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Features of Revealed Books

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Abstract

This article throws light on the meaning of Revelation and Features of Revealed Books in some detail. Account of the media through which God sent the revealed message to His Prophets constitutes a part of this detail. This article provides ample amount of information regarding the meanings of 'Revelation' with verses from the Holy Quran. Moreover the information given by this very article seems adequate and the way it is conveyed is quite acceptable. The writer started from introduction and gradually touched the climax to achieve best possible results. The meanings of the word 'revelation' are a concealed but swift gesture, an enlightening experience, and a divine communication. The mentioning of all enlisted features here will prolong this abstract. The most remarkable feature is the assurance of success covering all aspects of life in this world and the world hereafter. The reason is that the practices preached in these books are taught not by humans but by God (the Creator of everything), who is all knowing.

Keywords: Taurah, Psalms, Bible, Quran

Being Muslims, we are familiar to four Revealed books: i) The Taurah; ii) Psalms of David; iii) The Bible & iv) The Holy Quran. These four mentioned books were revealed to four different prophets. Taurah was revealed to Moses (PBUH); Psalms to David (PBUH); Bible to Jesus Christ (PBUH). and The Holy Quran was revealed to Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

All these books introduced such principles that are helpful to gain eternal salvation and God's love leading to success both in this world and the world hereafter. They possess these features because they are revelational. So, for a complete knowledge about the features of revelational books, it is imperative to define the 'word revelation' and its nature and sources.

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The literal meanings of ‘revelation’ in Arabic are concealed and swift gesture.¹ In conventional meanings, revelation means the message from Almighty Allah that comes in a direct way or through an angel to the heart of prophets.² Revelation means a disclosure, an enlightening experience, divine or supernatural communication.³ It means, to reveal, to make known something that was secret or hidden.⁴ Revelation, in the religious sense, is an insight into divine reality usually claimed by the founder or original adherents of a religion.⁵

The word revelation stands either (a) for the process by which God makes known the truth to man, which He requires, or (b) for the body of truth, which God has made known.⁶

Revelation is a religious term that designates the disclosure of divine or sacred reality or purpose to men. In the religious way, such disclosure may come through mystical insights, historical events, or a spiritual experience that transforms the lives of individuals and groups.⁷

Revelation means (a) the act of suddenly making known a supervising fact that had previously been secret, (b) an event, experience etc. that is considered to be a message from God.⁸ [This definition of revelation is rather misleading as it down-grades revelation and confuses it with “mystical insights, historical events, or a spiritual experience....” Revelation, it may be underscored, is the result of the out-pouring Mercy of God and is granted to His chosen prophets (PBUT) by way of His Guidance to humankind. It may be observed that its purpose is the transformation of socio-moral and economico-political order of a given community and through that community it is addressed to the hearts and minds of the rest of humanity. In principle, revelation has a Universal dimension: purpose is to create God-conscious individuals and God-conscious communities. Personal contemplation and meditation which constitutes an integral part of mysticism, and spiritual experience, could never elevate a man to the level of prophecy or prophet-hood. True mystics, even though God-intoxicated, remain at best just faithful disciples of the Prophet(s) of God. Their experiences may yield new meanings (out of the infinite meanings) of revelations but it cannot bring them new revelations altogether. In fact, it runs counter to the finality of prophecy and prophet-hood. Moreover there is a vital difference between the overriding intentions of the mystics and of the Prophets. Primary objective of mystics is self-transformation while the main objective of prophets is the transformation of humanity at large. These are extremely delicate issues and call for careful examination.]

Revelation is given this name as in Arabic it means, swift, and quick in arrival.⁹ Revelation comes very swiftly. For this swiftness, this

message is known as revelation because in Arabic Dictionary revelation is translated as swiftness, speedy.¹⁰

Revelation, in theology, an experience that results in an entirely new way of looking at the world and human existence. This experience does not come about through human search or study but as an inspired vision of reality. The inspiration however must be studied and interpreted to apply the newly perceived truths.¹¹

The definitions given above are my findings from some renowned and authentic books of religion. These definitions help us understand the nature of revelation to some extent especially when they are supported with examples from the Holy Quran.

The first meaning of revelation was a concealed, swift but understandable gesture. The word in this sense has been used many times in the Holy Quran e.g.

“And the Lord taught the bee to build its cells in hills, on trees, and in (men’s) habitations.”¹²

The same page of the Holy Quran explains the word ‘Auha’ as the message put into the mind or heart by Allah.

“So we sent this inspiration to the mother, ‘Suckle (thy child)’”¹³

We see that the bee, and the mother of Moses were not prophets yet they were communicated a message in a swift but concealed way. So Quran uses the word (Auha: revelation) on both occasions.

For a complete and comprehensive understanding it seems necessary to provide information about the media of revelation. So we discover that following are the ways used by God to make some unknown facts known.

- Direct dialogue from God;
- Revelation (Teaching) through a concealed body;
- Angel;
- The clang of a bell; &
- Vision (through dreaming)¹⁴

Direct Dialogue from God

Then he approached and came closer, And was at a distance of but two bow-lengths or (even) near, so did (Allah) convey the inspiration to His servant (conveyed) what He (meant) to Convey”¹⁵

Revelation through a Concealed Body

The experiences of Moses on the burning bush are examples of this media of revelation.

Angel

In the Quran it is mentioned that God speaks to the angels. God says:

“And (remember) when your Lord revealed to the angels: ‘Verily I am with you, so keep firm those who have believed’...”¹⁶

Revelation to the angels happens by God speaking to them and the angels hearing from Him.

