

The
QUR'AN

DIVINE REVELATION
Or Forgery



Maulana Sayyid Abul A'la Maudoodi

**THE QUR'AN:
DIVINE REVELATION,
OR
FORGERY?**

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

FOREWORD

At the time of his passing away, which will be mourned by millions, and Allah alone knows for how long Maulana Maudoodi—on whom be Allah's mercies—had been engaged in writing a Biography of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). A work which in its own way, was as monumental as Tafhim-ul-Quran, his six-volume Urdu translation and commentary on the Holy Quran. Two volumes of this Biography had been published in his own life-time under the title *Seerat Sarwar-e-Alam* while remainder remains to be published.

It is our hope that we shall, ^mSome day, be able to present to the world an English translation of this Biography. For the time being, we are only presenting a translating of one chapter from it which deals specifically with the issue whether the Qur'an is, as it claims and as was claimed for it by its bearer, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, on whom be peace, a Divine revelation, or a forgery as was alleged by the non-believers to whom it was initially addressed, and as ^{his}his detractors have all along striven to prove—the ugliest spectacle being

that of the so-called Orientalists who, despite all claim to impartiality, approach anything pertaining to Islam with a built-in bias which they cannot get rid of.

We trust that anybody who reads the present booklet, will realise, especially if he brings an open mind to the subject, that it would be more logical to affirm that the Qur'an is a Divinely revealed Book, and not a forgery at all. They would be persuaded study it for themselves, referring in particular, to *The Meaning of the Quran*, an English translation of *Tafhim-ul-Qnran*, which, however, is still in the process of completion.

The Academy is grateful to brother Abu Asad, formerly Editor of its (now defunct) monthly magazine, *The Criterion*, and now on the Editorial Board of its successor, *The Universal Message*, for having prepared the translation now under publication.

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S. Munawar Hasan

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Secretary General

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THE QUR'AN :

DIVINE REVELATION, OR FORGERY ?

1. The third element of the Islamic *Da'awah*¹ was that people should affirm that the Qur'an was a Divinely revealed Book, believe everything in it to be true or, rather, to be *the* Truth and to be from God, make all its teachings as to beliefs, thoughts and ideas, morality, worship, and human relations the fundamental law of their life, and reject everything which was in conflict with those teachings. And as an integral part of the creed it was also to be believed firmly that the Qur'an was the literal Word of God, revealed to the Prophet (on whom be peace) through the process of *Wahy*.² It was not

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1. That is, the call of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). The first two elements were Tawhīd (belief in the Unity of God and denial of divinity to any other being), and the Prophethood of Muhammad—A.A.
 2. The literal meaning of this word (وحي) is secret hint, something put into somebody's mind in such manner that no third person is aware of it. However, in the case of the Prophet Muhammad, it means transmission of the Divine Message to him through the angel Gabriel. (Please see also footnote 6)—A.A.

that he was inspired with the sense of what he was to say, and that he thereafter put it into words of his own. A further part of the required belief was that the Book was being preserved in the very words in which the revelations came, without any change by way of omission, addition, or alteration, and that no falsehood could make the least inroad into it. And, besides, since the Book was the authentic Word of God, its injunctions applied as much to the Prophet himself as they did to anyone else. Although it was he who was chosen to be the agent for its transmission to humanity, his position vis-a-vis the Qur'an was that of subservience, and he was in every way fully bound by what it laid down. Nor did he have the least authority to make any changes in it. Rather, his first and foremost duty was to impose its teachings on his own person and conduct, and then, in accordance with the instructions conveyed to him through it, endeavour to make Allah's *Deen*¹ prevail over all other ways of life.

2. This belief played a most significant role as one of the foundations of the revolution which was ushered in by Islam. Its implication was that God had given the world a Book as such, in which He had set down, in His own words, what was the Truth

1. *Deen* (دين), although generally translated as religion, has a much wider meaning. Here it is used in the sense of the Way of Life ordained by God. (The 'D' sounds like 'th' in 'the')—A.A.

and what was False, and people could now turn to it through all the ages to learn what to do and what to avoid in order to win the Pleasure of their Lord and Master. To ordain an individual as Prophet, to provide him with a Book, and to ask people to believe in and obey both of them, meant necessarily that wherever any individuals or a society accepted this belief, and pledged their allegiance to the obedience now required, there would be no more freedom to do as one pleased. The individuals in their personal capacity, and societies and communities in their collective capacity, were henceforth to be bound by the guidance now provided by a Leader, and a Book. And, when the Leader should be no more, this Book of Fundamental Law should endure after him to tell humanity at all times what God had ordered to be done, or forbidden being done, while the Prophet's own *Sunnah*¹ (which, according to the Qur'an itself, is its authentic, authoritative exposition), should leave no room for anyone to misinterpret the Qur'an for ulterior motives.

3. The above brief statement of the case explains clearly the necessity for making it incumbent on all, at the very outset of the *Da'awah*, to believe not only in the Unity of God, but also in the Prophethood of Muhammad (on whom be peace) 'in the

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1. *Sunnah*, or *Sunnat* (سنة) embraces the Holy Prophet's way of doing things, or anything ordered by him to be done by others, or something done by someone which he did not forbid.—A.A.

