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Ayat no. 69

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful
And We have not taught him poetry, nor is it meet for him; it is nothing but a reminder and a plain Quran, (***36:69***)

Allegation of magic on the Prophet and Quran

Then, after God threatened the deniers of God and the Hereafter, saying, “If We wish, We may blind them or disfigure them”, He refutes the allegation of the polytheists against Muhammad (‘s). Every falsehood, since it does not have any other weapon, resorts to false allegation to make things appear skewed. They try to show that they are right and the opposite party wrong.

By a slanderous accusation they intended to prove that a group of people has become misguided. As the Meccans were not investigative type, even if they believe a single word of their allegations, it would be effective.

When the polytheists of Mecca saw that the word of the Holy Prophet was gaining ground and Islam was advancing, people were attracted towards Quran, believing youths mocked idol worship and distanced themselves from the path of their parents, they met together to ponder what they should do to counter Muhammad (‘s) and his followers.

Walid was one of their leaders and he addressed them, “There is nothing we can do against Quran except that we may say that it is magic. Let us spread the rumor that Muhammad is a magician and that Quran also is his magic. If anyone questions our propaganda – first of all people are not so intelligent – yet, even if someone asks where that magic is?

We may say, it is magic as it creates differences between people, just as magic creates enmity between people, Muhammad also is making youths oppose their parents. He has separated youths from our idols.”

Poetry is a creation of the poet's imagination, having no reality

A period of time passed and this allegation about magic became old so they made another false allegation that Muhammad was a poet, which this verse refutes.

So, now our discussion is on poetry and poet. First of all, what is poetry? The theme, subject and production of which is not real. It is imagination, superstition, fancy and illusion, having nothing to do with reality.

It is an arrangement of words conveying the poet's thoughts in certain rhythm and on certain meters to make them more effective and attractive. For example, one says, "All this is mere poetry," which means that it has nothing factual; only the words are attractive. Therefore, it is a proverb in Arabic "Best is that which is most false."

For instance, Firdosi versifies the duel between Rustam and Asfandiyar and says when Rustam arrives in the battlefield: The hoofs of horses made the earths became six and the skies eight.

Can anything be further from the truth? Yet it sounds nice. Thus poets sing wonderful things in praise as well as in condemnation. They can even turn an oppressor into a first class man of justice and similarly, show a just person to be a tyrant.

Anyway, the Meccans alleged, "You are a poet. You are making verses for this Quran, which does not contain any truth, being mere imagination." So the Quran says:

And We have not taught him poetry, nor is it meet for him...

That is We did not teach him poetry. Nor does it befit him.

it is nothing but a reminder and a plain Quran,

The Prophet is a divine personality; a teacher sent by God and taught by God, while a poet has only imagination. What poet imparts knowledge and perfection to society?
Quran has in fact condemned poetry.

And as to the poets, those who go astray follow them.
Do you not see that they wander about bewildered in every valley? And that they say that which they do not do, (***26:224-226***)

Didactic poems, panegyrics and elegies for Ahle Bayt (‘a) is good poetry

Thus we now know what condemned poet and poetry mean? It means condemnable are those who present falsehood in a pleasing form. However if one uses beautiful and effective words in defense or in praise of truth, it is not at all objectionable, such as a didactic poem, panegyric or elegy of Ahle Bayt.

Since such poetry is more effective, its rank is also high and hence it is desirable. Therefore Quran says, “Except those who believe and do good and remember Allah much,” Such truth–teller poets are exempted from condemnation as they have faith and they do good. Such poets restrain from falsehood and they do not praise one who is not praiseworthy, and do not condemn those not liable for condemnation.

There are poets who sing eulogies for oppressors. They lie and sing worthless songs for payment from the public treasury. If they are given fewer amounts, they start condemning them. There are such examples in modern journalism also. The dethroned Shah used to send millions of dollars to foreign periodicals that they may not publish facts, rather they may show the opposite and sing his praises.

However, the journalists too, like poets, can support truth through their pen and serve the Muslim world just as they are capable of concealing the truth and supporting Israel.

Poetry is an undesirable way of earning livelihood

The poetry of Sadi, especially, is not condemnable as they are words of admonition. Islam has not condemned such poetry. It is said: A stomach filled with blood and pus is better than a stomach filled through poetry. However, that poetry is not condemnable which truthfully describes the gracefulness of Ahle Bayt and gives admonition, and which speaks against the enemies of Ahle Bayt and the polytheists.

During the earlier days of Islam, the polytheists had poets who sang against the Holy Prophet and Islam. Then there also were some poets who had become Muslims, who fittingly opposed the poetry of the false poets making them angry. They condemned which was false and anti Islam.

It is mentioned in *Tafsir Majmaul Bayan* that once the Holy Prophet (‘s) asked Hisaan to climb the pulpit and recite his poetry condemning the polytheists. After he completed the recitation, the Holy Prophet said, “Your poetry is deadlier than poisoned arrows for the polytheists.”

