

## THE NATURE OF EARLY NON-BELIEVERS' REPUDIATION TO THE QUR'AN

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**ABSTRACT:** The text of the Qur'ān, its transmitted multiple readings and agreed orthography have always been an arena of debate since the Qur'ān has revealed. So a continuous chain of variety of objections by the non Muslim scholars is as early as their acquaintance with the Qur'ān. This shows that modern Orientalism has not been able to produce even a single new constant objection on Qur'ānic text. Only a perpetual chain of illogical allegations have been charged since centuries with a slight reshaping and applying modern methodological style to present old and obsolete trends in a different form. It would be quite pertinent to take an eye bird view of the behaviour of infidels of Makkah, who were the initial audience of the voice of last revelation on the surface of earth. The article is aimed to highlight the fact that recent scholarship of modern orientalisists is no more than a continuous chain of assertion which were early made in the inception of Qur'anic revelation. It will also explore the western stagnant and antagonistic approach towards dealing the scriptural debate in a so-called academic style and their obscure motives behind raising the dubiousness in the World.

The historical study reveals the fact that apart from some individuals, who acknowledged the Qur'ān as the ultimate word of God and Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the final Messenger, a large number of the Jews and Christians of that time who came to know about the Qur'ān refused to accept it as a revealed divine scripture. This repudiation led to the emergence of polemical debates against the Prophet and the Qur'ān. A good amount of academic works came to surface. The whole concerned literature containing the detail of perpetual polemical works can be divided into four periods:

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noted by his companions. According to them, these stories were later on recited and memorized day and night before him.<sup>3</sup> Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) worried on the atrocities of the people of Makkah, Allah (SW) revealed this verse for consolation of the beloved Prophet.

إِنَّا كَفَيْنَاكَ الْمُسْتَهْزِئِينَ .<sup>4</sup>

Al-Qasṭulānī (d. 923 A.H.) indicates the prominent figures, who severely opposed Islamic commandments and behaved with an exaggerated ridiculous approach to Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), were the following chief men of Quraish:

- Al-Walīd bin al-Mughīrah
- Al-Ḥārith bin Qiss
- Al-'Aṣ bin Wā'l
- Al-Aswad bin 'Abd Yaghūth
- Al-Aswad bin al-Muṭṭalib<sup>5</sup>
- Nadhar b. Ḥarīth
- 'Utbah b. Rabī'ah

Similarly, *Mushrikīn* also attributed to Prophet Muhammad false accusations to prevent people from listening to Him. They alleged that Prophet was gone mad. The following verse clearly describes their charge.

وَقَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِي نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ إِنَّكَ لَمَجْنُونٌ .<sup>6</sup>

"They said, 'O you to whom the admonition has been revealed, surely, you are mad.'"

They accused him as magician

وَقَالَ الْكٰفِرُونَ هٰذَا سِحْرٌ كَذٰبٌ .<sup>7</sup>

فَقَالَ اِنْ هٰذَا اِلَّا سِحْرٌ يُؤْتٰرُ اِنْ هٰذَا اِلَّا قَوْلُ الْبَشَرِ .<sup>8</sup>

They also propagated that Muhammad was a soothsayer and a poet. Allah almighty has refuted this claim in this verse:

وَمَا هُوَ بِقَوْلِ شَاعِرٍ قَلِيلاً مَا تُؤْمِنُونَ وَلَا بِقَوْلِ كَاهِنٍ قَلِيلاً مَا

تَذَكَّرُونَ تَنْزِيلٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ .<sup>9</sup>

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before them and declared it to be the word of Allāh. The challenge to all the Arabs has been proclaimed in the following verse:

قُلْ لِّئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَذَا  
الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا - 12