Qur'an itself and in its being the Word of God, and to be fully conscious of the significance of this requirement. We shall now set out in some detail the claims made in respect of the Qur'an when it was first presented to the world, and with what irrefutable arguments as to its Divine origin.

THE WORD OF GOD

4. The first point, which is so forcefully set out in the Qur'an in so many places that it would take up too much space to cite all the relevant verses, is that the Qur'an is God's own Word, articulated to the Prophet (on whom be peace) literally, through the process of *Wahy*. There is not a single word in the whole of the Qur'an which could by any stretch of imagination be held to imply that it is the product of his own mind or that the words are his own. Throughout the Book the affirmation repeatedly made is of its being a revelation from God, e.g.,

- (i) And (O Muhammad !) We have sent down this Book to you, with Truth, confirming and encompassing all the Truth in the previous revealed Scriptures, which it will preserve and perpetuate; therefore, decide any issues among the people according to what has been sent down to you, and do not follow their desires (by) turning away from the Truth that has come to you. (5:48).

[Here it is clearly set out that "this Book", namely, the Qur'an, has been sent down to Muhammad (peace be upon him) by God Himself, and it has brought nothing but Truth. It is also stated that it confirms all the original Truth still to be found in the previously revealed Scriptures and that it will now preserve and perpetuate those Truths, so that everything contrary to truth which has got interpolated into them can now be sorted out by reference to the Qur'an.]

- (ii) And it is with Truth that this Book was sent down to you, and it is with Truth that it got revealed to you,¹ and We have not sent you as Our messenger except as a bearer of glad tidings (for those who believe) and a warner (to those who do not). (17 : 105).
- (iii) And (O Prophet !) recite to them what has been revealed to you from your Lord through the process of *wahy* (18:27).
- (iv) Verily (O Muhammad !) We have sent down this Book to you with Truth; so whoever accepts its guidance will do so for his own good; and whoever goes astray will have only himself to blame; and yours is not the responsibility for what they choose to do. (39:41)

1. That is, that it was with truth that the Divine Revelations which constitute the Book were sent down through the Angel Gabriel, and it was with truth that he in turn delivered these to the Prophet.—A.A.

- (v) And thus did We reveal to you the Qur'an, in the Arabic language, that you may warn the Mother of cities¹ (Makkah) and the people living around. (42:7)
- (vi) The revelation of this Book is from Allah, the Almighty, the All-Wise. (46:2)
- (vii) This is a Book bearing Our blessings which We have sent down to you, that men may ponder over its contents, and those who have understanding derive from it learning and wisdom. (38:29)
- (viii) And (O Muhammad !) you are certainly receiving this Qur'an from a Being supreme in Wisdom and Knowledge. (27:6)
- (ix) And it is without doubt a revelation to you from the Lord of all the worlds. It has been poured into your heart through the agency of a faithful and trusty spirit,² so that you may, (O Muhammad !) be one of the warners, (and it is couched) in plain Arabic language. (26:192-195)

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1. For a brief indication of the origin of Makkah, readers are referred to requested to refer to the chapter, "Significance of the Rites," our forthcoming publication, *Salient Features of Hajj*. Makkah was the first city in the area and led to the birth of other cities around it and also became the main city of Arabia.—A.A.
 2. The reference here is, of course, to the Angel Gabriel, who transmitted the Divine Messages exactly and most faithfully.—A.A.

(x) Do not (O Prophet !) move your tongue in an effort to hastily learn it by heart; the responsibility is Ours to make you learn it by heart and to be able (later) to recite it (fully). So, when We are reciting it to you, listen carefully; (and) it is also Our responsibility to make you understand its meanings (and implication and import). (75:16-19)

5. The above verses assert as clearly as possible that the entire Qur'an has been revealed to the Holy Prophet (on whom be peace) through *Wahy*, while the last two are most explicit on the point that it is not the sense that was conveyed to him but that the revelation was textual, the words being brought from God Himself. It was the Faithful and Trusty Spirit which brought the *Wahy*, couched in the Arabic tongue, and recited it to him. In his eagerness to learn them by heart, he tried to repeat the words as they were being recited, but he was told by God not to do so but to listen attentively. It was for God Himself to make the words stick in his memory, to make him recite them later (exactly as they had been revealed to him); and to make him understand their meaning and implications. The words can make sense only if the *Wahy* consisted in the transmission of a literal message; for if it was only the sense of the message or some ideas that were conveyed, it would be meaningless to speak of his repeating the words in the effort to remember

them and to specifically mention the language of the message.

THE PROPHET VIS-A-VIS THE QUR'AN

6. The other point equally clearly laid down in the Qur'an is that the Holy Prophet (on whom be peace) was himself subservient to its injunction and absolutely bound by them, with not the least authority to add to or subtract from them, or make any other changes :

- (i) And (O Prophet !) obey that which is revealed to you from your Lord; verily He knows well all that men do. (33:2)
- (ii) (O Muhammad!) obey that which is revealed to you from your Lord; there is no god but He, and care not for what those who associate others with Him may say. (6:106)
- (iii) (Tell them, O Muhammad !) I but obey that which is revealed to me, and am but a plain warner. (46:9)
- (iv) And (O Prophet) when you do not show them any miracles, they ask: "Why did you not choose a sign (miracle) for yourself?" Say (in reply :) : "I but obey that which is revealed to me from my Lord; these (verses of the Qur'an) are the beacon lights from your Lord, and are a guidance and a blessing for those who believe." (7:203)

[This last verse means that it was not for the

Prophet (on whom be peace) to bring forth some invention or composition of his own to suit some demand or as he might himself feel needed. His role was only that of a Messenger, and he was only to carry out the guidance provided by Him Who had appointed him to the office. Instead of miracles, He was given the Book, which contained Signs enough, and its most noteworthy achievement was that all those who believed in it found the Straight Path, and the changes wrought in their morals and conduct were clear manifestation of their being recipients of God's special Mercy.]

