

## Quranic Survey on the Makkans Reponse to *Dakwah*

Kajian al-Quran Terhadap Orang Arab Mekah dalam Penerimaan Dakwah

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### ABSTRACT

*It is natural that a person who undertakes dakwah responsibility will face challenges and obstacles. The sirah (life) of all messengers witnessed the challenging in doing dakwah. The Prophet Muhammad PBUH, as a chain of Prophets had the same experience as the previous Prophets. This article therefore attempts to explore the Quranic verses as to the Makkans response to the dakwah during the Prophet Muhammad's time. The method used in this study is based on the documental analysis, which is fully based on the Quranic verses related to the theme. The finding of this study revealed that the Makkans unbelievers responded extremely negative to the activities of dakwah executed by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH.*

*Keywords: Quranic survey, Makkans, dakwah, Prophet of Muhammad*

### ABSTRAK

*Adalah menjadi sunnah atau nature bahawa orang yang mengambil tanggungjawab melaksanakan dakwah akan berhadapan dengan cabaran dan halangan. Perjalanan hidup para rasul menyaksikan cabaran yang dihadapi oleh mereka dalam melaksanakan tugas dakwah. Nabi Muhammad SAW sebagai sebahagian daripada rantaian para rasul telah mengalami pengalaman yang sama sepertimana para rasul terdahulu. Artikel ini cuba meneroka ayat-ayat al-Quran berhubung respons orang-orang Arab Mekah terhadap dakwah di zaman Nabi Muhammad SAW. Kaedah yang digunakan dalam kajian ini berdasarkan analisis dokumen, iaitu kajian terhadap ayat-ayat al-Quran yang berkaitan dengan tema kajian. Kajian ini mendapati bahawa orang-orang musyrik Mekah memberikan respon yang begitu negatif terhadap dakwah Nabi Muhammad SAW.*

*Kata Kunci: Kajian al-Quran, orang Arab Mekah, dakwah, Nabi Muhammad*

### INTRODUCTION

As far as historical sources are concerned, it seems the Prophet's message remained clandestine for a period of about three years. Within this period the Quranic message was promulgated within the limited circle of the society he lived in i.e his own family, his close friends and other trustworthy people. The message, however, became widely spread in Makkah and the number of converts increased gradually. Several prominent Makkans figures also embraced Islam, such as Hamzah Abdul Muttalib and Umar al-Khattab. Based on that situation, the Quranic message needed to be promulgated openly to all people. The Quranic injunctions to the Prophet concerning the public promulgation of *dakwah* are referred to in the following verses. First of all the Prophet received the command:

Its meaning: Admonish your nearest kinsmen  
(al-Shu'ara': 214).

Although the above Divine Revelation refers to the Prophet's nearest kinsmen, it does not mean that the message remained confined to them, rather it included all the people in Makkah. Ibn Athir (1980: 41) thinks that the verse signifies a gradual development of *dakwah*, *tadarruj fi al-da'wah*. It has been reported that the Prophet was afraid initially after receiving Divine sanction to promulgate the message publicly. This is because he thought that the Makkans would oppose him. Then the Angel Gabriel convinced him that he must perform the assignment which was entrusted to him. Responding to this, the Prophet started to promulgate the Quranic message openly. It has been reported that the Prophet first of all started to invite his nearest relatives, i.e Banu Abdul Muttalib, Banu Fihri, Banu Ka'b, Banu Quraish and Banu Hashim. The following verse emphatically grants permission to the Prophet to promulgate his Message not only to Makkans but to the people who lived in its suburbs. This is clearly shown in the Quranic verse:

Its meaning: And this is a Book which We have sent down, bringing blessings, and conforming (the revelations) which came before it; that thou mayest warn the Mother of Cities and all around her. Those who believe in the Hereafter, believe in this (Book), and they are constant in hoarding their prayers (al-An‘am: 92).

