

## *I'jaz al-Qur'ān al-Karim* (An Evaluation of Historical Discourse and Dimensions)

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### Abstract

*This paper aims at an evaluation of various approaches to define and redefine the classical theory of the I'jaz (the inimitability of the Qur'ān) in the perspective of the challenges and problems faced by the Muslim society emphasising a need to cope with the rational thinking, modernity, scientific progress, psychological advancement and civilizational development, though there has been a comparatively lesser description of the rhetoricism of the Qur'ān too. It provides an account of scholarship exploring some novel dimensions of the matchlessness of the Qur'ān in the contemporaneous context. They have justified rationally and psychologically the Qur'ānic historic challenge of producing a book or its some surahs or few verses similar to the Qur'ān that has offered the irresistible call to the whole mankind: "Say: "If the whole of mankind and Jinns were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur'ān, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support". (Al-Isra 17: 88) The same challenge occurs in the Qur'ān on three previous occasions (Al-Baqarah, 2: 23-24; Yunus 10: 38, and Hūd 11:13) and later also in al-Tūr (52: 33-34). The content of all the verses referred to above is in response to the allegation of the unbelievers that the Qur'ān had been composed by the Prophet (peace be on him) and then falsely ascribed to God. All this was refuted. This refutation of the Qur'ān was logically established by the modern Arabic scholars through their sound arguments.*

**Keywords:** *I'jaz, inimitability of the Qur'ān, rational thinking, modernity, scientific progress, psychological advancement, civilizational development.*

### **Introduction**

*Li'jāz* means to show a *mu'jazah* or making people humble (*ājiz*) by showing a *mu'jazah*. But it is difficult to understand *li'jāz* unless we understand *mu'jazah* well. It is interesting to note that though *mu'jazah* is used as a religious terminology in Islamic literature it is neither used in the Qur'ān



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or hadith nor by any companions. The holy Qur'ān uses *'āyah* to express this kind of expression. For the miracles of Prophet Musa (AS) the word *āyah* is used: "To Moses We did give Nine Clear Signs (*āyat*)."<sup>1</sup> Also, for the she-camel of prophet Saleh (AS) the word *āyah* is used. The literal meaning of Arabic word *āyah* is 'sign' or 'destination' yet in the context of the Qur'ān it is possible to translate it as 'miracle'. Another terminology used by the Qur'ān in this context is *burhān*, which means a proof that cannot be denied and it makes everything explicit.

There are two other terms for miracles in Islamic literature which are used in ahadith and the literature of Companions. They are *dalīl* and *'alāmāt* referring to the proofs and signs of *nubuwwah* and there are chapters on the topic of *Dalā'il Nubuwwah* as well as separate books available on it. The term *dalīl* also refers to milestones or the companion who is leading the way. This suggests that the thing which we think is a miracle leads to the destination of Imān or in other words the message of the Prophet (SAW). However, the word *mu'jazah* was later introduced by the 'ulamā' which became popular due to its comprehensive meaning and understanding referring to that *āyah* which makes one *'ājiz*.

"An event that appears so inexplicable by the laws of nature, that it is held to be supernatural in origin or an act of God." "A person, thing or event that excites admiring awe." "An act beyond human power, an impossibility."

*I'ijāz Al-Qur'ān* (Miracle of the Qur'ān) is an important subject with reference to the Qur'ān in order to understand its greatness. *i'jaz* or inimitability of the Qur'ān is the doctrine that holds that the Qur'ān has a miraculous quality, both in content and in form, that no human speech can match. According to this doctrine the Qur'ān is a miracle and its inimitability is the proof granted to Prophet Muhammad in authentication of his prophetic status. It serves the dual purpose of proving the divine source of the Qur'ān and the genuineness of the prophet hood of whom it was revealed. So essentially there are two aspects of it: one is the *li'jāz Al-Qur'ān* which studies its history, how it began and developed as a science; the other aspect is to justify its miraculous character for the prophet hood of Muhammad (SAWW).

### **Inception and Reception in Islamic Thought**

There are numerous classical works of literary criticism which have studied the Qur'ān and examined its style. *I'ijāz Al-Qur'ān* as a science began in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century hijrah when scholars started thinking and writing about it. But it was in the 4<sup>th</sup> century hijrah that 'ulamā' wrote books about it thus making it a separate science in a very short period. Since then it has become an important part of the sciences of the Qur'ān.

1. The most famous works on the doctrine of inimitability are two medieval books by the grammarian Al Jurjani (D. 1078 CE), *Dalā'il al-i'jaz* ('the Arguments of Inimitability') and *Asraral-balagha* ('the Secrets of Eloquence'). Al Jurjani argued that the inimitability of the Qur'ān is a linguistic phenomenon and proposed that the Qur'ān has a degree of

excellence unachievable by human beings. Al Jurjani believed that Qur'ān's eloquence must be a certain special quality in the manner of its stylistic arrangement and composition or a certain special way of joining words. He studied the Qur'ān with literary proofs and examined the various literary features and how they were utilized. He rejected the idea that the words (*alfaz*) and meaning (*ma'ani*) of a literary work can be separated. In his view the meaning was what determined the quality of the style and that it would be absurd to attribute qualities of eloquence to a text only by observing its words. He explains that eloquence does not reside in the correct application of grammar as these are only necessary not sufficient conditions for the quality of a text. The originality of Al Jurjani is that he linked his view on meaning as the determining factor in the quality of a text by considering it not in isolation but as it is realized within a text. He wished to impress his audience with the need to study not only theology but also grammatical details and literary theory in order to improve their understanding of the inimitability of the Qur'ān. For Al Jurjani the dichotomy much elaborated by earlier critics between 'word' and 'meaning' was a false one. He suggested considering not merely the meaning but 'the meaning of the meaning'. He defined two types of meaning one that resorts to the 'intellect' the other to the 'imagination'

