

## Addenda: The Satanic Suggestion

It appears from a story narrated by many Sunni (traditionist) (fortunately this time not in their “six authentic collections”) that even after the supposed repeated removal of the pathetic satanic portion from the prophet’s heart, he fell prey to a very serious satanic suggestion --- and that too in conveying the revelation to the people!

As-Suyuti in his *ad-Durru ‘l-manthur* has quoted from ten traditionists several “traditions” to this effect, one of which is given here as a sample: –

“Ibn Abi Hatim has narrated through Musa ibn ‘Aqabah from Ibn Shahab that he said, ‘when the *Surah an-Najm* was revealed; and the polytheists used to say, “if this man (the prophet) were to mention our deities in good (terms) we would have accepted him and his companions; but he does not use such abusive and harsh words about others like the Jews and the Christians who oppose his religion, as he does about our gods”; and the messenger of Allah (s.a.w) was much distressed because of the troubles inflicted upon him and his companions by the idolaters and their rejection (of faith), and he was aggrieved by their straying; he therefore wished cessation of their harmful activities. When Allah sent down the *Surah an-Najm*, and he recited (the verses 19 and 20): *Have you then considered the Lat and the ‘Uzzah, and Manat, the third, the other?* The Satan inserted some words after the mention of the idols and said, “and surely they are the exalted cranes, and surely it is their intercession that is hoped for.”

It was the Satan’s rhymed composition and his mischief; and these two sentences entered the heart of every Meccan polytheist, and it was continuously on their tongues, and they congratulated each other and said that Muhammad had returned to his old religion and that of his people. When the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) reached the end of (the *Surah*) *an-Najm*, he prostrated and with him did prostrate every Muslim and polytheist. This word spread among the people, and the Satan propagated it, until the news reached the country of Ethiopia. Then Allah revealed:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ وَلَا نَبِيٍّ إِلَّا إِذَا تَمَنَّى أَلْقَى الشَّيْطَانُ فِي أُمْنِيَّتِهِ فَيَنْسَخُ اللَّهُ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطَانُ ثُمَّ يُحْكِمُ  
اللَّهُ آيَاتِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ

***And we did not send before thee any messenger or prophet, but when he desired, the Satan made a suggestion respecting his desire; but Allah annuls that which the Satan casts, then does Allah establish his signs, and Allah is knowing, wise. (Surah al-Hajj, 22:52)***

So when Allah made known his decision and freed him from the satanic rhymes, the polytheists turned back to their straying and their enmity of the Muslims, rather it became more serious!"[1](#)

Similar "traditions" with minor or major variations are quoted in ad-Durru 'l-manthur, vol. IV pp. 366-368.

Some of them say that the Prophet was praying in the Sacred Mosque and recited the Surah; but the fact is that the Prophet or the Muslims were not in a position to pray in the Sacred Mosque in the 5th year of the declaration of the prophethood, when this incident is said to have taken place.[2](#)

Others claim that he felt sleepy while praying and in that drowsiness the Satan made him utter these words!

Yet others say that Jibra'il came to the prophet and told him to recite again the revelation brought by him. The Prophet recited the Surah together with the satanic verses. Jibra'il said, "I had not brought this to you; it is from the Satan". Then the verse 22:52 was revealed.

Still another "tradition" says, that the Prophet, on being informed of that satanic mischief was very grieved and felt remorse for "fabricating lie against Allah". This depression continued until at the end Allah revealed the verse 22:52.

The actual meaning of the word, *al-gharaniq* (translated here as 'cranes') is obscure. It may mean wading birds (like cranes), or a soft grass growing with boxthorn, or a softskinned youth.[3](#)

There are twelve variations in as many traditions of the pathetic satanic verses, some of them difficult to understand, e.g. 'they are surely in the exalted *gharaniq*' and, 'they are surely with the exalted *gharaniq*'.

This story is so diametrically opposed to many Qur'anic realities, that it should not be glorified by comment. But seeing that it has been used by orientalist like Alfred Guillaume to discredit the Prophet's claim of divine revelation, some scrutiny is in order. After describing the story, he very "innocently" writes:

"In fact the incident is the strongest possible testimony to the sincerity of Muhammad. Of course it opens the door to the enquiry whether he may have been mistaken in supposing that his words were inspired on other occasion also."[4](#)

If this story is true then certainly this question would arise.

