A look at the Miraculous Aspect of Quran

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Abstract*: most Quran interpreters and scholars have arguments regarding the miraculous aspect of Quran. Some of them put more emphasize on rhetoric and literary aspects of it and some others on spiritual and meaning of it.*

The issues concerning miraculous aspect of Quran can be considered of two parts: the first one why has not the word miracle been mentioned in Quran per.se. and if it is true to apply this word for verses of Quran?

The second, why, in Quran and traditions of infallibles, is there no talk of eloquence and rhetoric of Quran? But instead some descriptions like guidance, Light, reason, proof, Sultan,… have been used. The meaning-wise and content-wise miraculous aspect of Quran are more important than eloquence and rhetoric of it and some Shia scholars highly emphasized on them.

Key words*: miracle, aspects of miracle, rhetoric miracle, eloquence and rhetoric, meaning-, and content-based miracle, verse, reason, proof, □ ujjat, guidance, ta□ add i (challeng*

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Introduction

since the first Islamic centuries, Quran interpreters and Muslim scholars endeavored to study about the miraculous aspects of the holy Quran and mentioned various aspects by supporting their claims by Quranic examples and proofs. Some of the miraculous aspects are due to Quran's rhetoric and eloquence and some on the spiritual and content of Quran like its guidance, truth and guidance.

Rhetoric miracle

Those who are emphasizing on rhetoric miracle of Quran, say what which is present in all surahs of this book is that extraordinary eloquence and rhetoric which is beyond imagination and as Quran challenges people to bring even one surah like its surahs, we can conclude that this miraculous aspect can be seen in all surahs while some of the mentioned aspect [content-based miracle] is not present for all surahs for example predicting unseen or scientific miracles.

In addition to it, the miraculous aspect of Quran in terms of content should be certified by the companions of prophet and the people of his time, while a lot of content-based miracles of Quran like scientific news of it or speaking about Unseen which were declared in next centuries and did not regard as a miracle for the people of that time.

"Majority of Quranic science scholars and interpreters emphasis on the eloquence and rhetoric of Quran. Allameh Majlisi, after a discussion about verses and traditions about miracle, wrote,

Regarding the miraculous aspect of I jaz, Majority of Ammeh and Khasseh, including sheikh Mofid believe that the miraculous aspect of Quran is because it belongs to the highest level of rhetoric and eloquence. And the people of rhetoric by their different tastes and people of

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eloquence by their skills can realize it; a kind of rhetoric and eloquence which is used in different aspects of it like news about unseen, heavenly knowledge, resurrection day, morality, scientific Hikmah, and practical Hikmah and religious and worldly benefits." [i]

Ibn Sinan Khufaji (466 A.H.), the Shia literary scholar and a poet wrote in the introduction of "Sir al-Fisahah" :

For anyone who desires to discuss the miraculous aspect of Quran, there is no way unless he becomes familiar with the secrets of rhetoric and eloquence. [ii]

Qutb al-Din Rāwandi, the great Shia scholar, in his book titles "al-Kharāi□j wa al-Jarāi□□" about miraculous aspect of Quran spoke in details and after mentioning seven parts of it, wrote:

"the closest saying among these sayings to truth and logic is the saying of the one who regards the miracle in Quran's rhetoric; as it is above the ability of all men of rhetoric and this can be a miracle." [iii]

The well-known Shia great scholar, Khajeh Nasir al-Din Tusi, (672 A.H.), wrote in his great book "Tajrid al-I□tiqād",

"Regarding the miraculous aspect of Quran, some said it is because of its rhetoric and some said it is because of its method and rhetoric both, and some others believed it is due to its Ijaz (succinct sayings). And all of these ideas are feasible."

Allamah □illi (762 A.H.), the famous Shia religious scholar wrote in his explanation on the saying of Khajeh while he also confirmed these three possibilities,

"The people of Haq (thruth) recognized the miraculous aspect of Quran in its eloquence and method." [iv]

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The public scholars also since a long time ago have been emphasizing on the miraculous aspect of the holy Quran. Abu Hilāl Askar i (4th century) wrote in the introduction of the book " al- Sanā atyn",

"After knowing God, the Almighty, the most suitable science to learn and to keep is the science of rhetoric and eloquence which the miracles of God's book can be recognized through them." [v]

Abul asan Ali ibn Isā Ramāni, in the book al-Nikat lil I jaz al-Qurān, named seven aspects of miraculous entity of Quran and explained them. These aspects are as the following: non-incompatibility, challenging all, succinct language, rhetoric, news about Unseen, breaking ordinaries, and comparing it with other miracles. But it worth mentioning that in this book, only the aspect of rhetoric has been explained to some extent, and the other aspects are mentioned briefly. In fact this book, without refuting other miraculous aspects dealt with the Quranic rhetoric in details, and mentioned various Quranic examples asserting his claim.

