

“Call to the path of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation,
and argue with people in the best manner.” (Holy Quran, 16:125)

The Light

AND

ISLAMIC REVIEW

Exponent of Islam and the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement
for over eighty years

October – December 2009

In the spirit of the above-cited verse, this periodical attempts to dispel misunderstandings about the religion of Islam and endeavors to facilitate inter-faith dialogue based on reason and rationality.

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احمدیہ انجمن اشاعت اسلام لاہور

◆ Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha‘at Islam Lahore Inc., U.S.A. ◆

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The Light was founded in 1921 as the organ of the AHMADIYYA ANJUMAN ISHA'AT ISLAM (Ahmadiyya Association for the Propagation of Islam) of Lahore, Pakistan. *The Islamic Review* was published in England from 1913 for over 50 years, and in the U.S.A. from 1980 to 1991. The present periodical represents the beliefs of the worldwide branches of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam, Lahore.

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The main objective of the A.A.I.I.L. is to present the true, original message of Islam to the whole world — Islam as it is found in the Holy Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, obscured today by grave misconceptions and wrong popular notions.

Islam seeks to attract the *hearts and minds* of people towards the truth, by means of reasoning and the natural beauty of its principles.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908), our Founder, arose to remind the world that Islam is:

International: It recognizes prophets being raised among all nations and requires Muslims to believe in them all. Truth and goodness can be found in all religions. God treats all human beings equally, regardless of race, nationality or religion.

Peaceful: Allows use of force only in unavoidable self-defence. Teaches Muslims to live peacefully under any rule which accords them freedom of religion.

Tolerant: Gives full freedom to everyone to hold and practise any creed or religion. Requires us to tolerate differences of belief and opinion.

Rational: In all matters, it urges use of human reason and knowledge. Blind following is condemned and independence of thought is granted.

Inspiring: Worship is not a ritual, but provides living contact with a Living God, Who answers prayers and speaks to His righteous servants even today as in the past.

Non-sectarian: Every person professing Islam by the words *La ilaha ill-Allah, Muhammad-ur rasul-ullah* (There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah) is a Muslim. A Muslim cannot be expelled from Islam by anyone.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad taught that **no** prophet, old or new, is to arise after the Holy Prophet Muhammad. However, *Mujaddids* will be raised by God to revive and rekindle the light of Islam.

About ourselves

Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore has branches in many countries including:

U.S.A.	Australia
U.K.	Canada
Holland	Fiji
Indonesia	Germany
Suriname	India
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Achievements:

The Anjuman has produced extensive literature on Islam, originally in English and Urdu, including translations of the Holy Quran with commentaries. These books are being translated into other languages, including French, German, Spanish, Dutch, Russian, Chinese, and Arabic. The Anjuman has run several Muslim missions around the world, including the first ever in Western Europe.

History:

1889: *Hazrat* Mirza Ghulam Ahmad founds the Ahmadiyya Movement.

1901: Movement given name *Ahmadiyya* after Holy Prophet Muhammad's other famous name *Ahmad*.

1905: *Hazrat* Mirza appoints central body (Anjuman) to manage the Movement.

1908: Death of *Hazrat* Mirza. Succeeded by Maulana Nur-ud-Din as Head.

1914: Death of Maulana Nur-ud-Din. Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam founded at Lahore as continuation of the original Anjuman. Maulana Muhammad Ali elected as Head.

1951: Death of Maulana Muhammad Ali after fifty years of glorious service to the cause of Islam. Maulana Sadr-ud-Din (d. 1981) becomes Head.

1981–1996: Dr Saeed Ahmad Khan, an eminent medical doctor and religious scholar, led the Movement, at a time of intense persecution.

1996–2002: Prof. Dr Asghar Hameed, a distinguished retired University Professor of Mathematics, and learned Islamic scholar, served as Head.

2002: Prof. Dr Abdul Karim Saeed Pasha elected Head.

A Universal Prophet

An introduction to the institution of prophethood in Islam and an analysis of the significance of the Holy Prophet Muhammad being the “last” prophet.

By Fazeel S. Khan

[This article was delivered as the introductory presentation at the symposium titled “Muhammad: The Last Prophet” held in Columbus, Ohio, in conjunction with the AAAIL(USA)’s annual convention, in July of 2009. This presentation provides the necessary background for understanding what it actually means by referring to Prophet Muhammad as the “last” prophet. The subsequent presentations at the symposium focused on particular aspects of the Holy Prophet Muhammad’s life that further established and confirmed his status as being the last prophet, based on the descriptive outline provided herein.]

Introduction

The topic of my presentation this evening deals with examining what exactly is meant by the Prophet Muhammad being the “last prophet”. In order to understand the concept of the “**finality of prophethood**”, one must first understand the premise underlying the “**institution of prophethood**” (meaning, who are prophets and what are their function). And in order to understand what the “**institution of prophethood**” entails, one must be able to comprehend the significance of “**divine revelation**” (meaning, what is the purpose of God communicating with prophets). And comprehending the significance of “**divine revelation**” in turn requires appreciating the very “**purpose of creation**” (meaning, knowing what the object of life is). I’ve been allotted an entire 30 minutes to try to accomplish this, so let’s get started.

Purpose/Object of Life

The purpose or object of life, that great philosophical question that has been debated by theologians from time immemorial, is provided for in the very first verse of the Quran, the holy scripture of Islam. The Quran states in the first verse of its opening chapter, Al-Fatiha, or “The Opening”:

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds (1:1).

Although rather short in length, the implications of the particular words used in this verse are quite profound. The Arabic word “hamd”, translated as “praise”, actually means having so much true admiration for a thing that one is inclined to incorporate it into one’s being. And the word “Allah”, normally understood as

“God”, is literally defined as “the Being Who exists necessarily by Himself, comprising all the attributes of perfection”. The Arabic word “Rabb”, translated as “Lord” means the “One Who not only creates but also fosters and nourishes creation from lower to higher stages until it reaches a goal of completion and perfection”.

Hence, the significance of the very first verse of the Quran is that the purpose of our existence is to identify, understand and emulate the divine attributes of God, Who is the Creator and Nourisher of the entire universe. That is, we are to strive to know God so that we can live a life that is God-like with others, thereby developing the divine attributes within us and ultimately become close to God in this life and the hereafter.

Successfully achieving this goal results in complete peace and contentment, otherwise known as the spiritual state of “heaven”. The Holy Quran describes this in the following words:

O Soul that are at rest,
Return to thy Lord, well-pleased, well-pleasing,
So enter among My servants,
And enter My Garden! (89:27-30)

Need for Divine Revelation

Now in order to *know* God, so that one may acquire the divine attributes and display them in our daily lives, man is in need of *guidance*. This guidance comes in the form of “divine revelation”.

Speaking of Adam (who symbolizes “man” in general), the Quran explains the reason why revelation from God is needed and the purpose that it fulfills. It states:

And when thy Lord said to the angels, I am going to place a ruler in the earth, they (the angels) said: Wilt Thou place in it such (beings) as make mischief in it and shed blood? ... He (God) said, Surely I know what you know not. **And He taught Adam all the names (i.e. gave Adam knowledge of all things)** ... And when We said to the angels, Be submissive to Adam, they submitted but Iblis (the Devil) did not. He (the Devil) refused and he was proud, and he was one of the disbelievers. And We said, O Adam! Dwell thou and thy wife in the garden, and eat from it a plentiful (food) wherever you wish, and approach not this tree, lest you be of the unjust. But the devil made them slip from it, and caused them to depart from the state in which they were ... **And Adam received (revealed) words from his Lord, and He (God) turned to him (Adam) mercifully** ... We said, Go forth from this state all, so **surely there will come to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear**

shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve.
(2:30-38)

This story of Adam and his wife, their relationship with angels and the devil is an allegory for the status and nature of man. We are told that Adam (or man in general) is given the knowledge of all things, meaning man is endowed with the capacity to acquire a deep understanding of the environment in which he lives. With this knowledge, man will be able to conquer the forces of nature. This is what is meant by the angels (who are the controlling powers of nature) submitting to Adam. Despite having the capability to control the physical world, man is unable to master the low desires within himself; this is why Iblis/Devil (that being that incites the lower desires in man) does not make obeisance and causes man to fall prey to his evil suggestions.

So, the moral of the story is that man is powerful against all, but weak against himself. It was to make man “perfect” in the complete sense, that *guidance* was provided by God to man, and this guidance came in the form of divine revelation. Thus, with the help of divine revelation, we are told that man can overcome the fear of the Devil’s temptings, and thereby remove the hindrance to his progress to perfection and the obstacle to the development of his higher moral qualities.