(v) And when Our revealed verses, plain in meaning, are recited to them, those who expect not to meet Us in the Hereafter say: "Bring us some other Qur'an, make some changes in it (to suit our wishes)". Say: "It is not for me to make changes on my own; I but obey that which is revealed to me; verily, I fear the punishment of the Great Day should I disobey my Lord." (10:15)

(vi) And if he (the Prophet) had attributed anything of his own to Us, We would have held him by the right hand and cut off the artery of his heart, and no-one among you would have been able to intervene. (69:44-47)

PRESERVATION OF TEXT

7. Yet another assertion made in the Qur'an, in so many words, is that God had Himself assumed responsibility for its complete textual preservation, that all it says is inevitable, that no kind of falsehood can make any inroad into it and, further, that God will continually show mankind signs in the physical world and in themselves which will go on proving its authenticity and its Divine origin in all ages :

- (i) It is We Who have sent down to you the *Zikr* (the Qur'an) and it is upon Us to ensure its preservation. (15:9)

[That is, this particular matter, of the preservation of its text, is God's own direct responsibility. The Qur'an will not suffer disappearance through anyone intending to destroy it, nor will it be suppressed by someone so minded; neither sarcasm nor sneers, nor canting objections will affect the eminence of its status, nor will anybody be able to put a halt to its call; and nobody ever shall get any opportunity of making any change in its text.]

- (ii) Nay it is a Glorious Qur'an inscribed on the Tablet Preserved. (85:21-22)

[That is, what is contained in it is indestructible, unchangeable, and inevitable to boot. The original text is inscribed on a Tablet preserved on High, in which none can make any change (because

none has access to it). Whatever has been said in it *will* happen, and if the whole world should combine to falsify it the effort will end in total failure.]

- (iii) And this Qur'an is indeed a Glorious Book. No kind of falsehood can attack it from in front or from the rear. It has been sent down from the Being Most-Wise, intrinsically worthy of all praise. (41 : 41 - 42)

[The meaning of frontal attack is that no-one can by any direct attack prove anything said in the Qur'an to be wrong or any of its teachings to be false or wrong. And the reference to attack from the rear means that no new Truth can be discovered which would prove anything in the Qur'an to be factually incorrect. No new knowledge, which would really be "Knowledge" as such—that is, a fact and a reality and not just theory or speculation—will come forth to refute the knowledge contained in the Qur'an. No experiments or researches or observations will ever prove anything to be wrong with the guidance which it provides in the matters of belief, morality, law, civilization and culture, economy or social behaviour, or politics or statecraft.]

- (iv) Anon shall We show them Our Signs, in the Heavens, and in themselves too, until it will be clear to them that it (the Qur'an) is *the* Truth. (41:53)

[This has two meanings. The first, that soon

the call of the Qur'an will spread over a large part of the world, and these people will see with their own eyes the kind of great religious, moral, intellectual, cultural, social, and economic revolutions which will be wrought thereby; and the second that the more man's knowledge of the universe and of scientific phenomena and of himself advances, the more will the truth of the Qur'an go on becoming increasingly evident.]

DENIAL AMOUNTS TO KUFR

8. Belief in the Qur'an—in the full sense as explained above—is as much part of the Islamic call as in the Unity of God and the Prophethood of Muhammad (on whom be peace). That is why people were asked in unmistakable terms to affirm such belief, and warned that whoever did not subscribe to it would be guilty of *kufr* (disbelief). Almost at the very start, namely, the opening verses of the second *Surah* (*Al-Baqarah*), it is high-lighted as one of the attributes of those on the right path of guidance :

And those who believe in the Book which has been sent down to you (O Prophet), and who also believe in the Books which were sent down before you. (2:4)

Later on, it is said that :

And along with the Qur'an We are also sending down that in which is spiritual well-being for the believers and a mercy for them;

but as for the transgressors, it only increases their loss. (17:82)

Also :

And it is only the *kafirs* (non-believers) who deny Our Signs. (29:47)

THE REACTION OF THE PEOPLE OF MAKKAH

9. The above demand—that people believe in the Qur'an too as God-sent—was even more difficult for the reactionaries to accept than that regarding the Prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him). Because, if they subscribed only to the latter, they could have some hope of being able to repudiate it after the Prophet (on whom be peace) had departed from their midst, but here was a Book which the Muslims were learning by heart and reciting in their Prayers, and which was also being reduced to writing, and there could therefore be no prospect of freeing themselves from it. They knew that acceptance of it as the Word of God would mean the end of their own ways. The Qur'an would then become the law for their way of life, and any departure from it would mean straying from the Path indicated by God Himself. And so they concentrated all their energies on denying this claim about the Qur'an, and adopted all the means within their power to oppose its acceptance by others too.

