

## Orientalists on the Miracle of Al- Isra and Al- Al-Miraj

*Dr Sajid Iqbal \**

*Dr. Ihsan ur Rehman Ghauri\**

### **Abstract:**

The Isra and Miraj were special favour bestowed upon last Messenger. This event was an identification of his ultimate success. This miraculous journey was a sign that the leadership of the world would move to the Muslims and that leadership was based on mercy and justice. This heavenly journey is an indisputable incident of Islamic history and is a part of belief and faith of the Muslims. A new chapter of ultimate progress and success was unveiled, new vistas of practical knowledge and experience were opened to the last Messenger. It is conceded firmly that there are two blessing nights of paramount importance in the history of Islam. The first is 27<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan named as ليلى القدر , when the glorious Quran was revealed to the last Messenger. This night is as important for the Muslims as that night for the Jews in which Moses was bestowed upon the prophethood at Mt. Sinai. And the second is 27<sup>th</sup> of Rajab known as شب معراج when the Prophet was granted transcendental ascension to heavens. This night is as significant for the Muslims as that for Christians in which Jesus was ascended to heavens. The miracle of Isra and Miraj is an object of pride and glory for the Muslims. Isra and Miraj took place physically in wakeful state. Many greatest signs were shown to the prophet and this was the main purpose of Isra and Miraj.

### **Definition of Miracle**

The Arabic word (معجزة) mujiza is translated into English as miracle. Miracle is derived through French from Latin "miraculum" which means, "a thing to be wondered at", etymologically, any event of nature to excite wonder<sup>1</sup>. Miracles are extraordinary and astonishing happenings that are attributed to the presence of supernatural or divine power. <sup>2</sup> Miracles are events, actions and states taken to be so unusual, extraordinary and supernatural that the normal level of human consciousness finds them hard to accept rationally. <sup>3</sup>The Arabic word mujiza is derived from "ajz." Imam Raghīb al-Isfahani states,

---

*\* Associate Professor, Institute of Islamic Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore – Pakistan.*

*\*Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies University of Sargodha*

والعجز اصله تاخر عن الشيء و حصوله عند عجز الامر اى موخره و صار فى التعرف اسماء للقصور عن فعل الشيء<sup>4</sup>

Mujiza literally means something which makes other unable to produce as like it. This word

is used in the holy Quran in its genuine (original) meanings.

قَالَ يُؤْيَلْنِي أَعْجَزْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِثْلَ هَذَا الْغُرَابِ فَأُوَارِي سَوْءَةَ أَخِي<sup>5</sup>

Woe to me! Am I not even able to be as this crow and to hide the dead bod of my brother?

According to Islamic Theology, the word 'ayat' is frequently used to signify miracle. When the term mujiza appeared in Islamic literature it became crystal clear synonym of ayat or miracle.

Imam Ghazali states at the opening of his chapter on miracle,

بيان معجزاته و آياته الداله على صدقه<sup>6</sup>

Imam Ibn Hazm Al-Andulsi has used the words 'ayat' and mujiza as synonyms to a great extent in his writings. Khawariq al-ada (the breaker of usage) is also used by the scholars to denote miracles.

Allah Almighty has bestowed miracles upon the great prophets like Abraham, Moses and Jesus. Allah has shown them the secrets of his creation and universe, which are totally beyond the ordinary comprehension of human being but they are facts that cannot be denied. Speaking about the miracles of the prophets, the Quran says that these miracles are not the acts of the prophets but that of Allah. Allah shows miracles at a time when they are in dire need of them. A miracle in itself is not an abnormal thing, even if we are sometimes unaware of its cause; very often the circumstances of its occurrence render it strange. The Quran tells about the Mi'raj of Abraham. The Quran also says about the Mi'raj of Moses, it was in the valley of Toor, where Moses saw a glimpse of Allah through veil and fell senseless at the dazzling light. Similarly, the Messenger Muhammad (pbuh) has his ascension to the Heavens.

#### **Significance of Miacle:**

A miracle is something which Allah displays to mankind in support of the truth and candidness which an apostle delivers to humanity as Allah's message. Miracles are supernatural and ultra natural incident. Imam Razi says, "The holy Prophets are superior in spiritual as well as in physical powers, distinguished them as compared to common men. They have also distinction in hearing, seeing, smelling and tasting abilities."<sup>7</sup>

A miracle strengthens the belief of the messenger and faithful. Magnificence of Allah and the Messenger is revealed to the people. Therefore, it is called the miracle that the creature is helpless to bring such a thing, such as aliven the dead, a staff may become a dragon, to create she-camel from the mountain, isra and miraj and splitting of the moon etc.

Therefore, the Quran has attributed the miracles to Allah. The very first motive of the miracle is to make strong the belief of an apostle himself. So that his eyes observe what his heart regards as true, For instance :

أَوْ كَالَّذِي مَرَّ عَلَى قَرْيَةٍ وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَى عُرُوشِهَا قَالَ أَنَّى يُحْيِي هَذِهِ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا فَأَمَاتَهُ اللَّهُ مِائَةَ عَامٍ ثُمَّ بَعَثَهُ<sup>8</sup>

Or of him, who, when passing by a ruined and desolate city, remarked: ‘How can Allah give life to this city, now that it is dead?’ There upon Allah caused him to die, and after a hundred years brought him back to life.

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ أَرِنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى . قَالَ أَوَلَمْ تُؤْمِن . قَالَ بَلَىٰ وَلَٰكِن لِّيَطْمَئِنَّ قَلْبِي<sup>9</sup>

When Abraham said: ‘Show me, Lord, how you raise the dead, He replied: Have you no faith?’ ‘Yes,’ said Abraham, ‘but I wish to reassure my heart.’

The second important purpose of the miracle is to fortify (strengthen) the belief of the followers and the faithfuls. Magnificence of Allah and the Messenger is revealed to the people. On the whole, these miracles solve the pragmatic problems of life.

