

Chapter 18: Miracle of Finality

The Holy Qur'an is the everlasting miracle of the last Prophet. The miracles of the former Prophets like Prophet Ibrahim, Prophet Musa and Prophet 'Isa, each of whom had a revealed Book and also wrought miracles, were distinct from their revealed Books. They wrought such miracles as the transformation of a blazing fire into 'coolness and peace', the conversion of a dry piece of wood into a serpent and bringing the dead to life. Obviously each of these miracles, was temporary and passing. But in the case of the last Prophet his Book itself was his miracle. It is the proof of his Prophethood. As such, the miracle of finality, unlike any other miracle, is everlasting, not passing nor meant only for the time being.

The fact that a Divine Book is the miracle of the last Prophet is absolutely in conformity with his time, the age of the advancement of science, knowledge, culture and education. The eternity of this Holy Book is also in consonance with the eternity of its message which is never to be abrogated.

The Holy Qur'an in several verses of it has expressly proclaimed this extraordinary and superhuman aspect of itself. One of these verses says:

"If you are in doubt about what We have revealed to Our bondman, then bring a chapter like it."
(Surah al-Baqarah, 2:23)

It has also expressly mentioned several other miracles wrought by the last Prophet.

The Holy Qur'an has dwelt on a number of questions related to the miracles. It declares that a Divine message must be accompanied by some miracles, that a miracle is a decisive evidence and definite proof, that the Prophets work the miracles by the will of Allah and that they work them to prove the veracity of their claim, and that they are not bound to accede to every request of everybody in this respect. In other words, the Prophets are not expected to hold an exhibition of miracles or to set up a factory of them.

As the Holy Qur'an has dealt with these questions, it has also expressly recounted the stories of the miracles of many of the former Prophets like Nuh, Ibrahim, Lut, Salih, Hud, Musa and 'Isa, and has

categorically confirmed them.

Some orientalists and Christian clergymen on the basis of those verses in which the Holy Qur'an responded negatively to the demand of the idolaters to work the miracles proposed by them, have claimed that the Prophet of Islam told the people that he had no miracle other than the Holy Qur'an, and if they did not accept it, he could do nothing further. Some 'liberal-minded' Muslim writers also have accepted this view, and explaining it, they say that the miracle is an argument which can convince only immature humanity looking for something extraordinary and fantastic. A mature man is not impressed by such things and is concerned only with the things rational.

As the age of the Prophet of Islam was that of rationality, not of myths and fancy, he declined by the will of Allah to accept any request for a miracle besides the Holy Qur'an. One writer says: "To seek the help of the miracles was unavoidable for the former Prophets, for in those days it was almost impossible for them to convince people with any rational arguments. At the time the Prophet of Islam appeared, humanity had passed the period of its minority.

It had reached the stage of its intellectual majority. The child of yesterday no longer depended on his mother and was able to stand on his own feet and use his brain. In such circumstances it was not unreasonable that the Prophet of Islam resisted the pressure of the disbelievers and his opponents demanding from him to work miracles. To prove the truth of his mission he solely relied on rational arguments and historical evidence. In spite of the insistence of the disbelievers the Prophet of Islam by the order of Allah refused to work miracles similar to those of the former Prophets.

He relied on the Holy Qur'an alone as an incomparable miracle. Its incomparability is in itself a proof of the finality of Prophethood. It is a Book that contains truths, teachings and guidance in complete conformity with all aspects of life. It is a miracle worthy of mature humanity, not an immature humanity believing in myths and fables.

The so called our liberal-minded Muslim writer adds: "The atmosphere in which the ancient man lived was always full of myths, idle stories and supernatural ideas. Hence he was not impressed by anything unless it was contrary to what was reasonable and perceptible. That is why we find mankind throughout history to be fond of what is unknown and in search of what is supernatural. This sentimental attitude towards what is imperceptible and unreasonable is more acute among the more uncivilized. The more men are close to nature, the more they are fond of what is extra-natural. Myths are an evil outcome of this situation.

