**January 5, 1917**

**Holy Prophet Muhammad’s Character: A Manifestation of the Highest Level of Spirituality**

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.



(By) the inkstand and the pen and that which they write!



By the grace of thy Lord thou art not mad.



And surely thine is a reward never to be cut off.



And surely thou hast sublime morals. (68: 1-4)

**The Meaning of Spirituality**

By using the term spirituality, one party wants to easily prove that the other one is excluded from righteousness. Principles of faith and their practice are totally ignored and it is stated that a certain group lacks spirituality. No effort is made to understand the real meaning of spirituality. Holy Quran refers to the Word of God as the spirit (*ruh*). The pure revelation that is given to the exalted servants of God is also called the *ruh* or spirit. Spirituality in the language of the Holy Quran is therefore acting upon the Word of God. People ordinarily assign a name to whatever they desire. Some have even formulated compositions to be recited for this purpose. Some consider meditation as spirituality. There are those who form a circle and chant in a loud voice. Thus people consider their own ideas as spirituality while in the idiom of the Holy Quran, spirituality means building one’s character according to the principles of the Holy Quran.

In the verses that I have recited today the Holy Prophet has been addressed in these words:

And surely thou hast sublime morals (*khulq*). (68: 4)

**Sublime Morals and Spirituality**

What are these sublime morals? It is the true spirituality towards which the Holy Quran guides. The Arabic words *khulq* and *khalq* are from the same root. *Khalq* refers to the outer physical form, while *khulq* indicates the internal spiritual condition. The Holy Quran guides us to these exalted teachings by giving us the excellent example of the Holy Prophet’s spirituality. It also guides us to acquire these sublime morals. This is the real spirituality towards which the Holy Quran directs us. Good morals can lead men to accomplish great tasks. Leave aside truly sublime morals, even a display of good manners can enable one to accomplish great works. As a result of these even a wrong principle of belief gets propagated in the world. The reason for the spread of Christianity, are the mild manners and kind treatment exhibited by its missionaries. First thing to remember is that one should keep his internal and moral condition in a right state just as he endeavors to look after his physical appearance.

**Standard of the Relationship between God and Humanity**

An individual’s relationship with God is a hidden matter, while our interaction with people is apparent to all. The gold standard for these interactions is the character displayed in our dealings with others. One cannot appreciate how close an individual is to Allah the Most High. Our public dealings are the best index of our character. How God treats His servants is different. If there is a shortcoming in following God’s commandments, He may forgive us. If, however, we treat a person unfairly, it becomes a matter between two individuals.

**Holy Prophet’s Life is an Excellent example of Sublime Morals**

What are the sublime morals of the Holy Prophet been mentioned here? If we look at his life history, all the different stages that he passed through are an excellent illustration of his morals. We see this high standard of morality whether there was extreme limitation of resources or when he was the sovereign ruler of Arabia. We do not observe such an example in any other person in the world. Allah the Most High ordained for him to be an orphan early on in life. This is a condition of extreme helplessness a child can face. The Arabic word for orphan (*yatim*) means one who is alone and helpless. Ordinarily the term is used for someone whose father has passed away. The Holy Prophet was still in his mother’s womb when his father passed away. So you see where his life began and where it ended. From a state of extreme helplessness, he rose to a position where he was in charge of hundreds of thousands of people with the treasures of Arabia under his control. To arise from an orphan to be a sovereign ruler is no ordinary matter. In both of these conditions we observe the most excellent morals displayed in the life of the Holy Prophet. It also happens in the world that an individual is suddenly uplifted from being a pauper to a prince but in these circumstances he does not have to pass through different stages. His character does not have the opportunity to fully evolve. With the acquisition of power, in fact his character deteriorates. Holy Prophet Muhammad had to gradually move through various conditions that mortals have to face on earth. He essentially had to face all of the conditions that an orphan is liable to encounter on the road to sovereignty. One finds an amazing display of sublime morals in the life of the Holy Prophet but I will only highlight one or two aspects for the purpose of this discussion.