Abu Sulaymān Khatābi said,

"The Holy Quran is a miracle as it joins the most eloquent words with the best order and meter to express the most correct meanings." [vi]

Qādi Bāqilāni, in his famous book " Ijāz al-Quran", regards rhetoric and eloquence as the aspects of Quran's miracle and wrote, " anyone who is familiar with the aspect of [science] of speaking and knows rhetoric and eloquence will find Quran as a miracle." [vii]

Jurjāni wrote in his two books " Dalail al-Ijaz" and " Asrar al-Balaghah", about rhetoric of Quran and named it as meter. He wrote, " Arabs were unable to bring something similar to Quran. And Quran challenged them to bring whatever they can regardless of its content which enjoyed the similar rhetoric and meter close to Quran." [viii]

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Zamakhshari, the famous interpreter wrote, “ to understand the miracle of the holy Prophet and the intricate details of his reasons and proof on his prophethood, there is no way unless knowing the science of Ilm Mana and Bayann [science of meaning and rhetoric].” [ix]

Fakhr Razi wrote in his book “ Nahayah al-Ijaz fi Dirayah al-Ijaz”, “ the most reasonable aspect of Quran as being a miracle is in its eloquence.” [x]

A review over literal and rhetoric miracle

In reviewing literal and rhetoric miracle we can point to two parts. First, applying the word miracle to the verses, explaining reasons of infallibles and prophets. Second, a review over those opinions which regards rhetoric and eloquence the basic aspect of Quran being a miracle.

The word Ijaz

The word Ijaz literally means to make unable as it is said , “

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And according to Mutekallemin, it means to express something unusual and extraordinary which is compatible with the claims of the one who says he is a prophet. [xi] Or it is expressing something unusual which challenges others and people are unable to bring something like it. [xii]
Or a prophet to prove his prophethood does something unusual and makes something happen while others are unable to do that. [xiii]

But the word Ijaz in the holy Quran has not been used in this meaning and instead of it other words like Ayah, Bayyinah, Hujjat, Burhan, Sultan,… have been used. For example, about God we read,

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Saturday, 08 October 2016 00:17 -

فَلِلّهِ الْحُجَّةُ الْبالِغَةُ

“say: 'Allah alone has the conclusive proof” (6:149)

Or about prophets,

جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ

“…their messengers came with clear signs,…” (9:9)

Or about Ibrahim,

تِلْکَ حُجَّتُنا آتَيْناها إِبْراهيمَ عَلى قَوْمِهِ

“Such is the argument that we gave Abraham against his nation.” (6:83)

About Bani Israil,

سَلْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ كَمْ آتَيْنَاهُمْ مِنْ آيَةٍ بَيِّنَةٍ

“ask the children of Israel how many clear signs we have given them.”(2:211)

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6 / 14

A look at the Miraculous Aspect of Quran

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Saturday, 08 October 2016 00:17 -

About Moses,

وَ لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَى بِآيَاتِنَا وَ سُلْطَانٍ مُّبِين

“We sent Moses with our signs and with clear authority”(40:23)

And also,

وَ اضمُمْ يَدَک إِلی جَنَاحِک تخْرُجْ بَيْضاءَ مِنْ غَيرِ سوءٍ ءَايَةً أُخْرَی

“Now, put your hand under your armpit. It shall come out white, without evil, a second sign.”(20:22)

The birth of Isa from Maryam is called a miracle and says,

جَعَلْنَا ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَأُمَّهُ آيَةًو

“we made the son of Mary and his mother a sign” (23:50)

About the holy Quran,

بَلْ هُوَ آيَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ فِي صُدُورِ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَمَا
يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا الظَّالِمُونَ

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7 / 14

“No, rather they are clear verses in the chests of those who have been given knowledge. None disbelieves our verses except the harmdoers.” (29:49)

And also says,

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“O people, a proof has come to you from your lord, and we have sent down to you a clear light.”(4:174)

Not only the word Ijaz has not been used in the holy Quran but also it has not been used in the discussions and argues among scholars of different religions. The books which have been written in the first three centuries of Islam which are about the wonders of Quran did not point out to Ijaz like Majaz al-Quran by Abu Ubaidah, Maani al-Quran by Fara, the meter of Quran by Jahiz, Tawil moshkil al-Quran by ibn Qutaybah.

The first book which was written by the title of Ijaz Quran was by Muhammad ibn Yazid Wasiti. After that a novel titled al-Nakt lil Ijaz al-Quran, a book by Abu Sulayman Khatabi titled Bayan Ijaz al-Quran, a book named Ijaz al-Quran by Baghilani, al-Risalah al-Shafiyah fi al-Ijaz wa Dalail al-Ijaz both by Abdul Qahir Jurjani, Nahayah al-Ijaz fi Dirayah al-Ijaz by Fakhr Razi and so on and so forth.