2. Al-Baqillani (d.1013 CE) wrote a book named *I'jaz al-Qur'ān* (inimitability of the Qur'ān') and emphasized that the style of the Qur'ān cannot be classified, and eloquence sustains throughout the Qur'ān in spite of dealing with various themes. Al Baqillani's point was not that the Qur'ān broke the custom by extraordinary degree of eloquence but that it broke the custom of the existing literary forms by creating a new genre of expression
3. Ibrahim al-Nazzam of Basra (d. 846 CE) was also among the first to study the doctrine. According to him, Qur'ān's inimitability is due to the information in its content which as divine revelation contains divine knowledge. Thus, Qur'ān's supremacy lies in its content rather than its style.
4. Al-Qadi Abd al-Jabbar (d. 1025 CE), in his book *Al-Mughni* ("the sufficient book"), insists on the hidden meanings of the Qur'ān alongside with its eloquence and provides some counter-arguments against the criticism leveled at Prophet Muhammad and the Qur'ān. According to Abd al-Jabbar, Arabs chose not to compete with Prophet Muhammad in the literary field but on the battlefield and this was the another reason that they recognized the superiority of the Qur'ān. Abd al-Jabbar rejected the doctrine of *ṣarfah* (the prohibition from production) because according to him *ṣarfah* makes a miracle of something other than the Qur'ān and not the Qur'ān itself. The

doctrine of *ṣarfah* means that people can produce a rival to the Qur'ān but due to some supernatural or divine cause decides against doing so. Therefore, according to Abd al-Jabbar, the correct interpretation of *ṣarfah* is that the motives to rival the Qur'ān disappear because of the recognition of the impossibility of doing so.

5. YahyaibnZiyad al-Farra (d. 822 CE), Abu Ubaydah (d. 824 CE), IbnQutaybah (d. 889 CE), Rummani (d. 994 CE), Khattabi (d. 998 CE), and Zarkashi (d. 1392 CE) are also among notable scholars in this subject. IbnQutaybah considered 'brevity' which he defined as "*jam' al-kathir mi ma'anih fi l-qalil min lafzih*" (collection of many ideas in a few words) as one aspect of Qur'ānicmiraculousness Zarkashi in his book *Al-Burhan* stated that miraculousness of the Qur'ān can be perceived but not described
6. Qaḍi Ayyaz who was a famous Andalusianfaqīh and Seerah writer, also wrote a very rare book *Al shifa' fi Tarīh Huqūq al-Muṣṭafa* which discusses the rights of the Prophet over the ummah. He discusses here the distinctive qualities of Muhammad (SAW) as compare to other prophets and also talks about *li'jāz al-Qur'ān* in detail very meticulously.
7. Mustafa Sadiq al-Rāfi'i (1880-1937), the Egyptian scholar and essayist who criticized in the letter and spirit the movement of renovation and modernization launched by Dr. Taha Ḥussain in the field of thought as well as in the literature. The articles written by him on the controversy over the prevailing conflict between the traditionalism and modernism in the Arab world during the period from 1908 to 1926 were edited and published under the title of *Tahta Rayah al-Qur'ān*. Rafi'i held the firm view that the modernization led by Taha Hussain and his supporters planned to divide the Arabic literature in to classical and modern and thus to target victimize the Arabic language by the refined sugar-quoted methods and to criticize the Quran and its inimitability. He considered, therefore, all the efforts to defend the language and its purity and authenticity as a jihad to be performed for the sake of God under the banner of the Qur'ān. Among the other books al-Rafii composed are *TarikhĀdāb al-Arab*, *Hadith al-Qmar*, *Kitab al-Masākin*, and as the poet his national songs like *AslimiYaMisr*, *Nashid al-Istiqlāl* and *al-Bahr al-Munfajir*; his treatises on the issues of love and affection like *Rasail al-Ahzān*, *HiyawaHua*, *al-SahābalAhmar*, and *Awraq al-Ward*; and in criticism apart from *TahtaRayah al-Quran* his writings like *'Ala al-Safud*. His magnum opus, however, is the book titled *I'ijaz al-Quran wa al-Balāghah al-Nabawiyah*. Al-Rafii, deals in detail with the various schools of the theory of *i'ijaz* and evaluates them addressing with the spirit and enthusiasm of a devout Muslim who seems antagonist against those who opposed him, and reacts sharply sometimes applying the method

below the standard he maintained in other writings. He in this book supports wholeheartedly everyone who strengthens the cause of Islam and the inimitability of the Quran. In the concluding pages of the book he offers his peculiar opinion about the theory of i'jaz al-Quran. Since the book was considered by the Quranic scholars as the pioneering one in the field it is advisable to summarise the discussions of the book in the following :

1. Al-Rafii defines the theory of i'jaz as an accumulation of the two things: (a) inaccessibility of human being to resist the Quranic challenge, and (b) the continuity of this inaccessibility through the ages.

2. The author narrates the first person who opposed the Quran was a Jew namely Labeed bin al-A'asam who was followed by Talut, then propagated by Banan bin Sanan, al-Ja'd bin Dirham and others in their periods. He has discussed the mischievous issue of the Quran being the created entity and how it was strengthened by the Mutazilites who were greatly influenced by the alien philosophies and ideologies, and how the theory of i'jaz was amalgamated with this non-Islamic theory of khalqalQuran.