**Two Important Aspects of the Holy Prophet’s Sublime morals**

Two striking examples of the Holy Prophet’s character stand out when we study his life history: His extreme determination and courage under very adverse circumstances and his humbleness and humility as a sovereign ruler. When he was in an extremely helpless state, he manifested a unique strength of character, conviction and a remarkably charitable disposition. In other words he had the qualities of a benevolent sovereign even in his state of poverty and helplessness. Compare this with when he became the king of Arabia. Witness the humility and humbleness of his disposition. These two examples are sufficient to shed light on a person’s character. They are enough to determine the excellence of his morals.

**Exceptional Benevolence in a State of Poverty**

The Holy Prophet’s mission begins in a state of extreme helplessness with no one to come to his aid or listen to him. His benevolent nature, however, far exceeds that of any king. His strength and dignity are beyond our imagination. Numerous conspiracies are hatched and plans made in succession by the enemy to destroy him. Doubts and mistrust are liable to arise in a person’s mind under such difficult circumstances. In the Holy Prophet’s case, as the efforts of the enemy gather speed persecution becomes more severe. We simultaneously observe amazingly powerful and spiritually strengthening prophecies about the future being made.

“I will prevail and you will be overcome. I will come out safe and unaffected by your evil designs,” are the prophetic words. The Holy Quran describes this condition in the verse:

“Soon shall the hosts be routed, and they will show (their) backs.” (54:45)

These statements were made when the Holy Prophet was in a state of extreme helplessness and poverty.

In this state a deputation of the rich and powerful from amongst the Makkan’s is sent to meet the Holy Prophet. They present their case thus:

“If your ambition is to possess wealth, we will amass for you as much of it as you wish; if you aspire to win honor and power, we are prepared to swear allegiance to you as our overlord and king. If you have a fancy for beauty, you shall have the hand of the finest maiden of your own choice. All we ask is for you to desist from rejecting our idols”

The Holy Prophet replied, “I want neither wealth nor power. I have been commissioned by Allah to warn mankind. I deliver His message to you. Should you accept it, you shall have felicity in this life as well as in the life to come; should you reject the Word of Allah, surely Allah will decide between you and me.”

On an earlier occasion, when a deputation of the Quraish went to Abu Talib, the Prophet’s uncle, to prevail upon him to dissuade the Prophet from speaking against their idols, and Abu Talib told the Prophet that he, too, was unable to defend him against the Quraish, his reply was: “If they place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left and ask me to give up my mission, I will not give it up until the truth prevails or I myself perish in the attempt.”

These words demonstrate the breadth of his heart and benevolent nature. For him all the treasures of the earth did not amount to anything. Witness the strength of character manifested in this state of extreme helplessness and persecution.

**Contentment and Benevolence are essential Attributes for development of human Character**

Contentment and benevolence are the hallmarks of human moral development. No matter how humble the condition, the heart should be strong. A humble person with a strong heart is commendable. Humility without inner strength is useless. The strength of character manifested by the Holy Prophet cannot be found in a fraudulent individual. This inner strength is what leads a person towards success. Being in need and in a state of helplessness does not matter. A giving heart is what is required. Some people greedily wish they were as rich as the other person so that they could live like him. This attitude is not right and provokes the inner burning or fire. Variation in the distribution of wealth and the human condition should not have an effect upon the human soul. The heart should remain tranquil in face of all adversities. This inner condition is in fact spirituality. The outward manifestations of the human condition do not matter if the heart and soul is at peace.