Such a proclamation was no ordinary thing. It came from a person who had never learned anything from the renowned poets and scholars of the time. This proclamation was therefore the greatest challenge to their literary prowess, as also a fatal blow to their creed and beliefs. This was also a call for combat against their national honour and personal prides that the haughty Arabs could never let go unchallenged. A hush fell over the whole galaxy of these stirring orators and fiery poets. Not a single soul stepped forward to accept this challenge. After sometimes the Qur'ān proclaimed once again:

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّمَّنْ لَمِ  
وَأَدْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ فَإِنْ لَّمْ  
تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَأْتُوا نَارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ  
أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ - 13

Their silence remained unbroken as before. None of them was able to compose even a few sentences to match the Qur'ānic verses. Just think that they were a people who according to 'Allāmah Jurjāni,<sup>14</sup> could never resist ridiculing the idea in their poetry if they heard that there was someone at the other end of the globe who prided himself in his eloquence and rhetorical speech. It is unthinkable that they could keep quiet even after such repeated challenges and dare not come forward. There can be no other explanation of this except that these stalwarts of eloquence and rhetoric were helpless in meeting the challenge of Qur'ān. They had left no stone unturned for persecuting the Prophet (PBUH). They tortured him, called him insane, sorcerer, poet and sooth-sayer, but failed utterly in composing even a few sentences like the Qur'ānic verses.

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And the Prophet continued reciting while 'Utba listened attentively till he reached a verse that required prostration, and prostrated himself. He then said, "You have heard what you have heard, it is up to you."<sup>17</sup>

It has also been recorded that 'Utba while going back to his clans, they started saying "you are coming with a changed mode" He replied his immediate with the following passage:

"انى قد سمعت قولاً والله ما سمعت مثله قط، والله ما هو بالشعر، ولا بالسحر، ولا بالكهانة، يا معشر قريش، اطيعونى واجعلوها بى، واخلوا بين هذا الرجل وبين ما هو فيه فاعتزلوه، فوالله ليكون لقوله الذى سمعت منه نبا عظيم، فان تصبه العرب فقد كفىته بغيركم، وان يظهر على العرب، فملكه ملككم، وعزه عزكم، وكنتم اسعد الناس به"<sup>18</sup>

"By God,! I have listened such a glorious discourse that never been listened, surely, this is not poetry, not sorcery and not clairvoyance."

### Quraish Boycotts Muhammad (PBUH) and his Clans

Stinging from their failure to tempt Muhammad, the Quraish went to Abū Ṭālib, a highly respected elder who was the Prophet's uncle and tribal protector, and demanded that he put an end to Muhammad's behavior, whom they accused of cursing their gods, denouncing their forefathers and insulting their religion. Abū Ṭālib sent for his nephew and conveyed to him Quraish's message. Anticipating that his uncle had forsaken him and that he was about to lose his support, he replied, "O my uncle, by Allah, if they were to place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left, to force me to abandon this thing, I would not, till Allah let it come forth or I perished therein." And he turned his back and wept. Touched by his words Abū Ṭālib assured him that he would not turn him away. Soon afterwards the sub-clans of Hāshim and al-Muṭṭalib, unwilling to desert one of their own decided against giving up Muhammad even though they were idolaters like the rest of Quraish. Failing to subdue him once again, Quraish wrote a decree stating boycott of the Hāshim and al-Muṭṭalib sub-clans: marriage and all forms of buying and selling, between the rest of Quraish and the two sub-clans was completely suspended, such that not even basic provisions could be secured. This ruthless and devastating embargo carried on for three year, during which the Prophet and his clans suffered immeasurably, carving out a precarious existence with noting to eat but the tough leaves of the sparse desert vegetation.<sup>19</sup> Ibn Ishāq writes:

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Despite the severity of their hatred the Prophet continued reciting, and the eavesdroppers continued to increase till they constituted a sizeable portion of Quraish, each of them wary of having his secret exposed.<sup>21</sup>

The Prophet was not asked to argue with his antagonists about Allāh's Oneness because the Qur'ān, clearly not the work of a man, contained within itself the logical proof of the existence and Oneness of Allāh. Yet as his recitations spilled from the stillness of night into the bustle of day and became public, Makkah's anxieties were quickly brought to the boil.