Repudiation of all Scriptures

10. The first attempt in this direction was to

deny altogether the Divine origin of the earlier Scriptures :

And the disbelievers said : “Never shall we believe in this Qur’an nor in any of the Books which have preceded it.” (34:31)

This, however, was not something which could hold much water or have much of an appeal to the general public. The deniers of the Qur’an themselves had belief in the divine origin of the *Sahifahs* of Sayyidina Ibrahim (on whom be peace) to which the Qur’an too makes a reference in two places. There were no copies extant, but they all had a general belief that there had been something that had been revealed to that Patriarch (peace be upon him) by God. Apart from this there was a considerable body of Jews and Christians in Arabia, part of whose creed was belief in Divine Scriptures and, since the people of Makkah needed their co-operation in their campaign against the Prophet (peace be upon him), they did not for long persist in this denial for fear of antagonising these possible allies. (For the Jews and Christians too were inclined more to reject his claim to be Prophet than to accept it.)

The Issue of Authorship

11. Having first tried to repudiate the very institution of Divine revelation and to deny the authenticity of the previous Scriptures, and found this a somewhat doubtful gambit, the Quraish next

began to devote all their energies to a fresh charge, of Muhammad (peace be upon him) being himself the author of the Qur'an. This charge is most vehemently refuted in the Qur'an in many a place, and in considerable detail. The 32nd *Surah*, *as-Sajdah* for example, almost opens with the following words :

The revelation of this Book is, without any doubt whatsoever, from (God,) the Lord of all the Worlds. (32:2)

In other words, the *surah* opens with an announcement that it is a revelation, and that it is, without a doubt, from the Lord of all the Worlds. Many other *surahs* begin similarly, and the intention is to announce, at the very outset, the source from which the words emanate, much like the identification announcement of a radio station. But unlike the latter, this is no ordinary identification. The announcement that the words are coming directly from the Sovereign Lord of the Universe is itself most extraordinary, and of momentous import and significance. The listener is at once presented with a most unusual claim, brought face to face with a great challenge and, impliedly, with a stern warning. Like a thunder-clap comes the announcement that this is no mere human voice speaking to other human beings. The Message is from God Himself, and in His own Words. The listener must at once decide whether to believe his ears, and to regard it as being truly the word of God. If he should

believe, and accept that it is the Word of God, he would for ever have to obey its behest and be no more free to do in life as he pleases. If he should disbelieve, there is the sure risk that, should it eventually turn out to have been the Word of God, he would have sealed his own fate and condemned himself to eternal damnation and never-ending punishment. Hence, by the very extraordinariness of the nature of the announcement, the hearer is alerted, that he may listen carefully and decide in all seriousness whether or not the words are in fact coming over the Divine radio service.

12. The verse quoted does not content itself with announcing that the Qur'an is a revelation from God. It puts the utmost emphasis on the point by adding that that, without any doubt, is the case. Now if we should only apply our minds a bit to the matter, and reflect on the background against which the words were revealed, we shall have no difficulty in appreciating that they not only make a claim but also contain proof thereof, and that there was no need for elaborate proof because the people concerned could themselves make out the line of argument. The entire life of the man who was presenting the Book to them had been spent in their midst, and he was therefore no stranger to them. They had known him to be the most truthful, the most sober and serious-minded, and the most upright of character and conduct among them. They also knew that never once had he uttered words

like those which had so suddenly begun to fall from his lips after the announcement or his ordainment as Prophet. And they were fully conscious of the vastly different style of these utterances and his everyday speech and knew that no human being could manage two such distinctively variant styles, (and that too regularly and not just once in a while). They could feel the grandeur, and the miraculous literary flavour and merit of what he called the Qur'an, and knew also for a fact that even their leading literary luminaries and poets had failed to bring forth anything to match it or, more correctly, not even attempted to match it, knowing the task to be hopeless. They fully realised the world of difference between it and the verses of their own poets or the utterance of their soothsayers and orators. Nor could they discover the slightest trace of any selfish motive on his part which might throw doubt on the veracity of his claim to be Prophet. No amount of searching investigation or close observation could establish in the least that he wanted any worldly advantage for himself or his family or clan or tribe or that he had any hidden motives. And, on top of it all, they were themselves witnesses to the marvellous revolution being wrought by his teachings in the lives and conduct of those of their own flesh and blood who were responding to his call and pledging him their faith. All these factors constituted proof enough that the Qur'an was no ordinary book, and hence it sufficed for it to make an

assertion as to its origin and throw out a challenge that they bring forth something like it. No further proof or arguments were needed.

13. (a) The verse immediately following that just discussed means :

Do they (indeed) allege (in all seriousness that he (the Prophet) has authored it himself ? Nay, the fact is quite otherwise; it is the Truth (O Prophet,) from your Lord, so that you may warn a people who have not had a warner before, in order that they may accept the guidance. (32:3)

Here we have a question, and an answer, but the very manner and tone are significant. Why is it, it is asked in a tone of surprise, that notwithstanding everything that goes to prove the contrary, the objectors persist in their baseless allegation of Muhammad having himself composed the Qur'an and attributed it falsely to God ? Have they no scruples, no qualms of conscience, and do they feel no shame at making such a groundless and absurd charge ? Does it not matter to them what those who know Muhammad for what he is (peace be upon him), and his work and his way of speech, and also understand the Book, will think of them for coming up with such a silly charge ?