3. The author elaborated the view of *ṣarfah* and the arguments offered by its supporters. He responded in this context to al-Nazzam, al-Murtuda, IbnHazm, al-Jahiz and others.

4. Al-Rafii discusses in detail the various stands of i'jaz and nullifies all of them, like the theory of order and arrangement maintained in the Quran unfamiliar to all the varieties of order incorporated by the Arabs in their prose and poetry in the beginnings, the crossing points and the punctuation marks; or the theory of the words being safe from all the faults that might disgrace the words; or the theory that the Quran is miraculously evacuated of the contradictions and consists of the noble and refined meanings; or the justification of the i'jaz being implied in the combination of all these things. The author disapproves them as any satisfying rationale of the i'jaz

5. He describes the theory of i'jaz as propounded by Abdul Qahir al-Jurjani in his *Dalāil al- I'jaz*, and refutes the claim that he was the first writer on the subject. According to al-Rafii, al-Jurjani was preceded in this regard by Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Yazid al-Wasiti (d. 306 A.H.) and Abu 'Isa al-Rummani (d. 382 A.H.).

6. The author also provides an account of the late coming scholars like Yahya bin Hamzah al-Yamani (d. 749), the writer of *al-Tirāz fi alBalāghah* and the like. They believe in the eloquence of the words, the nobility of the meaning and the beauty of the order as the factors to the inimitability of the Quran, Al-Rafii disapproves all these factors.

7. Al-Rafii says that some slanderous elements against the Quran cite the sophistries affected by some ulama in response to allegations charged by the enemies, while the holy Quran is far beyond to these sophistries and affectations. He says no man of letters in the later period has ever denied the

i'ijaz.

8. He also mentions Isa bin Sabih al-Muzdār and the followers of the Muzdaridschool; as well as Al-Husayn bin al-Qasim al-Anani and his followers known as Husayniah who denied the inimitable position of the Quran. Al-Rafii declares the claims of these as 'the madness (junūn) undoubtedly'.

9. Enumerating the books composed so far in the discipline of i'ijaz, al-Rafii mentions al-Jahiz (d. 255 AH) and his book *Nazm al-Quran* and criticizes Abu Bakr al-Baqillani for devaluating al-Jahiz. It was slipped from al-Baqillani that the situation that called al-Jahiz to write a book in the i'ijaz in the beginning of the third century was different from the one that persuaded him to compose his book in the end of the fourth century. Al-Jahiz, therefore, could not exceed the saying of the elaboration and eloquence as was conceived in the earliest period because he himself initiated writing in this discipline and the science of rhetoric was not constructed so far. Al-Rafii also mentions *I'ijaz al-Quran* by al-Wasiti, the same title by al-Rummani (d. 382) as well as the same by Abu Bakr al-Baqillani also. The author applies on al-Baqillani the criticism he himself had already applied on al-Jahiz. The i'ijaz of the Quran, to al-Baqillani as well as to al-Jahiz also, revolves around the word, the elaborating difference between one variety of words and the other, and other technical issues. He has provided a number of examples from each variety of prose and poetry to prove his stand. To al-Rafii, these examples proved by al-Baqillani represented the demerits and not the merits. Al-Baqillani is, however, successful in elaborating the fundamental issues to which he has written the book, so much as the scholars have duly considered the book as being unmatched in the status, the power of argument, the sound arrangement and compilation as well as in the eloquence of the interpretation the book possessed. His book *I'ijaz al-Quran* satisfied his contemporaries meeting accordingly their understanding and literary taste. The book, however, can not fully convince on the issue of inimitability of the Quran each and every generation.<sup>20</sup> Al-Rafii, then, mentions other writers of the i'ijaz like al-Khattabi (d. 388), Fakhruddin al-Rāzi (d. 606), IbnAbi al-Isb'a (d. 654), al-Zamlakani (d. 727), Abu Zayd al-Balkhi (d. 934), IbnSuraqua and others.

10. The author narrates systematically how the challenging verses were revealed in the descending order initiating from producing a book similar to the Quran, and that finally reduced to the challenge of bringing out a chapter like unto it. The holy Quran finally declared : "And if you are in doubt as to what we have revealed from time to time to our servant, then produce a Sura like there-unto; and call your witnesses or helpers (if there are any) besides God, if your doubts are true. But if you can't - and of a surety you can not - then fear the Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones, which is prepared for those who reject Faith" (2: 23-24). While elaborating this verse al-Rafii says: "Reflect in the order and coherence maintained in the verses you

will be surprised. The Quran excessively expresses the recklessness and excitement of Arabs in order to prove that their capability to resist the divine challenge was similar to the capability of a dead body to be active like one who was alive. This was impossible in the past and would be so in the future also. The Quran, therefore, challenged: Lantaf'alu that is, "of a surety you can not". The Quran pronounced, this was above their power, their strategy, their assistance and also above the whole world to respond. Then the Quran declared these Arabs as the fuel; then mixed them with the stones of the Hell, and finally called them the kafir, the unbeliever. In case they possessed any power that was to burst out inevitably. But there remained the ashes only without any fire".