Institution of Prophethood

Now, this guidance comprising divine knowledge for spiritual progress is communicated by God to those persons known as “prophets”. The Arabic word for prophet is *nabi*, which is derived from *naba*, meaning “*an announcement of great utility; imparting knowledge of a thing.*” One lexicologist explains the word *nabi* as meaning “an ambassador between God and rational beings from among His creatures.” According to another, a *nabi* is “*the man who gives information about God.*”

Now, in addition to delivering the divine knowledge that God desires to convey to man, prophets also serve another function. A prophet is also commissioned to be a model that is to be followed; that is, he is to illustrate how the divine message being conveyed is to be practically implemented.

It is the prophets’ example that inspires a living faith in the hearts of the people to which he is commissioned, thereby bringing about a real transformation in their lives. And this is why the Quran lays special stress on the fact that a prophet must be a human being; it states:

Had there been in the earth angels walking about secure, We would have sent down to them an angel from the heaven as a messenger (17:95)

Thus, it is necessary for a prophet to be a human being so as to satisfy the function of being a practical role model for mankind.

Being the Lord (i.e. the “Rabb” - the Creator and Fosterer/Nourisher) of all creation, God sent prophets to all people of the world. Just as God granted everything required for the physical sustenance of humans equally to all – air, sun, rain, soil, animals, vegetation, etc. - so too did He provide all people with that which was required for their spiritual development.

According to the Quran, every nation on earth received a prophet; it states:

There is not a people but a warner has gone among them (35:24)

For every nation there is a messenger (10:47)

The Quran stresses the universality of the institution of prophethood by declaring:

We believe in God and (in) that which has been revealed to us, and (in) that which was revealed to Abraham, and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and (in) that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and (in) that which was given to the prophets from their Lord, we do not make any distinction between any of them and to Him do we submit. (2:136)

In addition to Israelite prophets, the Quran makes specific mention of Hud and Salih of *Arabia*, Luqman of *Ethiopia*, a contemporary of Moses (generally known as Khidzr) of *Sudan*, and Dhu-l-Qarnain of *Persia*. In one report the Holy Prophet Muhammad is reported as saying that there have been 124,000 prophets in all. In addition to receiving guidance to be conveyed to their people, by their personal example, these prophets showed their people how to live a righteous life.

Finality of Prophethood

Now, although these prophets appeared in every nation with a message as to how to achieve closeness to God, the message given to these prophets was limited to the particular people to which they were sent and the specific times in which they lived. These prophets were, so to say, *national prophets*, and their work was restricted to the moral upliftment and spiritual regeneration of one nation and one period of time. The Quran alludes to this when mentioning earlier prophets. It states that Noah was sent to “*his people*” (7:59). Hud, Salih and Shuaib – each one of them were also sent to “*his people*” (7:65, 7:73, 7:85). Moses is spoken of as being commissioned to “bring forth *thy people* from darkness into light” (14:5). Jesus is spoken of as a “messenger to the *children of Israel*” (3:48).

In the past, when nations lived in isolated states, confined to distinct geographic areas, national prophets being commissioned to their people was ideal. However, when humanity progressed to the point that

nations no longer lived constrained by geographic boundaries and communications and mixing between peoples progressed immensely, the Divine scheme of the institution of prophethood required a means by which the entire human race could be spiritually unified. Because, each nation, ignorant of the fact that the very Divine favors with which they were blessed was also gifted to others, began to think of themselves as “chosen ones” of God. This belief in *divine favoritism* caused more wars in the past (and continues to be the principle cause of civil unrest today) than any other ideology since the beginning of time. Such views impeded any chance for a united human race living in peace.

The pinnacle, therefore, in the divine institution of prophethood was the coming of one prophet for all nations. The Holy Quran states that Prophet Muhammad was this “final” prophet in the long chain of messengers sent to humanity; it states emphatically:

Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and (*khatam al nabiyyin*) the last of the prophets (33:40).

Three Criteria of the “Last Prophet”

In order to assess the validity of this claim, three (3) criteria need to be analyzed. To be the “last” prophet – that is, the “world” prophet that is to unite humanity on the basis of a spiritual faith, the prophet must:

- Deliver a Universal Message;
- Be a Comprehensive Model of Life Experiences;
- Have the Universal Message and Comprehensive Life Experiences Preserved for Later Generations.

Universal Message

The Holy Quran illustrates the “universality” of the Holy Prophet’s message by distinguishing the “scope” of his mission. Unlike the prophets before him, the Holy Prophet is not described as being sent to a particular nation, race or people, but rather for all humanity; the Holy Quran states:

Blessed is He who sent down the discrimination upon His servant (i.e. Prophet Muhammad) that he may be a warner to all nations (25:1);

Say: O Mankind, surely I am the Messenger of God to you all (7:158);

And We have not sent thee but as a bearer of good news and as a warner to all mankind (34:28).

Moreover, the Quran itself is repeatedly referred to as “a reminder for all nations” (68:52; 81:27; 38:87; 12:104).

The universality of Prophet Muhammad’s message is further illustrated by the fact that not only did he declare that prophets of God appeared in every nation, but that it is mandatory for every one who believes in

him to also believe in all the prophets of the world. And by making a belief in the prophet of every nation the basic principle of his faith, Prophet Muhammad lays the foundation of a world-religion, wherein the idea of nationality is superseded by the consciousness of the unity of the human race.

And most decisively, the Holy Quran states:

This day have I (i.e. God) perfected for you (i.e. mankind) your religion and completed My favor to you and chosen for you Islam as a religion (5:3).

Thus, the completion of the favor – that is, the sending of the “last prophet” in the divine scheme of the institution of prophethood – goes hand in hand with the perfection of religion – that is, the divine guidance conveyed to man. Understanding this concept allows one to more fully appreciate the verse on Muhammad being the last of the prophets quoted earlier:

Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the last of the prophets (33:40).

This verse states that “Muhammad is not the father of any of your men”, meaning he does not have any sons or heirs as such to pass on his qualities to, like a father does to a son, “but”, the verse continues, “he is the Messenger of Allah and the last”, and therefore, most complete “of the Prophets”. The latter part of the verse reveals, by the grammatical use of the word “but”, which necessitates some sort of logical rebuttal or persuasive alternative, that even though he does not have any physical sons, he will be granted innumerable spiritual heirs for he is the final and most complete prophet whose example man will turn to in order to achieve closeness to God. The verse indicates that Prophet Muhammad is the guide without whom one cannot know God in the complete sense; that is, without whom one cannot find a practical illustration of all of the Divine attributes.

Comprehensive Model of Life Experiences

Concerning the requirement of being a “comprehensive model of life experiences”, the Holy Quran declares:

Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah (i.e. Muhammad) an excellent exemplar (33:21).

This verse points to the distinguishing characteristic of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The Holy Prophet’s life was so multi-faceted, that he was able to provide a model of virtue for mankind under all circumstances. From an orphan to a king of a great empire, Prophet Muhammad passed through all phases of life:

- If he had not led armies, he could not have served as a model for a responsible general leading armies into battle;

- if he had not joined the ranks of a military force, he could not have been an exemplar for a soldier laying down his life in the cause of truth, justice and freedom;
- if he had not made laws for the guidance of his followers, he could never have been regarded as an outstanding example to a trusted legislator;
- if he had not decided disputes, he could not have served as a light to an impartial judge and magistrate;
- if he had not married, he would have left men unguided in practically half of their daily interactions and could not have shown how to be a kind and affectionate husband and a loving father;
- if he had not been a laborer, he could not have revealed the value and integrity in working with one's own hands and earning an honest living;
- if he had not had life-long friends, he could not have shown the beauty in trust and true companionship;
- if he had not enforced punishment on tyrants for the wrongs inflicted on innocent persons, if he had not overcome his persecuting enemies and forgiven them, if he had not overlooked the faults of those close to him, he could not have been an *excellent exemplar* and a *perfect model*.

Indeed, it is the distinguishing characteristic of Prophet Muhammad's life that he not only gave practical rules of guidance in all walks of life, but gave by his life a practical illustration of all those rules. Unlike any other prophet, he himself worked out all the principles he taught to others! It is not through his sermons and teachings that we estimate his character, but rather through his actions and his deeds. Quite logically, only the one who has experienced all the circumstances forming the basis of the lessons he teaches, can truly be a perfect model for others.

I'd like to illustrate this point further. Let us take the quality of "forgiveness" for example. Forgiveness is much revered as a noble trait by all religions. Every prophet taught in one form or the other that "to forgive is divine." However, one can only claim to have truly exhibited an attribute such as forgiveness, if the conditions under which one forgives are appropriate. To truly forgive, in the fullest sense of the word, the following criteria must have occurred:

- First, one needs to be persecuted ruthlessly by others.
- Second, events must change so that the persecutors eventually fall at the oppressed person's mercy.
- Third, the oppressed person must possess the power to mete out punishment the persecutors rightfully deserve.

The mere preaching of forgiveness or mercy is no proof of actually acquiring this attribute; for this, one is required to be in a position to show it. Think about it, an oppressor would regard a claim of forgiveness as an insult to himself if it came from his helpless victim.

