

THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHET'S SEERAT

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*(This address was delivered in the University (new Campus) at
the invitation of the Punjab University Students' Union on
October 22, 1975)*

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I have been invited to speak in this assembly on the Message of the Holy Prophet (pbuh). To deal with this subject in the framework of logic, there is one obvious question which arises first: why the message of the Seerat of the Prophet (pbuh), and none other? Why, in particular, that of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and not that of any other Prophets or the founders of other religions? We must deal with this question at the outset. So that our minds may be fully satisfied that we can, in fact, obtain guidance not from any other ancient or modern personality, but from the character and personality of a Messenger of God alone. And of all the Messengers of God and the leaders of religion, it is the life of Muhammad (pbuh) alone which offers true and comprehensive guidance. Guidance of which we stand in dire need today.

Need for the Guidance of Allah

It is an undeniable fact that the source of all knowledge is Almighty Allah Who made this universe and created man to populate it. Who else but Him can know the realities of this universe? Who else possesses the knowledge of human nature and its true elements? The Creator alone knows His creatures. Human awareness is circumscribed by what has been revealed by the Creator, for man has no independent means of his own to get at the truth.

In this connection, the difference between two different aspects of reality must be fully grasped so as to avoid any fallacy in discussion. There are things which you perceive through the senses, and having gathered a body of knowledge by means of these senses, you can proceed to classify this information with the help of reflection, argumentation, observation or experimentation and to deduce laws from them.

For this type of information no revelation from heaven is needed. This is the province of your personal discoveries, explorations, meditations, reflections, research and deductions. It has been left to you to explore the world around you and discover the forces which operate; to understand the laws under which these realities function, so that you may stride forward along the path of development. Yet in this matter too, your Creator has not deprived you of His help.

All through the course of history, Allah has been unfolding before you, no matter how imperceptibly, His created world through an evolutionary process. He has opened up new vistas of knowledge before you, and at certain points of history He has inspired men to invent new techniques or to discover new laws. But the fact remains that in this domain man must gather knowledge by himself, without the help of a Divine Messenger or a Divine Book. Man has been endowed with all the resources to collect the information necessary in this sphere.

But the second category of reality is transcendental, beyond the reach of our perception; things which we are powerless to comprehend; things which cannot be weighed or measured by scales, nor discovered by pressing into service any of the instruments for acquiring knowledge which we have at our disposal. The theories of philosophers and scientists on this subject are mere conjectures and they do not come under the scope of knowledge. Here our ultimate Realities and rational theories about them cannot be taken as definitive even by the very expounders of these theories. But if the authors of these theories possess any awareness of the boundaries of their limited knowledge, they cannot have faith in the validity of their notions. Nor can they call upon others to believe them.

Need for Following the Precedent of the Prophets (pbuh)

Knowledge is obtained through the Guidance of Allah, for Allah alone is aware of realities. Allah offers this knowledge to man by means of Revelation. Revelation is transmitted to none but the Prophets (pbuh). Allah has never published a Book and, having distributed to each individual, told him to study it to ascertain for himself the reality of his own existence and that of the universe. To realize his role in the practical world in the context of this reality. Allah has always appointee the Prophets (pbuh) to convey this message to man, so

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that the Prophets (pbuh) should not rest content with merely propagating their mandate, but driving it home, demonstrating it in action, recalling to the right path, those who defy the Divine mandates and organizing the believers into a society where every aspect bears practical evidence of this knowledge.

It is evident from this brief exposition that, for Guidance, we are wholly dependent upon the character displayed to the world by a Prophet of God (pbuh) A non-Prophet who does not believe in a Prophet is not eligible to be our leader, even though he may be a sage, a deeply learned and wise man. This is because such a person bereft of this knowledge is incapable of devising a true and just system of life for us.

Why we cannot obtain Guidance from the Prophets other than Muhammad (pbuh)

Let us now consider the question of why, of all of the venerable men whom we know as Prophets, and all the and all the leaders of religions who conceivably may have been Prophets, we prefer to seek a message from the character of Muhammad (pbuh). Is this prejudice or is there a reasonable ground for doing so?