11. The author also describes in detail the wrongly claimants of prophethood and those who tried their worst in vain to resist the Quranic challenge, as Musaylimah bin Habib (d. 12 AH), Abhalah bin Kab popularly known as al-Aswad al-'Ansi (d. 11 AH), Tulayhah bin Khuwaylid al-Asadi (d. 21 AH), Sajāhbint al-Harith (d. 55 AH), and al-Nadhr bin al-Harith (d. 2AH). He also narrates those who were accused of resisting the Quranic challenge like Ibn al-Muqaffa (d. 759), Shams al-Ma'ālī Qabus bin Washamgir (d. 403), Abul Husain Ahmad bin Yahya known as Ibn al-Rawandi (d. 293 or 301 or 350 differently described), Abu al-Tayyibal Mutanabbi (d. 354), Ibn Sina (d. 1037 AD) and Abul 'Ala al-Ma'arri (d. 449), defending some of them as well. The author, however, attacks Ibn al-Rawandi and nullifies all his claims against the inimitability of the Quran one by one. The author quotes from various books of his like Kitab al-Farid which he had written for the refutation of the Prophet (SAW); Al-Taj; N'at al-Hikmah; Kitab al-Zamurradah; Qadhib al-Dhahab, al-Marjān and Risalah al-Ghufran, and declares him as a man of corrupt mind and corrupt thinking (fāsīd al-aql and fāsīd al-takhayyul).

12. To al-Rafii, Arabs failed to resist the Quranic challenge because they felt from the core of their hearts the inimitable position of the Quran since they were by their strong nature as well as due to their dominant taste, acclaimingly, over the techniques of the words and the schools of the eloquence, influenced by the superiority of the Quranic language over their literature. And as their knowledge advanced their feeling and belief in the inimitability of the Quran also increased simultaneously. The whole world in this regard constitute an individual soul, the author firmly writes. The Quran declares : "And if all the trees on earth were pens and the Ocean (were ink), with seven oceans behind it to add to its (supply), yet would not the words of God be exhausted (in the writing): for God is Exalted in power, Full of Wisdom" (31: 27).

13. Al-Rafii then elaborates his own opinion of the i'jaz. He says that the literary style of an erudite writer is the outcome of the specific nature he inherits. The style of the Quran being inimitable and inaccessible turns to the fact that it was not to be ascribed to a human nature. In case it was incorrect it had necessarily to be familiarized with the Arab literary styles. Because of this

unique feature the Quran was free from all sorts of contradictions. Al-Rafii, in his argument to favour the Quranic literary style, turns the reason into reasonable, and the cause into effect. He, therefore, instead of arguing that the Quran is a revealed book because it is miraculous and inimitable, claims it is miraculous because it is revealed by Allah. He provides the rationale in the favour of the Quran being unique and unmatched with the styles of Arabs, that the Quran did not offer a human format entirely

14. Apart from its style the Quran is inimitable also because of its rhyme and pure music, says al-Rafii. The Arabs were confronted by a novel variety of linguistic merit and the music being in the fluency and the complete harmony of the Quran; in its symmetric consecutive arrangement; and in its well-balanced structure by each and every accent and syllable as it is tuned accordingly and is not recited verbally only. He cites in this regard the case of Umar bin al-Khattab who did embrace Islam only when the Quran turned all of sudden his severe and harsh personality in a tenderhearted one. But the more interesting example was, says al-Raf'ii, that of the three most eloquent Qurayshite leaders, as cited in the books of history. According to the narrations, Al-Waleed bin al-Mughirah, Al-Akhnas bin Qays and Abu Jahl bin Hisham assembled a night to listen secretly the Quran being recited by the Prophet of God (SAW) in his house while praying. They continuously listened until the dawn appeared. When they met each other in their way to return they blamed each other and said in case the common people had seen them listening the Quran secretly they would have followed them and embraced Islam. In the second night, however, they repeated the same and while returning in the early morning when they again visited each other in their way they took a pledge not to repeat it. In the light of the day al-Waleed bin al-Mughirah, however, came to al-Akhnas and asked his opinion about the verses he heard from Muhammad (SAW). Al-Akhnas said: what do I say? Banu 'Abd al-Muttalib claimed the post of hijābah (keeping the door of holy Ka'bah) and we accepted it. They asked for the sidānah (serving the holy Kabah) and we did not raise any objection. They insisted on the siqāyah (provide water to the pilgrims) being rotated within them, and we agreed with them. Now they say: "Amongst us emerged a prophet on whom the revelation is made". By God! I can never believe in him". Al-Rafii says that nothing prevented them from the faith except the tribal prejudice. He also cites the following Quranic verse in this regard: "The Unbelievers say: "Listen not to this Quran, but talk at random in the midst of (its reading), that you may gain the upper hand" (41: 16).

The Makkan pagans thought in case they did not listen to the Quran they might be upper-handed. The favourite trick of those who wish to dishonour Revelation is, not only not to listen to it themselves, but to talk loudly and insolently when it is being read, so that even the true listeners may not be able to perform their devotions. They think that they are drowning the voice of God: in fact they are piling up misery for themselves in the future.



For God's voice can never be silenced. Al-Rafii says the word taghlibūn (you may gain the upper hand) attracts our attention. This should be reflected in again and again.

