

# Some Accusations against Muhammad (S)

*How non-believers wanted to discredit the mission of the Prophet (S)*

## Concept check

- A ‘poet’ can be a title of compliment, but when the Arabs accused the Prophet (S) of being a poet, what sinister allusion did they imply?
- What was the reason behind accusing the Prophet (S) with so many different terms of indictment?
- Why was it important for the Qur’ān to refute each and every allegations raised by the disbelievers?



## Introduction

During the early phases of the Prophet (S)’s career, the contemporary audience accused him in many different ways using many different derogatory words. These accusations were serious in nature and the Qur’ān did not overlook them or left unanswered.

In the early Makkan revelations the Qur’ān repeatedly quoted many such accusations and refuted them in strongest terms. Most often the Qur’ān strongly rejected the allegations, and at other times it challenged the accusers. Sometimes it counter-accused the accusers in a way to expose their wicked mentality, and at other times it simply condemned the accusers in strongest term. The purpose of the refuting or challenging the allegations was primarily to settle the contemporary misgivings, but secondarily to provide answers for all such allegations that would arise in future after the death of the Prophet (S).

These accusations provide interesting insight about the socio-cultural environment at the time of the Prophet (S). Reading all the related verses in the Qur’ān also provide interesting understanding about the thinking of the people and their responses towards Islam.

## Common accusations

Some of the most common and frequently raised allegations against the Prophet (S) were raised by those who disbelieved in his mission. There were many hypocrites who outwardly confessed faith in the Prophet (S) but inwardly did not believe. They too raised various accusations to undermine the spirit of the Muslims and to create confusion in the minds of the believers. In this lesson, we will mostly discuss the allegations raised by the disbelievers since these were the most vicious and most frequent. We will also discuss allegations raised by the hypocrites among the Muslims.

## Accusation of being a liar

The most common way to discredit statement of a person is to tell the person he is lying. But to accuse him as a “liar” will take the allegation little further. The word “liar” indicates the person habitually speaks lies and he cannot be trusted. A liar does not speak just one lie, he speaks many lies.

Simply speaking, a liar is one who falsifies truth. He may cover it up, deny it, or make up new statements or change a prior statement. When a person accuses



another person as a liar, the first person implies some of the following things:

1. He implies he has the correct knowledge about the matter
2. He implies the other person is wrong
3. He implies the other person cannot be trusted
4. He implies he is more reliable than the accused
5. He implies the other person changes his words
6. He implies the other person falsifies truth

The Prophet (S) was accused of a liar since some people claimed whatever he was saying was untrue, he was falsifying, he was making up stories. Above all, he was not reliable. People implied he was not speaking one lie, but he was telling many lies. Since these allegations were raised many times, the Qur'ān also addressed the issue in many verses, e.g. 6:33-34; 25:4; 34:43; 38:4. Below is quote of two such verses:

*25:4 But those who disbelieve say: "This is nothing but a lie which he has forged, and other people have helped him on it." So indeed they have brought forth an injustice and a falsehood.*

*34:43 For, when Our clear Messages are recited to them, they say: "He is nothing but a man who wishes to keep you back from what your forefathers used to worship." And they say: "This is nothing but a lie forged." And those who disbelieve say regarding the Truth when it comes to them: "This is nothing but an obvious enchantment!"*

## Accusation of being a *kahin* or soothsayer

In the contemporary Arabia a *Kahin* used to earn great attention and awe from the audience. A *kahin* is a title given to a person who showed strong aptitude at reciting couplets. They not only recite couplets, but also make predictions about future. Most of the predictions are derived from demonic sources or from the sources of jinns. The *Kahins* are often reported to go into spells induced by some devilish spirits. They also made predictions on the basis of certain signs and circumstantial evidence which could go wrong or right.

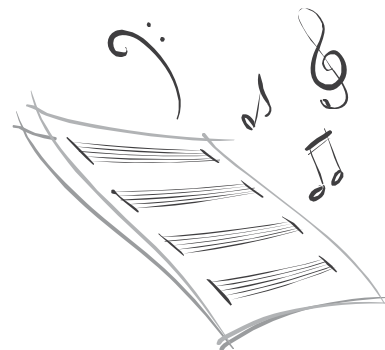
When the Quraish accused the Prophet (S) was a *Kahin*, they implied he was no different from other *kahins* in Arabia – influenced by devil, recited couplets, made predictions about future. They cleverly related the prophecy made by the Prophet (S) with the predictions

made by the soothsayers. Definitely there are some similarities in both the symptoms—but difference is prophecy originated from Allah, whereas soothsaying originated from devil. But ordinary people cannot tell which one is from Allah and which one is devil. It is not an easy task. Needless to say, such allegations prevented many people from accepting Islam or recognizing Muhammad (S) as messenger of Allah. Verses dealing with the issue of *Kahin* also speak about the allegation of the Prophet (S) being a poet, e.g. 21:5; 36:69; 37:36; 52:29-30; 69:40-43.