As mentioned elsewhere, the people had started attributing false stories and forged traditions to the Holy

Prophet (s.a.w) even during his lifetime. The Prophet (s.a.w) had to warn the Muslims against this fitnah in these words:

“Surely there are many who forge lie against me, and their number is sure to increase; whoever intentionally tells a lie against me should prepare his abode in the fire. Therefore, whenever a hadith is narrated to you, put it (for testing) before the Book of Allah and my (established) sunnah, and whatever conforms with the Book of Allah, take it, and what goes against the Book of Allah and my sunnah, reject it.”<sup>5</sup>

Therefore we must check whether this story conforms with other Qur’anic statements:

**First:** The Satan himself had admitted that he had no power over the purified servants of Allah:

قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأُزَيِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا أَغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ

قَالَ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ عَلَيَّ مُسْتَقِيمٌ

إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ إِلَّا مَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْغَاوِينَ

***‘He (Satan) said, “My Lord! ... and I will certainly cause them all to deviate, except thy servants from among them, the purified ones. He (Allah) said ... surely as regards my servants, you have no authority over them except those deviators who would follow you.” (Qur’an, 15:39–42).***

قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ

***“He (the Satan) said, ‘Then by Thy Might! I will surely make them deviate all of them, except thy servants from among them, the purified ones.’” (Qur’an, 38:82–83).***

Then how could the Satan get power over Muhammad, the most purified of all servants of Allah?

**Second:** Allah himself is the protector of the Qur’an and he guarantees that falsehood shall not come to it from any side:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

**“Surely we have revealed the reminder (the Qur’an) and most surely we are its protector.” (Qur’an, 15:9).**

وَإِنَّهُ لَكِتَابٌ عَزِيزٌ

لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ ۚ تَنْزِيلٌ مِنْ حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٍ

**“And most surely it is a mighty book; falsehood shall not come to it from before it nor from behind it; a revelation from the wise, the praised one.” (Qur’an, 41:41–42).**

Now with all this divine protection and guarantee how could the Satanic falsehood enter into it – and that also to such an extent that it was imprinted on the memory of the Prophet and he even repeated it before Jibra’il?

**Third:** Allah declares about the prophet:

وَلَوْ تَقَوَّلَ عَلَيْنَا بَعْضَ الْأَقَاوِيلِ

لَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُ بِالْيَمِينِ

ثُمَّ لَقَطَعْنَا مِنْهُ الْوَتِينَ

فَمَا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ عَنْهُ حَاجِزِينَ

**“And if he had fabricated against us some of the sayings, we would certainly have seized him by the right hand, then we would certainly have cut off his aorta; and not one of you could have withheld us from him.” (Qur’an, 69:44–47).**

Then how is it that in spite of such serious fabrication against the fundamental belief of monotheism and passing off the Satanic sayings as divine revelation, the Prophet’s aorta was not cut off?

Now let us have a glance at the *Surah an-Najm*, and see if such insertion was possible in this Surah:

**One:** At the beginning of the Surah, Allah swears that the Prophet has not erred nor has he gone astray,

nor does he speak out of desire; it is nothing but revelation that is revealed. (Vs. 1–4).

Is it not amusing that after such a sworn divine statement, the narrators had the temerity to claim that the Satan inserted his own composition in this very Surah?

Vs.5– 18 speak of the Prophet’s ascension and say that his heart was not untrue to what he saw there; and he certainly saw of the greatest signs of his lord.

**Two:** Then come the vs. 19–23 in condemnation of the idols:

“Have you then considered the Lat and the ‘Uzza, and the Manat, the third, the other? (vs. 19–20). What! For you are the males and for him the females? This indeed is an unjust division! They are nothing but names which you have named, you and your fathers; Allah has not sent for them any authority. They follow nothing but conjecture and the low desires which (their) souls incline to, while the guidance has certainly come to them from their lord.”

These “traditions” allege that the satanic rhymes were added after verse 20. How could those sentences fit in the above vs. 19–23? Were the Meccan idol-worshippers so naive that they were overjoyed and prostrated to Allah even after hearing such condemnation of their deities?

**Three:** Vs.24–26 describe Allah’s ownership of this life and the hereafter, and declare that intercession of many an angel will not avail at all except after Allah’s permission “to whom he pleases and chooses.” Vs.27–30 ridicule the idolaters’ custom of giving female names to the angels.

This right of intercession, denied even to the angels, was supposed to be bestowed upon the three idols through that interpolation!