(b) Just as in the earlier verse it was considered enough to say about the Qur'an that it was, without doubt, a revelation from God, and no elabo-

rate proof was thought required, similarly here too the charge is being dismissed with saying merely that the Qur'an is the Truth from God. And the reason for brevity is again the same. Who was presenting the Book, in what setting, and in what manner—all this was well known to the audience, as also the Book itself, what with its language, its supreme literary excellence, and the kind of fundamental human issues it dealt with; and the community could also see for itself the impact of its teachings on those who believed in it. The fact of the Book being of Divine origin was therefore so patent that it was enough to merely deny or dismiss the charge. Any labouring of the point would only have weakened the argument as much as it be would to enter into argument with a person who declares day to be night and to whom all one would say is : "Do you call this night despite the bright shining sun ?"

14. In yet another place, it is said, in the same vein :

And it (the Qur'an) is not something which could have been produced by other than God; on the contrary it is a confirmation of (revelations) that went before it, and a fuller explanation of "the Book"—from the Lord of the Worlds.
(10:37)

That is, the Qur'an does not present anything new, or something different from the fundamental teach-

ings and guidance transmitted to man through earlier Prophets. Rather, it confirms that guidance and those teachings. Had it been the product of the mind of someone seeking to found a new religion, he would surely have tried to introduce some new element to give it a character of its own and to reflect his own personality. And as for "a fuller explanation of 'the Book'," the meaning is that all the fundamental elements which are the common factor of all the previously revealed Scriptures (which Truths and elements together constitute 'the Book') are now to be found comprehensively in the Qur'an with all the necessary detail and explanation and with full indication of their practical implications and application.

15. Alongside these refutations, and arguments, comes the challenge :

Say (O Muhammad,) : Even if all the human beings, and all the Jinns, tried to bring forth something like this Qur'an, they would never be able to do so, even if they joined forces in the attempt. (17:88)

This challenge is repeated in four other places in the Qur'an namely, 2:23-24, 10:38, 11:13, and 52:33-34, and is in reply to the charge under discussion. In addition, the Qur'an says :

Say to them (O Prophet) : "I would never have recited this Qur'an to you had not Allah willed it so ; rather, I would never even have mentioned it to you. After all, I have spent a

whole life-time in your midst, and yet you fail to understand ?” (10:16)

16. In these two verses there is a three-fold argument :

- (i) The Qur’an is a miracle, something beyond human competence to match, whether it be with regard to its language, its style, the reasoning it employs, the issues it treats of, its teachings, or the knowledge it imparts of Unseen realities and of events past and future. The objectors say that it is the product of a human mind. The Qur’an counters this with asserting that even if all the human minds combine they can never produce anything like it. And not only that. Even if all the Jinns, whom the deniers regard as associates of God, and whose claim to that status or possession of any vestige of divinity it so vehemently and cogently denies, were also to devote their capabilities and energies to the task, they would still be unable to produce anything like to the Qur’an.
- (ii) Muhammad (peace be upon him) was no stranger who appeared suddenly upon the scene. He had spent full forty years among the people of Makkah before the Call, and could the Quraish claim that they had even once heard him utter anything like the Qur’an or discuss any of the problems and

issues it dealt with ? If not, why could't they get it into their heads that such sudden transformation in a person's speech, ideas, knowledge, and thought, could only have come about from without, that is, through supernatural means ?

- (iii) Muhammad (peace be upon him) did not disappear after giving the people the latest revelation. He continued to live among them, and mix with them, and talk to them. They had opportunities to listen to the Qur'anic recitations and to listen also to his everyday speech, and there was such an obvious world of difference between the two, that one of these was clearly not of human origin. And this difference, it might be added, was apparent not only at that time, while he was still alive. It is apparent even today, when one compares the Qur'an with his own sayings and his sermons, etc., available to us in the Hadith compilations. No-one with any familiarity with the Arabic language can claim that they are both in fact utterances of one and the same person.

17. Now we come to three other verses which challenged the Quraish to bring forth something like the Qur'an, starting with 11:13-14 :

Do they say that he (Muhammad) has forged it ? Say (O Prophet) : "Very well, if that be so, I dare you to bring forth ten *surahs* of

your own, and summon to your assistance whomsoever you can (of those whom you regard as gods) if what you say be true. And if they (your gods) do not respond by coming to your assistance, then know (it for a fact) that (the Qur'an) has been indeed sent down with the knowledge of God Himself, and (know) that there (truly) is no god but He ; So, then, are you even now prepared (or not) to bow before this reality ?”

Here we have an argument for both the Divine origin of the Qur'an and the Unity of God, the line of reasoning being as follows :

- (i) If, as the Quraish alleged, the Qur'an was a human product, there ought surely to be some other human being or beings equally capable of producing something similar. But if, despite repeated challenge, nobody was able to produce anything like it, should they not accept the Prophet's claim that he was not himself the author but that it had been revealed to him with the knowledge of God ?
- (ii) The Book condemns roundly, and in so many words, all those whom the Quraish regarded as gods, and repeatedly urges that they give up their worship of them because they had no share in divinity. Therefore, if those gods did really have anything of

godhood, it was incumbent on them to help the Quraish to prove the falsity of his claim and assist them in producing something similar to the Qur'an. But if they should prove unable, in this hour of decision, to infuse into the Quraish some power to meet the challenge, it should be obvious that they are no gods at all and are being worshipped only through sheer ignorance.