The Clang of a bell

Both of these ways are mentioned by the Prophet in his answer to al-Haarith b. Hishaam when he asked how the revelation came to him. God’s Messenger said:

“Sometimes he comes to me like the clanging of a bell, and this is the most difficult for me. It weighs upon me and I commit to memory what he says. And sometimes the angel comes to me in the form of a man and speaks to me and I commit to memory what he says.”¹⁷

Vision (through dreaming)

“Truly did Allah faithful the vision for His Messenger”¹⁸

“Remember in the dream Allah showed them to thee as few; if He had shown them to thee as many, ye would surely have been discouraged, and ye would surely have disputed in (your) decision, but Allah saved (you), for He knoweth well the (secrets) of (all) hearts.”¹⁹

Features of Revealed Books

As mentioned earlier that being a Muslim we are familiar to four revealed books along with the prophets to whom they were revealed.

i) Taurah was revealed to Moses (PBUH); ii) Psalms to David (PBUH); iii) The Bible to Jesus Christ (PBUH) & iv) The Holy Quran to Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

All these books introduced such principles that are helpful to gain eternal salvation and God’s love and finally success both in this world and the world hereafter. All the four prophetic religions carry same features.

- i) The very first feature of a Revealed book is that the set up of life preached by it is not the result of efforts made by human intellect and wisdom. Contrary to this it consists of directions from God (the Creator) Revealed religions preach a system that has come from God (the creator of universe and the man himself and the one who knows everything the best).²⁰ That's why all the Revealed religions seem more successful to deal with needs of society than other non-Revealed religions. As an inventor of an ordinary machine knows its needs and functioning best than its user. Similarly God (Allah) being the Creator of the whole universe knows best the needs and demands of society. So the teachings in the form of revealed scriptures seem up to the mark for this particular purpose.
- ii) The second prominent feature of a system introduced in a Revealed Book is that it gives a complete code of life. Any walk of life, whether individual or political has never been devoid of teachings of any revelational book as they are revealed from the Creator of all great and small objects including humans themselves.²¹
- iii) The third feature of Revealed Book is emphasis on faith. This faith includes faith in oneness of God (Allah), His prophets and the life hereafter. Faith means a complete change in thinking and behaviour. This reformation of thinking and behaviour is a result of revolution caused by the teachings of revelational book. The effect of revelational teachings on the heart and mind of humans ends in a complete transformation of life.²²
- iv) Revealed Books unite 'Din' (religion) and 'Dunya' (the worldly life). Non-revelational religions have created an artificial breach between the two, but revelational religions in their teachings (books) discourage this distinction.²³ Islam being a revelational religion and the Holy Quran being a revelational book discourage this concept of leaving this world for the success and salvation in the next in the words. *"Not to forget thy portion in this world."*²⁴
- v) Another salient feature of Revealed teachings is that it produces a balance between life as an individual and life as a

member of society. It ensures an individual the safety of his rights by putting responsibility on society. It secures the rights of other members of a society by making individual responsible for his duties.²⁵ Holy Quran says in this sense *“Then shall any one who has done an atom’s weight of good, see it. And any one who has done atom’s weight of evil, shall see it.”*²⁶

- vi) Revealed teachings are not artificial rather original, simple, logical and can be easily acted upon. The basic teachings of revelational religions (books) are Tauhid (Oneness of God), Risalat (Belief in Prophets), and life hereafter. The acts of worship described in these revelational books are so simple that any one can perform them. Anyone can take full advantage of these teachings described in revelational books.²⁷
- vii) Another feature of revelational books is that they create a harmony, unity and balance between performance permanence & change. Revelational teachings come up to the level of change in human needs without disturbing the promise of eternal success. The rules and regulations advised by revelation are eternal and do not changes but they have a touch of flexibility in them to work for the betterment of human ease.²⁸
- viii) Revelational books do not teach such rules which are philosophical and only remain in the minds and memories of its followers. Contrary to this, they stimulate reforms and revolutionary changes in the life of individual and ultimately in the life of a society. This stimulation to reform oneself and society means to promote what is good and stop what is evil. This simple teaching assures the decrease in evils and increase in good deeds. This rule assures success, prosperity and salvation, not only for an individual but also for society, not only in this worldly life but also in the life hereafter.²⁹ That’s why Quran says:
*“Ye are the best peoples, evolved for mankind. Enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong”.*³⁰

In this way revelational religions turn out to be a movement to reform oneself and the society.

- ix) All the above mentioned features of a revelational book make its last feature that it gives a complete balance and harmony to all phases of life. There is an evident and beautiful balance between all departments and modes of life. Contrary to this non-revelational books neglect spiritual world. The need of revelation is felt essential particularly for it provides the limits, on the basis of which, a complete balance can be achieved in all the walks of life and the contradictory demands of a human being.³¹

Conclusion

In the light of given information it may be humbly concluded that the Revealed books known to us are four in number. The first three could not maintain their revelational character. The features of Revealed books show their effectiveness covering all aspects of life in the best of the ways. Being the words (message) of the creator of the Universe, they suggest to the whole mankind the best solution to their problems. To create a harmony, unity and balance between extremes their teachings are the most appropriate prescription. They put emphasis on the fulfillment of duties to become deserving for attainment of rights. For these reasons they seem more successful for regulating and ruling the whole universe than other non- Revealed books.

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