In all of religious history, there is only one noble example of a life comprising all three conditions precedent for the true exhibition of "forgiveness". This was the life of Muhammad. The Holy Prophet and his small group of followers were met with the most severe forms of trials – humiliation, ostracization, torture and even death. They were forced to flee their homes in Mecca because of these persecutions. Some initially fled to Abyssinia. Ultimately, a migration was made to Medina. Indeed all prophets exhibited forgiveness and mercy under various conditions, but what separates Prophet Muhammad from any other person in history, is that eventually the tables turned: the very enemies of the Holy Prophet, the very tormentors and persecutors who attempted to kill him and annihilate his followers, fell at the Holy Prophet's mercy. Despite being at the point of the sword, the number of Muslims grew in Medina and after seven years of being away from home, and having made alliances with neighboring tribes, the Holy Prophet Muhammad prepared for an expedition back to Mecca. The Holy Prophet entered Mecca with 10,000 righteous followers, the mere sight of which forced the Meccans to surrender without resistance.

It could not have been regarded as inappropriate for the Holy Prophet to have administered punishment upon those who had made war upon him and his followers. The leaders, at least, could have been made an example of to the masses. However, the Holy Prophet's historic conquest was not one of bloodshed, but one of mercy and forgiveness. He declared: "There shall be no reproof against you this day"! A general amnesty was given, guaranteeing safety to all who showed they were not interested in fighting. The perfection of the attribute of "forgiveness" and its display in the most complete form was, thus, provided by the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

Preservation of the Message/Experiences

With regard to the requirement that the example of the "world-prophet" be preserved, so that it is available for all people and for all ages, like no other person in history, the entire life of Prophet Muhammad, in a most detailed and descriptive manner, is recorded in numerous collections of traditions from his own companions and contemporaries. Muhammad is, no doubt, a "historic" prophet. Many critics in the past and in contemporary times question whether some of the other prophets of God really existed, because of the very little "historic" material available about them. As for Muhammad, however, there has never been any serious allegation of this kind. From his early life until his

death, almost every detail about his words, his deeds his habits and his overall character, is on record. It is no exaggeration to state that most Muslims know more about the Holy Prophet than they do about their own parents.

When you think about it, it is truly an astounding concept – with all the knowledge and intimate details about his life, Muhammad still commands the respect and admiration of over one (1) billion persons on earth today. With the mass of evidence contained in written traditions and other documentation, it is amazing that critics of the Prophet cannot find more faults to pick against him. People today know exactly what Prophet Muhammad liked to eat, what drinks he disliked, how he brushed his teeth, how he walked, how he smiled, how he shook hands, what type of jokes he told, and even the number of white hairs he had in his beard, for even these such details are recorded. Through the voluminous authenticated records, Muhammad is truly a “living prophet” for his life is just as accessible for people the world over to witness today, as it was fourteen (14) hundred years ago in Arabia.

Conclusion

This, my friends, is what is meant by Muhammad being the “Last Prophet”. The following presentations will provide more details about how Prophet Muhammad was a successful “universal prophet”, by being:

- an exemplary citizen;
- a model public official;
- a guide for international relations;
- and an ideal spiritual reformer.

Muhammad: An Exemplary Citizen

By Sadr-u-Dean Sahukhan

[This article was presented at the symposium titled “Muhammad: The Last Prophet” held in Columbus, Ohio, in conjunction with the AAII(USA)’s annual convention, in July of 2009. In this article, Attorney Sahukhan, President of the Australia Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat, provides an insightful look into the Holy Prophet’s life as an ordinary member of the community. In terms of being a responsible member of a family unit, an active participant in community service pursuits, a neighbor with deep moral convictions, a laborer with a strong work ethic, etc., Attorney Sahukhan shows how the Holy Prophet Muhammad exemplified a perfect model citizen.]

The purpose of my presentation is to demonstrate why the Holy Prophet Muhammad is aptly described as an

“exemplary citizen”. This topic necessitates reviewing the Prophet Muhammad’s family life, community service, moral convictions and work ethics. I will be focusing on how, as an ordinary citizen, the Prophet’s daily life activities were always intended for the benefit of society as a whole.

A Responsible Member of a Family Unit

One of the most important reforms brought by the Prophet Muhammad concerned the rights, entitlements and position of women generally, and more particularly the position and status of wives. Despite the reforms, Islam today is still being portrayed as a religion that degrades insults and deprives women (wives) of any status and/or rights.

In all religious history, there is no person who has done so much to elevate the position of women as the Prophet (PBUH) did. He gave them rights when they had none. He reminded all that:

“The rights of women are sacred. See that women are maintained in the rights granted to them,”

He also said:

“That is the best of Muslims whose disposition is best; and the best of you are they who behave best to their wives.”

How the Prophet (PBUH) treated his wives and what he expected out of his community in treatment of their wives is a very emphatic manifestation of the reforms concerning the status of women in Islam.

His wife, Hazrat Aisha, always said that when the Prophet was at home and not doing work, he would be occupied serving her. He would milk his own goats, patch his own clothes, mend his own shoes and dust the house. The Holy Prophet, being a partner to his wives in terms of household chores, is a fact admitted by non-Muslim historians. Gibbon in ‘The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire’ (1823), wrote:

The good sense of Muhammad despised the pomp of royalty. The Apostle of God submitted to the menial offices of the family; he kindled the fire; swept the floor; milked the ewes; and mended with his own hands his shoes and garments. Disdaining the penance and merit of a hermit, he observed without effort of vanity the abstemious diet of an Arab.

A wife is one person who is the closest to a man. She is with him all the time. She is the one person who is always in the best position to observe and comment upon her husband’s thinking, behaviour, attitude and manners. The prophet’s qualities were such that they created the true and sincere love that ought to exist between any husband and wife.

When the Call came for him to receive the revelation of the Holy Quran, the Holy Prophet felt the responsibility was too onerous. He was too humble. He had doubts as to his ability to carry out the task. His wife Khadijah, at that moment, consoled him with these encouraging words:

God will never let thee see the humiliation of failure. Verily, thou showest due regard for blood-ties, carriest the burden of the infirm, practisest virtues that are extinct, entertainest guests and standest by what is righteous in the face of calamities.

A person earns his or her respect; he or she cannot demand the same. The response by his wife as stated above displays the respect, sincerity, trust and love she, as a wife, had towards the Prophet. The prophet worked towards and earned the respect of his wife. He earned those comments.

The most hostile critic cannot in the face of this evidence dare throw suspicion on the Prophet's sincerity. An impostor cannot possibly command the whole-hearted devotion of one so privy to his secrets. No wonder, Professor T.W. Arnold called it (referring to the prophet and his wife Khadija), "one of the most beautiful pictures of a perfect wedded life that history gives us."

The Prophet preached and practiced his views about women. He, in acknowledging the rights and position of wives, said:

Every one of you is a ruler and everyone shall be questioned about his subjects. The king is a ruler; and the man is the ruler over the people of his house; and ***the woman is a ruler over the house of her husband and his children.***

He also emphasised that:

Your body has a right over you, and your soul has a right over you, and ***your wife has a right over you.***

The emphasis is and was on a wife's rights and entitlement, not simply a privilege. Divorce, whilst recognised as a right by the religion of Islam, is very emphatically discouraged and ought to be considered only as a last resort. To express how much the religion of Islam despised divorce, the Prophet (PBUH) reminded all that:

Never did God allow anything more hateful to Him than divorce. With God, the most detestable of all things allowed is divorce.

Even in his farewell speech, Prophet Muhammad laid particular stress on the good treatment of women. He said:

Oh my people you have certain rights of your wives and so have your wives over you. They are

the trust of Allah in your hands, so you must treat them with all kindness.

The Prophet also laid great stress on the good treatment of daughters, particularly when in those days daughters were not only not cared for but were looked down upon as a curse. Lady Ayesha (wife of the Prophet) relates that once a woman, accompanied by her two daughters, came to her door and begged for alms. Lady Ayesha had no money or food in the house at the time except one date (fruit of the date-palm), which she gave to the woman. The woman, however, split the date in half and gave one piece each to her daughters, herself going hungry. After they had left, the Prophet came in. Lady Ayesha related the incident to him. The Prophet was greatly touched by the sacrificing spirit shown by the mother of the girls and he said:

Whoever is put into trial and tribulation because of his or her daughters, but still treats them well and provides for them to be established in life, then this noble action will serve as a screen from hell.

The Prophet loved children and was very kind to them. Whenever he found time he used to play with them. It sometimes happened that while he went into the *sajdah* (prostration that is part of the daily prayer), his two little grandsons, Hassan and Hussain, would climb over his back and ride on him. He would not remove them forcibly, but would wait till they came off and only then would he continue his prayer.