#### For example

وَوَهَبْنَا لَكُمْ السَّمْنَ وَاللَّحْمَ وَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّاءَ وَالسَّلْوى<sup>10</sup>

We gave the shade of clouds and sent down to you Manna and quails.

وَأُبْرِئِ الْأَكْمَةَ وَالْأَبْرَصَ وَأُخِي الْمَوْتَىٰ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ<sup>11</sup>

And I heal those blind, and the lepers, And I quicken the dead, By God’s leave.

إِذْ تَقُولُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَلَنْ يَكْفِيَكُمْ أَنْ يُبَدِّلَ اللَّهُ بِكُم رُبَّكُم بِئِنَّهُ الْفِ مِنَ الْمَلِكَةِ مُنْزَلِينَ<sup>12</sup>

Is it not enough for you that God should help you with three thousand angels

(specially) sent down.

The third purpose of the miracle is to evoke the awareness of the infidels to the fact that the Prophets are assigned the responsibility to warn people by God. So they are always helped by God. In this regard, miracles impress and inspire the disbelievers to believe in Allah and his Messenger such as, when the staff of Moses became a dragon the enchanters reacted.”

قَالَتِي السَّحْرَةُ سِحْرًا قَالُوا أَمْثَلًا رَبِّ هَارُونَ وَمُوسَىٰ<sup>13</sup>

#### Orientalistic approach towards the Messenger’s Miracles:

“No other aspect of the Prophet’s life has interested Orientalists and historians of religion more than the heavenly journey.”<sup>14</sup>

Manabu Waida wrote in The Encyclopaedia of Religion, “Muhammad, the seal of the prophets rejected every request to pose as a miracle worker in contrast to Moses as well as Jesus, who worked miracles. Muhammad made no attempt to advance his religious authority by performing miracles. He further stated that Muhammad ascension closely associated with isra , neither term appears as such in the Quran, yet both developed in close connection with crucial, though ambiguous Quranic passage.<sup>15</sup>

“Muhammad (PBUH) was not thought to have been granted any miracles in the traditional sense as they were not, ipso facto, sufficient to convince unbelievers.”<sup>16</sup>

“ The Quranic grounding of ascent of Muhammad is tenuous in two ways. In the first place, the ascent is not described and the term miraj is not used in Quran. Secondly, the Quran stresses that Muhammad brings no miracle other than the divinely-wrought miracle of the Quran.”<sup>17</sup>

“Only the pious fantasy of later generations of believers clothed the dim figure of the Prophet with a rich and multi-coloured fabric of fable, legend and miracle, not realizing that by diminishing his essential historic humanity they were robbing him of one of his most attractive qualities.”<sup>18</sup>

“Muslim religion assumes, as a matter of course, that Allah works miracles and has done so in the past, e.g., through Moses and Jesus significantly not through the Prophet. According to the Quran, Muhammad (PBUH) explicitly rejected the idea of proving his vocation by signs and miracles. The Quran itself was the greatest miracle, and he was but a human Messenger and preacher of repentance. Nevertheless, subsequent narratives invested his birth and life with superlatively miraculous details.”<sup>19</sup>

Almost all the Prophets and Messengers worked miracles. For many centuries, millions of the Jews and billions of the Christians have believed in the miracles of Moses and Jesus respectively. The followers of Buddha and Zoroaster have also recognized their miracles. There is not a single Jew or Christian who calls in question the miracles of Moses and Jesus. But at once, the Jews and the Christians deny the miracles of Muhammad (PBUH) as compared to Moses and Jesus. It is only their solicitation; obstinacy and prejudice that make them to refuse the miracles of the Messenger of Islam.

Approximately one thousand miracles of Muhammad (PBUH) were related by his honest and truthful companions and then by many reliable and trustworthy narrators and authorities. These miracles were recorded in authentic books of traditions, commentaries of the Quran, books of see'rah and history. These miracles have come to us from a number of different sources; therefore, these are absolutely authentic as these are related by truthful companions. The Quran also describes many important miracles of the prophet; splitting of the moon, opening of the chest, illiteracy of the prophet, isra and miraj and the Quran itself.

#### **Significance of Isra and Miraj:**

The theme of ascension found its place in the literature of Islamic theology, philosophy, Sufism and history. This magnificent event of Isra and Miraj is of the most historical importance. The Isra and Miraj were special favour bestowed upon last Messenger. This event was an identification of his ultimate success. The prophet's mission was going to enter a very crucial phase, demanding entire struggle and a lot of sacrifices. The last days of Makkan phase of the

prophet are noted for alternate fortune ranging between two extremes: gradual success and continual persecution. It was in this context, glimpses of propitious lights were looming on the distant horizon, to ultimately materialize in the event of Isra and Miraj from Makkah to Jerusalem and then Ascension through the spheres of the heavens to provide him with inspiration and support by showing him what no other human has ever been blessed with. This miracle proved to the prophet that if the earth would become unkind or cruel to him at certain times then the gates of heavens are open for him at all times. Being risen to a position so high indicates that Muhammad (pbuh) is a darling beloved of Allah the Creator of the Universe. The Messenger was charged with the office of prophethood for both the Houses of Allah, in Makkah and Jerusalem. This event was an honour and compensation to the Messenger and an indication of migration to Madinah. This miraculous journey was a sign that the leadership of the world would move to the Muslims and that leadership was based on mercy and justice. This heavenly journey is an indisputable incident of Islamic history and is a part of belief and faith of the Muslims. A new chapter of ultimate progress and success was unveiled, new vistas of practical knowledge and experience were opened to the last Messenger. It is conceded firmly that there are two blessing nights of paramount importance in the history of Islam. The first is 27th of Ramadan named as *ليلة القدر*, when the glorious Quran was revealed to the last Messenger. This night is as important for the Muslims as that night for the Jews in which Moses was bestowed upon the prophethood at Mt. Sinai. And the second is 27<sup>th</sup> of Rajab known as *ليلة المعراج*, when the Prophet was granted transcendental ascension to heavens. This night is as significant for the Muslims as that for Christians in which Jesus was ascended to heavens. The miracle of Isra and Miraj is an object of pride and glory for the Muslims. It is the most significant miracle of the Messenger (Pbuh). It has been mentioned in the Holy Quran (Al- Isra, 17:1, 60 and Al- Najm, 53:13-18) as well as in all authentic books of ahadith and seerah. It has come down to us through the reliable chain of the narrators and this chain is continuously reached to our age.