With a popular fair fast approaching, some people from amongst Quraish approached al-Walīd bin al-Mughīra, a man of some standing. He addressed them, "The time of the fair has come round again and representatives of the Arabs will come to you. They will have heard about this fellow of yours, so agree upon one opinion without dispute so that none will give the lie to the other." They said, "Give us your opinion about him," and he replied, "No, you speak and I will listen." So they said, "He is a kāhin (كاهن: clairvoyant)." al-Walīd responded, "By God, he is not that, for he has not the unintelligent murmuring and rhymed speech of the *kāhin*." "Then he is possessed." "No, he is not that. We have seen possessed ones, and here there is not choking, no spasmodic movements or whispering." "Then he is poet." "No, he is no poet, for we know poetry in all its forms and meters." "Then he is a sorcerer." "No, we have seen sorcerers and their sorcery, and here there is no spitting and no knots." "Then what are we to say, O' Abū'Abd Shams?" He replied, "By God, his speech is sweet, his root is as a palm-tree whose branches are fruitful, and everything you have said would be known as false. The nearest thing to the truth is your saying that he is a sāhir (ساحر: sorcerer), who has brought a message by which he separates a man from his father, or from his brother, or from his wife, or from his family."<sup>22</sup>

We find the same phenomenon in the case of Abū Bakr, who built a mosque in Makkah next to his own house and devoted himself to regular prayer and recitation of the Holy Qur'ān. The polytheists approached *Ibn Addaghinna*, who was responsible for protecting Abū Bakr, and asked him to prevent Abū Bakr from reading the Qur'ān because, among other things, women and children were known to eavesdrop on his recitations, and were naturally more susceptible to such an influence.<sup>23</sup>

Competitors of the Qur'ān.

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been sent to them and these events did not reach us.  
When this is inconceivable, no less so is the idea that  
Qur'ān's challenge was met.<sup>25</sup>

However, some buffoons did compose a few ridiculous things which are still preserved in the pages of history and the Arabs have laughed at them.

1. Musailima, a man of al-Yamāma, pretended to be a prophet during the last days of the Arabian Apostle. He did this after he had visited Medina and embraced Islam. His aim was to acquire a kingdom and he offered his terms for peace to the Apostle to the effect that he should be accepted as a partner or appointed as the Apostle's successor. He formally wrote a letter to Holy Prophet (PBUH) in 10<sup>th</sup> Hijra, asserting following statement:

"اما بعد : فانى قد شوركت فى الارض معك ، وانما لنا نصف الارض  
ولقريش نصفها، لكن قریش قوم يعتدون ....."<sup>26</sup>

Musailima claimed that the angel *Rahmān* brought him his Qur'ān which was divided into sections and sentences. His compositions were in harmony with the saj' of diviners as he asserted the prophetic office to be a part of divination. Here are some of his self made compositions on the style of *Sura "Al-Qāri'ah"* and *Surah "Al-fil"*:

"الفيل ما الفيل وما ادراك ما الفيل له ذنب وبيل وخرطوم طويل".....<sup>27</sup>

While trying to make a parody of *Sura "Al-Nāzi'āt"*, he asserts:

"والمبدرات زرعاً؛ والحاصدات حصداً؛ والذاريات قمحاً؛ والطاحنات طحناً؛  
والعاجنات عجنماً؛ والخابزات خبزاً؛ والثاردات ثرداً؛ واللاقمات لقماً؛ اهالة وسمناً  
— لقد فضلتم على اهل الوبر؛ وما سبقكم اهل المدر؛ ريفكم فامنعوه؛ والمعتر  
قأوه؛".....<sup>28</sup>

Another lampoon runs as:

والشاء والوانها؛ واعجبها السود والبانها؛ والشاة السوداء؛ واللبن الابيض؛ انه  
لعجب محض؛ وقد حرم المذق فما لكم لا تمجعون .<sup>29</sup>