There are several other verses which indicate the sanction to promulgate the Quranic message openly. The Quran says:

Its meaning: Therefore expound openly what you are commanded, and turn away from those who join false gods with Allah (al-Hijr: 94).

Another verse is:

Its meaning: Verily He who ordained the Quran for you, will bring thee back to the place (al-Qasas: 85).

In commenting on the word ‘*fasda‘ bima tu‘mir*’ in the about verse, al-Baydawi (n.d. 174) maintains the Prophet was commanded by God to promulgate openly, using the argument to explain the *syariah*, the law of the religion. The Quran states:

Its meaning: The Quran is indeed the message, for you and for your people; and soon shall you all be brought to account (al-Waqi‘ah: 77-80).

The above verses clearly indicate the public stage of the Prophet’s *dakwah*. Soon after receiving these Divine injunctions the Prophet started to change to his new strategy in *dakwah* that is promulgating the *dakwah* openly to his relatives, the Arabs and all the people, without any hesitation and fear.

The Prophet’s new strategy, promulgating *dakwah* openly, thus it has created another problem for the promulgation of *dakwah*. The Makkans became hostile and opposed his message. Ibn Ishaq reports that the majority of Makkans rejected the message when he declared it openly except for a few of them who responded to his invitation and embraced Islam afterthat (al-Shafii n.d: 157). Here an attempt will be made to comprehend the general attitude of the Makkan unbelievers or their response to *dakwah*.

#### QURANIC SURVEY ON THE MAKKANS REPOSE TO *DAKWAH*

##### 1. General attitude of the Makkan unbelievers:

The Quran provides many evidences concerning the general attitude of the Makkan unbeliever to the Prophet’s *dakwah*. A meticulous survey of the Quran reveals the following findings.

##### a. Rejection of the Quran as a revealed Book:

First of all, the Quran mentions this attitude as follows:

Its meaning: Then he turned back and was haughty (al-Muddaththir: 23).

The above verse referred to the Makkan unbelievers. Their arrogance led them to turn away from the Prophet’s *dakwah* (al-Jalalayn 1954: 777). al-Khazin suggests that this verse specifically referred to al-Walid Ibn al-Mughirah. Then the Quran states:

Its meaning: But it will be avoided by those most unfortunate ones (al-A‘la: 11).

al-Sabuni (1981: 549) thinks that the unbelievers did not accept the Prophet’s advise. In al-Qiyamah: 32, the Quran describes their attitude:

Its meaning: But in the contrary, we rejected the truth and turned away.

The Quran indicates that, although they were reminded many times, and a lot of explanations, *dala‘il*, were given to them, they remained as unbelievers and turned away from the message:

Its meaning: Not a sign comes to them from among the signs of their Lord, but they turn away there from (Yasin: 46).

In another verse the Quran mentions that their opposition to the message was due to their arrogance:

Its meaning: And they rejected those signs in iniquity and arrogance, though their souls were convinced (al-Qasas: 14).

Their arrogance in rejecting the Prophet’s message can be traced in the following revelation:

Its meaning: They say: We shall not believe in thee, until thou cause a spring to gush forth for us from earth, or until you have a garden of date trees, and vines, and cause rivers, a gush forth in their midst, carrying abundant water, or thou cause the sky to fall in pieces, as thou sayest (will happen), against us, or you bring Allah and the angels before (us) face to face, or thou have a house adorned with gold, or you mount a ladder right into the skies. No we shall not even believe in the mounting until you send down to us a book that we can read (al-Isra‘: 90-93).

In another surahs, al-Hijr: 12-13, Saba‘: 31, al-Zukhruf: 78, al-Jathiyah: 8, al-Ghasiyah: 23, al-Nahl: 83, al-Mu‘minun: 69 and al-Insyiqaq: 20-22, the Quran again describes their similar attitude as the aforesaid.