#### **Number and Names of the Narrators:**

Dr. Mahdi Rizqullah states, "Many of the narrations of the Prophetic period in Makkah are dedicated to describing this journey. In Bukhari alone, the total numbers of narrations reach the figure of twenty, coming down from six companions. Muslim has eighteen reports originating from seven companions."<sup>20</sup> Syed Maudoodi has stated that twenty five companions had related this unique incident.<sup>21</sup> Zurqani states that forty five companions have narrated this miraculous journey.

Imam Ibn Kathir has mentioned the names of twenty five Companions, who have narrated this miraculous journey of the Messenger including: 1- Umar, 2- Ali, 3- Ayesha, 4- Abd Allah ibn Abbas, 5- Abd Allah ibn Masud, 6- Abd Allah ibn Umar, 7- Ubayy ibn Ka'b, 8- Hudhafah ibn Yaman, 9- Anas ibn Malik, 10- Jabir ibn Abd Allah, 11- Abd Allah bin Amr, 12- Abu Hurayrah, 13- Abu Ayyub Ansari, 14- Abu Dharr, 15- Malik ibn Sa'sa'ah, 16- Umme Hani, 17- Asma' bint Abu Bakr, 18- Samra bin Jundub, 19- Suhiab al Rumi, 20- Abu Amaama Bahli, 21- Abu Sa'id al Khudri, 22- Abu Yahla, 23- Bareeda, 24- Abu Dihyah, 25- Abd al Rahman bin Qart (RA).

#### **Date of Miraj:**

The scholars of Sirah are of different opinions on the date and year of Miraj.

i- Ibn Sa'ad writes two reports about this event:

(a)- It took place on 17<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan, 18 months before hijrah

(b)- It was happened on 17<sup>th</sup> of Rabee ul Awal, one year before hijrah. <sup>22</sup>

ii- Moulana Abdul Rahman Aziz writes that Miraj has taken places on 27<sup>th</sup>

Rajab of 10 Nabwi according to 20<sup>th</sup> March, 620 A.D. <sup>23</sup>

iii- The most accepted opinion of the Muslims is that Miraj took place on 27<sup>th</sup> of Rajab, 10<sup>th</sup> year of Prophethood. <sup>24</sup>

iv- Ibn Abd al Barr, Ibn Qutaiba and Imam Nawawi have related that this

glorious incident has happened in the month of Rajab, while Hafiz Abdal Ghani Maqadisi has fixed the date of Miraj that is 27<sup>th</sup> of Rajab.

v- According to Zurqani, the people have accepted this idea of 27<sup>th</sup> of Rajab. This is the strongest report. <sup>25</sup>

vi- Allama Halbi has stated that this incident has taken place one year before hijrah and Ibn Hazm has accepted this notion.

vii- But some scholars have the opinion that this event happened two years before hijrah while others have said that Miraj took three years before hijrah. <sup>26</sup>

viii- Ibn Kathir has stated that Miraj was happened 16 months before hijrah while according to Tabari 17 months before hijrah.

ix- Musa b. Uqbah has narrated on the authority of Zuhri and Urwah b. Zubair that Miraj took place a year before the hijrah. <sup>27</sup>

This event took place in the 27<sup>th</sup> night of Rajab. Many traditionists and biographers are agreed upon this date. During the analysis of these reports, we have concluded that this marvelous incident has taken place on 27<sup>th</sup> of Rajab in the 12<sup>th</sup> year of Prophethood after the sad demise of

Hazrat Khadija and Hazrat Abu Talib. They both passed away in Ramdhan 10<sup>th</sup> Nabwi. And the Messenger visited Taif in Shawal of the same year. After the visit of Taif, the Messenger was much disturbed on the behaviour of the Chiefs of Taif and Makkah. So, Allah called for his beloved Messenger on heavens to console and encourage him. Ibn Abd al Barr has testified the occurrence of ascension in 52 birth of the holy Prophet. Ibn Jozi, Qazi Sulaiman Mansoor puri, Syed Maudoodi and Safi al Rahman Mubarak puri are also of the same opinion. We, then concluded that the Miraj has taken place in 27<sup>th</sup> of Rajab, 12<sup>th</sup> year of the Call. At that time the age of the Messenger was 52 years, four months and fourteen days.

The holy Quran speaks about it in its two chapters: "Al-Isra and An-Najm."

سُبْحٰنَ الَّذِيْٓ اَسْرٰى بِعَبْدِهٖ لَيْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ اِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْاَقْصَا الَّذِيْ بَرَكْنَا حَوْلَهٗ لِنُرِيَهٗ مِنْ اٰيٰتِنَا ۗ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيْرُ<sup>28</sup>

Glorious is He Who made his servant travel by night from Al-Masjid-ul-Haram to

Al-Masjid- ul-Aqsa whose environs. We have blessed, so that We let him see some of Our signs.

Surely, He is the All-Hearing, the All- Seeing. In second surah, Allah says about ascension to heavens.

عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيْدٌ الْقُوَى ۗ ذُو مِرَّةٍ فَاسْتَوَى ۗ وَهُوَ بِالْاُفُقِ الْاَعْلٰى ثُمَّ دَنَا بِالْاُفُقِ الْاَعْلٰى ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلَّى فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ اَوْ اَدْنٰى فَاَنزَلْنٰهُ اِلٰى عَيْنِهٖ مَا اَوْحٰى مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَاى اَفْتُرُوْهُ عَلٰى مَا يَرٰى وَلَقَدْ رَاٰ نَزْلَهٗ اُخْرٰى عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهٰى<sup>29</sup>

It is taught to him by one (angel) of strong faculties the one of vigour. So he stood poised, while he was on the upper horizon. Then he drew near, and came down, so as he was at a distance like that of two bows (joined together), rather even nearer.