As can be seen from this example, the whole composition was foolish and mean. His end proved that he was not a prophet and that his compositions were not revelations. After the death of the Prophet, the First Caliph sent a large army against Musailima and he was put to death, leaving no one to mention him except the Muslims in their histories, and none to mourn him. Musaylimah had claimed the following sentences as "*wahy*" revealed to him:<sup>30</sup>

يا ضفدع بنت ضفدعين؛ نقى ما تنقین؛ نصفك فى الماء ونصفك فى الطين؛  
لا الماء تكدرين ولا الوارد تنفرين؛ ولا الشارب تمنعين.<sup>31</sup>

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that a Qur'ān had been revealed to him. A few people followed him. But afterwards he gave up his pretension and lived like an ordinary man.<sup>35</sup>

6. An-Naḍr bin al-Ḥārith a contemporary of the Prophet whose daughter's verses are cited in al-Ḥamasah He did not pretend to be a prophet. Some people claimed that he wrote a ' history of the Persians and other stories, with which the Arabs were not familiar, in imitation of the Qur'ān. On account of his foolishness in his assertion no historian has cared to quote his composition.<sup>36</sup>

7. 'Abdullah bin al-Muqaffa'(d. 142 A.H.) Then again, long after the revelation of the Qur'ān a renowned Arabic man of letters and essayist and translator of *Kalilah wo Dimnah* 'Abd Allah bin al-Muqaffa' (d. 142 A.H.) intended to write a rejoinder to the Qur'ān but just then he heard a child reciting the verse...

وَقِيلَ يَتَّزِضُ آبِلَى مَاءِكَ وَيَسْمَاءُ أَقْلَى وَغِيضَ الْمَاءِ وَقُضِيَ

الْأَمْرُ وَأَسْتَوَتْ عَلَى الْجُودِيِّ وَقِيلَ بُعْدًا لِلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ .<sup>37</sup>

And at once declared "I testify that it is impossible to echo these words and verily it is not a human composition."<sup>38</sup>

8. Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā Abū al-Ḥussain Al-Rāwandī (d. 293A. H.) was an atheist. He wrote many books against religion and it is said that he is the author of a book called at-Tāj (The Crown). According to Abu'l-Fida, the Muslim scholars refuted all the arguments of al-Rāwandī including his claim to competition with the Qur'ān. Though it is said that he intended to compete with the Qur'ān with his at-Tāj yet there is no proof that he wrote it in a spirit of competition. It is probable, therefore, that in it, as in his other books, he also advanced arguments against the inimitability of the Qur'ān. Al-Ma'arrī has remarked in his *al-Ghufrān* about al-Rāwandī's at-Taj as follows:

واما تاجه فلا يصلح ان يكون نعلا، وهل تاجه الا كما قالت الكاهنة اف وتف .

"As regards his *Crown* it deserves not to be a sandal. His crown is not but, as the diviners said, fie and dirt."<sup>39</sup>

9. Abu'l-'Ala al-Ma'arrī (d. 449 A.H.). It is asserted that he compete with the Qur'ān through a book named *الفصول والغايات فى مجارة السور والآيات*. It is a baseless allegation of the atheists that the charged al-Ma'arrī with competing with the Qur'ān.

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Rūmī. Many Christian slaves lived in Ṭā'if. One of them was 'Addās, the slave of 'Utbah and Shaybah the sons of Rabī'ah. Another name is of al-Azraq the Roman the blacksmith.<sup>43</sup>

Norman Daniel comments demonstrating the continuity of this hostile approach and its chief reason is appropriate to be mentioned here:

The earliest Christian reactions to Islam were much the same as they have been until quite recently. The tradition has been continuous and it is still alive. Naturally there has been variety within the wider unity of the tradition, and the European (and American) West has long had its own characteristic view, which was formed in the two centuries or so after 1100, and which has been modified only slowly since. One chief reason for continuity has been not only the normal passage of ideas from one author to the next, but the constant nature of the problem. The points in which Christianity and Islam differ have not changed, so that Christians have always tended to make the same criticisms; and even when, in relatively modern times, some authors have self-consciously tried to emancipate themselves from Christian attitudes, they have not generally been as successful as they thought.<sup>44</sup>

Hence, such propagation by infidels through different means was kept on by their Christian successors like, John of Damascus, Al-Kindī, 'Ammār Al-Baṣrī and others who carried on by giving them modern touch, and same baseless and false accusations about Qur'ān were made.