Based on the above Quranic verses, it is clearly evident that the Makkan unbelievers rejected the Quran and the Prophet's *dakwah*. Their attitude of rejection the *dakwah* among others due to arrogance and ignorance.

- b. Preventing others from listening the Quran and inviting them to join their effort to prevent the *dakwah*:

The Quran gives an example of their hostility as follows:

Its meaning: Nay, but verily man is rebellious, that he thinks the himself independent! Lo! Unto thy Lord is the return. Hast you seen him who dissuadeth. A slave when he prayeth (al-'Alaq: 6-10).

The above revelation referred to Abu Jahl Ibn Hisham (al-Tabari 1954: 253). The Quran then states:

Its meaning: Hinderer of the good, transgressor, malefactor (al-Qalam: 12).

Al-Tabari (1954, 25) maintains that this verse referred to al-Akhnas Ibn Shariq al-Thaqafi whom he describes as being an extreme unbeliever. In another revelation the Quran portrays their plot against the Prophet and forbid the other people to accept *dakwah* as seen in al-Tariq:15, Ibrahim: 46, al-An'am: 26, Fussilat: 26 and al-Ma'arij: 17. al-Baghawi (1987, 3941) says that the above verse indicates the opposition of the Makkan unbelievers to the Prophet's *dakwah*.

- c. Mockery:

The Quran bears witness that Makkan unbelievers used to mock the Quran, the Prophet and the believers. At the beginning, the Quran mentions generally the attitude of the unbelievers all the time:

Its meaning: Ah! (my) servants! There comes not a messenger to them but they mock him (Yasin: 30).

The Quran describes their mockery to the Prophet:

Its meaning: When they see thee, they treat thee no otherwise than in mockery; is this the one whom Allah has sent as a Messenger? (al-Furqan: 41).

The similar attitude of the Makkans towards *dakwah* and the Quran mentioned repeatedly in another surahs, for example in al-Anbiya': 36 and al-Jathiyah: 9. The above attitude was criticized by the Quran which warns them:

Its meaning: So they will know soon (enough) the truth of what they mocked at (al-Syu'ara': 6).

Its meaning: Ah! On the day it (actually) reaches them, nothing will turn it away from them, and they will be completely encircled that which they used to mock at (Hud: 8).

The Quran even explains that the purpose of their mockery is to mislead people from the right path:

Its meaning: Say: O people of the Book! exceed not in your religion the bounds (of what is proper), trespassing beyond the truth, nor follow the vain desires of people who went wrong in times gone by,-who misled many, and strayed (themselves) from the even way (al-Ma'idah: 77).

The Makkan unbelievers mocking attitude towards the Prophet had the aim of misleading other people so that finally they would join them in opposing and rejecting the *dakwah*. This allegation however was rejected by the Quran which even warned them that they would be punished on the basis of their attitude.

- d. Doubt and many disputations:

Doubt and many disputations are from of the Makkan's attitudes which was highlighted by the Quran. First of all the Quran mentions this attitude in the following way:

Its meaning: He questions: "When is the Day of Resurrection? (al-Qiyamah: 6).

They disputed that the Prophet was a man no an angel:

Its meaning: And they say: What sort of a Messenger is this, who eats foods, and walks through the streets? Why has not an angel been sent down to him to admonish him? (al-Furqan: 7).

Al-Baydawi (n.d.: 89) comments on the above verse concerning their disputations that they were ignorant of the reality of thing that are unseen (*mahsusat*). He suggested that the difference between the Prophet and other people is not in terms of physical aspects, (*umur jismaniyyah*), but in terms of spirituality (*ahwal nafsaniyyah*).

Among the other Quranic verses which concern their attitude are al-Isra': 94, al-Hijr: 7, al-An'am: 8, al-Kahfi: 54, al-Mu'minun: 82, al-Mulk: 26 and al-Nazi'at: 43-46.