Thus He (Allah) revealed to His slave what He revealed. The heart did not err in what he saw. Do you quarrel with him in what he sees? Indeed he saw him another time by Sidrat-ul-Muntaha, the Lote-tree in the upper realm. near which there is Jannat-ul-Ma'wa (the Paradise of Abode).

**Opening of the Chest:** The Messenger was lying in Hateem in a state midway between sleep and wakefulness. The archangel Gabriel came down to him and woke him up. He opened his breast from throat to navel, took out the heart and washed and purified it with Zamzam. Then he brought a tray filled with wisdom and faith and filled his heart therewith. He filled the prophet's breast with intelligence, patience, excellent character, knowledge, certainty and submission then he closed it, held him by his hand and rose up.<sup>30</sup>

**The Nocturnal Journey:** Anas b. Malik reports, the Messenger said, "A Buraq was brought to me. It was a white creature, larger than a donkey and smaller than a mule. It placed its foot at the end of the horizon. I mounted it. He took me to Baitul Maqdis. I tied it by the peg used by earlier Prophets. I entered the Mosque and led the Prophets in the prayer. I came out. Gabriel brought me two bowls; one of milk and the other of wine. I chose milk. Gabriel remarked, "Your choice fell on nature. Then Gabriel took me up to the heavens."<sup>31</sup>

**The Ascension:** After this, Gabriel took the Messenger in body to the heavens. He met different Prophets at different firmaments. He met Adam, the progenitor of human beings at first heaven; Jesus and John at second, Joseph at third, Enoch at fourth, Aaron at fifth, Moses at sixth and Abraham at seventh heaven. Abraham leans his back at the Bayt al Ma'mur. Seventy thousand angels enter it daily to worship and none of them will get an opportunity to enter it again till the Day of Judgement. Then he proceeded to the highest point of the Lote Tree.

The Messenger was shown paradise, its domes were made of pearl and its ground was made of pure Musk.<sup>32</sup> He also was shown Hell. He saw Gabriel near Sidra tul Muntaha in his real form. This is marked as the boundary. Gabriel told: "If I go beyond this limit, I shall be burnt by the manifestation of the Divine glory, but you are invited, so proceed." Gabriel showed him the rest of the way to go to the threshold of Divine Presence. He approached and there he heard the creaking of the Pen writing up the divine decisions and determinations and then he came into the Enclosure of the Holiness. The distance between the Lord and the guest was of two bows or even less. There following salutations were exchanged:

The Messenger said:

Blessed, pure and sincere salutation to Allah!

Allah Almighty replied:

Peace upon the O Prophet, as well as the divine mercy and blessings.

The Messenger of Allah was given three gifts:

- i- He was given five obligatory prayers a day.
- ii- He was offered him two concluding verses of sura al Baqarah that were drawn from the heavenly throne's treasure as a gift and souvenir.
- iii- Allah made him a gracious promise that those of his Ummah who do not associate partners with Allah, Allah will forgive their major sins.<sup>33</sup>

He was also given twelve commandments<sup>34</sup> as Moses was received ten commandments at Mount Sinai<sup>35</sup>. Then Messenger descended from heaven straight to Bayt al Maqdis. There he rode to Makkah on Buraq. He returned to Makkah before dawn.

"The legend of the heavenly journey confirms that God is not mute, remote prima causa but indeed a personal power who can be addressed, and thus proves that there is the possibility of fruitful person to person dialogue between creator and creature."<sup>36</sup>

#### **Narration of Mir'aj and reaction of the Infidels:**

On his return, the Messenger in a gathering of people in Ka'bah told about his nocturnal journey. Majority of Makkans were traders. They had seen Bayt al Maqdis. They asked



different types of questions about Bayt al Maqdis. “Not only did the Messenger describe the structural particularities of Bait al Maqdis rather, he even informed them of the event that took place between Makkah and Bait al Maqdis.”<sup>37</sup>

The infidels did not believe in this event but they made fun of the Messenger. They thought how can a person go and come back from Makkah to Jerusalem and from Jerusalem to Makkah with in a night, because this distance took two month to travel.

According to Hafiz Salah ud Din Yusuf<sup>38</sup> and Moulana Amin Ahsan Islahi,<sup>39</sup> it takes forty days to reach Jerusalem from Makkah. It is said that many of the Muslims became apostates on that ground. But this apostasy is absolutely unsupported by authentic sources and facts. “At the relevant time, there were only a handful of Muslims all whose names are fully known to us, it is also known that none of them ever went back their faith.”<sup>40</sup>

#### **Did Miraj occur physically or spiritually?**

In connection with al-Isra and Miraj, a number of questions arise; we shall deal with them on by one.

##### **i. How can a person travel a distance of 40 days in a single night?**

This question is very simple in context of the modern age. Now-a-days, the aeroplanes fly and cover distant distance in a few hours. The animal Buraq, as it is evident from its name Buraq, had the speed of light. So, it covered the distance in a few moments. The questions of possibility or impossibility does not arise, the restrictions of time and space apply to man, not to Allah.”<sup>41</sup>

In the Ascension, the Prophet has moved with the speed of the spirit and travelled through all times, space and dimensions of existence in a very short period.”<sup>42</sup>

In the modern age of science, man has invented aeroplanes and jets of very fast speed. He had also made sputniks, appolos and satellites to reach the Moon and further to the Mars.

سبق ملا ہے یہ معراج مصطفیٰ سے مجھے کہ عالم بشریت کی ذمہ میں ہے گردوں<sup>43</sup>

The man of modern age has invented electricity. Its speed is 186000 miles per second. The Buraq of Allah had far fast speed than electricity. After Ein Stien’s theory of Relativity, modern Physics have proved that if a body will travel with the speed of light, time would be stopped. Here we want to give the example of stop watch. If you stop it at some point, it will remain at the same point and time will be suspended. Similarly Allah had suspended system of the universe. And after this journey He restored this system of the universe.