The man of the desert is always looking for a miracle. His world is full of spirits and wonderful mysteries. The spirit of a primitive man is moved only by what is marvellous and mysterious. That is why we see that not only the Prophets, but also the kings, the heroes and the sages of every nation have resorted to something supernatural to justify what they claimed. In these circumstances the Prophet whose mission was based on the invisible had to have recourse to a miracle more than others, for at this period of

history supernatural events were more effective than logic, science and indisputable facts".

However, the life of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be on him and his progeny) is an exception to this rule. He announced that his miracle is a Book. He made this announcement in a society, in the largest commercial city of which the number of those who knew the art of writing was not more than seven. This society never thought of anything other than boasting, the sword, the camel and the male child. It is in itself a miracle that in this society he announced that his miracle was a Heavenly Book.

He announced this in a country where no Heavenly Book ever existed. His Lord, Allah, the Creator swears by the ink, the pen and the writing before a people who regarded the pen as the tool of a few helpless and weak persons. This is a miracle in itself. Only that Book is a miracle which can always be seen. Unlike any other miracle it is the only miracle the marvellous and extraordinary nature of which can be more accurately understood and appreciated by those who are more wise and more learned in comparatively advanced and cultured societies. It is the only miracle the belief in which is not confined to those who have faith in supernatural things.

Its supernaturalness can be acknowledged by any knowledgeable person. It is the only miracle which is not for the common people. It is for the intelligentsia, unlike other miracles it is not intended to stimulate the admiration of the onlookers and to persuade them to accept a message on that basis. It is meant to educate those who accept it. It is a message in itself. The miracle of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be on him and his progeny), though not a human product, is not something not concerned with the human beings. Unlike the miracles of the past, it is not a device used only to make people believe, and having no other use. But his miracle represents a sort of the display of the highest human talent. It is also the best model for exercise and training, and for that a model which is always available.

The Holy Prophet tried to divert human inquisitiveness from what was extraordinary and supernatural to the rational, logical and intellectual problems and social and moral questions. His task was not so easy, especially in view of the fact that the people with whom he had to deal were not willing to submit to anything except what was unnatural.

It is really astonishing how he called himself a Prophet, invited people to accept his Divine message and at the same time admitted formally that he was not aware of the "unknown". Apart from the human value of this admission, what is striking is the extraordinary truth which is felt in his actions and which compels every heart to bow to him in admiration and respect. Some people asked him to foretell what price their goods were to fetch so that they might plan accordingly to be able to earn profit and make money.

The Holy Qur'an ordered him to say: ***"I have no power to acquire for myself a benefit or to avert any trouble except by the will of Allah. If I had the knowledge of the unknown, I would have certainly acquired for myself much that is good and no harm would have touched me. I am no more than the one who gives warning and brings good news to a believing people."*** (Surah al-A'raf, 7:188)

A Prophet who could make no prophecy, who did not converse with the spirits, the fairies and the jinn

and who did not work a miracle everyday, was no good in the sight of the people of the desert. The Holy Prophet called upon them to look into the universe, to observe piety, uprightness and faith, to acquire knowledge and to understand the meaning of life and destiny, but they ceaselessly continued to ask him to work a miracle and make a prophecy. On the other hand Allah prompted him to say: **"Glory be to my Lord! I am no more than a human messenger."** (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:93)

Those who deny the occurrence of miracles rely mostly on the following Qur'anic verses saying: **"They say: We will not believe you unless you make a spring gush forth from the earth for us; or you have a garden of date-palms and cause rivers to flow abundantly in their midst; or you cause the sky to fall on us in pieces as you have asserted, or you bring Allah and the angels before us; or you have a house of gold; or you ascend to heaven. But even then we will not believe in you until you bring down for us a book which we can read. Say: Glory be to my Lord. I am nothing but a human messenger."**(Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:90 – 93)

They say that these verses show that the idolaters asked the Holy Prophet to work a miracle other than the Holy Qur'an, but he declined to accede to their demand.