The Quranic narrations concerning the above Makkan attitude seem to show that they were very hard to believe in the doctrine of the life in the Hereafter. They also could not believe that the

Messenger of Allah was chosen from the humans. The attitude was similar to that held by people towards previous Prophets which has been mentioned so many times in the Quran.

## 2. Allegations:

In order to prevent other people from following the Prophet's *dakwah*, the unbelievers made several allegations:

- i. The Prophet is mad, a liar, a soothsayer and a poet:

At first the Quran mentions that the Makkans accused the Prophet of being mad:

Its meaning: And those who disbelieve would fain disconcert thee with their eyes when they hear the reminder, and they say: Lo! He is indeed mad (al-Qalam: 51).

Their allegation that the Prophet was mad can also be traced in al-Hijr: 6 and al-Dukhkhan: 14. They also alleged the Prophet PBUH was a liar:

Its meaning: Those who disbelieve say: This is naught but a lie that he hath invented, and other folk have helped him with it, so that they have helped him with it, so that they produced a slander and a lie (al-Furqan: 4).

The Quran states:

Its meaning: Or they say: He hath invented it. Say: Then bring the surahs, the like thereof, invented, and called on every one ye can beside Allah, if ye are truthful (Hud: 3).

In the above verse the Quran challenged the Makkans to invent a verse like the Quran. The purpose of this challenge was to weaken their opposition. The Prophet PBUH rejected their allegation by reciting the verse:

Its meaning: Say (O Muhammad): If I have invented it, shall ye have no power to support me against Allah. He is best aware of what ye say among yourselves concerning it. He sufficeth for a witness between me and you. And he is forgiving, the Merciful (al-Ahqaf: 8).

The Quran portrays that the Makkans maintained the same allegations against the Prophet in al-Ahqaf: 11. The Quran tells them that the Prophet's *dakwah* is not a heresy. It is a truth:

Its meaning: And this is a confirming Scripture in the Arabic language, that it may warn those who do wrong and bring good tidings for the righteous (al-Ahqaf: 12).

Another form of their allegation about the Prophet was that he was a soothsayer, and a poet. These two allegations can be found in the following verses. The first, they alleged the Prophet did magic:

Its meaning: And said: This is naught else than magic from of old (al-Muddaththir: 24).

Similarly, this kind of accusation (magic) can be found in al-Furqan: 8, al-Nalm: 13, Yunus: 12, al-An'am: 7 and al-Ahqaf: 7. The Quran criticized their allegations:

Its meaning: With herats preoccupied. And they confer in secret. The wrong-doers say: Is this other than a mortal like you? Will ye than succumb to magic when ye see (it)? (al-Anbiya': 3).

Another Makkan allegation against the Prophet was that he was a poet. The Quran states:

Its meaning: Or say they: (he is), a poet, (one) for whom we may expect the accident of time? (al-Thur: 30).

The Quran supported the Prophet and condemned their allegations. They were regarded as extremists:

Its meaning: Say (unto them): Expect (you will), I am with you among the expectant. Do their minds command them to do this? Or are they an outrageous folk? (al-Thur: 32).

The Quran in another verse maintained that the Prophet had brought a sacred message. Therefore their allegations about the Prophet as a poet and *kahin* were nonsense:

Its meaning: That it is indeed the speech of an illustrious messenger. It is not a poet's speech—little is it that ye believe! Nor diviner's speech—little is it that ye remember (al-Haqqah: 42).

In the following verse, the Quran confirmed that the Prophet's message was from God:

Its meaning: It is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds (al-Haqqah: 43).

They even regarded the Prophet PBUH both as a poet and madman:

Its meaning: And said: shall we forsake our gods for a mad poet (al-Saffat: 36).

Their false allegation was soon denied by the Quran in the following revelation:

Its meaning: But he brought the Truth, and he confirmed those sent (before him) (al-Saffat: 37).

