

Chapter 16: Judgement of Quraysh about The Holy Qur'an

A discussion, which is purely about the essence of a miracle and the miraculous nature of the Holy Qur'an is beyond the scope of this book. However, historical discussions tell us that this Heavenly Book was the greatest and sharpest weapon of the Holy Prophet—so much so that the expert poets and the circles of prosody and oration were puzzled and astonished at the eloquence, melody and attraction of its words, sentences and verses, and all of them admitted that the Holy Qur'an of Muhammad stood at the highest level of eloquence and clarity and its mastery over the words and its way of expression was unparalleled.

The impression, penetration, rapture and attraction of the Holy Qur'an was such that even the most severe enemies of the Holy Prophet trembled within themselves when they heard some of its verses and at times they became so much ecstasized that for quite some time they could not move from their places owing to amazement. Here is an example.

Judgement of Walid

Walid was one of the judges of Arabia. Many difficulties of the Arabs were solved through him. He possessed enormous wealth. A group of Quraysh went to him for the solution of the problem of penetration of Islam in all houses and explained the matter to him and sought his opinion about the Qur'an of Muhammad.

They said to him: "Is the Qur'an of Muhammad magic or divination or is it a sermon or a rhetoric which has been prepared by him". The sage of Arabia requested for time so that he might express his view after hearing the Qur'an. Then he rose from his place and came to the Prophet. He sat with him in 'Hajar-i Isma'il' and said "Read something from your poetry".

The Holy Prophet replied: "What I say is not poetry. Rather it is the word of Allah which He has sent down for your guidance". Then Walid insisted that he should recite the Qur'an. The Prophet recited the

first thirteen verses of Surah al-Fussilat and when he reached this verse:

If they give no heed, say "I have given you warning of the scourge which overtook Thamud and 'Ad',

Walid trembled violently within himself. All his hair stood straight on his body and he got up in a state of astonishment and went home. He did not come out of his house for many days –so much so that Quraysh began ridiculing him and said: "Walid has given up the creed of his forefathers and has adopted the faith of Muhammad".¹

Tabarsi says: "When Surah al-Ghafir was revealed to the Holy Prophet he recited it in a very attractive voice in order to communicate the Divine verses to the people. By chance Walid was then sitting by his side and heard these verses without being attentive:

This Book is revealed by Allah, the Mighty One, the All-Knowing, Who forgives sin and accepts repentance; the Bountiful One, Whose punishment is stern. There is no god but He. All shall return to Him. None but the unbelievers dispute the revelations of Allah. Don't be deceived by their activities in the land.....

These verses impressed the sage of Arabia very much. When Bani Makhzum came round him he commended the Holy Qur'an in these words: "Today I have heard from Muhammad a speech which does not belong to the category of the speeches of the human beings and the genii. It is very melodious and possesses a special beauty. Its branches are full of fruits and its roots abound with blessings. It is an outstanding narration and no other narration is as outstanding as this."

He uttered these sentences and went his way and Quraysh thought that he had begun to believe in Muhammad's religion.²

According to a great scholar³ this was the first commendation and praise of the Qur'an by a human being and a careful study of this speech makes the miraculous nature of the Holy Qur'an vis-a-vis Arab ignorance absolutely clear and it becomes evident that the reason of the Holy Qur'an being a miracle in their eyes was its unusual rapture, attraction, sweetness and melody, because they did not find such deliciousness and elegance in any other thing except the Qur'an.

Another Example

'Utbah bin Rabiyyah was one of the elders of Quraysh. At the time when Hamzah embraced Islam the entire assembly of Quraysh was stricken with sorrow and grief and their chiefs feared that the Islamic faith would expand further. At that stage 'Atbah said: "I shall go to Muhammad and shall make some offers to him. It is possible that he may accept one of them and abandon the new religion". The chiefs endorsed his view.

He, therefore, got up and went to the Prophet who was then sitting in the Masjid. He offered to him wealth, authority and medical treatment in very gentle words. When he stopped speaking the Prophet said to him: "Was it all that you wanted to say?" He replied: "Yes." Then the Prophet said: "Just listen to these verses, for this is the reply to all that you have said".

Ha Mim. A revelation from the Compassionate, the Merciful. It is a Book, the verses of which have been well expounded; an Arabic Qur'an for those who have understanding. Bearing good news and warning. But most of them ignore it and give no heed. (Surah Ha Mim, 41:1-4).