Unfortunately we cannot agree to this theory, especially in view of the points mentioned above and in view of what we have said in regard to the superiority of the Holy Qur'an to all other miracles. From our point of view the disputable points are as under:

(i) The Prophet of Islam had no miracle other than the Holy Qur'an. He refused to fulfil the demand of the idolaters who wanted him to produce some other miracle. The verses of the Surah Bani Isra'il prove this point.

(ii) As for the value and effectiveness of miracles, it may be said that they were compatible with the period of the minority of mankind when reason and logic were not effective. Even the sages and the kings had recourse to supernatural things to justify themselves. The Prophets also had to resort to them to convince their people. The Prophet of Islam whose miracle is a Book is an exception to this rule. He justifies himself by means of a Book or actually by reason and logic.

(iii) The Prophet of Islam tried to divert the attention of the people from the unusual and supernatural things to the rational and logical questions and to turn their sensitivity from wonders to the actualities and facts.

Now let us discuss one by one the points made by the opponents of the miracles: Is it true that the Prophet of Islam had no miracle except the Holy Qur'an? Apart from the fact that this view is unacceptable from the viewpoint of history and traditions reported by numerous authorities, it is contrary even to what the Holy Qur'an itself says. The miracle of the split of the moon is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an itself. Suppose someone explains away the verse mentioning this miracle, though it is not amenable to any explanation, how will the story of the ascension of the Holy Prophet mentioned in the Surah Bani Isra'il be explained? The Holy Qur'an expressly says: **"Glory be to Him who carried His**

slave by night from the Masjidul Haram (in Makkah) to the Masjidul Aqsa' (in Jerusalem), the precincts of which We have blessed. (We took him on this journey) to show him some of Our signs. " (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:1)

Is this occurrence not a supernatural event and a miracle?

In Surah at-Tahri'm there is an event saying that the Holy Prophet told a secret in confidence to one of his wives who divulged it to another wife of his. The Holy Prophet asked the first wife why she disclosed the secret to the second one and recounted a part of the conversation which had transpired between the two. That wife was surprised and asked the Holy Prophet how he came to know all that. The Holy Prophet replied that Allah had apprised him of the event.

When the Holy Prophet confided a fact to one of his wives and when she afterwards divulged it and Allah apprised him thereof, he made known to her of part thereof and passed over the rest. And when he told it to her, she said: "Who has told you?" He said: "The Knower, the Aware has told me". Does this not mean telling the unknown? Is this not a miracle? What has been mentioned in Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:90 – 93 and some other verses does not at all indicate what has been inferred from it. The idolaters were not asking for a proof of Prophethood and sign with a view to gain satisfaction. They were actually asking for something else. These verses as well as Surah al-'Ankabut, 29:50 throw ample light on the unique mentality of the idolaters who were apparently demanding a miracle. These verses also make clear the philosophy of the Holy Qur'an about the miracles of the Prophets.

In Surah Bani Isra'il the idolaters begin their talk saying virtually: ***"We will not join you unless you on your part make a spring gush forth for us in this arid land of Makkah."*** This is just a bargain.

They further say: ***"Or you have a garden of date palms with rivers flowing in their midst or you have a house full of gold, so that we may share these things with you."*** This is again a bargain, as they wanted these things for their own benefit.

They say: ***"Or you cause the sky to fall on us in pieces as you think that it will fall on the Day of Resurrection."***

This is asking for a punishment and the end of everything, though apparently they asked for a miracle.

"Or you ascend to heaven or you bring Allah and the angels be fore us." (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:90 – 93)

This is again a bargain, though this time they were not asking for riches, but were asking for something they could be proud of. Anyhow, they ignored the fact that it was impracticable to fulfil their demand.

The words actually used by the idolaters are notable. They did not say: '*Lan numina bika*', that is we will not believe you. Instead they said: '*Lan numina laka*', meaning we will not join you to your advantage. This difference in meaning has been pointed out by the scholars of the principles of jurisprudence while

explaining similar expressions in Surah at-Tawbah, 9:61. Further, the intention of the idolaters is clear from the way they put their demand. They asked the Holy Prophet to make a spring gush forth for them in exchange for their support and expedient faith. Evidently this is a demand for remuneration and not for a proof and a miracle. The Holy Prophet came to make the people believers, not to purchase their opinion and faith.