I submit that there is a rational basis for this. We certainly acknowledge and believe in the Prophethood of all those who have been named in the Holy Quran as Prophets. But, we lack reliable information by authentic sources on their teaching and their character. There is no doubt about the Prophethood of Hadrat Noah, Ibrahim, Ishaque, Yusuf, Moses and Jesus Christ (peace be upon them) and we believe in all of them. But none of the Scriptures revealed to them has come down to us in its original form so that we may benefit from its pristine message. Similarly, the life-history of none of these Prophets (pbuh) has been handed down by any authentic means enabling us to follow their example in the various spheres of individual and collective existence.

A person who undertakes to prepare an account of the teaching and characters of all these Prophets (pbuh) cannot write more than a few pages and these too, entirely with the help of the Qur'an , for nowhere else is authentic material extant about them except in the Holy Qur'an.

The Jewish Scriptures and the Prophets (pbuh)

It is said that an account of Moses and the later Prophets (pbuh) and of their teachings is contained in the Old Testament. But consider the Bible from the historical viewpoint. The original text of the Torah, as revealed to Hadrat Moses (pbuh), had been destroyed at the time of the sack of Bait-ul-Maqdas in 6 BC, and along with it the scriptures of the former Prophets (pbuh) had perished. In 5 BC, when the tribe of Israel arrived in Palestine after their release from the Captivity in Babylon, the Prophet Ezra (pbuh), assisted by some venerable collaborators, prepared an account of the life of Moses (pbuh) as well as a history of the tribe of Israel. In this work were incorporated in appropriate places such verses of the Torah as were readily available to the author and his associates.

In the period falling between the fourth and second century BC, Various authors penned down the Scriptures (from which sources we know not) of those Prophets who had preceded them by several centuries. In 300 BC, to cite an instance, an unknown writer wrote a book in the name of Hadrat Yunus (pbuh) and incorporated it in the Bible, despite the fact that Hadrat Yunus was a Prophet of the 8th century BC. The Zubur (Psalms) were committed to writing five centuries after the death of Hadrat Da'ud (pbuh) and to them were added sonnets composed by some hundred poets. We have no knowledge of the sources from which the compilers of the Zubur (Psalms) had gleaned those Sonnets.

Hadrat Sulaiman (pbuh) died in 933 BC, and Amsal-i-Sulaiman (An Anthology of Soloman's Proverbs) was compiled in the year 250 BC which also incorporated the maxims of several other sages.

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In short, no book of the Bible bears an authentic connection with any Prophet to whom it is ascribed. Furthermore, even these books of the Jewish Bible perished at the second sack of Bait-ul-Maqdas in 70 AD, leaving only their Greek translation extant, a translation dating back to the period falling between 258 BC and the first century BC.

In the second century AD, the Jewish scholars prepared a Jewish Bible with the help of manuscripts which had survived the vicissitudes of time. The oldest copy of this Bible now extant dates back to 916 AD. Apart from this, no other Jewish manuscript exists anywhere today.

The Jewish scrolls discovered in the cave of Qumran on the Dead Sea are not older than the first and second century BC, and even those contain a few scattered fragments of the Bible.

The earliest manuscript comprising the first five books of the Bible current among the Samaritans was written in the eleventh century AD. The Greek translation prepared in the second and third century BC was marred by countless errors. A retranslation from Greek into Latin was done in the third century AD. By what standard can we judge this material as an authentic source of the life-histories and teachings of Moses (pbuh) and the later Prophets of the Jews?

Finally, there were certain unwritten legends known as oral law, current among the Jews. For a span of thirteen or fourteen centuries they remained unwritten until, in the later part of the second and the beginning of the third century AD, a priest known as Yahuda B. Sham'un committed them to writing under the title of ' Mishnah.' Commentaries on this work by the Palestinian Jewish scholars under the name of ' Halaka' and by Babylonian scholars under the title ' Haggada ' appeared in the third and fifth century respectively. The ' Talmud' is, in fact, an anthology of these three works. Significantly, authoritative evidence which may reveal the chain of transmission is lacking in the case of all traditions incorporated in these books.

Christian Scriptures

A similar state of affairs exists in the case of Hadrat Isa's character and teachings. Jesus (pbuh) conveyed orally to the people the Bible which God originally revealed to him. His disciples, too, propagated it among the people by the spoken word in such a manner that they presented an admixture of their Prophet's life-story and the revealed verses of the Bible. None of this material was put into writing during the lifetime of Jesus (pbuh) or even in the period following him. It fell to the lot of the Christians whose vernacular was Greek to transform these oral traditions into writing. It must be borne in mind that Christ's native tongue was Syriac or Aramaic and his disciples spoke the same language as well.