*21:5 "In fact", they say: "medleys of dreams! of course, he has forged it! rather he is a poet. Then let him bring us a Sign as the former were sent with."*

## Accusation of being a poet

The accusation of the Prophet (S) being a poet is closely related to the accusation of him being a *kahin*. If someone said you or I were a poet, probably it is a compliment. For any other person, the title of 'poet' or 'novelist' or 'musician' would not mean anything derogatory. Therefore, it may appear that if the Prophet (S) was accused of being a poet, one should not be very alarmed. But the implication of the allegation is as vicious as any other accusations. Here is the reason why. Most of the poets in the contemporary Arabia used poetry as a social past-time. Poems were composed, recited and people enjoyed listening to the poems. The themes of many of the poems were eulogies of the ancestors, nature or women or they were just pure word play without any serious intention out of it. Importantly none of the famous poets at the time of the Prophet (S) claimed themselves as Allah's messengers. None of them claimed the verses they composed were divine in nature. Their purpose was simple—please the crowd and earn little money.



Thus, by equating the Prophet (S) with the contemporary poets, the Arab audience wanted to disclaim the Prophet(S)'s claim of Prophethood. The implied argument was if none of the poets were prophets of Allah, Muhammad (S) could not be a prophet, but a simple poet like the rest of them. If somehow the people were led to believe Muhammad (S) was only a poet, people would take the message of the verse with no greater weight than mere word play. The leaders in the society believed if this could be proved, then people need not worry about morality and Awakening so often emphasized in the early revelations. Muhammad (S) thus was no more than many other looking for a small livelihood.

They had a reason behind raising the allegations. Most of the early revelations had strong resonance and assonance in the verse. Assonance means resemblance of sound in words or syllables or close juxtaposition of similar sounds or repetition of a letter or sound or vowel with repetition of consonants. When read out loud, the audience did not fail to notice the end rhyme in many sūrahs. This feature in early Makkan revelation was able to attract attention of the audience. It was divine plan to reveal the earlier revelations with this characteristic features. But the disbelievers cleverly twisted the divine plan to write off the Prophet (S) as an ordinary poet.

The Qur'ān says:

*36:69 And We have not taught him poetry, nor is it proper for him. This is nothing but a Reminder and a perspicuous Qur-an,*

*37:36 and they said: "Shall we indeed give up our deities for the sake of a mad poet?"*

## Accusation of being a forger

The question of forgery is addressed in 21:5; 25:4; 32:3; 34:8; 38:7; 52:33; 69:44-47. You will notice many of these verses also speak of more than one allegation. For example verse 21:5 speaks of forgery as well as being a poet, verse 37:36 speaks of being mad and poet.

*32:3 Or do they say that he has forged it? No, it is the Truth from your Rabb in order that you may warn a people to whom no warner has come before you, that perhaps they may follow guidance.*

The Quraish raised allegation of forgery after they listened to the Prophet (S) recited some of the most spellbinding sūrahs. They believed if it was not for

forgery, it was not possible for an unlettered, insignificant person, who until that point never showed any eloquence or skill in literary composition, all of a sudden began saying phrases rich in literary styles, resonance and assonance unparalleled in the contemporary history.

Frequent mention of past stories in the Qur'ān also led the skeptics believe the Prophet (S) forged the information. The Quraish vaguely knew about some of the past stories through legends, but Muhammad (S) provided various astonishing details about the stories. They calimed unless these were plagiarized, he could not have known the details. They implied he must have heard these stories from other sources earlier during his life or at that time from some unnamed foreigner (16:103). They claimed either Muhammad (S) duped himself in believing the Qur'ān had a divine source or was duping others by saying it was divine while he knew it was not true.

## Accusation of being an enchanter

The Prophet (S) was often accused of being an enchanter. The term *sihr* primarily denotes sorcery or magic. In an act of magic, the magician creates an illusion of changing one thing into another by subtle maneuvers that beat ordinary observation.



Primary aim of all magic is to entertain but no magic expects to make lasting effect. Once the magic show is over, the order of things returns to normal. For example, a magician shows a live woman is placed inside a box with her head and leg popping out from two end of the box. Then he cuts the box in two halves, creating an impression that the woman was cut into two halves. But at the end of the show the woman remains intact, nothing happens to her. In other words, no lasting effect is achieved from the magic show.

The Prophet (S)'s mission and preaching appeared to challenge the contemporary societal philosophy and ideology to such an extent that most skeptics thought it was unachievable, therefore illusory in nature (10:2; 21:3; 38:4). Once the magical spell would be over, things would return to the normal. The allegations of the Prophet (S) being an enchanter is mentioned in verses 10:2; 21:3; 25:8; 38:4; 74:18-25.