The writer whom we quoted above, himself says: "The idolaters asked the Holy Prophet to foretell the price their goods would fetch so that they could earn profit". Evidently this demand for a miracle was not made in order to know the truth. They wanted to use the Prophet as a means of making money. Naturally his reply was: "If I had the knowledge of the unknown, I would have certainly used it to acquire for myself much that is good in this world. Obviously miracles are not meant for such purposes. I am a Prophet. I only give warning and bring good news to a believing people".

The idolaters, thought that the Prophet could work a miracle to order, any time and for any purpose. That is why they wanted him to make a spring gush forth, to have a house of gold and make a prophecy about the market rates. But the fact is that a miracle is just like a revelation. Its occurrence is determined from "that side", not "from this". Just as a revelation is not subject to the wish of the Prophet and is a process which influences his will, similarly a miracle is also a process that proceeds from the other side and influences the will of the Prophet, though it is worked by him. That is what the words, 'by the will of Allah' signify both in the case of a revelation and a miracle. And that is what is meant by the following verse of Surah al-'Ankabut, which has been misinterpreted by the Christian missionaries: ***"The signs are with Allah alone. I am nothing but a plain warner"***. (Surah al-'Ankabut, 29:50)

The same is the case with the revealing of the unknown miraculously. As far as the personality of the Holy Prophet is concerned, he is not aware of the unknown. The Holy Qur'an says: ***"Say: I do not say to you that I am an angel, nor am I aware of the unknown."***

But when he comes under a supernatural influence he tells of what is hidden, and when he is asked how he knew that, he replies that Allah, the All-knowing apprised him of the unknown matter.

When the Holy Prophet says that he does not know the unknown and if he had known it he would have earned a lot of money through that knowledge, he wants to refute the false presumption of the idolaters; and makes it clear that the knowledge of the unknown falls within the range of a miracle for he receives it through Divine revelation only. Had his knowledge of the unknown been automatic and had he been able to use it for any purpose he liked, he would have used it to fill his own coffers instead of telling the future market rates to others in order to enable them to fill their pockets.

In another verse the Holy Qur'an says: ***"He is the knower of what is hidden and He reveals His secret to none, except to a Messenger He has chosen."*** (Surah al-Jinn, 72:26 – 27)

The Holy Prophet was certainly His chosen Messenger.

Furthermore, the Holy Qur'an has recounted many miracles of the former Prophets like Prophet Ibrahim, Prophet Musa and Prophet 'Isa. Then how was it possible that the Holy Prophet when asked to work a miracle like that of the former Prophets; should say that he was no more than a human messenger? Had not the idolaters a right to retort and say: "You yourself describe the miracles of the former Prophets so eloquently. Were they not human beings or were they not Prophets?" Is it possible that such a glaring contradiction should exist in the Holy Qur'an? Is it imaginable that the idolaters did not take notice of such a glaring contradiction?

Should the thinking of these liberal-minded be correct, the Holy Prophet instead of saying: "Glory be to Allah! I am no more than a human messenger", should have said: "Glory be to Allah! I being the last Prophet, am excluded from the rule applicable to other Prophets. Therefore do not ask me to do, what the other Prophets were asked to do". Anyhow, he did not say so. On the other hand he said: "I am a messenger like all other messengers".

This shows that what the idolaters, demanded from the Holy Prophet was not a miracle or a sign with a view to find out the truth. They were asking for something else and their demand was such that the Prophets usually do not accede to it. That is why the Holy Prophet declined to give a positive reply to their selfish and arrogant demand. They were actually asking for something impossible.

We admit that the common people are inclined to invent the stories of the miracles and ascribe them not only to the Prophets and the Imams but even to any grave, stone or tree. But that is no reason why we should deny that the Holy Prophet had miracles other than the Holy Qur'an.