As regards orphans the Holy Prophet is reported as saying:

"Whoever treats an orphan well and brings him (or her) up like his own child, then he and I would be together like this (and he showed his two fingers together) in Paradise."

Consistent with his beliefs as set out above, he practiced the same. He played the role of foster parent whenever the need arose. On one occasion, it was *Eid*. The month of fasting had ended, and the great Muslim festival was being celebrated in the proper manner. Charity was extended to the poor and alms were distributed amongst the needy. The *Eid* prayer and the sermon were duly observed. At *Eid celebrations* food, fancy articles, toys for children and merry-go-rounds were in abundance. Children would attend the celebrations with their parents. Children in new clothes were accompanying their parents, and there was laughter and liveliness all around. It was at one of those celebrations the keen and kindly eyes of the Prophet noticed a small boy in tattered clothes. He was standing all alone and was looking longingly and sadly at the other children going to the fair. The Prophet then knew him to be an orphan. He went up to him and smilingly said, "Let me be your

father for the day,” and then gently jerk him and put him astride his shoulder. His talking and joking soon brought a smile to the boy’s face, as they both headed for the fair-ground. That was the Prophet.

Community Service

The Prophet, in whatever he did or said, was always working towards bringing about reform for those in need of help. Sympathy for the poor, the helpless, orphans and widows was, in short, ingrained in his very nature. He was known for helping his neighbours. It is reported that he would regularly assist the elderly in his community with chores and in particular doing shopping for them in the market.

One illustration concerns a poor old woman used to sweep the mosque in Medina, where the Prophet used to say his prayers. She used to sleep in one corner of the compound of the mosque and was fed out of charity by members of the congregation. One day, the Prophet noticed her absence and asked about her. He was informed that she had died the night before and had been buried. The people did not think it worthwhile to inform the Prophet about it. On this, the Prophet rebuked them and attended her grave, where he, in company with other people, recited the funeral prayers for the salvation of her soul.

Caring for those in need was viewed by the Holy Prophet as “charity”. And he clarified:

Charity is incumbent on every Muslim.

He went on to say:

Every good deed is charity, and it is a good deed that you meet your brother with a cheerful countenance and that you pour water from your bucket into the vessel of your brother.

The point being that the Holy Prophet would always try to better the circumstances of everyone with whom he came into contact.

Moral Convictions

As an exemplary citizen, Prophet Muhammad lived his life in a way that showed the development of deep moral convictions, and he encouraged the same from others. The following sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad are all self explanatory and need no elaboration:

That person is not a true Muslim who eats heartily while his neighbour is starving.

Whoever does the needful for his brother, God does the needful for him. Whoever removes the distress of a Muslim, God removes for him a distress out of the distresses of the Day of Resurrection.

You will recognise the faithful in their having

mercy upon each other and in their love for one another and in their kindness towards one another, like the body – when one member of it ails, the entire body ails.

Unfortunately, one of the major problems all civilizations face is the lack of honesty and truthfulness in dealings with others. The Prophet Muhammad, addressing this problem, said:

Surely truth leads to virtue, and virtue leads to paradise, and a man continues to speak the truth until he becomes utterly truthful. Surely falsehood leads to vice and vice leads to the fire, and a man who continues to tell lies is written down a great liar with God.

The most excellent *jihad* is the uttering of truth in the presence of an unjust ruler.

The implementation of these moral virtues in daily interactions is what Prophet Muhammad practiced and was able to bring about in others.

A further illustration of the Prophet Muhammad’s implementation of moral convictions in daily activities is witnessed by his emphasis on the high **dignity of labor**, that function of society which is most essential but not always respected. The Prophet said:

Nobody has eaten better food than the bread which a man earns out of the work done with his two hands. David, the Prophet of God, worked with his hands for his living.

He is also reported as saying:

Pay the workman his wages before the perspiration on his body (due to labour) dries up.

On another occasion he said:

God has said that on the Day of Judgement, He would take to task three persons in particular: one who enters into a covenant in the name of God and then lightly breaks it; the second who enslaves and sells a free person and spends the money on himself; the third who engages a labourer and takes full work out of him and then refuses to pay him his wages.

He further explained:

God did not send a Prophet into this world who has not acted as a shepherd, tending goats and sheep, at one time or another.” And when the Companions asked about him, the Prophet said: “Yes, even I used to tend goats owned by the Meccans and was paid a few coins for the work.

Similarly, the Holy Prophet emphasized the implementation of moral convictions in **trade and other**

commercial transactions within society and among communities. For example, once the Prophet was passing through the bazaar when he saw a heap of grain lying in front of a shop. The Prophet dug his hand into the heap and felt that the grain inside was a little wet. On this, the Prophet questioned the shopkeeper about it, who replied that some of it had got wet due to rain. The Prophet then explained:

You should have kept the wet grain on top of the heap so that the customer could see it; any man who cheats is not one of us” said the Prophet.

On another occasion, the Holy Prophet admonished those who hoarded grain in order to create artificial scarcity and then sold it at higher prices; he explained that such conduct was a sin.

It is recorded that the Holy Prophet also said:

The truthful honest merchant is as the prophets and the truthful ones and the martyrs.

May God have mercy on the man who is generous when he buys and when he sells and when he demands his due.

If they (traders) both speak the truth and make manifest (the defect, if any, in the transaction), their transaction shall be blessed; if they conceal (the defect) and tell lies, the blessing of their transaction shall be obliterated.

Based on the foregoing outline of the Holy Prophet’s practices and lessons on ensuring daily activities are conducted with awareness of the higher moral values, is it any surprise that Edward Gibbon and Simon Oakley conclude in their “History of the Saracen Empire”:

The greatest success of Mohammad’s life was effected by *sheer moral force*. (London, 1870).

Conclusion

The most credible way to assess the status and qualities of a person is to see how others perceived him/her after an independent, objective and informed assessment is carried out. The following are just such assessments :

Rodwell in the Preface to his translation of the Holy Qur’an recorded:

Mohammad’s career is a wonderful instance of the force and life that resides in him who possesses an intense faith in God and in the unseen world. He will always be regarded as one of those who have had that influence over the faith, morals and whole earthly life of their fellow men, which none but a really great man ever did, or can exercise; and whose efforts to propagate a great verity will prosper.

W. Montgomery Watt in “Muhammad at Mecca”

(Oxford, 1953) wrote:

His readiness to undergo persecution for his beliefs, the high moral character of the men who believed in him and looked up to him as a leader, and the greatness of his ultimate achievement - all argue his fundamental integrity. To suppose Muhammad an impostor raises more problems than it solves. Moreover, none of the great figures of history is so poorly appreciated in the West as Muhammad.... Thus, not merely must we credit Muhammad with essential honesty and integrity of purpose, if we are to understand him at all; if we are to correct the errors we have inherited from the past, we must not forget the conclusive proof is a much stricter requirement than a show of plausibility, and in a matter such as this only to be attained with difficulty.

Washington Irving in “Mahomet and His Successors” wrote:

... in his private dealings he was just. He treated friends and strangers, the rich and poor, the powerful and weak, with equity, and was beloved by the common people for the affability with which he received them, and listened to their complaints.

His military triumphs awakened no pride nor vain glory, as they would have done had they been effected for selfish purposes. In the time of his greatest power he maintained the same simplicity of manners and appearance as in the days of his adversity.

Prof. Ramakrishna Rao said:

The personality of Muhammad, it is most difficult to get into the whole truth of it. Only a glimpse of it I can catch. What a dramatic succession of picturesque scenes! There is Muhammad, the Prophet. There is Muhammad, the Warrior; Muhammad, the Businessman; Muhammad, the Statesman; Muhammad, the Orator; Muhammad, the Reformer; Muhammad, the Refuge of Orphans; Muhammad, the Protector of Slaves; Muhammad, the Emancipator of Women; Muhammad, the Judge; Muhammad, the Saint. All in all these magnificent roles, in all these departments of human activities, he is alike a hero.