The whole Surah proceeds in the same vein declaring Allah’s power and might and describing the punishment meted out to some previous peoples because of their disbelief and arrogance. In short, the theme of the whole Surah from the beginning to the end testifies to the incorruptibility of the divine revelation, condemns idol-worship, and emphasizes monotheism and divine power. How could that totally mismatched satanic sentence fool the idolaters?

Now, let us have a look at the V.52 of *Surah al-Hajj* (ch.22).

It is a part of a long speech, beginning with verse 49 and going to verse 54 and beyond. After declaring that the Prophet was a warner to the people, it mentions good reward of the believers and then says:

وَالَّذِينَ سَعَوْا فِي آيَاتِنَا مُعَاجِزِينَ أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ

**“And (as for) those who strive to oppose our signs, they shall be inmates of the flaming fire” (22: 51).**

Then comes verse 52:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ وَلَا نَبِيٍّ إِلَّا إِذَا تَمَنَّى أَلْقَى الشَّيْطَانُ فِي أُمْنِيَّتِهِ فَيَنْسَخُ اللَّهُ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطَانُ ثُمَّ يُحْكِمُ اللَّهُ آيَاتِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ

**“And we did not send before thee any messenger or prophet, but when he desired, the Satan made a suggestion respecting his desire; but Allah annuls that which the Satan casts, then does Allah establish his signs. And Allah is knowing, wise.” (22:52).**

And then it proceeds:

لِيَجْعَلَ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطَانُ فِتْنَةً لِلَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ وَالْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ ۗ وَإِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَفِي شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ

**“So that he may make what the Satan casts a trial for those in whose hearts is disease and those whose hearts are hard: and most surely the unjust are in a great opposition.” (22:53)**

and so it goes on.

Now let us look at the claim that the verse 52 was revealed to console the Prophet after that satanic interpolation.

**First:** Had *Surah an-Najm* and the verse 52 of *Surah al-Hajj* been connected in any way, they should have been revealed at about the same time. But even according to Rev. Rodwell, *Surah an-Najm* (ch.53) was revealed at Mecca 5 years after the declaration of the Prophethood; and *Surah al-Hajj* (ch.22) was revealed at Medina. According to the order of revelation established by Rev. Rodwell, *an-Najm* is the 46th chapter while *al-Hajj* is the 107th. (Although Muir calls it a Meccan chapter, he too believes that it must have been revealed at the very end of the Prophet’s stay at Mecca, i.e. some 8 years after *an-Najm*). There can thus be no connection between the two chapters.

**Second:** To create the connection one has to look at the verse 52 in isolation and take it out of its context. Does academic honesty allow such exercise?

**Third:** The meaning of the above-mentioned ‘ayah is plain and simple. There is no need for any story to make its meaning clear. What is the desire of every messenger and prophet? Simply, to establish in the world the belief in the unity of divine being, explaining the truth, which is revealed to him. Satan interferes in this desire of every messenger and prophet; instigating men, making suggestions to them to oppose the prophets and to put obstacles in the way of truth. But god promises to establish truth of his revelation.

Now where is the need of any story to make its meaning comprehensible?

**Fourth:** Those who want to connect the verse 22:52 with that supposed satanic interpolation, have to interpret the word *umniyyah* (desire) as “recital.” Rodwell has translated this sentence as follow: “We have not sent any apostle or prophet before thee, among whose desires Satan injected not some wrong desire.”

Then he has written the following note: “It is said by tradition that Muhammad was consoled by this revelation for the satanic suggestion mentioned in sura liii, 20, p.70 (n). But in this view of the text, for ‘among whose desires’ or ‘affections’ we should render ‘when he recited.’<sup>6</sup>

So you see, the connection cannot be established unless the meaning of “unmiyyah” is changed from desire to recitation. But “desire” is the actual meaning of the word; and recitation etc. is metaphorical extension of the true meaning. Ibn Manzur explains in his *Lisanu ‘l-‘Arab*: “Recital is called *unmiyyah* because when a reciter of the Qur’an passes from a verse of mercy, he desires (to get) it, and when he passes from a verse of chastisement, he desires to be saved from it.” Further extension has given this word meanings of lie and forgery, “because when someone says a thing he does not know, then it is as if he desires it (to happen.)”<sup>7</sup>

And it is a well-established rule of Arabic literature that the real meaning should always be given preference, unless there is some solid reason to overlook it for metaphorical interpretation. Therefore, the translations, which use the word recital and reciting, are all off the mark. And without this change, no connection can be established between the two chapters.