Further, there is a difference between a Prophetic miracle and a saintly miracle. A Prophetic miracle is a Divine sign and a proof to prove that there is a Divine assignment. It is always linked together with a challenge. It has certain special conditions and takes place for a special purpose. As for a saintly miracle, that is a supernatural event which is purely an outcome of the spiritual power and personal sanctity of a perfect or a semi-perfect man and does not take place to prove the truth of any Divine mission. It is almost an affair with no special conditions attached to it. A Prophetic miracle is the voice of Allah in support of a particular person. But that is not the case with a saintly miracle.

Value and Effect of a Miracle

What is the value of a miracle? The logicians and the philosophers divide the material that is used to argue a case into several kinds. Some arguments have a proving value. They are something beyond any reasonable doubt, as is the case with the data used by a mathematician. Some other arguments have only a persuasive value, as is the case with the arguments advanced by the rhetoricians. If the arguments of the latter are analysed, they often do not prove to be convincing. But so long as they are not dissected, they prove quite moving. Some other arguments are merely emotional or have some other value.

Value of a Miracle From the Viewpoint of the Qur'an

The Holy Qur'an describes the miracles of the Prophets as the signs and clear proofs, and regards them as a convincing and logical evidence of the existence of Allah in the same way as it regards the creation as the incontrovertible proof of His existence.

The Holy Qur'an has elaborately dwelt on the question of the miracles. It considers the demand of the people for a miracle and their refusal to submit to the Prophets unless a sign was shown to them, to be reasonable and justified, provided the demand was not made for ulterior motives or just as a pastime. It has eloquently narrated many stories of the practical response of the Prophets to such demands. The Holy Qur'an has nowhere indicated that a miracle is only a persuasive argument suitable to the simple-minded people and appropriate to the period of the minority of mankind. On the other hand it has called it a clear proof.

Nature of the Holy Prophet's Guidance

The miracle of the 'Finality' being a Book, a piece of literature and a treasure of culture and knowledge, is an everlasting miracle. Many of its miraculous aspects are still gradually coming to light. Some wonderful features of the Holy Qur'an which have become known to the people of our times were not known and could not be known in the past. The value of a Book-miracle is better grasped by the thinkers than by the common people. It is true that this miracle because of its special merits, is appropriate to the period of the finality, but, is it also true that this miracle has the nature of a Book because it is intended, among other things, to divert the attention of man from the unknown to the known, from the unreasonable to the reasonable and logical, and from the supernatural to the natural, Does the Holy Prophet try to draw of the inquisitiveness of people from the unusual and supernatural things to the rational, logical, intellectual, scientific, social and moral questions and to turn their sensitivity from wonders to the realities?

That does not appear to be true. Should it be true, that would mean that all other Prophets were inviting people to the unknown and only the Holy Prophet invited them to the known. If this is the case, then why have hundreds of the verses of the Holy Qur'an been devoted to the description of miracles?

Undoubtedly it is one of the basic distinctions of the Holy Qur'an that it calls for the study of nature and describes the natural phenomena as Divine signs. But a call for the study of nature does not mean diverting the attention of people from everything that does not pertain to nature. On the other hand a call for the study of natural phenomena as signs means passing from nature to what is beyond nature and from what is perceptible to what is intelligible.

The importance of the work of the Holy Prophet lies in the fact that just as he calls the people for the study of nature, history and society, he also persuades those who submit to nothing but supernatural to submit to reason, logic and science also. He similarly tries to make those who are fond of reason and logic and submit to nothing but what is natural and perceptible, to get acquainted with a higher logic as

well.

The basic difference between the world presented by the religion on the whole, and especially by Islam, and the world depicted by purely human sciences and philosophies, is that as William James has put it, in the construction of the world of religion certain other elements have gone in addition to the material elements and the laws generally recognized by mankind.

The Holy Qur'an does not want to divert the attention from natural and perceptible things to supernatural and imperceptible things. The importance of the Holy Qur'an lies in the fact that besides paying attention to what is natural or in the words of the Holy Qur'an, is the seen, it puts the belief in the unseen in the forefront of its teachings: **"This is the Book about which there is no doubt. It is a guidance to the pious, who believe in the unseen."** (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:2 – 3)

How can the Holy Qur'an divert the attention of people from what is supernatural when it is itself a miracle, and so many other miracles have been described in more than hundred verses of it.