Larmatine, the French scholar, says:

If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man in modern history with Muhammad?.. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he? (*Histoire De La Turquie*, Paris, 1854, Vol. II, pp. 276-277)

Prophet Muhammad was the only Prophet who experienced and went through every phase of life in order to illuminate the world as to how to live. He began as a servant, then as a trader, as a God fearing man, as a husband, as a father, as a spiritual teacher, as a guide, as a commander, and last of all as a king. In other words the Prophet was able to put all his lessons into practice and show the development of these qualities. A review of his daily interactions reveals he indeed was an *exemplary citizen*. It is to this unique experience, that the Holy Quran declares:

Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah (i.e. Muihammad) *an excellent exemplar...*

Sincerity (Ikhlas): The Topmost Prerequisite Towards Achieving Authentic Islamic Renaissance

By: Prof. Henry Francis B. Espiritu

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Surely, We have revealed to thee the Book with truth, so serve Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience. (*Holy Qur-an 39:2*)

All men will perish, except the scholars, and all scholars will perish except those who act in accordance with their knowledge, and all of them will perish except the sincere, and even the sincere are still in great danger of becoming hypocrite and if this happens, they, too, will perish...—Prophet Muhammadⁱⁱ

The Spirituality and Sincerity of our Righteous Ancestors Resulted in the Golden Age of Islam

The golden era of Islam was the time when Muslims were the leaders of the world civilizations; unfortunately, this age has already sadly passed away. These past moments of victory for Islam have escaped from us

because of our carelessness (*ghaflat*), love of self (*hubb-e-nafs*), love for fame (*hubb-e-jah*), and love for the world (*hubb-e-dunya*). The early Muslims were the acknowledged leaders of the world because of their spirituality and because of their sincere love for Allahu Taala and their obedience to the commands of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.). During these times of intense spirituality and sincere commitment to Islam, the *kalima*, “*la ilaha illa Llah*” was proclaimed from the lands of Arabia, to Africa, to Andalusia (Spain), to the land of the Balkans, Central Asia, Turkey, the Indian Subcontinent, Mongolia, China, until the Philippine islands. During these times of Islamic glory, the Muslim civilization existed as a beautiful confluence of Arab, Turkish, Indian, Mughal, Byzantine, and Persian cultures showing that Islam is indeed a very cosmopolitan, tolerant, and universal faith. Our ancestors’ brave proclamation of God’s greatness (*Allahu Akbar*) and their sincere intention to propagate the message of Islam to the whole world, made Islam march from victory to victory winning the hearts of peoples by their message of oneness of God and unity of humankind. The spirituality (*ruhaniyyat*) and sincerity (*ikhlas*) of our righteous ancestors were the reasons why they were able to establish the “golden age” of Islam during their time. We owe our beautiful Islamic heritage to the Companions of the Prophet whose sincerity and spirituality made Islam victorious throughout the whole world during their time.

The Pitiful Situation of the Muslim Ummah Today as a Sign of our Spiritual Weakness:

Islam came and spread to the world to bring dignity to humanity and to preach the liberating message of *tawhid* (monotheism) to all peoples. However, today, enemies from all corners attack Islam; and Muslims are becoming defensive day by day. We, Muslims, are given the command by Allahu Taala to be the model community in showing the path of unity, harmony, and solidarity; but today we are becoming divided and we have lost the ideals of *akhuwwat* (genuine fraternity) that characterized the conduct of the *Sahaba* and the *Tabi’en*. The Islamic *Ummah* that was once the brave protector of the oppressed and the poor is now becoming helpless due to its internal and external enemies. The *Ummah* which had once placed its trust and hope in Almighty Allah, is now becoming more and more dependent on the protection of this world’s mighty nations. Islam eliminated slavery from the world, but alas, we are now becoming slaves of the unbelieving economic and political superpowers! What is the cause of our degradation; and what is its cure? It is indeed high time now to diagnose our spiritual illness and together we will search for its cure; *Inshallah*, the *Ummah* will recover from this disease and begin once again to take the position of global leadership to bring the world towards peace, harmony, tolerance, understanding, and unity.

Diagnosing the Ummah's Situation with the Purpose of Curing its Spiritual Sickness

To diagnose the spiritual sickness of the *Ummah*, we will begin by consulting our beloved Prophet, Hazrat Muhammad (s.a.w.) so that through his deep prophetic wisdom, we will receive helpful advice (*naseehat*) to cure our serious spiritual illness. Let me narrate this particular *hadith-sharif* coming from the blessed tongue of our Holy Prophet, since it contains very helpful and beneficial insights in understanding the spiritual problem of present-day Muslims:

Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) was asked by his *Sahabah* regarding the situation of Muslims in the future, specifically at the time when the Day of Judgment is near. Our Holy Prophet said: "A day will surely come when all unbelievers will unite against Muslims and will launch joint attacks against them." The *Sahabah* asked the Holy Prophet, "Will the Muslims be less in number compared to the enemies?" Rasulullah replied; "Muslims will be spread throughout the world and will be numerous but their strength will be like a tiny ball of cotton, they will be powerless and helpless unless they repent and turn to Allah for help. Another *Sahaba* asked, "Oh Prophet of Allah: What would be the cause of the weakness of Muslims?" He replied: "Your weakness comes from your love of this world (*hubb-e-dunya*), love of self (*hubb-e-nafs*), and love of fame (*hubb-e-jah*)".ⁱⁱⁱ

From this *hadith sharif* of the Prophet, we can infer many important lessons for our own spiritual benefit. Firstly, the Prophet knew the spiritual weakness of the Muslims as the Day of Judgment approaches. This shows that our Prophet was truly given—by Allahu Taala's permission—the capacity of knowing some aspects of *ilmul-ghaib* (unseen events); specifically those events dealing with the future situations of the Islamic *Ummah*. Likewise, this prophecy of the Prophet should make us aware that indeed, our time today is already near the Day of Judgment—this is because the Muslim *Ummah* has already become victim of the oppression of unbelievers. However, this *hadith* brings great hope for us Muslims because it contains the diagnosis of our sickness and the promise for the cure. The Holy Prophet said that the cause of our weakness is threefold, namely, love for this world (*hubb-e-dunya*), love of self (*hubb-e-nafs*), and love of fame (*hubb-e-jah*). These three wrong types of love have removed the love for Allah and for His Prophet in the heart of careless believers. According to the Prophet, these loves of self, the world, and fame have made our faith (*iman*) and resolution (*niyyat*) as powerless as a tiny ball of cotton; this is the reason why today, the unbelievers are oftentimes successful in defeating Muslims.

Happily, our situation is not hopeless. The Prophet likewise announced the powerful cure for our spiritual cancer. He said that if we will repent and turn back to Allahu Taala, then He will aid and support the Muslim *Ummah* once again. "Repenting" means, to ask forgiveness to Almighty Allah for our carelessness (*ghaflat*) and to reject our exaggerated love for self, for fame, and for the world. "Returning back to Allah" means, instead of loving our self, our fame, and worldly things, we will endeavor to sincerely love Almighty Allah with all our heart, with all our spirit, and with our whole being. "Turning to Allah for help" means, trusting and putting our confidence only in Allah as the Source and the Architect of all victories and successes that come to our lives. Thus, it is indeed very clear from this *hadith sharif* that the real source of the *Ummah's* victory is in the genuine spirituality (*ruhaniyyat*) of individual Muslims. True spirituality begins with *islah-un-nafs* (reformation of our wicked self) and the practise of sincerity (*ikhlas*) in all our actions.

According to the Qur-an, Allah's Help (Nasrullah) Will Depend on the Ummah's Sincerity and Spirituality

Allah Almighty says in the *Holy Qur-an*:

When Allah's help (*nasrullah*) and victory (*fath*) comes. And thou seest men entering the religion of Allah in companies. Celebrate the praise of thy Lord and ask His protection. Surely, He is ever Returning to mercy (*At-Tawwaba*). (*Holy Qur-an*, 110:1-3)

Surah Nasr is very helpful in understanding how the help (*nusrat*) of Allah comes to the believers, and what the believers can do to win Allah's grace and favor. This particular *Surah* contains the definitive key that unlocks our understanding regarding the relationship between the sincere spiritual conduct of Muslims (*ruhaniyyat* and *ikhlas*) and Allah's promise of *nusrat* (help/aid/support) and *fath* (victory) to the *Ummah*.

Maulana Muhammad Ali, in his renowned commentary of the Holy Qur-an, beautifully explains the context and the circumstance when *Surah Nasr* was revealed to the Holy Prophet. According to Maulana Muhammad Ali, the content of *Surah Nasr* describes Allah's help and victory that He gave to the early Muslims when they triumphantly conquered Makkah without a fight or bloodshed. The victory (*fath*) being referred to in this *Surah* was the conversion of the whole Arabian Peninsula to Islam. After the conquest of Makkah, various deputations of Arab tribes came to the Prophet to swear their allegiance (*bay-ah*) to him. The Prophet saw with his own eyes how the promise of Allah became true in his lifetime. Despite his overwhelming victory, the Prophet was reminded by Almighty Allah in this *Surah*

that true victory comes only because of Allah's help (*nasrullah*). Following this great victory, Almighty Allah told the Holy Prophet to praise and worship Him (*fa salli li Rabbika wan-n'har*) for all the wondrous things that Almighty Allah did to Islam and to the Muslims. On the other hand, the Prophet was also required to ask Allah's protection (*wa-astaghfir*). What is this seeking of protection for? Why ask for protection after this great and overwhelming victory?