**Holy Prophet’s treatment of the Poor and his Opponents as a Sovereign Ruler**

Similarly if we observe the last period of his life an incredible change of circumstances has occurred. We again observe a distinct example of his sublime morals. He remains as humble as a king as he was as a helpless orphan. Once he was sleeping alone under the shade of a tree, while his sword was suspended from the tree branch. An enemy crept up and taking possession of his sword woke the Holy Prophet up. “Who can save you from me now?” he asked. Ponder upon the helplessness and the perilous situation of the Holy Prophet. A person usually loses his composure under such circumstances. The Holy Prophet, however, remains calm and without any hint of hopelessness firmly answers, “My God will protect me from you!” See also the manifestation of God’s power, the hands of the enemy start shaking and the sword drops out of his hands and the Holy Prophet picks it up. “Tell me,” he asks “Who will save you now from my hands?” The Holy Prophet is now in full control of the situation and the enemy is helpless. Instead of retribution against him, he forgives this most dangerous opponent. Observing such sublime character the enemy does not remain unimpressed and immediately converts to Islam. Winning of hearts in this manner reflects the magnificent success of the Holy Prophet and all his worldly victories were a result of such sublime morals. Humility of disposition while in possession of power is what deserves admiration. Humility under adverse circumstances is not a display of character because a person does not have a choice. People who deserved severe punishment for their crimes were forgiven and dealt with mercifully by the Holy Prophet when he had fully prevailed against them. Six thousand captives were released on one occasion while on another hundred families taken prisoners were given their freedom either by the Holy Prophet or his companions. The general amnesty given with the fall of Makkah is well known. These were the same people who committed all kinds of atrocities against the Holy Prophet and his companions, including plots to murder him. They repeatedly attacked Madinah after he had sought refuge there. The words spoken by him on this occasion do not show any vengeance but reflect an extraordinary spirit of forgiveness:

No reproof against you this day. (12:92)

This is the character and spirit of humility that he displayed during the hour of victory.

As a ruler, the treasures of Arabia came in his possession and many of his companions became affluent. The way the Holy Prophet led his life, however, remains unchanged. We observe the same degree of humility and meekness of disposition that was there in the beginning remain unchanged towards the very end. An indigent person given wealth can put it to wrongful use. Acquisition of wealth and power however does not alter the nature of the Holy Prophet in the least. Observe the strength of his character. As a king he mends his own clothes and takes care of his needs with his own hands. In the market one day when he comes across an old woman who can barely walk, he goes on to help her and get her groceries for her. There is the least hesitation to do such mundane tasks even when he is the sovereign ruler.

**Different Duties of the Holy Prophet**

There are many other tasks the Holy Prophet has to accomplish. He has to prepare and lead his companions to defend against the enemy attacks and to observe their movements. Many a times he is observed alone on horseback doing such reconnaissance. He is also the chief lawgiver for his nation, such law that remains effective through the ages and is useful for all nations. He also leads the daily congregational prayers. Today people have to be appointed only to perform this task. He also gives decisions as a judge and caters to the needs of his wives and children. There is no task that he does not do in person. One can search the pages of history in vain to find anyone like him.

**Lessons to be learnt from the Excellent example of the Holy Prophet**

Remembering the excellent example of the Holy Prophet and his accomplishment of numerous duties in a state of humility and poverty is not a useless exercise. Merely praising these accomplishments, however, is of no benefit. We can only benefit from following his excellent example and having a heart that remains strong in state of helplessness. In poverty we should not covet the riches of the wealthy and our disposition should remain benevolent. Simplicity is not to be discarded amidst affluence. Living in luxury can make it hard to face poverty. Simplicity in a state of plenty in food and attire, in fact in all matters should be the rule. This is the excellent example of the Holy Prophet for his followers to keep.

**Holy Prophet’s refusal to allow his wives material benefits and the lessons to be learned**

When the wives of the Holy Prophet requested a share in the general prosperity of the community, the Holy Prophet received the following revelation:

O Prophet, say to thy wives: If you desire this world’s life and its adornment, come, I will give you a provision and allow you to depart a goodly departing.

And if you desire Allah and His Messenger and the abode of the Hereafter, then surely Allah has prepared for the doers of good among you a mighty reward. (33:28-29)

What is the lesson in this for us? Everyone cannot acquire all these excellences, nevertheless the perfect role model of the Holy Prophet can provide us with many benefits. Simplicity in one’s living, food and attire brings contentment under all conditions. One should not become dependent upon anything. These are the lessons we should learn and acquire from the sublime morals of the Holy Prophet. (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).