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Thematic Quranic Translation Series - Installment 26
(IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE)

ALLAH'S MODE OF COMMUNICATION
WITH MAN

Rebuttal of Fictitious Traditional Interpretations

Relevant Verse Brought under Rational
and Academic Scrutiny

ANOTHER MAJOR BLUNDER

On this particular Quranic Theme all of us are duped into acknowledging that Allah swt uses three different modes for bestowing His Guidance to humanity. Our entire inherited legacy of translations and interpretations invariably stipulate the three prescribed modes in such an illogical way that the issue takes a weird or preposterous form. It was therefore deemed necessary that this theme must also be investigated on the criterion of rational and academic approach and effort made to re-present it in its true and clear light. The puzzle frivolously created by retarded minds must be solved once for all according to human knowledge, intellect and logic and a perfect picture of Quran's injunctions is presented before the Muslims and the world at large. The Verse under research reads as follows :-

Verse 42/51:

وَمَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَنْ يُكَلِّمَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا وَحْيًا أَوْ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ رَسُولًا فَيُوحِيَ بَأْذَنِهِ مَا يَشَاءُ ۗ إِنَّهُ
عَلِيُّ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٥١﴾

Traditional Translations:

Shakir: “And it is not for any mortal that Allah should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger and revealing by His permission what He pleases; surely He is High, Wise.”

Moududi: “It is not given to any human being that Allah should speak to him except through revelation, or from behind a veil, or that a messenger (an angel) be sent to him who reveals to him by Allah's leave whatever He wishes. He is All-High, Most Wise.”

Asad: “And it is not given to mortal man that God should speak unto him otherwise than through sudden inspiration, or [by a voice, as it were,] from behind a veil, or by sending an apostle to reveal, by His leave, whatever He wills [to reveal]: for, verily, He is exalted, wise.”

Yousuf Ali: “It is not fitting for a man that Allah should speak to him except by inspiration, or from behind a veil, or by the sending of a messenger to reveal, with Allah's permission, what Allah wills: for He is Most High, Most Wise.”

Pervaiz: “ The Law of Nature which is in force in the universe is conveyed to human society through *Wahi*, which is revealed to *Anbia* and not to every individual. *Allah* communicates in three ways. Two of these are reserved for *Anbia* and the third for ordinary human beings. He communicates with *Anbia* either by instilling the contents of His *Wahi* in their hearts (2:97); or at times by conveying it to their ears, from behind the veil (as happened with *Moses* ~ 2:253; 4:16). Both these ways are confined to *Anbia*². As far as other ordinary human beings are concerned, a *Rasool* is sent to them. The *Rasool* conveys to them the Divine Revelation bestowed by *Allah's* command. (No man other than a *Nabi* can be in communication with *Allah* directly.) This arrangement is made by the verily highly exalted *Allah*, Who takes all decisions rationally.”

My dear Readers can easily surmise that all the archaic and/or progressive translations emphasize THREE MODES. Strangely enough, these THREE MODES do not become clearly manifest for a common man. It is because only a lone reference is usually made towards the alleged SECOND MODE by quoting MOSES pbuh with whom Allah swt reportedly used to “talk” from “behind a veil”??? And this exclusive way or mode, allegedly the SECOND MODE was to be assumed or supposed as the one OTHER THAN WAHI (REVELATION).

The outdated traditional translations take the THIRD ASSUMED MODE in their own special mythical way as we see in their routine fixed style. Accordingly, they portray the picture of a mythical entity called Angel, sent as a postman to deliver

the divine message . It clearly shows that, for these early scholars, the exalted self of the Creator, Who ordains that He is always closer to the man than his jugular vein, needed a messenger to convey his message to man from some far away station! It exposed their retarded minds which assumed Allah swt as a person sitting somewhere high up in His imperial court in the presence of his courtiers, where He issues orders and His staff carries them out. In that Court there are some postmen or messengers too who are appointed to convey His messages to humans, and are called Angels. Then these old Imams draw great pictures of magnified bodies of those Angels and their super natural powers and prowess in a way which is tantamount to the insult of rational and intellectual thinking, laws of nature, proven scientific knowledge and the hitherto known process and stages of creation of the Universe. In fact, they make a laughing stock of themselves and of their faith group.

However, some advanced translations which include the one by respected G.A. Pervaiz above, regard the two prescribed MODES – the First and the Second - as reserved for Divine Envoys or Messengers; and the THIRD MODE for common men. The said first TWO MODES include the SECOND MODE which is the one named “VIRTUAL TALKING FROM BEHIND A VEIL”. This, as per the Word of God, is the “Kalaam (speech/talk)” which Allah utters addressing His Messenger. The FIRST MODE, as we already know, is that of sending Revelations to the Messengers. AND,,,the THIRD MODE is also of Revelations to the Messengers which they, in turn, convey to the common men. It shows that ultimately or virtually the TWO MODES described here are the same and consist in sending Revelation, directly and indirectly.....but there is a different misconceived MODE too, the SECOND MODE, that of “TALKING FROM BEHIND A VEIL”.

It is evident from the interpretation of the SECOND MODE, embodying “virtual talking”, that all of these translators commonly believed in one factor; they all believed as if Allah swt is some human like figure WHO has a tongue like man has; which means He has a body too! And that with His tongue He also “speaks” with some particular human being in his language! That He has got a voice too! And, very strangely,,,that this particular MODE of talking is reserved for only one special person out of the entire human species – for a particular Divine Envoy, whose name is MOSES???