18. The above verse spoke of ten *Surahs*. The Quraish having failed to meet the challenge, the number was reduced to one only :

Do they say that he (the Prophet) has forged it (the Qur'an)? Say to them (O Muhammad):
“(Then) bring forth one single *surah* like it,¹ and

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1. A *surah* is one of a total of 114 parts of the Qur'an which are of varying length. But the smallest of these consists of three verses only and embraces just a single line. This is the *surah* 'Kausar,' No. 108. It is related that when Abu Jahl, the leading Quraish chieftain and opponent to Islam, and the foremost among the persecutors of Muslims, accidentally heard the *surah* for the first time, even he was carried away, and remarked : “Glory be to God ! How beautifully does each verse rhyme with the others !”

Now the Arabs were, among other things, extremely fond of poetry and poetical contests were quite customary at times of great gatherings. Over a period of time certain pieces of poetry by seven poets had come to be unanimously acknowledged as the most excellent, and these were written on separate sheets of paper and hung outside the Ka'ba, and came to be known as the *Saba' Mu'allaqah*→

summon to your assistance whomsoever you can, other than God—if you are right ?” (11:35)

A general impression which has come to prevail with regard to this challenge is that it relates only to language and style. No doubt most of the commentaries do emphasise only this particular aspect. However, a Book which owes its authorship to God must obviously be unique in more than one respect, and this actually is the case with the Qur'an. There is no doubt that the language and the style are alone enough to make it unique, but what also makes it a miracle beyond human capacity to match are the fundamental issues of human life it treats of, the knowledge of reality it imparts, and its teachings regarding the proper norms for human conduct. The Qur'an itself points to this consummate excellence, e.g.,

Do they say that he (the Prophet) has made it up himself ? The fact of the matter is that they do not wish to believe (and hence invent accusations and excuses for not believing). Why don't they, if what they say be true, bring

← (the seven suspended pieces). Abu Jahl wrote out of the *surah Kausar* and somehow passed it on to the only surviving poet out of the seven. One glance at it, and the poet burst out, سبحان الله ما هذا قول البشر “Glory to be God ! This is not the utterance of a human being !” Then he went to the Ka'ba, took down his own poetry, and in its place hung only the small piece of paper on which the *surah* had been written. This is how the Qur'an's challenge was met ! —A,A,

forth something like it (matching it in quality, content, and merit) ? (52:33,34)

19. In other words, those of the Quraish who allege that Muhammad (peace be upon him) has himself authored the Book know in their hearts that that, in fact, cannot be so, and those of them with a taste for language and literature realise at once on hearing it that it far surpasses any human utterance or writing. And not only that ; those who know him personally and his daily mode of speech cannot even suspect him of being really capable of producing something like it. The truth, therefore, is that the allegation is nothing but a made-up excuse for not believing in him and in the Qur'an.

20. Further, it is not just that Muhammad (peace be upon him) did not author the Qur'an. The fundamental fact is that it does not owe its authorship to any human at all, because it is simply impossible for any human being to produce something of its kind. Therefore, if the Quraish aver it to be the product of a human being, then let them bring forth something produced by some other human being which will match it in all its uniqueness. This challenge was not only for the Quraish but for all non-believers anywhere, and was thrice repeated during the time that the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) was at Makkah (10:38, 11:13 and 17:88), and for the last time at Medina (2:237), but not a single person came forth during those days nor has

anyone done so ever since and presented to the World something which could meet the challenge.¹

21. Some people who look at the challenge only superficially, say that there is nothing special about the Qur'an being unique in its language and style, because nobody can write in the style of another, whether it be prose or poetry. Homer, Rumi, Shakespear, Goethe, Ghalib, Tagore, and Iqbal² are all unique in this respect and it is impossible for anyone to match their styles. We readily grant that that is so. But what they forget is that the significant words in the verse cited above relate not to the language or style but the total merit, irrespective of whether the language used is Arabic or some other.

THE LIVING MIRACLE

Let us now recount some of the features which made the Qur'an a miracle when it was first revealed, and which still make it a miracle even

1. And this despite the fact that thousands of Westerners have acquired great proficiency in Arabic and even authored Arabic Lexicons and written other literary work in the language.—A.A.
2. With Homer, Shakespeare and Goethe, the Western world is fairly familiar, and with Tagore (1861—1941) too to some extent because he was the only Indian to win the Nobel prize for literature (1913), while Iqbal (1877—1938) has, of late, been rousing considerable interest in literary circles in the West. Jalal-ud-Din Rumi (1207—1273) was a great Persian poet, while Ghalib (1797—1869), whose full name was Asadullah Khan—'Ghalib' being his poetic name—was the greatest lyrical poet the Indo-Pakistan Sub-Continent has produced.—A.A.

today, and will go on doing so—perhaps more so—in time to come :