According to Maulana Muhammad Ali, this particular *Surah* teaches us to take shelter in Allah always, even if we think that we are achieving great things. This is because it is our human nature to easily forget Allahu Taala (the Real Giver of victories) when great achievements come. Oftentimes, great achievements lead us to desire for more victories so that we can use these victories for our selfish (*nafsaniyyaat*) aims.^{iv} Whenever achievements and victories come to our lives, *Shaytan* also wants to gain advantage from our victory and success; this is the reason why we need to ask for protection against pride (*takabbur*) of our power and self-vanity (*ujub*). We therefore need to acknowledge with gratitude that every worthy achievement comes from Almighty Allah, the True Provider of victory. In the words of the *Holy Qur-an*, "my reward is only Allah" (*Holy Qur-an*, 11:29).

From Maulana Muhammad Ali's exegesis of *Surah Nasr*, we can find three beautiful advices (*naseehat*) which will hopefully enrich our lives as Muslims. Firstly, this *Surah* shows to us that Muslims can be victorious only if they truly and sincerely depend on Almighty Allah's help. Without Allah's help, despite all our efforts we will never achieve anything. Secondly, we invite Allah's mercy and aid by living a genuine Islamic life—a life of loving submission (*ubudiyyat*) to Allah by following (*itteba'at*) the *Sunnah* of the Prophet. We earn the pleasure of Almighty Allah by being truly spiritual Muslims in thought, in word, and in deed. Thirdly, we can be assured of continued victory in our lives if we remain humble despite the achievements that come our way. Almighty Allah's help is guaranteed if we live a life of simplicity (*zuhd*)—this is the life modeled after the *Sahaba*, and characterized by self-denial, humility, and meekness even in the midst of tremendous victory.

Crucial Advice for the Muslim Ummah: Strive to Practice True Spirituality and Sincerity while Hoping Solely in Allah's Help

The *Holy Qur-an*, the *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), and the spiritual examples found in the lives of the *Sahabah-e Kiram* and our early Muslim ancestors (*Tabi'en*) testify that the true power of Muslims were not dependent on military superiority nor of greater armed capabilities. The evil plans of the unbelievers

were not able to overwhelm the *Sahabah* because of the *Sahabah's* pure intentions and sincerity. The *Sahabah-e Kiram's* sincerity is the reason why they were able to spread the liberating message of Islam to the ends of the earth.^v Victory is promised to those who "believe, do good, exhort one another to truth, and exhort one another to patience" (*Holy Qur-an*, 103:3).

In the same vein, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad—the great Punjabi saint and the reviver (*mujaddid*) of the *Sunnah* of the Prophet in the Indian subcontinent during the last century of the British *Raj*—gave a very crucial advice to the Islamic *Ummah* so that the present Islamic community will regain its spiritual and cultural preeminence in the world. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad advised Muslims to practice genuine sincerity in their spiritual life since it is the singular key towards achieving Islamic renaissance. Seeing the pathetic situation of the Muslims of his day, and their terrible condition of disunity and chaotic dissension in the ranks of the *Ummah*, Hazrat Mirza Sahib asked the Muslims to take Hazrat Abubakr Siddiq's life as a shining exemplar of genuine sincerity. The sole object of Hazrat Abubakr's life is Allah alone. Similarly, his hope of reward or ultimate desiderata is fixed in Almighty Allah alone. To quote from Hazrat Mirza Sahib;

The remedy for idolatrous pride is true sincerity as manifested in the lives of the companions of the Holy Prophet. The life of the first caliph of Islam shows his pre-eminent station of excellence in exercising sincerity. Sincerity may be attained by preferring the worship of God to the worship of one's own self, by making God's pleasure to vanquish the pleasure of the ego; by renouncing the material and moral reward to be had from men and expecting solely God's good-pleasure... Hazrat Abubakr demonstrates his virtuous ascendancy in the exercise of sincerity from the time he entered Islam as the first Muslim until he breathed his last as the humble, frugal, yet exemplary Caliph of the whole *Ummah*. All throughout his life, he expected his reward and vindication only from God and not from men".^{vi}

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, in the abovementioned quote exhorted Muslims to aspire for the sole pleasure of Almighty Allah in all the good deeds (*aamal-e-salihah*) that they are doing instead of utilizing these good deeds for one's vanity, pride and showing-off to others. Denying our egoistic propensities even in matters of worship is a potent medicine to ward-off our self-centeredness. By doing acts of self-denial, by constant practice of genuine sincerity (*ikhlas*), and by making Almighty Allah as the only goal and center of our life and existence, our individual spiritual reformation is already underway. God willing, if all Muslims will

aspire to live a life of spiritual authenticity for the sake of gaining Almighty Allah's good pleasure, then the Muslim *Ummah* will be revived from the miserable state that it is in as of the present.

The Muslim *Ummah* can qualify for Allah's help (*nusrat*) only after the attainment of a high state of spiritual cultivation (*ruhaniyyat*) which can only be achieved by undertaking the first step, which is self-reformation (*islah-e-nafs*). The promise of the *Holy Qur-an* that believers will receive the help and support of Almighty Allah is based on three conditions that Muslims should be able to fulfill, namely; moral purification (*islah-e-nafs*), sincerity of intention (*ikhlas-e-niyyat*), and cultivation of spirituality (*ruhaniyyat*). Righteous deeds (*a'amal-e-salihah*) acceptable by Allah are those actions that passed through the doors of moral purification (*islah-e-nafs*) and sincerity (*ikhlas*). So-called "good deeds" that lack *islah-e-nafs* and *ikhlas* can never merit Almighty Allah's favor. A good deed devoid of sincerity and moral purification will never produce reformation in the Islamic *Ummah*. In the words of Shaykh Muhammad Maseehullah Khan Sherwani:

Iman (faith) can never be perfected without *ikhlas* (sincerity). True spirituality (*ruhaniyyat*) means that ones' *batini* (inner) intentions and *zahiri* (outward) actions are similar. Whatever deeds one shows externally should be similar to the *niyyat* that is internal in his *qalb* (heart) and *hal* (inner condition). Our external actions should not contradict our internal aims. Our aim should only be for Allah's pleasure; and therefore all our *aamal-e-saleehat* (good deeds) should only be for the sake of Allah and not for showing-off (*riya*) to others. Only when our *zahiri aamal* (external actions) and *batini niyyat* (inner intentions) are in perfect harmony, can we be called true *mu'min* (faithful one).^{vii}

Therefore, good deeds if separated from sincerity will never have any spiritual value in the sight of Allah Almighty. The *Sahabah* were able to achieve great work for Islam since their outward conduct is perfectly harmonious with their inner intention. Allahu Taala gave His blessings and help in all the affairs of the *Sahabah* because they lived the life of pure sincerity. We, too, can qualify for Almighty Allah's assistance if we can model our life with the sincerity of the *Sahabah-e-Kiram*.

The present situation of the Islamic *Ummah* shows that the unbelievers are constantly bombarding our way of life, our family, our belief system, and even our Muslim territories for total destruction. The enemies of Islam are targeting the whole *Ummah* with the view of annihilating it. We are left with two powerful remedies to cure this situation and these are: repenting (*tawbat*) of our carelessness and living the spiritual life

(*ruhaniyyat*) with the Prophet and the *Sahabah* as our models. *Ruhaniyyat* and *ikhlas* are the two keys that will change the pitiful conditions that characterize present-day Islam. Living a truly sincere spiritual life is our real defense from our worldly enemies; no other kind of defense is more powerful than living a sincere and spiritual life in direct obedience to the will of Allahu Taala and His Holy Prophet. May Allah have mercy on us so that we will be able to live a life of genuine spirituality and sincerity. *Inshallah*, Allah will be compassionate to our miserable condition, and He will grant us his help and give us victory (*fath*) in this world and in the Hereafter. *Amiin, thumma Amiin*.

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- iv See, Maulana Muhammad Ali, *Commentary of the Holy Qur-an*. Columbus, Ohio: Anjuman Isha'at Islam, Lahore, 1998; *Surah Nasr*: 1-3.
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- vii Shaykh Maseehullah Khan Sherwani, *Shariat aur Tasawwuf [Shariat and Sufism], Volume 1*; translated by Allama A. S. Desai Sahib. Gauteng, South Africa: Ashrafiyyah Press, n.d.; pp. 34-37.

The Mighty Striving, an Explanation of the Objective of this Jamaat and the Sacrifices required to Achieve this Goal

By Maulana Muhammad Ali

(translated from Urdu to English by Dr. Mohammed Ahmad)

[This article is a transcription of a *Jumma Khutba* (sermon) delivered by Maulana Muhammad Ali on March 1, 1922. In this *khutba*, Maulana Muhammad Ali explains the significance for the term "Jihadan Kabiran" as used in the *Holy Quran*; that is, a "mighty striving" to spread the truth to the world using the *Holy Quran*. He then

makes clear that the purpose for the existence of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat is to carry forth this “mighty striving”, as the Jamaat was formed on the basis of responding to the attacks made against Islam by Christian missionaries and the neglect on the part of the general Muslim populations to effectively counter them. He then points to the spread of Christianity in the Philippines as an illustration of the effect of missionary activity and Muslim neglect. Interestingly, he notes that if even a single person dedicates him/herself to the work of this Jamaat, he/she can accomplish a tremendous amount. The particular mention of the Philippines and the lesson on the impact of even one person’s efforts seems to have materialized in recent times due to the work of one dedicated member, Mrs. Samina Malik, and the establishment of a thriving, multi-city, Jamaat established in Philippines, that is engaged in a concerted “mighty striving” throughout the country, through her sole efforts. It is hoped that the lessons presented in this khutba will serve as an inspiration to other members to make personal sacrifices for purposes of furthering the objective for which this Jamaat was created.]