“Knowledge of Physical laws now has made it possible for human beings to get out of the gravitation force of the Earth with the utmost speed which is being done with the help of aerial

and cosmos machines. According to Ein Stien theory of relativity, which has gained universal acceptance, there is no such thing as gravitational force.”<sup>44</sup>

ii. **Did Miraj occur in sleeping or wakefulness?**

The Messenger was lying one night within the enclosure of the Ka’ba (Hatim). Gabriel made him to stand. He also split his chest and washed his heart with Zamzam. The Messenger mounted to the Buraq. He offered the prayers in Bait al Maqdis. He was also introduced to earlier Prophets. All these were taken place in wakefulness. According to Ibn Hajar; Isra and Miraj took place in the state of wakefulness with the body and soul<sup>45</sup>.

iii. **Did the Messenger ascend bodily to heavens?**

The writer of the article on Miradj in The Encyclopaedia of Islam has stated, "In development of the story of ascension, Muslim writers have used models afforded them by the Jewish and Christians Apocalypses. A few features may also from the Zoroastrians from the Arda Viraf. He wrote on the behalf of Tor Andrae, the question was raised whether the ascension was a dream or a reality and the objection was also raised to the assertion that Muhammad on this occasion saw God face to face. According to him the Quranic word ruya implies that the night journey was not on a real journey but a vision".<sup>46</sup>

It is a very important question relating this incident. On his return from heavens, the Messenger expressed his experiences of Al-Isra and Miraj to the Makkans. They did not believe in him. Muslim scholars have different opinions whether Nocturnal Journey and Ascension took place in a literal or spiritual sence. There are two opinions regarding Miraj.

(a)- It was mere a dream.

(b)- The Messenger went to Bait-al Maqdis and then heaven physically.

According to Urjun, the Ummah is one in this – except for a few varied opinions which in fact have not come to us through trustworthy reports such those of Ayesha, Mu’awiyah and Hassan Basri<sup>47</sup>.

Here we come to analyze the first opinion at first the group of traditionists who favour the view that the Miraj was only a Roya. They do not think that Roya of the Messenger was comparable to the Roya of the common man. They argue this verse in the favour of their viewpoint.

وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الرُّءْيَا الَّتِي أَرَيْنَاكَ إِلَّا فِتْنَةً لِلنَّاسِ<sup>48</sup>

And We did not make the vision We showed to you, but a test for the people.

Here, we must ponder over the actual words and then meanings of authentic narrations. Abdullah Ibn Abbas has narrated that this verse pertains to the Miraj. In Arabic language, the

word roya is used for a dream. However, Ibn Abbas explained that the word roya means observation by the eye.<sup>49</sup>

If roya is mere a dream, how can a dream be a test or trial for the people and the Makkans did not deny this incident. The word roya is used in Arabic both for the vision in dream and seeing with the physical eyes. The well known Arabic poet Mutanabbi says,

مغى الليل والفضل الذى لك لا يمضى      ورو ياك اطلى فى العيون من الخمض<sup>50</sup>

This night is over, but your praise is not exhausted. Your seeing with the eyes is more enchanting than your vision in a state of slumber.

According to Ibn Kathir, the view of the majority, both ancient and later ones hold that the night journey took place with body and soul.<sup>51</sup>

Sharik b. Abdullah reported a narration of Anas that it was an experience in a dream of the eye's and awakening of the heart.<sup>52</sup>

Qadi Iyad in Shifa and Imam Nawawi in Sharah Muslim have said that there are doubts in this report of Sharik, so they rejected this report. According to the report of Malik b. Sasa'ah, the Messenger said, "While I was lying in the Hateem or Hijr."<sup>53</sup>

Sirah Ibn Hisham has mentioned a report on the authority of Muhammad Ibn Ishaq narrated by Amir Muawiya and Ayesha. According to this report, Miraj was spiritual and true visions. Mu'tazalities have the opinion that the prophet was carried in spirit to Jerusalem and heavens while his body remained at Makkah.

i. It is reported by Ibn Hamid that he was told by Aslamah who was told by Muhammad b. Ishaq that some one of the family of Abu Bakr told him that Ayesha used to say that the Prophet's body did not disappear from them but his soul was taken in the night journey.

ii. It is reported by Muhammad Ibn Ishaq that Yaqoob Ibn Utbah b. Mughirah said that when Mu'awiyah Ibn Abu Sufyan was asked about the Miraj he would say that it was a true vision from Allah.<sup>54</sup>

As for the first report, there is also no mention of the name of a family member of Abu Bakr who told Ibn Ishaq from Ayesha. We do not know who was the family member and what was his status among traditionists. Hence this report is not sound.

According to words of the report, the body of the Messenger was not disappeared. At this night Ayesha was not in the house of the Messenger. But she was at her father's home, because she went to her husband's home after hijrah. Secondly, the Messenger was lying in Hatim before going to

Bait al Maqdis and heavens. Thirdly; in this report, the chain of narrators includes Muhammad ibn Ishaq, another reason of the rejection of this report is that according to Imam Malik; Muhammad ibn Ishaq is not reliable, he is a liar and dijal. The second report has a broken chain. Yaqoob did not hear himself from Muawiyah. Yaqoob never met any of Prophet's companions. Dr Mahdi Rizqullah states that Muawiyah opinion lacks a strong chain of transmitters, coming down through ibn Ishaq. Al-Tabari strongly favoured the belief that the prophet was transported literally, with his body and while awake. Imam Nawawi has written in Sharah Muslim, "We find most of the people, majority of our predecessors and the general body of the latter day jurist, scholars of Hadith and scholastic philosophers that is the Miraj of the Prophet was physical with his body."<sup>55</sup>

Qadi Iyad writes in Al-Shifa, "Most of the scholars of Islam of early days and majority of the Muslim had this belief that Miraj was taken place physically and in the state of awaking. And this is the opinion of Umar, Ali, Ibn Abbas, Ibn Masood, Huzafa, Anas, Abu Hurayrah, Jabir, Malik B. Sasa'ah."<sup>56</sup>

According to Hafiz Ibn Qayyam:

ثم اسرى بروحه وجسده الى المسجد الاقصى ثم عرج به الى فوق السماوات بجسده و روحه<sup>57</sup>

Shah Waliullah stated that the event of Isra and Miraj took place physically in wakeful state.<sup>58</sup>

Qadi Iyad is himself of the opinion that the whole incident of Miraj was occurred with body and soul. And the verses of the Holy Quran and sahih and authentic ahadith also testify this idea."<sup>59</sup>

Here we give some arguments to prove that Miraj was physical. Syed Maudoodi states in the explanation of

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَا<sup>60</sup>

Glorious is He Who made his servant travel by night from Al-Masjid-ul-Haram to Al- Masjid-ul-Aqsa.