(a) It is the highest and the most perfect piece of literature in the language of its revelation. In the entire Book there is not a single word or sentence which might be sub-standard. Whatever is said is couched in the fittest words and expressed in the most appropriate manner. The same topic is repeatedly touched upon but each time in a different way, so that the repetition never jars on good taste. From the first page to the last words fit in like gems specially and artistically cut for the setting. The language and the content are so moving and full of appeal that no-one who knows Arabic can help going into raptures; even the most bigoted disbeliever is at time stirred to his depths.¹ Fourteen long centuries have passed, and yet this Book remains the highest literary composition in Arabic, so much so that no other book in the same language can claim even to approach its standard. Not only that, but the standard set by it was such as to have remained the standard for the language all these fourteen hundred years. Languages undergo diverse changes over such long periods, and there is no language in the world other than Arabic which has retained its spellings, norms of style, idiom, grammar and syntax, and usage on the same pattern. But it

1. Not only that, but hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of Western Christians have become converts to Islam mainly after having read only translations of the Qur'an.—A.A.

is veritably one of the miracles of the Qur'an that, on its account, Arabic alone has undergone no such change. Not a single word has become obsolete nor has a single idiom gone out of use. Literary standard in Arabic is still judged according to the standard set by the Qur'an, and even today only that usage is treated as standard which conforms to the usage in the Qur'an. Is there any man-written book in the world, in any language, which can match the Qur'an in these respects ?

(b) It is the only Book in the whole world which had such a wide, deep, and all-embracing impact on men's thoughts, ethics, culture, and way of life, and to an unparalleled degree. First it transformed the nation to which it was initially addressed, and then that nation, in turn, transformed other nations and people over huge areas of the globe. There is no other book which has produced such a revolutionary change.¹ It did not remain only an academic

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1. Communists might claim that Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* too brought about revolutions in more country than one and is still the gospel for communists all over the world. More recently, Mao-Tse-Tung's little red-book too became a favourite with all Chinese, though it now seems to be following him into oblivion after his own death. But, in the first place do either of these books deal with the fundamental issues of life as does the Qur'an and, secondly, who does not know how bloodless was the revolution which was brought about by the Holy Qur'an, and how full of bloodshed were those brought about by communism !---A.A.

piece of work. Every single word in it contributed, in the practical world, to the formulation of fresh ideas and the building up of a new civilization. The impact still continues, and is manifesting itself in ever widening areas.

(c) The fundamental issue it treats of is one of vast dimensions, encompassing the entire universe and all eternity. It tells us of the nature of the universe and of its beginning and the ultimate end destined for it, and how it is organized. It tells of its Creator and Sole Administrator, His attributes, His powers and the authority He wields, and the way and the purpose of its organization. It defines in precise terms man's own place in the whole scheme of things, and tells us that that is the natural place for him—the place he gets born into and which he has no means of changing. It tells us what, consistently with this place, is for him the right way of thought and action—the way which conforms to the supreme reality—and what are the wrong ways which conflict with that reality. It then marshals innumerable arguments, drawn from everything that is in the heavens or on earth, from every nook and corner of the universe, from man's own self and his physical being, and his whole history, which prove that the paths it pronounces to be wrong are in fact wrong. At the same time it explains how and why man takes to the wrong paths and how he can find the right path which always was and always will remain one and the same, and

how it has been shown to mankind all through the ages. And it does not merely point to the right path. It goes further and presents a whole programme of action for keeping to that path, a programme which embraces the whole gamut of beliefs, ethics, self-purification processes, acts of worship, social relationships, culture and civilization, politics, justice, law, in fact all the various aspects of human life, all in a consummately knit pattern. It also tells in great detail what the results would be, in this world, of following the right path, or taking to the wrong ones, and what results will manifest themselves in another world which will come into existence after the present one has been ended. It gives a very detailed description of the way the present world will come to its end, in all the various stages, and presents a fairly full picture of the new world which will take its place. It also goes into considerable detail as to the kind of life man will experience in that world, how he will have to account for his actions in this world, the specific issues that will be framed to judge him, the irrefutable evidence which will be brought forth, in the shape of a meticulous and exhaustive record of his life and the infallible evidence which will be led to prove its veracity, and why some will be rewarded and others punished, and how rewarded or punished. And this whole discussion is not just a hotch-potch put together by an idle, dreamy speculator. On the contrary, the Author of the

Book has direct knowledge of all reality because He is the Creator of everything. His vision embraces all eternity, from beginning to end, and He knows the reality of each and everything. For him the entire universe is an open book. No part of it is hidden from Him, although hidden from the creatures. He can see not only the beginning and the end of mankind and the intervening period but also the new life which awaits it after the end of the present one. The guidance He provides for man is based not on speculative theories but on Knowledge. What He presents as reality has not to this day been proved to be otherwise, in any of its aspects. The concept of the universe and of man which He presents at once explains fully all the manifestations of nature and the phenomena that take place in the world, and can serve as the basis for research and study in each and every branch of human knowledge. The answers to all the ultimate issues of philosophy, science, or sociology are to be found in His Book and are so logically interconnected that they can provide the base for a complete, integrated and consummate ideology. As for the practical guidance it contains, it is not only highly rational and sublime, but for fourteen hundred years innumerable human beings have been acting upon it in different parts of the world, and experience has proved it to be the best and to bring real happiness and peace of mind: May one ask whether there is any other book in the world which can come up to

the Qur'an in all these respects or even one of them?