On this topic the individual opinion of al-Rafii regarding the inimitable features of the Quran may be summarized as under :

1. The music and the rhyme the holy Quran implied.

2. The spirit reflecting transparently in the order and arrangement maintained in the Quran.

This while addressing the soul does not constitute the words with the meanings only; it rather forms an enlightened life, a spiritual creation. In it lies the sound of natural soul in the construction of the Arabic language, and the sound of thought or the intellect and this was abundantly available to the Arabs. The distinction of the Quran lies in a third sound e.g. the sound of sensitivity in the words and the illustrated meanings.<sup>27</sup> 3. The Quran is free from the words supportive; these are used in the books of the most eloquent literary men. To al-Rafii, the Quran has used the words unavoidable to communicate the meaning it intends. No additional or supportive words are found in the Quran. 4. The Quran comprises of the inimitability both in the inner and outer dimensions. It consists in its design the fundamental principles of the sciences and discoveries explored by the human being only in the modern time. Responding to IbnRushd (d. 595) who discussed briefly how the Quran covered all the logical methods of education both in imagination (tasawwur) as well as in testification (tasdiq), al-Rafii says that it is not strange in the logic that the words are expressive and elaborating to all the levels of understanding as well as they lead the elites to explore the specialized justification and otherwise interpretation (tawil) and simultaneously the argumentative nature of these words does not result in specifying one interpretation and rooting the others out. It is quite possible the true interpretation would have emerged after a long period in which the human intellect would have matured. This was demonstrated in the modern times. A distinguished verse from the Quran reads : "O ye assembly of Jinns and men! If it be you can pass beyond the zones of the heavens and the earth, pass you! Not without authority shall you be able to pass!" (55: 33) See the chapter al-An'aam verses 130-134, where the jinns and men are addressed collectively. That whole passage should be read as a commentary on this verse. 'If you think that because you do things in secret, or because some of your sins do not seem to meet their inevitable punishment, or some of your good deeds seem to go unnoticed, do not be deceived. Judgement will soon come. You can not possibly escape out of the zones in which your lives have been cast, without authority from God. Be grateful to God for the chances He has given you. All that has been promised unto you will come to pass: nor can you frustrate it in the least bit' (6: 134). According to al-Rafii, the verse quoted above implies in its design the discovery of flying in the air and that it would be explored by the ins (the human being). This interpretation could be

realized only after the passage of thirteen centuries. This novel rationale was provided by the inimitable rhetoric of the Quran.<sup>28</sup> This was interpreted by al-Rafii as strengthening (al-siyāsahalmantiqiyah) the logical argumentation by the method of the rhetoric (tariqah al-balāghah). Apart from the spiritual and synthetic inimitability advocated by al-Rafii, another trend emerged in the theories of i'ijaz al-Quran and that was the trend of psychological inimitability of the Quran (al-i'ijaz al-nafsi) founded in the modern times by Shaykh Amin al-Khauili.

### **Various Aspects**

Hence, from a literary and stylistic point of view, this attempt failed to replicate the Qur'ān. The totality of every chapter is a special characteristic of the Qur'ān, each having its own unique form and its unique use of literary devices. The Qur'ān's inimitable eloquence is based upon:

- i. Eloquent use of language to please and persuade;
- ii. It's perfect choice of words expressions with the best of verbal forms;
- iii. Accuracy of meaning;
- iv. Apt selection of pronouns and rhetorical devices;
- v. Interrelation between style, structure and meaning.

The list above is not exhaustive and represents just some of the reasons why it has not been possible to emulate the Qur'ān to this day.

The technical meaning of *li'jāz* is that *khāriq 'ādah* (supernatural event) which is used by Almighty Allah to demonstrate the truth of a prophet. There are three things to be noted here: 1. It is a supernatural event; 2. It was sent to verify the truthfulness of a prophet; 3. it was a self-evident event which left no room for any denial. A *khāriq 'adat* refers to that event which is not possible for any human being and the prophet is showing it to convince others in order to demonstrate his reality.

It has been the Sunnah of Almighty Allah that He always sent *āyāt* and miracles to confirm the truthfulness of His messengers. However, history also tells us that the pious people always submitted to the call of the Prophet immediately as if they were waiting for it. Moreover, they supported the call of the prophets very wholeheartedly depending on their closeness and understanding of him. As a matter of fact weaknesses are also unveiled besides the positive qualities when we get close to someone. But the case of the Prophets is different as people only get acquainted to their positive qualities as they see them deeper and deeper. Hind bin AbiHalāh, son of Khadijah (RA) presented a very in-depth observation on the Prophet (SAW) that if someone saw the Prophet for the first time he was really impressed by the awe of his personality. And the more one lived with him; the better he developed a strong attachment with him.

Khadijah's(RA) understanding of the Prophet is known to everyone as she knew him even before getting married. When she heard about the nubuwwah of the Prophet (SAWW) she said that 'Allah will not humiliate

you because you are kind towards others, carry people's burden, kind towards your guests and are always just and fair. This was because she knew him very well and was convinced that he was worthy of a prophet. Similarly other companions who were righteous and very virtuous people did not ask for any miracle by the Prophet but accepted Imān immediately. It is in fact those who do not want to believe, ask for miracles as is the case of Pharaoh, Abu Jahl and Abu Lahab who did not believe even after asking for miracle.

Just like there are some extremely virtuous people who do not need any miracle to convince them. There are also some at the other extreme of meanest group who wouldn't be convinced by any miracle, even if the moon is cut into two in front of them. However, a big number between the two are those whose hearts call for the acceptance of truth yet a veil covers their heart. It is these people whose veil of the heart is removed after seeing a miracle and they enter the circle of Islam. It makes them clear that this person is a representative from the Lord of the Worlds and this miracle is given to him as a sign which cannot be challenged by another human being.

The first characteristic of the miracles by Allah is that to whichever nation or place He sends the miracle, He sends it according to their mental, rational, intellectual and cultural status. For example, Prophet Saleh (AS) belonged to the desert Arab and mountainous region which had no intellectual and cultural life. There were only Bedouins taking care of the camels. They were therefore given a unique she-camel as a miracle. This miracle was given according to their understanding and at their demand. Still, they could not fulfill its conditions and killed it and the result was their destruction.