The word Subhana is an expression asserting something unusual and marvelous that is far from being false and untrue. To start with these word's shows that this is the greatest event is of great importance and this event occurred due to unlimited power of Mighty God. The words make it clear that Allah took his slave also prove physical travel. This was a physical tour and the Messenger observed all these wonders with his physical eyes on the invitation of Allah.<sup>61</sup>

Allah has opened surah Al- Isra with the word of glorification to express His power. Any opening with the mention of glorification is not employed except for things extraordinary that reason does not easily accept. The word Abd in Arabic language is used for the body and soul.

The Quran also uses the word Isra for Miraj that signifies a journey both of body and soul during the night.

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَسْرِ بِعِبَادِي أَنْتُمْ تُتَّبَعُونَ<sup>62</sup>

And we inspired Moses saying: Take away my slaves by night, for ye will be pursued.

إِنَّا رُسُلُ رَبِّكَ لَنْ يُصَلِّتُوا إِلَيْكَ فَاسْرُ بِأَهْلِكَ بِقِطْعٍ مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ<sup>63</sup>

O verily we are Messengers of thy Lord; They shall not read thee. So travel in a part of the night.

The word Isra specifies travel by night. Bani Israel travelled with Moses during night. This verse obviously refers to bodily movement not spiritual.

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَىٰ بِعَبْدِهِ

Abd is a word that is used for both body and soul. Soul did not travel but fly and body can travel. The word lailan means part of a night which means this miraculous journey was under taken a short span of time by night.

If Miraj was mere a vision or dream; the pagans of Makkah did not deny it, because a person sees wonderful things in dream. They would not have ridiculed and made fun of him. A dream could never have created such a wide spread discussions as this marvelous incident did. The events attached with Miraj such as opening of the chest, riding on Buraq, offering the prayers, climbing up the ladder, drinking of the milk, all these attest physical Miraj.

The disbelievers on their part went to see Abu Bakr on account of this event, he at once said: “Yes, I do verify it.” It was on this occasion that he earned the title of As- Siddique (The Most truthful).<sup>64</sup>

Shah Wali Allah says: “On the occasion of Miraj the holy Prophet was taken first Masjid Aqsa and then unto the Lote tree and where ever God willed and the event occurred to him bodily in a state of wakefulness, but at a point midway between the spiritual and physical (worlds) where the characteristics of both the worlds are present. For this reason the soul started to extend its domain over the body and the body under the influence of the spiritual dominance began to influence the affairs of the soul.”<sup>65</sup>

#### **Did the Messenger see Allah with his eyes?**

Another question arises here is most important. Did the Messenger see Allah with his eyes?

There is divergence of opinion concerning this matter. The Muslim scholars and also the companions of the Messenger are divided into two schools of thoughts.

- i. First school accepts that the Messenger saw the Lord.

- ii. Second school denies this, according to this school, the Messenger saw Gabriel in his original form.

In Sura An-Najm, Allah says:

عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَى ذُو مِرَّةٍ فَاسْتَوَى وَهُوَ بِالْأُفُقِ الْأَعْلَى ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلَّى فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَى فَأَوْحَى إِلَى عَبْدِهِ مَا أَوْحَى مَا كَذَّبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَى أَفَتُمَرُّونَهُ عَلَى مَا يُرَى وَلَقَدْ رَأَهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَى عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَى<sup>66</sup>

It is taught to him by one (angel) of strong faculties the one of vigour. So he stood poised, while he was on the upper horizon. Then he drew near, and came down, so as he was at a distance like that of two bows (joined together), rather even nearer. Thus He (Allah) revealed to His slave what He revealed. The heart did not err in what he saw. Do you quarrel with him in what he sees? Indeed he saw him another time by Sidrat-ul-Muntaha, the Lote-tree in the upper realm.

These are the verses of the Holy Quran on which the companions are divided. Some of them said that Allah Almighty was sighted by the Messenger. But most of them thought that the Messenger saw an archangel Gabriel.

Sharik b. Abdullah has narrated a hadith on the authority of Anas b. Malik, which concluded, "The Messenger reached up to Sidra tul Muntaha and the Lord of Honour came closer and leaned forward till there was between them the distance of two arrows or less than that."

Imam Muslim has remarked about Sharik. Sharik has put the events in his narration out of order and added or deducted text. Yahya Ibn Saeed al Qattan says: "Hadith must not be transmitted from him." Imam Nisai does not regard him as sound. Many other reporters have narrated the miraculous incident of al-Isra wal-Miraj on the authority of Anas but none of them has (related) these words. Perhaps Sharik has added these words on his own behalf. For this reason the scholars of Hadith have rejected this addition. Imam Khattabi commented, "There is no other Hadith in Saheeh Bukhari as much open to objection as this Hadith."<sup>67</sup>

Hazrat Abdullah Ibn Abbas has narrated that the Messenger saw Allah Almighty near Sidra tul Muntaha.<sup>68</sup> Another narration of Ibn Abbas is that Muhammad (pbuh) saw his Lord with his heart twice, not with the eyes. Imam Ahmad related that he saw Allah with his two eyes. This is held by Abu al Hasan Ash'ary and Imam Nawwawi too.<sup>69</sup> Moulana Idrees Kandelvi, Anwar shah Kashmiri, Shabbir Ahmad Usmani<sup>70</sup> and Pir Karam Shah have the same opinion. Hadith related by Muslim on the authority of Abu Zarr that the Messenger did not see Allah. He asked, "O Messenger of Allah, did you see Allah?" He said, "He is Light. How can I see it?"