I bear witness that none deserves to be served besides Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is the servant and messenger of Allah, after this I seek the protection of Allah from the accursed devil. In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful.

Seest thou not how thy Lord extends the shade?
And if he pleased, He would have made it stationary. Then We have made the sun an indication of it,

Then We take it to ourselves, taking little by little.

And He it is Who made the night a covering for you, and sleep a rest, and He made the day to rise up again.

And He it is Who sends the winds as good news before his mercy; and We send down pure water from the clouds,

That We may give life thereby to a dead land, and give it for drink to cattle and many people that We have created.

And certainly We repeat this to them that they may be mindful, but most men consent to naught but denying.

And if We pleased, We could raise a warner in every town.

So obey not the disbelievers, and strive against them a mighty striving with it. (Holy Quran 25: 45-52).

Natural Phenomenon and their Relationship with Spiritual Development

A distinctive feature of the Holy Quran, unsurpassed by any other scripture, is that it takes every-day, ordinary, natural phenomenon, and uses them to draw our attention to profound spiritual truths. This is not something which has only recently been discovered with great effort. On the contrary, the Holy Quran itself uses clear and unambiguous language to expose its meaning. To the superficial observer this form of expression may appear ordinary and he may question its need. The careful observer, however, appreciates the profound spiritual facts and truths towards which the Holy book draws our attention through these analogies.

In the verses above that I have recited for you, the Holy Quran States: *Seest thou not how thy Lord extends the shade? And if he pleased, He would have made it stationary. Then We have made the sun an indication of it, then We take it to ourselves, taking little by little. And He it is Who made the night a covering for you, and sleep a rest, and He made the day to rise up again. And He it is Who sends the winds as good news before his mercy; and We send down pure water from the clouds, That We may give life thereby to a dead land, and give it for drink to cattle and many people that We have created.*

It then gives us the reason for repeatedly using this mode of expression i.e., people should heed this advise (*And certainly We repeat this to them that they may be mindful*). It thus informs us of the magnificent teachings that God has revealed to His prophets for the guidance of man, but which are rejected by the majority.

We are then told that if God had so desired he could have raised a warner in every town (25:51). This being not the case, you who have received the message of the Holy Quran should not obey the disbelievers, and rather strive with this book, the Holy Quran, a mighty striving (25:52). In other words work diligently and carry the message of the holy Quran to those who have not received it.

Now let us focus on the relationship between these verses; there is a profound and meaningful connection between them. In the beginning the rising of the sun and the extension and contraction of the shade is mentioned. When physically the sun rises we observe that the shade is extended, however, when it moves overhead the length of the shadow contracts. Similarly when the spiritual sun (Holy Prophet called the “light giving sun” in 33:46) rises the world is enveloped in darkness. With the advancement of its light of knowledge, the shadows of darkness are dispelled. Before sunrise, there is darkness everywhere and people are lying in deep slumber. As soon as there is daybreak, people wake up and get involved in their daily activities. Similarly the emergence of the spiritual sun brings a sense of spiritual

awakening among the people and they make spiritual progress. Those lying idle are energized by the effulgence of religious knowledge.

After this our attention is drawn towards another natural phenomenon, the blowing of wind currents before rainfall. By observing the wind patterns, an intelligent person can gauge the possibility of rainfall. Similarly before the coming of Divine revelation or a prophet, which is likened to rainfall, there are currents which draw people's attention toward truth and Divine mercy. Thus before the advent of the Holy prophet, we observe that some people became naturally attracted to belief in one God. However, just as mere blowing of wind without rain cannot nurture vegetation, similarly mere thought of the unity of God cannot enliven the spiritually dead nations.

The Holy Quran then tells us: "and We send down pure water from the clouds, that We may give life thereby to a dead land, and give it for drink to cattle and many people that We have created." This pure water represents *divine revelation*. Just as rainwater gives life to the dead earth, Divine revelation enlivens the hearts which are spiritually dead. People who are leading their lives like animals benefit from it, and so to do those who are more civilized also partake of its sustenance.

It is then stated:

"And if We pleased, We could raise a warner in every town."

Just like rainfalls over different communities, if God had so willed, Divine revelation would have spontaneously been bestowed to different people. In this manner, however, the marvelous change which was brought about by the excellent example and untiring effort of a single individual, the Holy prophet Muhammad, would not have occurred.

Propagation of Religion to be carried out with the Holy Quran by followers of the Holy Prophet

The principle which forms the basis of this *mighty striving* is then mentioned: "So obey not the disbelievers, and strive against them a mighty striving with it (The Holy Quran)." What is the connection between sending a warner to every nation, not following the disbelievers, and carrying out a mighty striving against them with the Quran? This means that while the disbelievers strive for the progress of disbelief, you should make an uncompromising effort to spread the truth of Islam by means of the Holy Quran. In this you are shown the path of your success in opposing disbelief. If you carry out the *striving* (Jihad) with the Holy Quran, by inviting people to it, you will be facilitating the propagation of righteousness. The Arabic word *Kabir* (mighty) in *Jihadan Kabiran* also signifies the importance and immensity of this task.

Because of the importance of this work it was entrusted to the *Mujaddid* (reformer) of this age. We can only gauge the importance of the work of spreading Islam through the word of the Quran, by observing and assessing the condition of the world around us. The work of the Holy Prophet we know from the Holy Quran, is not restricted to a particular age and people, it is for all nations and for all times. It is therefore very essential to appreciate the magnitude and importance of the task that you as a community have been given. A superficial observer is unable to perceive its true significance.¹

Need to Propagate Islam through the Holy Quran understood by the Companions and Early Followers of the Holy Prophet

The companions of the Holy Prophet and the early Muslims had understood the vital nature of this task, and carried the propagation of Islam to all corners of the world. In fulfilling this duty, they did not care if they survived or passed away in distant lands, they travelled across oceans and continents to carry the message of the Quran. This is the reason you will today find Muslims in remote corners of the globe, in places in which you may not even be aware that the message of Islam was propagated. How far have the Muslims of this age neglected this crucial duty? They are aware of the loss of their worldly kingdoms but are totally oblivious of the fact that Islam itself is departing from the Muslims. The unwavering commitment of the early Muslims to their faith can be judged by the following incident. When Abu-Sufyan, a well known opponent of Islam appeared before Heraclius the emperor of Rome he was asked the following question. "Do any of them get turned off from their faith and revert once they have entered it?" His answer was a resounding "no!" This was testimony provided by a disbeliever in front of a Christian Monarch. It is regrettable that today hundreds of thousands of Muslim are turned off from their faith and become apostates in large numbers, but the Muslim nation remains unconcerned. God did not create them to confine Islam to their own persons, but it is their duty to spread Islam in the world and invite others, even their rulers to it. Their state of neglect and inertia in this matter has reached its limit.

Hostile Missionary Propaganda against Islam, its Scope and harmful effects

If you want to know the extent of hostile propaganda against Islam, you should read the reports of missionaries. You will find out the amount of monetary resources allocated for the purpose propagating their religion, and building hospitals, schools and colleges and distributing free religious literature. You might be despaired to learn these statistics and on finding out how many people are involved in this effort and how many people are leaving Islam. We have learned from one missionary magazine that a large number of Western missions are involved in

the propagation of the Christian faith. Amongst them only a few missionary societies from England have spent three million nineteen hundred thousand Rupees for this purpose. There is one society amongst them that dedicates itself only to the translation of the bible into different languages and propagating it. Its annual income is thirty five hundred thousand Rupees, and they have distributed fifteen hundred thousand bibles or its portions over the last one year. Besides these English missionary societies there are in addition American, Scotch and German missionary societies working independently in this field. These are only the Protestant missions. The Catholic missions are besides these. Study and evaluate the work of these missionary societies and ponder upon the critical nature of the work of propagation of the Quran that you are faced with and the strong opposition you have to face in this field. These societies have vast resources, including missionary schools, colleges, hospitals and the power of the government at their back. How many missionaries are working for them? Only in Japan which is a relatively small country there are one thousand and ninety six missionaries of non Japanese origin. The total number including natives comes to a total of four thousand.