Finally, they also considered the Prophet PBUH was both a liar and poet:

Its meaning: (These are but) muddled dreams; nay, he hath but invented it; nay he is but a poet. Let him bring us a portent even as those of old (who were God's Messenger) were sent (with portents) (al-Anbiya': 5).

ii. The Message is the tales of the ancient people:

The Quran witnesses many facts concerning this kind of Makkans allegations about the Prophet. The following Quranic verses present a clear example regarding this particular issue:

Its meaning: That, when our revelations are recited unto him, he said! Mere fables of the men of old (al-Qalam: 15).

This particular accusation to the Prophet Muhammad also can be seen in the following verses; al-Furqan: 25, al-Naml: 68, al-An'am: 25, al-Ahqaf: 17, al-Nahl: 27 and al-Mu'minun: 83. The Quran warned them:

Its meaning: Say (unto them, O Muhammad): Travel in the land and see the nature of the sequel for the guilty (al-Naml: 69).

And then the Quran comforted the Prophet PBUH:

Its meaning: And grieve thou not for them, nor be in distress because of what they plot (against thee) (al-Naml: 70).

The Quran threatened them:

Its meaning: That they say bear their burdens undiminished on the Day of Resurrection, with somewhat of the burdens of those whom they mislead without knowledge. Ah! evil is that which they bear! (al-Nahl: 27).

The Quran in support the Prophet's method for combating the Makkans allegations did not leave any space for them to accuse the Prophet. All of their allegations were criticized and proved false.

3. Offers of the Prophet:

The Makkans, beside made various allegations to prevent the Prophet's *dakwah*, also offered him the following things:

i. The Quran presented the Makkans demand for the Prophet to change the content of the Quran or bring a new one. The Quran states this event:

Its meaning: But when Our clear signs are rehearsed unto them, those who rest not their hope

on their meeting with us, say: "Bring us a Reading other than this, or change this (Yunus: 15).

al-Baydawi (n.d.: 88) comments that since the Quran condemned and criticized their gods which they worshipped, they asked the Prophet to bring another one instead of the Quran.

The Prophet did not compromise with them. He rather gave them an answer by reciting the same verse:

Its meaning: Say: It is not for me, of my own accord, to change it: I follow naught but what is revealed unto me: If I were to disobey my Lord, I should myself fear the penalty of a Great Day (to come).

The firm answer from the Prophet left the Makkans disappointed with their efforts. The Prophet remained firmly in Islam and continued his assignment in promulgating the *dakwah*.

ii. Another effort by the Makkans to make the Prophet give up his assignment in promulgating the Quranic message was offering him the wealth, honour and the kingship. For this purpose they sent 'Utbah Ibn Rabi'ah to negotiate with the Prophet concerning their proposal. The Prophet, however refused their offers and recited the following verse to 'Utbah:

Its meaning: Ha Mim. A revelation from (Allah), Most Gracious, Most Merciful. A book, whereof the verses are explained in detail, a Quran in Arabic, for people who understand. Giving goods news and admonition: Yet most of them turn away, and so they hear not. They say: "Our hearts are under veils, (concealed) from that to which you dost invite us, and in our ears is a deafness, and between us and you, is a screen: So do am but a man like you: It is revealed to me by inspiration, that your God is one God: So stand true to Him, and ask for His forgiveness. And woe to those who join gods with Allah. Those who practice not regular charity, and who even deny the Hereafter (Fussilat: 1-7).

4. Effort to assassinate the Prophet and put an end the Islamic message.

Realizing the failure of their previous efforts to end the Prophet's message, the Makkans had launched another strategy for the achievement of their purpose. They initially attempted to expel the Prophet from Makkah. The Quran clearly recorded their conspiracy:

Its meaning: And they indeed wished to scare you from the land that they might drive you forth from

thence, and they would have stayed (there) but a little after you (al-Isra': 76).