Ka'ab al Ahbar met Ibn Abbas and said, "Allah has divided between Moses and Muhammad (pbuh), His speech and His sight. Thus Moses was honoured twice with His speech and

Muhammad (pbuh) twice with His sight.” Masrooq told this to Ayesha. She was much disturbed on hearing this. She rejected and denied the vision of Allah with physical eyes. She presented a verse from the holy Quran.

لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْأَبْصَارُ ۖ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْأَبْصَارَ ۗ<sup>71</sup>

No vision can comprehend Him, and He comprehends all visions,

Masrooq, a student of Ayesha asked her,

1. “Mother of the faithful! Did the Prophet see Allah?” She said, “What you say makes my hair stand on end! There are three things which of anyone narration to you know that he is a liar.

(a)- The person who says that the Messenger saw Allah is a liar, because Allah himself says:

وَمَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَنْ يُكَلِّمَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا وَخِيًا أَوْ مِنْ وَرَائِ حِجَابٍ<sup>72</sup>

It is not (possible) for a human being that Allah speaks to him, except by way of revelation, or from behind a curtain.

She stated again that the Messenger had not seen Allah. However, he saw Gabriel twice in his real appearance<sup>73</sup>

Ayesha says, “First of all, I had myself asked the Prophet about it and he said that he was Gabriel and he had not seen in his real form except those two times.”<sup>74</sup>

Abu Zarr Ghifari asked the Messenger, “O Messenger of Allah! Have you ever seen Allah? He said, “He is light. How can I see Him? We learn from another hadith that he said, “I have seen only a light”<sup>75</sup>

According to Abdullah Ibn Masood, the Messenger saw Gabriel with six hundred wings.<sup>76</sup> Abu Hurayrah also says that same thing is reported by Imam Muslims. Imam Bayhaqi state that the reports of Ayesha. Ibn Masood and Abu Hurayrah are correct that deal with the vision of Gabriel.

#### **Signs seen by the Messenger:**

Syed Maudoodi also discusses this in detail in Tafhim ul Quran. He concludes that the Messenger did not see Allah. He saw Gabriel twice. He argues that the aim of Miraj was to see the Messenger Allah’s signs. He quotes two verses from the Holy Quran.

لِنُرِّيَهُ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا<sup>77</sup>

So that We let him see some of Our signs.

لَقَدْ رَأَى مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرَى<sup>78</sup>

He has indeed seen a part of the biggest signs of your Lord.

The Prophet saw wonderful signs of his Lord. Opening of the Chest was a great sign. He saw Buraq and rode on it, travelling with the speed of light. He was taken from Makkah to Madinah, Toor, Hebron, Bait al Laham and Bait al Maqdis. He was welcomed and greeted by the earlier prophets and led them in prayers. The most beautiful Ladder was taken for him to ascend the heavens. The prophet said, I had never seen such a beautiful thing. Further, he was ascended to seven heavens where he met Adam, Jesus, John, Joseph, Enoch, Aaron, Moses and Abraham. He also saw angels. Hell was shown to him on the first firmament. He also saw Bait al Ma'mur and Sidra tul Muntaha. There four rivers; two hidden rivers of Paradise named the Salsabeel and the Kousar, and two open rivers named The Nile and the Euphrates were seen by him. Paradise was observed by him near Sidra tul Muntaha. He saw Gabriel in his true shape with 600 wings and huge figure. These greatest signs were shown to him and this was the main purpose of Isra and Miraj.

Martin lings very beautifully summarized this discussion. "The summit of his ascent was the Lote tree of the Uttermost End. So it is named in Quran, and in one of the oldest commentaries, based on the sayings of the Prophet, it is said: 'The Lote tree is rooted in the throne, and it marks the end of the knowledge of every knower, be he archangel or prophet. All beyond it is a hidden mystery, unknown to any save God Alone.'" At this summit of the universe Gabriel appeared to him in all his archangelic splendor, even he was first created. Then in the words of revelation: when there enshrouded the Lote tree that which enshroudeth, the eye waned not nor did it transgress. Verily be beheld, of all the signs of his Lord, the greatest."<sup>79</sup> Dr. Israr Ahmad<sup>80</sup> and Hafiz Salah ud Din Yousuf have also the same ideas as Syed Maudoodi.<sup>81</sup> Hafiz Ibn Hajr, Imam Razi, Imam Qartubi, Moulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi and Mufti Muhammad Shafi have the opinion that the prophet did not see Allah with his physical eyes.<sup>82</sup>

**Conclusion:** This marvelous event occurred due to unrestricted power of Allah Almighty. The word Subhan made it clear that Allah took his slave also proved physical travel. This was a physical tour and the Messenger observed all these wonders with his physical eyes. The Messenger did see a lot of wondrous signs of Allah. This incident was a great trial and test of the companions' belief in Allah. They overcame it and this added more to their belief and faith in Allah.

This incident proved the importance and sacredness of Jerusalem. Allah has created mankind and jinn for His Ibadah; so, He made five prayers obligatory on this occasion to fulfill this purpose. This unique incident is the source of inspiration and motivation for the believers to



keep steadfast on the path of Faith and Islam. It is the belief of the Muslims that Jesus was ascended to heavens alive. If Jesus can ascend than why did Muhammad (pbuh) not do accordingly?

The Quran and the Miraj are the greatest miracles in the history of mankind. The Messenger was given the status (Miraj) that was not conferred upon any other Prophet, because Miraj is the hall mark of the greatness and exaltedness of the Messenger.