Most Greek-speaking authors heard these traditions in the Aramaic vernacular and committed them to writing in Greek. None of these writings is dated prior to the year 70AD; there is not a single instance in these works where the author has cited an authority for an event or maxim attributed to Hadrat Isa (pbuh) in order that we might construct a chain of transmission. Furthermore, even these works have not survived. Thousands of Greek manuscripts of the new Testament were collected, but none of them is older than the fourth century AD; the origin of most of them does not go beyond the period spanning the 11th to the 14th centuries.

Some scattered papyrus fragments found in Egypt can lay claim to no greater antiquity than the third century. We cannot say when the Bible was translated from Greek into Latin. Nor do we know the writer's name.

In the fourth century AD, the Pope commissioned a review of the Latin translation. In the sixteenth century, this version was discarded and a fresh translation from Greek into Latin

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was prepared. The Four Bibles were most probably rendered into the Syriac language from Greek in 200 AD, but the oldest Syriac manuscript extant was written in the 4th century. A handwritten copy dated back to the 5th century AD contains, in frequent parts, a different version.

Among the Arabic translations made from the Syriac none is known to have been prepared before the 8th century AD. It is curious that some seventy different versions of the Bible were prepared, four of which were approved by the leaders of the Christian religion, while the rest was rejected. We have no information concerning the grounds for their approval or rejection. But can this material be credited to any extent with authenticity as regards the character and message (gospel) of Jesus (peace be upon him)? With regards to other leaders of religion the situation is not dissimilar. Take, for example, Zoroaster whose birth date is not shrouded in mystery. The most that can be said about him is that there is evidence of his existence some 250 years before the subjugation of Persia by Alexander. In other words, his life can be dated some five centuries before Christ (pbuh). His book "Avasta," in its original language, is extinct today; the language in which the book was originally written or orally propagated is dead.

In the 9th century AD, a translation of "Avasta" was published in nine volumes, out of which the first two volumes perished. The earliest surviving manuscript of the book dates from the middle of the 13th century. Such is the condition of Zoroaster's book. As for his character, our information does not extend beyond the detail that he began preaching his religion at the age of forty. Two years earlier, King Gustaph became his disciple and Zoroaster's creed turned into a State religion. Zoroaster lived to be 77, and after his death, as time went on, legends were spun around his life, all of them apocryphal.

One of the renowned religious personalities of the world was Buddha. Like Zoroaster, he might have been a Prophet. Yet he left no book, nor did his followers claim that he had given one. A hundred years after his death, a movement was started which lasted for several centuries to collect his maxims and the account for his life. But no compiler of the Buddhist scriptures produced during this period furnishes a chain of evidence for the maxims and teachings of Buddha. It is evident that even if we wished to turn for guidance to other Prophets (peace be upon them) and religious leaders, we could not come by a reliable source from which might be derived authentic and unassailable information on their history and teachings.

We are left with no alternative but to turn to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) who left a trustworthy Book free of any excisions or adulterations; the Prophet (pbuh) whose detailed history, sayings and practices were transmitted to us by authoritative sources so that we would be guided by his example. In the entire course of history such a leader could only be found in the sublimely gifted person in Muhammad (pbuh). The Holy Prophet (pbuh) put forth a Book (the Holy Quran) with the definite claim that it was the Word of God which had been revealed to him. On scrutiny, we positively feel that this Book is free of interpolations. The Book does not incorporate a single maxim of the Holy Prophet (pbuh); rather, the inclusion in this Book of any sayings of the Prophet (pbuh) has been scrupulously avoided.