Egypt was at the height of magic during the time of Prophet Musa (AS) and it was for this reason that they excelled over other nations. There were millions of magicians busy in learning and teaching the art of magic in the country. Therefore, the only way to convince them was by making them convinced through magic. Prophet Musa had good access in the court of the king and his miracle was so powerful and unique that it made all the magicians say it is something beyond magic, it is a miracle. This suggests that this was beyond the imagination of human perfection for these experts that is why they surrendered that it is a miracle.

Similarly Prophet Isa (AS) was given the miracle according to the nature of the place he was sent. He was born in Palestine which was part of the Eastern Roman Empire at that time and known for Greek learning and sciences. All the Greek sciences, philosophy and logic were prevalent over there particularly Greek medicine was really good. In fact, Greek sciences have lost their significance now but only thing extant is their medicine which is alive till now.<sup>2</sup>

Under these circumstances the miracle given to Prophet Isa was of the nature which convinced their experts in medicine say that this is something which is far-off medicine. It was not possible for Greek medicine to reach that

Messianic character and cure a born blind person by just one blow from the mouth. Or, a patient of leprosy would be cured by just lightly massaging over the patient. These experts could then surrender that it was not simple medicine but these were the miracles from God.

A second characteristic of miracles from Allah is that as they are sent according to the place and time of the prophets so do they lose their credibility after the prophets are gone. Those miracle stay alive so long as the prophets are working on their mission and lose their miraculous nature as the nubuwwah of the prophet is over. The third characteristic is that the miracles are sensational which can be felt with one's senses that this is a miracle. Also, the miracles of earlier prophets were only timely because they were peculiar to those time and areas.

However, just like the nubuwwah of Prophet Muhammad was meant for ever so was his miracle for all human beings and forever as long as his religion is alive. The holy Qur'ān is the biggest miracle of Prophet Muhammad and is unique in the sense that whenever the Prophet had to verify his nubuwwah he presented the Qur'ān - both *nātiqandsāmit* (speaking and silent). Other miracles which were given to him were not provided by him in support of his prophet hood. There are many stories in the Seerah books which demonstrate that whenever he had to give any proof for his prophet hood to a non-Muslim, he only showed him the Qur'ān nothing physical.

But what is it that makes the holy Qur'ān or the personality of Prophet Muhammad a miracle? One is to see his qualities which made every true person confirm that his was a true message as it is seen in the examples of Abu Bakr and Khadijah etc. Abdullah bin Salam was a learned man who had heard negative things about the Prophet but when he met him and saw his face he surrendered that it is not a liar's face.

In order to understand the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān it is important to identify some unique characteristic for the period for which the Qur'ān was sent. This period can be easily distinguished as the period of learning and knowledge as compare to the time before it was revealed, which was the time of ignorance and darkness. This Qur'ān is a miracle meant for this world of science and learning and a knowledgeable person would admit that it is beyond human imaginations, a divine book.

Before talking about the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān it is important to remember that the Prophet was sent mainly for two audiences. One was directly Arab, "It is He Who has sent amongst the Unlettered an apostle from among themselves"<sup>3</sup> and the other was for later generations, "As well as (to confer all these benefits upon) others of them, who have not already joined them."<sup>4</sup> This message was thus conveyed from the Prophet through these companions trained by him to later generations.

Since the Qur'ān was meant for both the Arabs of that time and the future generations, it was a miracle for both kinds of addressees. A lot of

research has been done regarding the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān for Arabs as compare to its general appeal. The thing which could most impress the Qur'ān's first addressee Arab Kuffār and mushrikīn of Makkah was the rhetoric and eloquence of its language. They considered themselves so eloquent that they called everyone else '*ajam* (dumb). An example of how poetry and its expression were meant for them can be found in a simple example of famous companion Hassan ibnThabit. He had a young boy who once came running to him crying, as a hornet had bitten him. When Hassan asked what happened? The boy replied, "Something has bitten me." In response to Hassan's question that what it was and how it was? The boy replied, "The thing that bit me looked like, as if it was wrapped in a striped sheet." Hassan got really excited listening this and said, "Bye God! My son has become a poet."

Three things were considered as standard of eloquence for Arabs: 1. *khatābat* (oration); 2. Poetry; 3. *Kahānat* (sooth saying?), which referred to short meaningless sentences used by soothsayers supporting their claim of knowledge of unknown. All three treasures were well kept by Arabs but their appreciation for the poetry was unanimous. There were seven poets who were regarded as the best poets and their seven odes were known as *madhhabāt* worthy of writing from gold for being at the maximum level of perfection in poetry.

It is a fact that many opponents of the Qur'ān who were experts in their field were impressed of its style and approach. Examples of 'Umar Farooq ® and father of Khalid bin Waleed ® are relevant here. Everyone knows 'Umar's hatred towards Islam and the Prophet (SAW) although he had never listened to the Qur'ān directly. He relates that once he was returning from a gathering at night and saw the Prophet (SAW) praying towards Ka'bah. He thought that no one can see him now so he should try to listen what he was reciting. But, the fear that people will think that such an intelligent person is listening to the Qur'ān made him hide behind the curtain around the ka'bah. The Prophet was reciting Surah al-Haqqah at that time and 'Umar relates that he felt its strong effect on his heart but denied that feeling convincing his self that this is highly poetical. Just then the Prophet (SAW) recited, "It is not the word of a poet."<sup>5</sup> 'Umar thought that then it is *kahānat* and the Prophet uttered, "Nor is it the word of a soothsayer."<sup>6</sup> 'Umar couldn't tolerate any more and left the place. 'Umar ® was under mental distress for few days and decided to end the whole thing by killing the Prophet (God Forbid). And as we know that he was going to kill the Prophet but when found out that his own sister and brother-in-law have accepted Islam, he went to kill them first and thus converted.