*10:2 ....The Unbelievers say: "Certainly this is obviously an enchanter."*

*38:4 Now they wonder because a warner from among themselves has come to them; and the Unbelievers say: "This is an enchanter a great liar."*

Interestingly such allegations were not only made towards the Prophet (S), but as Qur'an indicates, the people in the earlier periods similarly blamed their prophets (51:52).

### Accusation of being mad

A mad person is one who is unsound in mind and body. Either he has dysfunctional or a retarded brain.



Sometimes a person can be fully discredited if the word he says does not make any sense to the hearer. The influential contemporary leaders ridiculed the Prophet (S) as a mad person to let fellow naïve people believe his saying was worthless. If the general audience were made to believe the Prophet (S) was unsound in mind, his words would not warrant second attention. The leaders thought people might write off his words as senseless and would not follow his religion.

The allegations of the Prophet (S) being a madman is addressed in 7:184; 15:6; 34:8,46; 37:36; 52:29; 68:2,6,51; 81:22.

*15:6 And they say: "O you upon whom the Reminder has been revealed! you are certainly mad indeed."*

*37:36 and they said: "Shall we indeed give up our deities for the sake of a mad poet?"*

*7:184 Have they not reflected? Their Companion has no madness. He is none but a perspicuous warner.*

### Accusations by half-hearted muslims

Many of the half hearted-Muslims or new-Muslims did not have full faith in the religion. They might have accepted Islam, but their commitment towards Islam was wavering. The cause of Islam was not strong in their heart. As such many of them accused the Prophet (S) for not becoming forthright with them. During the battle of Uhud, Khandaq and expedition of Tabuk, as well as at many other occasions, some of the half hearted believers and hypocrites accused the Prophet (S) for being deceptive. Obviously their purpose was to weaken the Muslim spirit since they themselves were not fully committed towards Islam.

### Keyterms

Kahin      Assonance      Soothsayer  
 Enchanter

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1. Which of the following statement is true about the accusations raised by the contemporary Arabs?

- A. All accusations were raised only by the Quraish
- B. All accusations were raised only by the Jews
- C. Accusations were made by the non-believers as well as by hypocrites among believers
- D. They stopped accusations after the Prophet (S) migrated to Madīnah
- E. The accusations were not serious in nature, therefore can be ignored

2. Of all allegations against the Prophet (S), the accusations of him being a poet was mostly:

- A. A compliment
- B. A title of respect shown to him
- C. To equate his mission no greater than that of many other poets in the society
- D. Acceptable since many verses in the Qur'ān has rhymes
- E. To show Muhammad (S) was capable of composing poems

3. What were the three major themes of the poems composed during the time of the Prophet (S)?

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4. Read verse 25:4. What accusation did the Qur'ān refute in the verse?

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5. What are the accusations raised in the verse 38:4?

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6. Which of the following choice is correct about the allegation against the Prophet (S) as being a forger?

- A. The allegation of forgery was mostly raised by the Quraish
- B. The allegation of forgery was mostly raised by the Jews in Madīnah
- C. The allegations of forgery was raised due to frequent mention of biblical incidents in the Qur'ān
- D. Only (A) and (B)
- E. Only (B) and (C)

7. In Arabia a kahin used to be a person who specialized in certain activity. Which of the following choices correctly identifies the key activity of a kahin?

- A. Plagiarist
- B. Quack physician



- C. Worshipper of devil
- D. Recites couplets and foretells about future
- E. Hypocrite

8. Allegation of forgery did not arise as much in Makkah as in Madīnah. Which of the following choices reflect the main reason this allegation originated in Madīnah?

- A. The Prophet (S) became popular in Madīnah
- B. Constant interaction with various Jewish tribes lead them propagate the allegation
- C. For the first time in Madīnah people realized the Qur’ān and the Tawrat has so much similarities. This caused the Jews and others propagate the allegation
- D. Only (A) and (C)
- E. Only (B) and (C)

9. Read the verse 16:103. In connection with the allegation of forgery, who is said to have taught the Prophet (S) about past scriptures?

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10. When the disbelievers accused the Prophet (S) as an enchanter, they wanted to imply a specific point. Which of the following choices correctly states the point they wanted to imply?

- A. He was good at showmanship
- B. He was showing miracles
- C. He was equated with Jesus since Jesus showed miracles
- D. His belief and philosophy was illusory in nature, once the effect of enchantment is over, the promise of the religion will disappear
- E. He was an entertainer to the audience

11. The Prophet (S) was blamed as being a poet. Which of the following choices points out one of the reasons he was accused as poet?

- A. The Prophet (S) practiced his skill at eloquence
- B. The Prophet (S) competed with other poets in reciting
- C. Early revelations had end rhyme and assonance in many sūrahs
- D. The Prophet (S) memorized many poems during his childhood
- E. All of the above

12. Check the verses 21:5; 36:69; 37:36; 52:29-30; 69:40-43. What is the common accusation mentioned in all these verses? What is another common accusation found in at least two of the same set of verses?

(a) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) \_\_\_\_\_