(d) This Book was not presented to the world fully written up. The revolutionary movement for reform it ushered in was initiated with some elementary instructions and, thereafter, for twenty-three years, as the movement passed through different phases and stages, various other parts, short or long, were revealed to the Divinely ordained leader of the movement, as the occasion demanded. After the fulfilment of his mission, all the various parts were formally compiled in the form of that complete Book which is known as the Qur'an. The leader claimed that the pieces in question were not his own composition but had been revealed to him by the Lord of all the Worlds. If someone still persists in alleging that the Qur'an is the product of Muhammad's own mind, let him present just one example, from the history of all mankind, of someone like him, someone who for years personally led a powerful movement for the revolutionary transformation of a whole society, as a prelude to the transformation of other peoples and nations ; who had to act in such diverse capacities as preacher, moral reformer, leader of the oppressed, head of state, commander in battle, conqueror, law-giver, judge, etc, and who consequently had, sometimes in one capacity and sometimes in another, to deliver orations and discourses, all of which, when put together, present a complete, integrated and comprehensive plan and scheme of thought and action,

with no internal inconsistencies or contradictions, but with the same central theme and underlying idea pervading the whole ; a leader who, from the first day of the start of his movement to the last went on building up, on the same foundation, a universally applicable system of beliefs and conduct of which every single ingredient conforms fully with the others ; a leader the compilation of whose utterances cannot but impress any discerning reader with the fact that right at the start of the movement he had before him a complete plan of action over the whole period so that at no intermediate stage did he have any new ideas or give up any earlier ones. If there has been any other leader who did all this, using his own brains and creative genius only, then let the world bring him forth, and hold him up for comparison.

(e) The leader who delivered the orations and discourses (all divinely revealed) referred to which now constitute the Qur'an, lived just like any member of the society, among those very people to whom they were initially addressed. It was not that he lived in seclusion, to emerge from time to time just to deliver the verses and then go into hiding again, thus giving people no opportunity of getting to know him as a person and becoming acquainted with his way of speech and habits and customs. He had lived his whole life among them even before he was Commanded to start his movement and went on living among them afterwards too. They

knew very well his everyday speech and his way of talking. Much of his talk is preserved in the vast Hadith literature, and the Arabic knowing reader can easily find out for himself, by studying this literature, about the language and style of his everyday speech. His contemporaries felt clearly and it can be felt even today, how vastly different were the language and style of what he called the Qur'an and the everyday speech he employed in his dealings and discussions with the people. This becomes strikingly clear whenever one comes across any quotations from the Qur'an in the midst of any of his own sayings or sermons. The point is : Has there ever been or can there ever be, any individual capable of talking, for years on end, in two such utterly difference styles without anyone ever discovering that they are the styles of one and the same person ? We readily concede that there are always a handful of people capable of managing two different styles at different times, but only temporarily and for short periods. But it is impossible for a person to talk for over two decades, in one language when he utters something which he claims to be from God, and in quite another when he does so in his personal capacity, *unless* it actually be the case that what he claims to be from God *is* actually from God, and hence different in style from his own speech.

(f) During his leadership of the movement, he had to cope with many a different circumstance. For years he was the victim of ridicule, insults, and

indignities, and extreme persecution, at the hands of his fellow-citizens and tribesmen ; his followers were subjected to such severe persecution that they were forced to leave the country and find refuge elsewhere; his enemies conspired to put him to death; he was himself obliged to migrate from the city of his birth, which he loved so dearly; at times he was forced to live in penury and to even starve ; he had to fight endlessly, winning victories on occasion and suffering set backs or near-defeat on others ; there were occasions when he defeated his enemies, and those very men who had perpetrated such atrocities on him and his followers had to submit before him ; and he also attained a position of authority which has been available to few indeed, perhaps none. Obviously one's sentiments can never remain the same while passing through all such vicissitudes and suffering trials and tribulation at times and achieving unprecedented triumphs at others. And yet, whenever this particular leader (may peace be upon him) spoke in his personal capacity on any one of such occasions one can clearly discern the manifestation of his emotions and sentiments, but as to that which he claimed to have been revealed by God, it was entirely free of any human sentiment and remains free to this day. Not even the worst and most implacable critic of the Qur'an can put his fingers on any words showing any trace of human emotion or sentiment.

(g) The vast and comprehensive knowledge

which is to be found in this Book was not only not to be found either in any of the books of those times, whether of Arabia, Egypt, Greece, Rome, or Iran, but is not to be found even in those of this, the twentieth century, notwithstanding the existence of thousands of people of great learning. Today, it is only after devoting a whole life-time to the study of any one discipline of science, philosophy, or the social sciences, that people finally discover what the ultimate issues in each case are, and yet if they were only to turn to the Qur'an and study it with some depth they would find that here they have the concrete answers to all those ultimate issues. And this is not true of just one branch of knowledge, but of all the various branches which have any connection with the fundamental issue of the nature of man and the universe. How, then, can one believe that an unlettered dweller of the desert of Arabia fourteen centuries ago somehow got such a masterly grasp and over-all view of all the various branches of knowledge down to their minutae that he was able to enunciate clear and absolute answers to all the basic and fundamental issues of life, on his own ? Surely, the answers came from someone else, that someone being the Creator of everything, and the Source of all knowledge.

The above does not exhaust enumeration of all the facets of the miracle of the Quran, but even these few should be enough to show to anyone with

understanding and a genuine urge for truth, that the Qur'an is today an even greater miracle than when it was originally revealed, and this fact will go on becoming even more established as time passes and man's knowledge advances.

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