The other story is that of Walid bin Mughirah, father of Khalid bin Walid\_father of a General and among the great leaders of Arab. He was a very staunch opponent of the Prophet and was once invited by him for dinner. He was very hesitant to attend the dinner but his friends encouraged that you are

a learned person and should not be afraid. When he went for dinner the Prophet recited some Qur'ān and he listened to it quietly. After that he stopped opposing his mission and asked other opponents to stop also. Abu Jahal made fun of him that it was because of the dinner that he changed but he said that you wouldn't understand its reality as it was a different *kalam*. He did not convert to Islam but was so impressed by the Qur'ān that he left his opposition.

Another story similar to it was that of 'Utbah bin Rabi'ah, a great leader of Quraish. Quraish sent him towards Muhammad to ask him what he wants and they would give him anything in return. Utbah was Prophet's uncle and made good offers to him. But the Prophet's response to his offer was the recitation of the Qur'ān and when Prophet recited last verses of Surah Ha MimSajdah referring to the punishment on Ād and Thamūd he was so amazed that he closed the Prophet's mouth by his hand to stop reciting. He was afraid of the punishment and requested the Prophet to stop, "Don't do that, otherwise punishment will also come to your nation." He went back and warned his nation from his opposition and leave him alone but didn't convert to Islam

The Arabs were the direct addressees of the above miraculous nature of the Qur'ān and later generations were its indirect addressees. However, the other aspect whose main addressees are the later generations would remain a miracle forever. It is that miracle on which the more people will contemplate the more horizons would open. It is towards this miracle that the Qur'ān called its opponents to bring another book like it if they had doubt about its divinity. This was particularly with reference to its *fasāhahandbalāghah* when the Qur'ān called all Arabs, polytheists, and atheists, Jews or Christians\_ who did not want to accept it as a divine book to produce a book like it. This challenge has been repeated again and again but no one from among the learned Arabs dared to accept the challenge even when it was reduced to a *kalam*,<sup>7</sup> ten surahs<sup>8</sup> or a small surah like *Surah al-Kauthar* of the Qur'ān.<sup>9</sup>

This challenge is still open to the world but no one could accept it even though the Qur'ān has been translated in almost 205 languages. Scholars and learned around the world are aware of this challenge and the people of all backgrounds have been reading it but no one could even think of producing something like the Qur'ān.<sup>10</sup> There are hundreds of copies of different translations available everywhere yet no philosopher, scientist or poet produced any writing in response to its challenge. MusaylimahKadhhab claimed that revelation comes down on him yet he didn't dare to put those words against the Qur'ān. In fact, his followers didn't accept him as a prophet but it was only tribal feeling which supported him. Musaylimah had accepted the Qur'ān as a divine book and was smart enough not to challenge it because he knew it was divine and so were his followers who accepted the Qur'ān and didn't challenge it.

It is possible that some people may not accept the Qur'ān as a divine

book or the book of guidance but no one has ever confused it with even hadith literature though hadith also has a high standard. Those who have read both hadith and Qur'ān can easily distinguish them because of the extraordinary linguistic style of the Qur'ān. The language of the Qur'ān is so distinct that even the best linguist couldn't produce anything like it. This is because the Qur'ān uses the best possible word to make its expression and convey the right meaning and does not employ words seldom used in Arabic language.

For example, the plural of ارض (world) in Arabic is ارضين and it has been also used in hadith and by fuqaha'. However, it is against the higher standard of *fushah* therefore the Qur'ān avoided it, expressing it in a different way. The Qur'ān says:

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ وَمِنَ الْأَرْضِ مِثْلَهُنَّ

meaning seven heavens and seven earths which makes the meaning clear while avoiding the plural of earth in Arabic. Thus Qur'ān avoided those words which were not commonly used and were not up to its standard.

An important aspect of Qur'ān's *fasāhah* and *balāghah* is that it was conveyed through a person who was never taught by any one or received any formal education. If the Prophet had acquired education from any one then critics would have blamed that he learned the technique of Qur'ān from that person. Also, the stories of earlier people which were not known to Arabs have been described in such detail that Arabs couldn't counter them.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, there are many events when people thought of something or hypocrites did something and then declined it but the revelation came down exposing the whole truth.<sup>12</sup> The Qur'ān also predicted about some political situations which came true and amazed the world, such as giving glad tidings of the conquest of Romans though they were defeated by Persians. It says: "The Roman Empire has been defeated- In a land close by; but they, (even) after (this) defeat of theirs, will soon be victorious."<sup>13</sup> It was unimaginable that Romans would be victorious at the time prediction was given and Muslims were sad because of their closeness with Romans as they also believed in divine religion unlike Persians who were polytheists like mushrikīn Arabs.

Another prediction is given about Pharaoh in the Qur'ān: "This day shall We save thee in the body, that thou mayest be a sign to those who come after thee!"<sup>14</sup> This was Allah's promise to keep his body as a sign but since it was not known to any one until 100 years ago therefore, there were many speculations about it. Some people believed that it was regarding Pharaoh's armor which was kept for some time and people used to come see it. Some thought that his body was kept for few months and the verse meant that. However, when pyramids were exposed in Egypt more than hundred years ago, Pharaoh's body was identified with salt pointing that he lived during

Prophet Musa's time and died in the sea. It is a fact that his body is kept in the Museum of Cairo and people go to see it and learn lesson.

