

# 1. Introduction

I have made it clear many a time that God the Most High has sent me at the head of the fourteenth century<sup>1</sup> for the reformation of the people, bearing the name *Promised Messiah* and has granted me heavenly signs. I consider it appropriate to set down some of my biography in this book;<sup>2</sup> perhaps some seekers of truth may derive benefit by pondering over it.

By a happy coincidence, one Haji Muhammad Ismail Khan, chief of Datavali, recently requested me by letter to write my biography briefly for inclusion in a newly compiled book of his, and also to explain in it my claim and the arguments bearing upon it. Therefore, I consider it proper to reproduce here my reply for general benefit. With introductory remarks, it is as follows.

## My brief biography and objects of my mission

I have presently received a letter from Haji Muhammad Ismail Khan, chief of Datavali, along with a printed request, in which he has expressed his intention of compiling a book containing notes about famous personalities of India, including Punjab, from all walks of life. For this reason, he has asked me also for my biography. I too considered it proper to write something for general benefit in accordance with his request, and to set down in writing for publication in his book something about the

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1. The 14th century *Hijra* covered the period 1883–1979 C.E. (*Publisher.*)
  2. The book referred to is *Kitāb al-Bariyya*, within which this life-sketch appeared as a long marginal note. (*Publisher.*)

history of my family, about my own life and about my claim to be the Messiah and the arguments in support of the claim. But the requirement of brevity, which he has applied to his work, does not allow sufficient scope to fulfil this purpose. Hence as far as necessary, I wish to write this article in some detail. I hope the respected Khan *sahib*, having regard to my labour and toil of a few days, and looking at the value of the work, will not refrain from including it fully and in its entirety.

### **Purpose of biography.**

It is clear that unless the events of a man's life are sketched by drawing a full picture, a few brief lines cannot benefit the public, nor can any reliable result be achieved by writing them. The real purpose of biography is that the contemporaries or the future generations, by pondering over the events of the lives of those people, follow something of their example of morals, courage, righteousness and piety, knowledge and wisdom, work for the cause of the faith, service of humanity, or some other kind of praiseworthy achievement. Or at least this, that having come to know of the lives of the great persons of the nation, they should be so convinced of the grandeur and dignity which has always marked the stalwarts of Islam that they are able to present this before the adversaries in defence of the community. Or that they may form an opinion about the status of these people and their truthfulness or otherwise.

It is obvious that for this purpose everyone needs to know a somewhat detailed account of events. Many a time it happens that someone starts reading about the events of the life of a famous person in his biography very eagerly, and is full of the urge to derive some benefit by learning about all his circumstances. Then, if it so happens that the biographer has been content with being very brief and has not presented the life sketch in clear detail, the reader becomes thoroughly disgusted and disheartened, and very often he criticises such a biographer in his heart. In fact, he has a right to raise such an objection because at that time, due to overwhelming eagerness, he is like

a starving man before whom is placed a tray of delicious food, but just as he takes a morsel the tray is taken away.

Hence it is the duty of those esteemed men who take up the pen to write biographies that, in order to make their work widely useful, popular and well-liked by the people, they should write the life-events of famous people in such detail, with patience and magnanimity, and present their lives so completely that the reading becomes a substitute for meeting. So if such an excellent narrative makes someone spend time profitably he might also offer prayers for the success of that biographer in the world and the hereafter. Students of history know very well that this is exactly what has been done by those revered scholars who have written the biographies of the outstanding personalities of the nation with noble intentions and for the public good.