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- <sup>19</sup> Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, Vol. 1-2, pp. 350-51; Ibn Ishāq, *as-Seyr wa al-Maghāzī*, the version of Ibn Bukair, pp. 154-167.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, Vol. 1-2, pp. 315-16.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibn Ishāq, *as-Seyr wa al-Maghāzī*, pp. 205-6. See 'Azamī, Muhammad Mustafa, *The History of the Qur'anic Text From Revelation to Compilation*, Leicester, England: UK, Islamic Academy, 2003, p. 49
- <sup>22</sup> Ibn Ishāq, *As-Seyar wa al-Maghāzī*, edited by Suhail Zakkār, p. 151; Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīra*, Vol. 1-2, pp. 270-71. Azami, p.49
- <sup>23</sup> Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīra*, Vol. 1-2, p. 373 ; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, i; 206; Also see Azami, Op., Cit., p.50
- <sup>24</sup> Syed Muhammad Badrddin 'Alavi, *Inimitability of the Qur'an*, Lahore: Orientalia, 1954, p. 43; this article was originally appeared in a famous journal "Islamic Culture of Hyderabad Deccan, January 1950.
- <sup>25</sup> Al-Khaṭṭābī, *Thalāth Rasā'il fi i'jāz al-Qur'an*, Cairo: Dar al-M'arif, p.50. See for comments Muftī Taqī 'Usmānī, *An Approach to the Qur'anic Sciences*, Karachi: Dār al-Ishā'at, p. 128
- <sup>26</sup> Muṣṭafā Ṣādiq al-Rāf'ī, *T'jāz al-Qur'an wal-Balāgha al-Nabawiyya*, Cairo: Al-Maktaba al-Tijjāriyya al-Kubrā, p. 196
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 198, al-Khaṭṭābī has given the sentence as *الفيل مالفيل وما ادرك ما الفيل له مشفر طويل و ذنب اثيل وما ذاك من خلق ربنا بقتيل* , Somebody else had composed the following phrase: *الم تر الى ربك كيف فعل بالحبلى اخرج منها نسمة تسعى بين شراسيف وحشى* , See Al-Khaṭṭābī, *Thalāth Rasā'il fi i'jāz al-Qur'an*, pp. 50-51.
- <sup>28</sup> The translation of this sentence is "The elephant, what is the elephant and what did make you know what the elephant is. It has a hard tail and long trunk." Ibid., p. 198.
- <sup>29</sup> Rāf'ī comments on this caricature as *ولعمر الله ما ندرى اكان هذا القرآن ينزل على قلب مسيلمه او على معدته* ; see footnote Muṣṭafā Ṣādiq al-Rāf'ī, *T'jāz al-Qur'an wal-Balāgha al-Nabawiyya*, p. 198.
- <sup>30</sup> Al-Khaṭṭābī, *Thalāth Rasā'il fi i'jāz al-Qur'an*, pp. 50-51
- <sup>31</sup> See also Muṣṭafā Ṣādiq al-Rāf'ī, *T'jāz al-Qur'an wal-Balāgha al-Nabawiyya*, p. 198.
- <sup>32</sup> Syed Muhammad Badrddin 'Alavi, *Inimitability of the Qyr'an*, Orientalia, Lahore, 1954, p. 46 and also see al-Rāf'ī, *T'jāz al-Qur'an*, p. 199.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid.,