Philippine Islands Identified as an Area of Need

In the Philippine Islands, there are now only about two hundred and fifty thousand Muslims remaining in the Island of Mindanao. In 1919, seven hundred missionaries were dispatched to this area for the preaching of Christianity.

Though in the last few years in India the acceptance of Christianity by the maulvis (Muslim preachers) and the aristocracy has stopped. This has been largely due to the efforts of the *Mujaddid* (Reformer) of this age. This is not however a matter of great Joy. Even over here the report only one church missionary society indicates that they baptized four thousand and five hundred individuals. Whoever they may be, was it not our duty as Muslims to invite them to Islam? Also consider this, how much hardship they readily face for the sake of their religion. How difficult and cumbersome it is to journey in the Sahara desert in Africa. When one missionary lady found out about a community in the Sahara, she travelled five hundred miles from Tripoli and reached Kaffra. On her way over there she feared for her life, therefore she pretended to be a follower of Islam. She came back and published the conditions over there in her Journal and now preparations are underway to preach Christianity over there. Some people may get discouraged by looking at the efforts of these missionary societies and may question the chances of success of a Muslim effort under these circumstances.

There is however no reason for us to be discouraged. *It is Divine law that a single individual when he*

embarks on a journey to spread the truth, he can accomplish what cannot be achieved by monetary resources and political sponsorship. The followers of Muhammad peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, did just that and left their homes only with the message of truth and righteousness. How successful were they in spreading Islam, but unfortunately after this the Muslims went into a state of inertia. They said God himself will take care of this. There is no doubt that all this cannot be accomplished without the help of God, but in order to evoke his blessings and Mercy, you will also have to make an effort. Muslim consciousness is stimulated by the loss of power and kingdom, because they have witnessed this with their own eyes. They, however, are least worried about their faith which has been abandoned by thousands of individuals. Very few are worried about its destruction and loss.

In the Philippines Islands which are now under American control, the efforts of the missionary societies have successfully converted hundreds of thousands of Muslims to Christianity. Now only two hundred and fifty thousand Muslims remain in the Island of Mindanao. The American Mission has sent seven hundred missionaries over there within a period of one year. Seven hundred preachers for a population of two hundred and fifty thousand! This shows the intensity of effort being made over there. Twenty four thousand to this day have converted to Christianity in the Island of Java, and three hundred Muslims every year are leaving Islam and accepting Christianity.

Duty of Those Who have taken the pledge

If someone's heart grieves under these circumstances, he should give thought to the grave difficulties the religion of Islam is facing. Other Muslims do not pay attention to this. Those people who have taken the pledge at the hand of the Reformer of this age, are satisfied with only this that they have been given incontrovertible arguments against the onslaught of missionary propaganda and have thus crumbled the cross. This is true that God through the Reformer of the age has provided you with the means to break the cross (allegorical reference to the irrefutable arguments against Christianity), but it is up to you to make an effort. This Reformer (Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad) has given you a strong and powerful weapon in the form of these arguments to counteract the missionary propaganda. It is your responsibility to use it. If you fail to do so, it will get rusted and useless. These arguments were already there in the Holy Quran. He drew your attention to them. You, however became satisfied that you have this weapon to counteract the Christian missionary propaganda. You took a step and did some work at Woking England, and Allah assisted you in this undertaking. The truth, however, is that it was the result of the striving of one individual. The second error at this stage

is to become inactive and be happy and content with this effort. Your objective should have been to initiate the propagation of Islam all over the world on a large scale. That is why the Holy Quran states: “And if We pleased, We could raise a warner in every town” (25:51). This implies that your representatives should carry the message to every community. When one person carries the seed, God helps him and multiplies his one seed with a thousand. He, who does not make an effort to carry the seeds, cannot benefit from the mercy and blessings of Allah. You have the seeds of truth and righteousness in your possession. If you endeavor to spread them, Allah promises seven hundred fold in return. It is true that we do not possess the means to open colleges, hospitals and schools to propagate our faith by these means. Nor can we print religious literature in hundreds of thousands. We do not have the monetary resources to do this as an organization. It is our duty, however, to make the Muslims aware of the difficulties Islam is facing so that they can contribute in whatever way they can. The Muslims of India do have some awareness of this cause. That is why God sent His Reformer (*Mujaddid*) to India. You are therefore duty bound, that wherever there are Muslims, you should make an effort to save them from the influence of Christianity. If the Reformer had come in their midst, it would have been their duty to do the same for you. But the Reformer came to you, so it becomes your responsibility to act. It has been fourteen years since the Reformer passed away, and you have yet to fulfill your duty. You have not conveyed this message to other countries. It is not necessary that you go there with great pomp and show. You should sally forth with your limited and scarce resources. God will create individuals over there who strive in the way of His religion. If somebody embarks on this journey with sincerity and a truthful yearning in his heart, Allah will not let his effort go to waste. Christianity does not have these seeds of truthfulness in its religious dogma. That is perhaps why it has not been so successful, or has only been able to influence poverty stricken and less civilized nations. With all the resources at their disposal, they cannot accomplish what a possessor of truth and righteousness can do. Each one of you should carry the message to another country. If someone is afraid of dying in an alien land, he should know that death will overtake him even over here. Instead of dying with his family, he will give up his life striving in the way of Allah. What could be a better way than this?

Monetary sacrifice needed to carry out the work of Propagation

The other fact that I repeatedly draw your attention to is, we do not have vast financial resources. One has to spend money for the propagation of faith. If you become cognizant of the difficulties Islam is facing, and contribute even a small amount towards this effort, it

can add up to a lot. Monthly contributions should be paid with regularity. After all we pay taxes whether we like it or not. Why then should we feel that it is hard to spend in the way of Allah? By Allah’s blessing there are certain individuals amongst us who can cater to the expense of running a whole mission. If you leave behind a lot of money when you die, you will not feel the happiness and contentment which you will have if you spend it now in propagating the name of God. What if somebody becomes poor spending in the way of Allah? Alas some of our members do not even give their monthly contributions with regularity. This is because we give last priority to spending in the way of our religion. First we want to fulfill our material needs, than if something is left over we will spend it for the cause of religion. This is not how those who have pledged to keep religion above the world should behave. Whether you are poor or rich you should make an effort to spend in the way of Allah. Respect those who give in the way of Allah. Be the first ones to pay your dues. Those who are rich and well off have a special responsibility. Since God has given them so much, they should be ready to spend in His way. We should all pay our Zakat into the treasury of our organization. We should also solicit contributions for this purpose from other Muslims, so that they have an opportunity to participate in this mighty striving. If we are able to collect the monthly and the Zakaat contributions and all members assist us with their financial resources, we can by the grace of Allah accomplish a lot for our religion, in spite of being few in numbers. You should form the habit of voluntarily paying your Zakaat and monthly dues. Your religion is in great need of monetary sacrifice at this time. Those who cannot go out to propagate their religion can perform a great service by spending in the way of Allah. The Holy Quran also calls spending in Allah’s way as wisdom: “He grants wisdom to whom He pleases. And whoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given great good (2:269). In the same context where we are encouraged to spend in the way of Allah, we are also informed that the devil prevents us from spending in the way of Allah. The fear and apprehension that comes to mind when making such financial sacrifice is attributed to the Devil. The Holy Quran describes this in the words: “The devil threatens you with poverty and enjoins you to be niggardly.” (2:268). The devil threatens you that you will become poor if you spend for Allah’s cause. Save yourself from this false insinuation of the devil, and learn to spend in the way of Allah. Pay your monthly contributions with regularity. Whenever we take stock of our accounts, many people are found in arrears. Wake up from this state of inertia, and pay you monthly dues regularly. If you assist the religion of Allah with your wealth, He will become your Helper.

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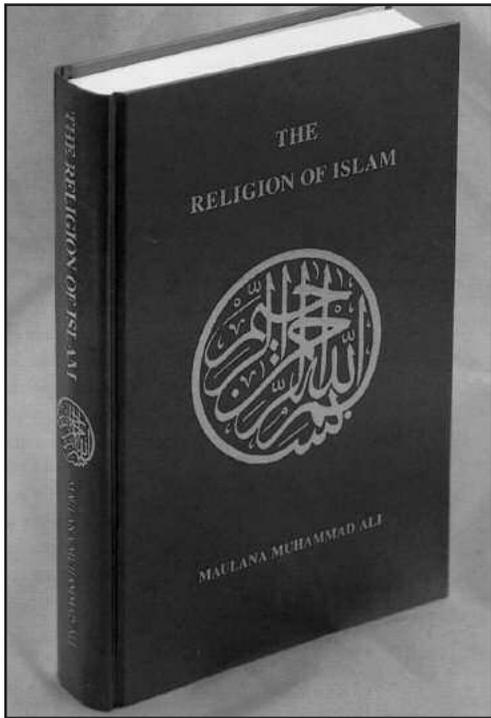
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