The Quran also provides another example of their efforts to put an end to the Prophet's message by taking fatal action i.e, to kill him. The Quran witnesses this dramatic event which occurred soon before the Prophet fled to Madinah as follows:

Its meaning: And when those who disbeliever plot against you (O Muhammad), to wound you fatally, or you kill you or to drive you forth (al-Anfal: 30).

As a matter of fact, the historical source also suggest a similar form Makkans' method to stop the Prophet message as witnessed in the above Quranic verse. Ibn Kathir (1932: 175-176) reported, that the leading chiefs of the Makkkan organized a meeting in *Dar al-Nadwah*, Council House, and three proposals were made. The first, was to imprison the Prophet, the second to expel him from Makkah and the third, to assassinate him. They accepted the third proposal from Abu Jahl. The Prophet was saved from this assassination attempt. The Makkans failure to assassinate the Prophet is stated by the Quran in the same verse, which means: They plot, but Allah (also) plotted; and Allah is the best of plotter.

## CONCLUSION

The Quran vividly presents the struggle between *al-haq* (the truth) and *al-batil* (falsehood) or between Islam and *jahiliyah* in its Makkkan verses. These two aspects are presented with appropriate thought-provoking similitude's so that their aims and scope can be comprehended by all (al-Buruj: 8-10; al-Balad: 10; Sad: 2; al-Furqan: 1; al-Isra': 73; al-An'am: 112-113; Ghafir: 40; al-Syura: 24; Ibrahim: 1, 3, 4, 9, 30, 46). The result of the Prophet's *dakwah* to promulgate the Quranic message openly invited the hostility of the Makkans. Whenever an attempt was made by the Prophet to present the Message, they opposed it. The Quran narrates the accounts of the general attitude of the Makkans of the Makkans to oppose the *dakwah*. They, for example, rejected the Quran as a revealed Book (al-Muddaththir: 23, al-A'la: 11; al-Qiyamah: 32; Yasin: 46; al-Naml: 14; al-Isra': 90-93; al-Hijr: 12-13; al-An'am: 4; Saba': 31; al-Zuhruf: 78; al-Jathiyah: 8; al-Ghashiyah: 23; al-Nahl: 83; al-Mukminun: 66-67; al-Mukminun: 69; al-Inshiqaq: 20-22), prevented others from listening to the Quran and invited them to assist them in their efforts to minimize the influence of *dakwah* on the

people (al-'Alaq: 6-10; al-Qalam: 12; al-Tariq: 15; Ibrahim: 46; al-An'am: 26; Fussilat: 26; al-Ma'arij: 17). They mocked at the Prophet (Yasin: 30; al-Furqan: 41; Lukman: 6; al-Anbiya': 36). Their psychological effects of their continuous hostility against the *dakwah* were great on the person of the Prophet. Divine consoling and comforting words revealed from time to time to prove a great solace and inspiration to the Prophet in his struggle a promulgate the *dakwah*. al-Baydawi (n.d.: 101) thinks that these consoling and comforting words made the Prophet realize the fact that he was always under God's protection. Besides these consoling and comforting words, the Quran also provided the Prophet with several methods to face with determination and courage Makkkan hostility. Among these are, *al-hikmah*, *al-maw'izah al-hasanah* and *al-mujadalah bi al-ahsan* (al-Nahl: 125), *al-'afw*, forgiveness, and *al-sabr*, patience (al-A'raf: 199; al-Syura: 40; al-Taghabun: 14; al-Hijr: 85), *tawakkal*, trust in God (Hud: 4), *layyin*, gentleness (al-Hasyr: 5), *'azmil al-umur*, strong determination (al-Saffat: 17; al-Syura: 43) and *al-ikhlas*, sincerity (al-A'raf: 29; al-Mukmin: 14,65) to mention a few. All the Makkans efforts to deviate the Prophet from his path including the offer of material prosperity proved futile (Fussilat: 1-7). On the contrary, the Prophet stood firm in the performing his divine assignment to promulgate the divine message.

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