We are unable to understand what is meant by saying that the Book is the only miracle, the belief in which is not confined to those who believe in the supernatural things.

What belief? Does the writer mean the belief that the Holy Qur'an is a Book the contents of which are very valuable and sublime, or the belief that it is a miracle? The belief that a thing is miraculous in the sense that it is a Divine sign, amounts to the belief in its supernaturalness. How can a man have a belief in a miracle and at the same time not have a belief in anything supernatural?

It has been said that the miracle of the Prophet of Islam does not belong to the category of non-human matters though it is a non-human act. To us the meaning of this statement also is not clear for it can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly it may mean that the Holy Qur'an being a revealed Book, not having been composed by the Holy Prophet is a non-human act, but though it is the word of Allah, not of any human being, it belongs to the category of human matters and is an ordinary act, like other human acts.

It appears to be improbable that this is what the writer means, for in the case of the acceptance of this view, the Holy Qur'an would have no distinction over other revealed Books. All the other revealed Books have also issued from the same source of revelation, but as they have no supernatural aspect, they not belong to the category of superhuman acts.

There is a category of the sayings of the Holy Prophet known as *Hadith al-Qudsi*. These sayings are the revealed words of Allah but still they are neither miraculous nor superhuman.

The Holy Qur'an is distinguished from other revealed Books and from *Hadith al-Qudsi* in that it is superhuman. It is revealed as well as superhuman and supernatural. That is why the Holy Qur'an says: **"Say: If all human beings and jinn were to combine to produce the like of the Qur'an, they would surely fail to compose the like of it, even if they helped one another."** (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:88)

The other interpretation of the above-mentioned statement may be that unlike the miracles of other Prophets such as converting a staff into a serpent and bringing the dead to life which definitely do not belong to the category of human acts, the miracle of Muhammad (Peace be on him and his progeny) being a sort of learned speech and dissertation, belongs to that category, but it is still superhuman, having sprung from a supernatural source. Should this interpretation be what is intended, and it should be, then this statement in itself is an admission that there exists what is supernatural and extraordinary and that there are things which are unseen and unknown. Then why should we think of a miracle as if it is something mythical and irrational. Why should we not from the very beginning distinguish between the miracles on the one hand and the myths and superstitions on the other, so that the less-informed people may not form that impression of the miracles which we do not want them to form. Why instead of saying clearly and in a straightforward manner that the Book of the Prophet of Islam is a miracle, should in a roundabout way say that his miracle is a Book?

In one of the last works of the same writer an article has been published under the heading: 'The Qur'an and the Computer'. This article may be considered to be a correction of his earlier view about the miraculousness of the Holy Qur'an and a sign of the gradual development of his thinking.

In this article he has proposed the replacement of the letters of the Holy Qur'an by the computerized signs and the use of this great manifestation of human culture for the discovery of the Qur'anic knowledge. This is a timely and sound suggestion. The writer has hinted at the endeavours made and being made by some Egyptian and Iranian scholars in this field. He has also made an interesting discourse under the caption: 'How to Prove the Inimitability of the Qur'an'.

In this article he has referred to a valuable book entitled, 'The Process of the Development of the Qur'an', which has lately been published and in which its learned author has proved that the size and the length of the verses and the words revealed to the Holy Prophet in over 23 years form an exact and regular curve. Commenting on the discovery made in this book the writer says: "Is there any speaker in the world the year of whose sentences may be ascertained from their length, especially when these sentences do not form the text of any literary or scientific book produced by an author in a regular manner?"

In contrast, they are the sentences which came from time to time on the lips of a man over a long period of twenty-three years of his busy life. They do not form a book written on a particular subject, nor do they pertain to even any pre-conceived field. They cover multifarious questions which arose in society from time to time. Some of them answer the specific queries made, and some others deal with the problems that came up in the course of a long-drawn struggle. They were revealed to a great leader and were collected and arranged later".

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