The Holy Prophet recited some verses of this Surah. When he reached the thirty seventh verse he performed '*sajdah*'. After this he turned to 'Utbah and said: 'O Aba Walid! Have you heard the Message of Allah?' 'Utbah had been somewhat enchanted by the Word of Allah. He had placed his hands behind his head, which rested on them.

In this very condition he kept gazing on the face of the Holy Prophet for quite some time, as if he had been deprived of his power of speech. Then he got up from his place and went to the place where Quraysh had assembled. The chiefs of Quraysh had realized from his condition and countenance that he had been impressed by the words of Muhammad and had returned in a condition of humility coupled with distraction of mind. They were all watching intently to see 'Utbah's face.

All of them asked him: "What has happened?" He said: "By Allah! I have heard from Muhammad a speech which I had never heard from anyone. By Allah! It is neither poetry, nor magic nor divination. I consider it expedient that we should leave him alone so that he may propagate his religion amongst the different tribes. If he is successful and acquires a land and a kingdom it will be considered to be a matter of pride for you and you will also benefit from it. And if he is defeated, others will kill him and you, too, will be at ease".

Quraysh ridiculed 'Utbah for his remarks and views and said that he had been enchanted by the speech of Muhammad. 4

These are two specimens of the views of two outstanding eloquent speakers of the Age of Ignorance and other specimens are also available.

Strange Stratagem of Quraysh

One day, after sunset, the chiefs of Quraysh like 'Utbah, Shaybah, Abu Sufyan, Nazar bin Harith, Abul Bakhtari, Walid bin Mughayrah, Abu Jahl, 'As bin Wai'l etc. assembled by the side of the Ka'bah and decided to call the Prophet and discuss the matter with him directly. They, therefore, sent someone to ask the Prophet to participate in the meeting.

On having been informed about the matter the Prophet came hurriedly and joined their assembly, hoping to guide them to the right path. Conversation started from all sides and Quraysh repeated their

grievances. They complained that dissension and discord had taken place amongst Quraysh, and expressed readiness for every sacrifice. In the end they made requests to the Prophet which have been depicted in the following verses:

They say: "(O Muhammad!) We will not believe in you until you make a spring gush from the earth before our very eyes, or cause rivers to flow in a grove of palms and vines; until you cause the sky to fall upon us in pieces, as you have threatened to do, or bring down Allah and the angels in our midst; until you build a house of gold, or ascend to heaven; nor will we believe in your ascension until you have sent down for us a book which we can read (and which confirms your prophethood)." (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:90-93)

It is evident that all that they said was mere deceit, because palm and vine groves have nothing to do with the prophethood of a person and causing the sky to be torn to pieces and to fall down on earth is quite incompatible with the prophetic mission, whose object is to guide the people.

Amongst their demands there was only one thing, which had a miraculous aspect and that was the Prophet's ascension to heaven. And even if the Prophet had performed this miracle they would not have believed in him, because they had made it clear that he must also send down a book which should confirm his prophethood!

If Quraysh had been really keen to verify the truth of the Prophet's claim his ascension –to heaven would have been a sufficient proof of it. However, they said that they would not be satisfied with it, because all demands of theirs were based on particular motives. The Holy Prophet replied to them: "Surely I am no more than a Messenger and cannot perform a miracle without the permission of Allah".⁵

Stimulant for The Obstinacy of the Chiefs of Quraysh

This portion of the history of Islam is one of the points which deserves discussion, because one ponders as to why Quraysh quarrelled with the Prophet to this extent, notwithstanding the fact that all of them considered him to be truthful and honest and had not till that time observed even the smallest shortcoming in him, and had heard fascinating and eloquent words from him, and had often seen him perform unusual deeds which were beyond the ambits of the laws of nature.

A few things may be considered to be the cause or causes of this obstinacy:

1. Quraysh were jealous of the Holy Prophet

Some of them did not follow the Prophet, because they were jealous of him and wished that they themselves should possess this divine office.

The Holy Qur'an says:

They also say: 'Why was this Qur'an not revealed to some mighty man from the two towns'?
(Surah al-Zukhruf,43:31)

The exegetes while explaining the reason for the revelation of this verse (viz. the unbelievers objected as to why the Qur'an was not revealed to one of the chiefs of Makkah or Ta'if) write thus:

"Walid son of Mughayra once met the Prophet and told him that he (Walid) was more suited for the office of Prophet as he enjoyed precedence over him (the Prophet) in the matter of age, wealth and children.⁶

Umayyah bin Abi Salt was a person who used to talk about a prophet before the advent of Islam and was anxious to assume this high office himself. He did not, however, follow the Holy Prophet till the end of his life and used to instigate the people to oppose him.