It really was so. Poetry relating to the caliphate and guardianship of Ali (‘a) was also recited by Hisaan at Ghadeer Khum. In that connection, the Holy Prophet (‘s) told him, “So long as you assist us, you will be supported by the Holy Spirit.” This was a hint at Hisaan’s deviation after the passing away of the Holy Prophet when he inclined towards Muawiyah.

Indeed, it was one of the miracles of the Holy Prophet that he did not pray unconditionally in favor of Hisaan. Hisaan, in his lasts days, turned towards Muawiyah and recited eulogies for him, while at the same time composed poems condemning Ali (‘a). Thus his end was bad. Therefore, the Prophet had said, “As long as you are on the right path, helping the truth, you will get support from the Holy Spirit.”

If one says the truth and gives truthful admonition he is very much worthy of praise and respect.

Poetry of Husain bin Hajjaj in the presence of Syed Murtaza and Aale Booyah

This relates to the 19th of Ramadan when Ali (‘a) was struck by the poisonous sword of Ibne Muljim: In the year 300 Hijri, Masood bin Aale Booyah came to Najaf Ashraf. Izzudaulah had discovered a treasure, which he intended to spend on the grave of Ali (‘a). So he sent Masood to Najaf and he engaged in the aforesaid construction work.

At that time, Husain bin Hajjaj, the famous poet of those days was composing couplets in praise of Ali (‘a). He had also composed a poem with regard to the Imam’s tomb, which he recited in the presence of Aale Booyah and Syed Murtaza, the representative of the syeds: O the owner of the white dome in Najaf.

Indeed, his poetry is wonderful and he has brought together the virtues of Ali in it. Every couplet gladdened the hearts of Ali’s friends and made his foes distraught. His poetry went to the extent of taunting the caliphs and Abu Hanifah, which was against dissimulation. Therefore Syed Murtaza stopped him, saying it was enough.

The poet was displeased and he left the meeting as he thought that instead of being praised he was ordered to stop the recitation. He went home in a sorrowful state of mind and that night he saw Ali (‘a) in his dream. He was saying, “Do not be gloomy, O Ibnul Hajjaj. I have issued orders for redressal. Tomorrow, the Syed will come to you. You may remain seated in your place so that your honor is maintained.”

Syed Murtaza also was a very great man. Apparently too he was a chief of Sadat (Syeds). In his dream, he also saw his ancestor, Ali (‘a), who appeared angry. So he asked, “O Master! I am your sincere son. What made you wrathful against me?” He replied, “Why did you break my friend’s heart?”[1] Now, go to him tomorrow, apologize and also make recommendation in his favor to Ibne Booyah (so that he may give him a good reward).”

So, the Syed also, notwithstanding all his honor and rank, got up and went to Ibne Hajjaj. As he reached the door of Ibne Hajjaj said loudly from his seat, “The Master who has sent you here has also asked me not to get up from my seat.”

The Syed replied with all humility, “I have heard and I have obeyed.” Then he himself came to Ibne Hajjaj and sought pardon, took him to Aale Booyah and explained to him that he has earned the pleasure of Ali (‘a). A robe of honor and a permanent pension was granted to the poet.[2]

Reverting to our topic, we can say that most of the time, poetry is falsehood and it spreads untruth, while Quran is absolute truth and it separates falsehood from truth.

Most surely it is a decisive word, And it is no joke. (***86:13-14***)

Quran, the reminder of God and the hereafter

Poetry is nothing but mindlessness towards God and hereafter, whereas Quran makes man remember God, His virtues, His actions and the Hereafter.

Poetry rouses passions but Quran turns man towards God. There can be no comparison between the Heavenly Preacher and the poet and his poetry.

...nor is it meet for him...

That is it is unfitting and becoming of him to recite poetry. Quran is clear admonition. It is a reminder. It is life-giving. Its laws enliven and sustain individuals and the society. Every society, which follows it, is alive forever if God wills.

Our society has, due to the grace of Quran, become free from the clutches of imperialists, colonialists and rebels. Our heads are now high and hereafter, under the shade of the Holy Quran, we shall live honorably forever.

Human life is affected by Quran

That it may warn him who would have life, (***36:70***)

That is one who is alive. What kind of living or life is mentioned here? Of course, it is not an animal or a vegetable life. The vegetable life is always in growth. As regards animal life, it is under the influence of instinct.

Rather, what is meant here is the heart or soul of man. Its sign is hope in God. One who is inhuman does not have this sign. It is man who realizes that everything is in the hands of Only One God. Therefore he relies only on God. His hope and his fear, both are connected to God. Quran is for such living persons.

…and* (*that*) *the word may prove true against the unbelievers.

Meaning what was told about the disbelievers came to be true. Here ‘Word’ perhaps means the threat of hell. Verily the deniers are worth entering hell. They are those who have no life of humanity in them. They are dead and soulless. They are blind and deaf and unable to understand or realize anything.

And certainly We have created for hell many of the jinn and the men; they have hearts with which they do not understand, and they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear; they are as cattle, nay, they are in worse errors; these are the heedless ones. (***7:179***)

1. The poets of Ahle Bayt were indeed always ready to sacrifice their lives and their lives were really in danger as they were very strongly attached to Ahle Bayt.
2. Waqaaya Al-Aiyaam of Khayabani

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