In this Book, the Holy Prophet's life (pbuh), the history of the Arabs and the events which occurred during the period of the revelation of the Qur'an have not been mingled with the Divine verses, as is the case with the Bible. The Qur'an is the pure Word of God. Not one word therein is not divine. Not a single word has been deleted from its text. The Book has been handed down to our age in its complete and original form since the time of Muhammad (pbuh). From the time the Book began to be revealed, the Holy Prophet (pbuh) had dedicated its text to the scribes. Whenever some Divine Message was revealed, the Holy Prophet (pbuh) would call a scribe and dictate its words to him. The written text was then read to the Holy Prophet (pbuh), who having satisfied himself that the scribe had committed no error in recording, would put the manuscript in safe custody. The Holy Prophet (pbuh) also used to instruct the scribe about the sequence in which a revealed message was to be placed in a particular Surah. In this manner, the Holy Prophet (pbuh)

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continued to arrange the texts of the Quran in systematic order until the end of the chain of revelations. Again, it was ordained from the beginning of Islam that a recitation of the Holy Qur'an must form an integral part of worship. Hence the illustrious Companions (pbuh) would commit the Divine verses to memory as soon as they were revealed. Many of them learned the entire text by heart and an even greater number memorized different portions of it.

Besides, those of the Companions (pbuh) who were literate used to keep a written record of several portions of the Holy Qur'an. In this manner, the text of the Holy Qur'an was preserved in four different ways during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (pbuh):

1. The Holy Prophet (pbuh) had the whole text of the Divine Messages from beginning to end committed to writing by the scribes of revelations.
2. Many of the Companions (pbuh) learned the entire text of the Qur'an, syllable upon syllable, by heart.
3. All the illustrious Companions (pbuh), without exception, had memorized at least some portion of the Holy Qur'an, for the simple reason that it was obligatory for them to recite it during worship. An estimate of the number of the illustrious Companions (pbuh) may be obtained from the fact that one hundred forty thousand Companions (pbuh) participated in the Last Pilgrimage performed by the Holy Prophet (pbuh).
4. A considerable number of the literate Companions (pbuh) kept a private record of the text of the Qur'an and satisfied themselves as to the purity of their record by reading it out to the Holy Prophet (pbuh).

It is an incontrovertible historical truth that the text of the Holy Qur'an extant today is, syllable for syllable exactly the same as the Holy Prophet (pbuh) had offered to the world as the Word of God. After the demise of the Holy Prophet (pbuh), the first caliph Hadrat Abu Baker (ra) assembled all the Huffaz (those who have memorized the Qur'an) and the written records of the Holy Qur'an and had the whole text written in Book form. In the time of Hadrat ' Uthman (pbuh) copies of this original version were made and officially dispatched to the capitals of the Islamic world. Of these copies extant in the world today, one is in Istanbul and the other in Tashkent. Whoever is so inclined may compare any printed text of the Holy Qur'an with those two copies. He shall find no variation. And how can one expect any discrepancy, when there have been several million Huffaz in every generation since the time of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) and in our own time? Should anyone alter one syllable of the original text of the Qur'an, these Huffaz would at once expose the mistake. In the last century, an Institute of Munich University in Germany collected forty-two thousand copies of the Holy Qur'an including manuscripts and printed texts produced in each period in the several of the Islamic world. Research was carried out on these texts for half a century, at the end of which the researchers concluded that apart from copying mistakes, there was no discrepancy in the text of these forty-two thousand copies, though they belonged to periods spanning the first century Hijrah to the 14th century Hijrah and had been procured from all parts of the world. This Institute, unfortunately was destroyed in the bombing raids on Germany during World War II, but the findings of the research project survived. Another point that must be kept in view is that the word in which the Qur'an was revealed is a living language in our own time. It is still current as the mother tongue of some hundred million people from Iraq to Morocco. In the non-Arab world also hundreds of thousands of people study and teach this language.

The grammar of the Arabic language, its lexicon, its phonetic system and its phraseology, have remained in tact for fourteen hundred years.

A modern Arabic speaking person can comprehend the Holy Qur'an with as much proficiency as did the Arabs of fourteen centuries ago. This, then, is an important attribute of Muhammad (pbuh), which is shared by no other Prophet or Leader of Religion. The Book which God revealed to him for the guidance of mankind today exists in its original language without the slightest alteration in its vocabulary.