### REFERENCE & NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Collier's Encyclopedia, vol.16, P. 345
- <sup>2</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica Vol.17, P. 403
- <sup>3</sup> The Encyclopedia of Religions, Vol. 9, P. 542.
- <sup>4</sup> Imam Raghīb, Mufradat al Quran Vol. 2, P. 222
- <sup>5</sup> Al- Maidah, 5:31
- <sup>6</sup> Ihya Uloom --Din, Vol. II, P 384
- <sup>7</sup> Tafseer Kabir, Vol4, P. 455
- <sup>8</sup> Al Baqrah, 20: 259
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid, 2: 260
- <sup>10</sup> Al-Baqrah 2:57
- <sup>11</sup> Al-Imran 3:49
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid, 3:124
- <sup>13</sup> Ta-Ha, 20:70
- <sup>14</sup> Schimmel, Annemare, And Muhammad is His Messenger P.161
- <sup>15</sup> The Encyclopaedia of Religion, Vol. 15, p. 547
- <sup>16</sup> Encyclopedia of the Quran Vol. 3, P. 392
- <sup>17</sup> Encyclopedia of the Quran Vol. 1, P. 176
- <sup>18</sup> Lewis, Bernard, The Arabs in History P. 45
- <sup>19</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica Vol.17, P406
- <sup>20</sup> The Prophet of Islam, Vol.1, P.263,
- <sup>21</sup> Syed Moudoodi, Tafheem ul Quran Vol. 2, P.588
- <sup>22</sup> Tabqaat Vol.1, P.281
- <sup>23</sup> Muhadith Vol. 26, No.6 June 2000, P.10
- <sup>24</sup> Urdu Daiera Maarif Islamia 19/39 P.U 1986
- <sup>25</sup> Shibli, Sirat un Nabi Vol. 3, P.281
- <sup>26</sup> Seerat Halbia 2/472
- <sup>27</sup> Maghazi Urwah bin Zubair P. 120

- <sup>28</sup> Al-Isra, 17:1
- <sup>29</sup> An-Najm, 53:5-14
- <sup>30</sup> Bukhari: H:4709, 4710, 3886, 3887, 3888, 4856, Muslim: H:163, 164
- <sup>31</sup> Bukhari: 5610, 5576
- <sup>32</sup> Al-Bukhari H. 349, Muslim 1/149/H 163
- <sup>33</sup> Muslim: 173
- <sup>34</sup> Al-Isra, 17:23-39
- <sup>35</sup> Exodus, 20:3-17, Deuteronomy, 5:6-21
- <sup>36</sup> Schimmel, And Muhammad is His Messenger P. 164
- <sup>37</sup> Dr. Abdul Kareem Awad, Al-isra, wal Meraj, P.13, Bukhari, H:4710
- <sup>38</sup> Yusuf, Hafiz Salah ud Din, Waqia Miraj P.17
- <sup>39</sup> Islahi, Amin Ahsan, Tadabr ul Quran Tafseer Isra
- <sup>40</sup> The Last Prophet and this teachings. P. 265. 1986
- <sup>41</sup> Syed Moudoodi, Sirat Sarwar Aalam: Vol. 2, P.646
- <sup>42</sup> Awad, Dr. Abdul Karim, Al- Isra and Meraj , P.85
- <sup>43</sup> Iqbal, Bal-Gabriel, P.
- <sup>44</sup> Azad, Ghulam Murtaza, Islamic studies, vol. 22 No.2, Islamabad. Summer 1983.
- <sup>45</sup> Al-Fath, vol. 15, p.44
- <sup>46</sup> The Encyclopaedia of Islam, vol. vii, pp.98-99
- <sup>47</sup> Urjun, Muhammad Rasulullah, vol.3, pp. 242-250
- <sup>48</sup> Al-Isra17:60
- <sup>49</sup> Bukhari, H. 3888, 4716
- <sup>50</sup> Shibli, Sirat un Nabi
- <sup>51</sup> Ibn Kathir, Al Seerah al Nabviya Vol. 1, p.203
- <sup>52</sup> Bukhari 3570, 7517
- <sup>53</sup> Bukhari: 3887
- <sup>54</sup> Tafseer Tabari, Sirat Ibn Hisham
- <sup>55</sup> Commentry on Muslim, Chap. Al Isra 1/91
- <sup>56</sup> Al-Shifa 1/279
- <sup>57</sup> Ibn Qayyam, Za'd al Ma'd, Vol.1, P.99
- <sup>58</sup> Shah Walliallah, Hujjatallah al Baligha, Vol. P.
- <sup>59</sup> Al-Shifa, Vol.1, P. 280
- <sup>60</sup> Al-Isra 17:1
- <sup>61</sup> Tafheem ul Quran Vol. 2, P. 579
- <sup>62</sup> Ash-Shuara 26:52

- <sup>63</sup> Hud, 11:81
- <sup>64</sup> Ibn Hisham, 1
- <sup>65</sup> Hijatullah hil Baligha , P 569
- <sup>66</sup> An-Najm, 53:5-14
- <sup>67</sup> Fath Al-Bari 3/403, 404
- <sup>68</sup> Trimdhi Tafseer Sura An-Najm
- <sup>69</sup> Sirat un Nabi 1/202 Ibn Kathir
- <sup>70</sup> Kandelvi, Moulana Idrees, Muarif al Quran, Vol. 7, p. 567
- <sup>71</sup> Al-Ana'am 6:103
- <sup>72</sup> Ash-Shura 42:51
- <sup>73</sup> Bukhari 4855
- <sup>74</sup> Sahih Muslim Chap. Al-isra, P. 337
- <sup>75</sup> Muslim Chap. Al-Isra
- <sup>76</sup> Bukhari, Muslim, Trimdhi
- <sup>77</sup> Al-Isra117:1
- <sup>78</sup> An-Najm, 53:18
- <sup>79</sup> Lings, Martin, Muhammad His Life Based on the Earliest Sources. P. 102
- <sup>80</sup> Dr. Israr Ahmad, Miraj un Nabi P. 33
- <sup>81</sup> Yusuf, Salah ud Din, The event of Miraj and its observations P. 80-81
- <sup>82</sup> Mufti Shafi, Muarif al Quran, Vol.5, p. 197