The logical question that arises from here is as to why this exception is exercised with only MOSES?? Was there some special reason or mystery behind this “talking”?? Can we think of any justifiable reason for this lone and extraordinary exception?? Has any eminent scholar of Quran an answer to this question from us? Probably none!

Let us make it clear here that, according to Quran, the nature and composition of Allah’s exalted self stands beyond human comprehension or imagination (لَا تُدْرِكُهُ (الْأَبْصَارُ – 6/103). He neither has a body, nor a tongue, nor a material existence, nor has a station or residence from where He may “talk” with a man living somewhere on earth. He is an invisible, non-material, Absolute Consciousness

(هُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْأَبْصَارَ = وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ) (6/103) which is permeated throughout every inch of this Universe and its space. He is an entity Who has created this indescribable pageant of Universe under a definite plan and purpose, every stage of which is heading automatically towards its final destination. And that Exalted Consciousness wields full control over it and is the ultimate guide for all of his creation, particularly the human race. He can’t be symbolized in a human body!

So, our first and foremost question, which is entitled to a very easy answer, goes like this : “Does the action of Revelation itself not take place “from behind a veil”???” Let us ask this question in another way: “Is the Almighty Allah NOT BEHIND A VEIL while sending a Revelation???” If you have figured it out in the same way as this humble writer does, then this issue stands resolved in a jiffy! YES! The process of WAHI or Revelation is in itself taking place FROM BEHIND A VEIL”! It IS a communication or talking from BEHIND A VEIL.

Dear friends, is it difficult to understand that WAHI itself is called an act undertaken “behind a Veil” or in complete secrecy? Isn’t this the MODE through which Allah swt conveys His message WITHOUT SPEAKING LIKE MEN, AND WITHOUT REVEALING HIS SELF?? In Reality, “the communication through Revelation” and “the speaking (kalaam) from behind a veil” just cannot be two different and separate MODES!!!

I hope by now I have succeeded in making clear that Allah's only MODE OF COMMUNICATION with man is WAHI (Revelation), whether it may descend upon an individual's mind or upon the appointed Messenger for dissemination to humans collectively.

Therefore, the pertinent rational translation of the respective Verse, while adhering strictly to the Divine Words, should be as follows :-

وَمَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَنْ يُكَلِّمَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا وَحْيًا أَوْ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ رَسُولًا فَيُوحِيَ بَأْذَنِهِ مَا يَشَاءُ ۗ إِنَّهُ عَلِيُّ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٥١﴾

“And it is not probable for any man that Allah should speak with him except through the MODE of WAHI, or (take it this way) remaining BEHIND A VEIL; or He may appoint Rusool and then again send WAHI to him containing His orders as He may wish. Indeed He is the one exalted and wise.”

It is our teachers and seniors who have tried to create superfluous difficulties for us and, in this case, TURNED A SINGLE EASY COURSE OF DIVINE COMMUNICATION into a big puzzle and a point of controversy. And you have just seen that a little bit of mental exercise has closed this controversy forever.

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In the context of Allah's “virtual talking”, we are referred to the following Verse and are admonished to believe that Allah swt DOES SPEAK virtually, not symbolically:-

Verse 4/164: وَكَلَّمَ اللَّهُ مُوسَىٰ تَكْلِيمًا-

Whereas, Quran also informs us specifically that Allah swt used to send revelations to MOSES too. Quran informs us of this reality repeatedly with the words : “Wa Auhayina ila Musa”(و اوحينا الى موسى), “And we sent Revelations to MOSES”. Please check the Verses: 7/11, 7/16, 10/87, 20/77, 26/52, 26/26, 28/7, which would leave you fully convinced. In the light of all the referred Verses, we deem the theory of “Kaleem ullah” (the one with whom God talks) as fictitious. After going through these Verses, Can a scholar have the audacity to declare that Allah swt used to “talk” to MOSES with His tongue like a human?

To close the chapter of this controversy, let us translate the above referred Verse 4/164 in a Rational way befitting with the context of this Theme:-

وَكَلَّمَ اللَّهُ مُوسَى تَكْلِيمًا “And Allah addressed MOSES to convey his message”.

This proves that Allah swt doesn't have a double standard. Allah's "kalaam" does not signify talking in words. The Revelation is in fact nothing other than Allah's "kalaam". Moreover, "talking from behind a veil" too is the same way of communication by Allah, the Revelation. Allah's "kalaam" is not spoken; it is conveyed to man's mind (Qalb). Quran is also called Allah's Kalaam, but we know that it is conveyed to our Rusool's mind without involving virtual talking. Similarly, "laa tabdeela li-kalimaat-illah" cannot mean "the words uttered by Allah's tongue do not change". It simply means that Allah's "Revealed Word" does not change. Hence, in connection with Allah's address to humans or Nabis, the word "kalaam" or "Yukallim" or "Kalamaat-illah" cannot be the words spoken by tongue.

The last point. The words "min-hum man kallam-allah" (منهم من كلم الله) in the Verse 2/253, do not signify an exception of virtual speech for one or a few of the Messengers. Here the proposition "min" does not signify an exception. It is a "min bayaniyah" – من بيانيه. Not "min tab'eedhiyya" – من تبعيضييه. It does not mean that Allah swt virtually spoke to some of them. It rather means that Allah swt addressed "all of them". With the references of many Verses above, stipulating "و اوحينا الى موسى", the deduction of an exception of virtual speech with MOSES proves baseless.

I hope I have been able to transmit the reality.