Akhnas, who was one of the enemies of the Prophet, said to Abu Jahl: "What is your opinion about Muhammad?" He replied: "We and Abd-i Munaf quarrelled about nobility and greatness and we vied with them and adopted all possible ways and means to become their equals. Now that we have become their equals they say that revelation descends from heavens on a member of their family. By Allah! We will never believe in him."⁷

These are some specimens which clearly indicate the jealousy of the chiefs of Quraysh. There are also other such specimens which can be found in the pages of history.

2. Fear of the Day of Judgement

This was the most effective cause for the obstinacy of Quraysh, because they were pleasure-seeking, voluptuous and easy-going people. The call of the Holy Prophet was opposed to the old habits of these persons who had enjoyed absolute freedom for centuries; and to give up bad habits entails great suffering and toil.

Furthermore, hearing of the verses regarding torture, which threaten the pleasure-seeking, unjust and ignorant persons with severe punishment, created a strange fear in their hearts and made them very much disturbed and uneasy. When the Holy Prophet recited the verses mentioned below in the general gatherings of Quraysh with a pleasant voice, there appeared a tumult, which disturbed their merry-making.

The Arabs who used to equip themselves for warding off all sorts of occurrences, cast lots with arrows, took omens with stones to procure safety, and considered the coming and going of birds to be the signs of occurrences, were not at all prepared to sit still unless they had acquired a guarantee against the torture of which Muhammad warned them. They, therefore, quarrelled with him so that they might not hear his good tidings and threats. Here are some of the verses which greatly disturbed the minds of the pleasure-seeking and ignorant Arabs:

When the Day of Judgement comes man will avoid his brother, mother, father, wife and children. On that day everyone will be concerned with himself (Surah 'Abasa, 80:34-37)

While sitting by the side of Ka'bah and drinking wine they suddenly heard these words:

No sooner will their skins be consumed than We shall give them other skins, so that they may truly taste Our scourge. (Surah al-Nisa, 4:56).

This made them so much disturbed and agitated that they involuntarily cast aside their cups and began trembling with fear.

There were other reasons also which made them refrain from admitting the truthfulness of Islam. For example, one day Harith bin Nawfal, son of Abd-i Munaf came to see the Holy Prophet and said: "We know that what you warn us of is true and correct. However, if we express our belief in you the polytheist Arabs will turn us out of our land". The following verse was revealed in reply to such persons:

They say: 'If we accept your guidance, we shall be driven from our land.' But have We not given them a sanctuary of safety(Surah al-Qasas, 28:57)

Some objections by the Polytheists

At times they said: "Syria is the land which fosters prophets in its lap, and it has not been observed so far that a person should have been appointed to the prophetic mission in this desert (Makkah)". In imitation of the Jews some polytheists said: "Why is the Qur'an revealed piecemeal? Why has it not been sent down as a whole like the Injeel and the Taurat?" The Holy Qur'an reproduces their objection in these words: "*The unbelievers say: 'Why was the Qur'an not revealed to him in a single revelation?'*"

Then it gives the following reply:

We have revealed it thus, so that We may strengthen your faith. (Surah al-Furqan, 25:32)

Undoubtedly unpleasant events and harsh occurrences have a great effect on human spirit and the only source of satisfaction for the Holy Prophet was the fresh words which he heard from his Lord, who ordered him to practice forbearance and fortitude, and by this means created a fresh spirit in his entire frame. It was for this purpose that the Holy Qur'an was revealed piecemeal.

Furthermore, in the early days of Islam, some rules were formally recognized, but it was not appropriate to let them continue. It was not, therefore, possible that the Holy Qur'an should have been revealed in a single revelation.

1. A'lamul Wara', pp. 27-28 and Biharul Anwar, vol. XVII, pp. 211-222.

2. Majma'ul Bayan, vol. X, page 387.

3. Kitabul Mu'jizatil Khalidah by Allamah Shahristani, page 66.
4. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. I, pp. 293 – 294.
5. Some of the Christian missionaries have argued on the basis of this and other verses that the Holy Prophet of Islam did not possess any miracle other than the Qur'an. The falsity of this argument has, however, been clearly proved and the object of such verses made manifest in the Persian book entitled 'Risalati Jahani Pyambaran'.
6. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. I, page 361.
7. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. I, page 316.

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