It is interesting to note that there are some descriptions in the Qur'ān which received objections from orientalists and have not been proven until recently. These are some statements which are not confirmed by people of other religions, for example, the Qur'ān says that "The Jews call 'Uzair son of Allah, and the Christians call Christ the son of Allah." The fact that Christians believe Jesus is God's son is well known however, Jews deny that they claim like this. There have been many explanations given by Muslim commentators. They said that a man had claimed like that during Prophet's time and some said that there was a group which claimed like that or Jews became so grateful to Uzair after he wrote whole Gospel from his memory that regarded him as son of God. But, all these explanations have been denied by Jews as baseless or condemning that they were not even Jews. Muslims have raised the question that why didn't the Jews object when this verse was revealed but the fact remained that it could not be proven properly.

Some sixty years ago in Jordan near Dead Sea a shepherd entered into a cave following his goat and some strange things were discovered. When shepherd could not see the goat due to darkness he came back and returned next day with some people and light. Inside the cave he found that there were big containers full of papers which were very old. He thought that there was some treasure and came back to inform villagers. There was an archaeological team in that area at that time and upon hearing this news they went there. When the government heard about this they stopped them and founded its own team of experts to investigate. The articles published so far indicate that these papers belonged to the library of a Christian scholar around 100 to 150 years after Jesus during the Jewish rule when Christians were oppressed.

These people were believers in one God and when they were oppressed they were forced to leave their homes and the fear that these books would be damaged made the owner hide in the cave, which could not be obtained. These treasures are written in Syrian and Hebrew and are translated by UNESCO into English and published. One book published around 1960 by a Christian scholar condemns Jews for regarding Uzair as son of God because he was only a pious person and God has no son. *I'ijāz al-Qur'ān* as a science began in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century hijrah when scholars started thinking and writing about it. But it was in the 4<sup>th</sup> century hijrah that 'ulamā' wrote books about it thus making it a separate science in a very short period. Since then it has become an important part of the sciences of the Qur'ān. These manuscripts indicate that there was a group among Jews at that time which believed in Uzair as son of Allah.

The issue of *fasāhah* and *balāghah* in the Qur'ān one can admit that this is the only book which maintains its high standard throughout. It is generally seen even among the best poets and authors that sometimes they would slip and lose their standard. But Qur'ān is the only book maintaining its high



standard even compare to hadith which would make one confuse where it is better than the rest.

Impact of the Qur'ān seen on the lives of its readers is also tremendous. There is no other book in the history of the world which has changed the lives so much as the Qur'ān did. It changed `peoples' creed, their dress and even customs which has no comparison anywhere in the world. This is because its message is so comprehensive and vast that no other book could even come close to it. It is like an ocean from where new meanings and ideas keep coming in last 1400 years and is not outdated. It is like ever fresh document and its students are involved in approaching it from all dimensions.

This is the miracle of the Qur'ān that it contains all sorts of material to satisfy the need of every profession and every interest. Students of philosophy get ideological guidance from it, students of economics find solution to their financial problems in it and similarly students of political science find ways to success and development by adopting the principles identified in the Qur'ān. Although the Qur'ān was revealed gradually (in 23 years) according to the human situations demanding different explanations<sup>15</sup> (in changing Makkan and Madinan) situations yet it is amazing to see how coherent it is and in order.

As it has been explained earlier, the whole Qur'ān was arranged by the Prophet himself and its internal organization and coherence is itself a miracle. This all was done while keeping all its rules and regulations and language as it is but with an appeal to all ages. It is interesting that with the passage of time various aspects of Qur'ānic sciences would be explored and there will be no end to it.

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### Referenes:

<sup>1</sup> Surah Al Israa', 101

<sup>2</sup> Greek medicines are still used in sub-continent, e.g. Jawarish Jallinus and Ma'jun Buqrat etc.

<sup>3</sup> Surah al-Jumu'ah, 2

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 62:3

<sup>5</sup> Surah al- Haqqah, 41

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 42

<sup>7</sup> "Let them then produce a recital like unto it." Surah Tuwr, 52:34

<sup>8</sup> "Or they may say, "He forged it," Say, "Bring ye then ten suras forged, like unto it." Surah Huwd, 13

<sup>9</sup> "And if ye are in doubt as to what We have revealed from time to time to Our servant, then produce a Surah like thereunto." Surah al-Baqarah, 23

<sup>10</sup> Musaylimah Kadhdhab was one person who claimed that revelation was sent to him but he accepted Qur'ān as the divine book and had that much understanding that it can not be challenged.

<sup>11</sup> This is clear from the stories of 'People of kahaf,' 'story of Prophet Musa and Khidr,' and 'Zul-Qarnain' in Surah al-Kahaf.

<sup>12</sup> Surah Al Tawbah mentions some events like this: Story of Abdullah bin Uba'y during the campaign of BanuMustalaq is an example when he turned away from his mischief after igniting people that the Ansars were being treated unjustly when a senior Ansar was stopped by the servant of Umar because it was not his right. But when Zaid bin Arqam reported it to Prophet, he declined it and revelation was sent to Prophet explaining the whole situation.

<sup>13</sup> Surah Al Ruwm, 2-3

<sup>14</sup> Surah Yunuws, 92

<sup>15</sup> For example after the war the questions were raised regarding the booties of war and the verses of Surah Anfal were revealed explaining how to distribute it.