Thus both external and internal Qur’anic evidence goes emphatically against this story of the Prophet’s “lapse”. In view of these Qur’anic proofs, there is no need to look at the chains of its narrators. Even so, it should be mentioned here that this story appears for the first time in the book of al-Waqidi who is known to be unreliable and fabricator of reports. Moreover, six “traditions” end at one or the other *tabi’i* (disciple of a companion); and eight end at Ibn ‘Abbas who was not even born at the time this incident is said to have taken place.

Who was the person who informed those narrators about it? We do not know – probably because there was no such person; and those reports were forged by some people in later days.

Although Alfred Guillaume rejects traditions everywhere indiscriminately, he has tried to prove this “tradition” as genuine, as it suits his purpose. He has this to say against this last argument:

“Critics of tradition have endeavored to discredit the honesty of those who reported this story; but it is impossible to suggest a motive for its invention other than a desire to discredit Muhammad, the Qur’an, and Islam itself – and such a supposition in regard to sincere Muslims is absurd.”<sup>8</sup>

In other words, if the real motive is disclosed, A. Guillaume would accept this story as false. In this connection, we shall have to remind our readers of the painful reality of the early days of Islam, and that is the currency of false and gorged “*ahadith*” as briefly mentioned in pp. 94–98. Alfred Guillaume himself

has written several pages about it in this same book.

The political needs of the Umayyads brought in very many things which were totally against the Islamic faith, e.g. about the predestination of human actions. ‘Allamah Shibli Nu’mani writes:

“Although all these causes were present which were responsible for the difference in faith, yet the political differences started the ball rolling. The reign of the Umayyads was full of cruelty and bloodshed; and as against that there was a spirit of revolt among the common people; but the well-wishers of the government always silenced the people by saying that “Whatever happens takes place according to the will of the Almighty, and as such common people should not raise their voices against it at all. Everything is destined before-hand, and whatever happens, good or bad, happens according to the will of God; and we should bow down to that.”<sup>9</sup>

The Shi’as believed that their Imams were *ma’sum*, sinless. And the Umayyad caliphs were certainly not sinless. In fact most of them were more immoral and depraved than even their subjects. It is not the intention here to prove as to whose idea about the “sinlessness” was correct; it is enough to point out here that this difference of the article of faith was present there with full force. Under such circumstances, it was the easiest thing to save their sinful caliphs from serious charges by inventing stories and “*ahadith*” to show that even the Holy Prophet himself was not free from sins and satanic snares. Why should the public be concerned if their caliphs were guilty of various sins and crimes, and if they were open to the temptations of Satan?

In this background not only the motive for forging this story of the Satanic verses, but also of all attempts which were made to smear and tarnish the image of the Holy Prophet becomes clear. It was due to these forgeries that Alfred Guillaume had to say that the Sunnis did not believe in the “sinlessness” of the prophets; and that it was only after they were affected by the “sinless Imams” of the Shi’as, and the “sinless Messiah” of the Christians that they also began to believe in the “sinlessness” theory of all other prophets.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1.</sup> As-Suyuti, ad-Durru ‘l-Manthur. vol.4, p.367.

<sup>2.</sup> Ibn Sa’d, at-Tabaqat al-Kubra, Beirut, vol.I, p.206.

<sup>3.</sup> Lisanu ‘l-‘Arab, Qum, 1405/1363. vol. 10, pp.286–288.

<sup>4.</sup> Alfred Guillaume. op. cit., pp.35–36

<sup>5.</sup> Shaykh ‘Abbas al-Qummi, Safinatu ‘l-Bihar, vol. 2. p.474. Countless ahadith to this effect may be seen in the books of both sects, including Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol.I (“kitabul-‘ilm: Bab ithm man khadhiba ‘ala ‘n Nabi”) p.38

<sup>6.</sup> Rodwell, The Koran, p.58

<sup>7.</sup> Lisanu ‘l-‘Arab, Vol. 15. pp.294–295: see also al-Munjid under the root m–n–y.

<sup>8.</sup> Alfred Guillaume, op. cit., p.35.

<sup>9.</sup> Shibli Nu’mani. Ilmu ‘l-Kalam, part 1, p. 17

<sup>10.</sup> Alfred Guillaume. op. cit., p.111.

<https://www.al-islam.org/quran-and-hadith-sayyid-saeed-akhtar-rizvi/addenda-satanic-suggestion#comment-0>