The difference between a miracle and a bayyinah is this point that a miracle means to make unable but Ayyah and Bayyinah means a proof and reason and the aim of it is not to make unable but the goal is to provide a proof , a reason which proves the claim of prophets, and a guide to God. Those whose hearts are pure will not ever stand up against right to force prophets to revoke to miracles.

Eloquence and rhetoric

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The holy Quran and traditions of prophet and infallible imams did not point out to the eloquence and rhetoric of Quran as a miracle. Though the holy Quran is extraordinary and unique regarding its rhetoric and eloquence and no human being can compete it. But the rhetoric and eloquence which belongs to the face of words and meaning-frame which fulfill this book. These elements elevate this book above all other things even the previous holy books.

Some of attributes that Quran counts for itself are as guidance, Hikmah, science, Burhan, Basair, Shifa, Ruh, advise, light, Bayyinat. For example,

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"We have indeed heard a wonderful Koran" (72:1)

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"Surely this Quran guides to that which is most upright" (17:9)

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"A proof has come to you from your lord" (4:174)

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"These are clear proofs for people, a guidance, and mercy"(45:20)

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"***an admonition has now come to you from your lord, and a healing for what is in the chests, a guide and a mercy to believers." (10:57)***

The holy prophet also described Quran by these attributes. For example, in a tradition from him, we read, Quran is an accepted intercessor and an honest witness. Anyone who sets it as his leader, will go to heaven and anyone who leaves it will end up in hell. Quran is a guide which guides to the best paths. It surface is hikmah and its depth is a wonder. The wonder of its Hikmah will not expire by passing the time and its strange secrets will not wear out by frequent reciting. Quran is the stable rope of God and the right path is this. Anyone who speaks according to its commands is truth teller and anyone who judge based on it is just and anyone who puts its orders into practice will be salvated. [xiv]

Regarding these attributes, isn't it a negligence on behalf of us to consider the highest miracle of it in its rhetoric and eloquence?

In addition to it, there are some signs in the verses challenging all to bring verse like Quran which can clear the miraculous aspect of Quran. For example, in a verse,

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"say: 'if what you say is true, bring down from Allah a book that is a better guidance than both, I will follow it!" (28:49)

It is clear that if the miraculous aspect of Quran was in its eloquence and rhetoric the verse should be like this:

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say: 'if what you say is true, bring a book more eloquent and rhetoric than Quran.

Or in another verse,

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“say: 'if mankind and jinn combined together to produce the like of this Quran, they would never be able to produce one like it, not even if they were to help one another. “ (17:88)

It is clear that if the miraculous aspect of Quran was only rhetoric and eloquence, it should be,

Question: some of those who claim the miraculous aspect of Quran is because of its rhetoric and eloquence refers to a tradition from Imam Abul Hasan in which there are some points about the similarity of the miracles of prophets with the sciences of their ages. They said, as at the time of Prophet eloquence and rhetoric were common among Arabs, so it should be regarded as the miracle of Quran.” [xv]

The mentioned tradition is like this: ibn Sukayt narrated from Imam Abul Hasan who said, God the Almighty appointed Moses as a prophet when people of his time were busy with magic. Moses came to them with something that they could not compete, so broke their magic and make the truth clear. God, appointed Isa when diseases were abundant and people needed medicine. Isa came to them with the proofs they could not reject. He revived dead ones… so he showed the truth to people. God appointed Muhammad when rhetoric was common among people. Prophet came to them with sermons and Hikmah. He challenged them and showed the truth. [xvi]

First: in the traditions there is no word about rhetoric and eloquence, as it is mentioned in them the common thing among people of Prophet’s time was Kilam and speech so the miracle of Prophet was the same, because the truth of Quran are words in essence and not similar to the miracles of previous prophets.

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The sentence,

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in the text of the tradition, is direct to clear that the miraculous aspect of Quran is in its great meanings and lessons not the words.

Second: in the following of this tradition which usually does not narrate, the narrator asked a question like this, so if it was like this at that time, what is our Hujjah at this time?

Imam replied,

It means by your logic look at the verse of Quran to realize its truthfulness.

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[i] Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwār, vol.17,p.224

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[ii] Khufaji, Sinan, Sir al-Fisahah, p.4

[iii] Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwār, vol.92,p.128

[iv] Tajrid al-Itiqād, p.281

[v] Abu Hilāl Askari, Kitab al-Sanā atyn, introduction

[vi] Thalāth Rasā il, p.27

[vii] "Ijāz al-Quran

[viii] Thalāth Rasā il, p.141

[ix] Al-Kashaf, vol.1, p.3

[x] Nahayah al-Ijaz fi Dirayah al-Ijaz, p.82

[xi] Kashf al-Murad, p.275

[xii] Al-Lavami al-Ilahiyah, p.212

[xiii] Al-Bayan, p.33

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[xiv] Irshad al-Qulub

[xv] Al-Bayan, p.39

[xvi] Al-Kafi, Kitab Aql and Jahl, no.20

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