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Authenticity of the Character and Precedent of the Holy Prophet (pbuh)

Now take the second attribute of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) by which he stands unique among all Prophets (pbuh) and leaders of religion. Just as the Book transmitted to him, amounts of his character have also been preserved to serve as a beacon for us in all walks of life. From early childhood to the close of his life, a large number of those who saw him, witnessed the events of his life and heard his conversation, addresses, exhortations or warnings, had retained them in memory and passed them onto their successors. Some of the research scholars believe that the number of those who had passed on to the next generation eyewitness accounts or reports of events that they had heard during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) number a hundred thousand people. The Holy Prophet (pbuh) himself dictated some commands and handed or dispatched them to certain people. These were later bequeathed to the succeeding generations.

There were at least six Companions (pbuh) who had recorded the Traditions of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) and tested the authenticity of their records by reading them out to the Holy Prophet (pbuh). These writings were also inherited by posterity. After the death of the Holy Prophet (pbuh), some fifty Companions (pbuh) undertook to collect accounts of the circumstances and incidents of the Prophet's life and his holy utterances. The material gathered from this source also came into the hands of those who later accomplished the task of collecting and compiling the Traditions of the Holy Prophet (pbuh).

Besides, as I have mentioned earlier, the number of the Companions who transmitted orally their knowledge of the Holy Prophet's character (pbuh) runs to one hundred thousand, according to the estimate of some researchers. Little wonder, when we take into account the fact that the Holy Prophet (pbuh) performed his last Hajj, known as the Farewell Pilgrimage, in the company of one hundred and forty thousand people! All these believers saw him at the time of Hajj, learned from him the rituals of Hajj and listened to the addresses which the Holy Prophet (pbuh) delivered during this last Pilgrimage. It is improbable that when this assembly, who had attended such an important occasion as the Hajj, disperse to their own homes, their friends, relations and fellow-citizens should not have questioned them on the circumstances of their journey or failed to ascertain from them the injunctions about Hajj. One can well judge from this, after the Holy Prophet (pbuh) had departed from the world, how eagerly the people must have questioned those who had seen him and listened to his speech, on the details of his life, his sacred utterances, commands and instructions.

The procedure that had been adopted from the beginning regarding the traditions bequeathed to the later generations by the illustrious Companions (pbuh) was that whoever ascribed an event or saying to the Holy Prophet (pbuh) had to state his source and furnish a chain of evidence. In this way, the sources of a particular tradition were traced through all connecting links back to the time of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) in order to determine whether their connection with the person of the Prophet of God (pbuh) was demonstrably true. If any links were found to be missing in the chain of transmission, the authenticity of the tradition fell into suspicion. When in the case of a tradition, a complete line of evidence had been set up to the time of the Holy Prophet (pbuh), and even one of the reporters along the line had been recognized as unreliable, the tradition was discarded. If you ponder this a while, you will realize that circumstances relating to no other man in history have been recorded with such rigorous scrutiny. It is the distinction of Muhammed (pbuh) that no tradition ascribed to him has been accepted, save on authority. And while looking for the authority of a tradition, it was not considered sufficient to establish a chain of evidence up to the time of the Holy Prophet (pbuh), but each one of the successive transmitters was carefully scrutinized as well so as to determine his or her reliability. For this purpose, the circumstances of all the reporters were thoroughly investigated and full-scale books were compiled. Setting forth details as to who was trustworthy and who was not; what sort of character and personality each of them had; whose memory was sound and who's weak. Furthermore, the reporter who had actually met the source from whom he had derived the tradition was distinguished from the one who merely named the source without ever having met him. Information about all these reporters has been documented on such a

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comprehensive scale that today we can easily determine in the case of each tradition whether it has been derived from trustworthy or fake sources. Is there any other person in the history of mankind whose life story has been derived by such authentic means? Is there another single instance in which, while discovering the history of one individual person, comprehensive books were compiled on the life stories of thousands of reporters who had narrated some tradition about that person? The primary motive behind the vigorous campaign of the modern Christian and Jewish scholars is to cast doubt on the authenticity of the tradition is jealousy, for they know full well that the authority on the genuineness of their own Scriptures as well as for that of the histories of their Prophets is non-existent. It is owing to this jealousy that they have dispensed with all intellectual honesty in their criticisms on Islam, the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

All Aspects of the Holy Prophet's (pbuh) Life Are Open and Fully Known

The authenticity of the sources for a reconstruction of this life and character is by no means the only distinction of the Holy Prophet (pbuh). Another factor which distinguishes him from all others is that we have access to far more details about each and every aspect of his life than we have with respect to other historical personages: His family background; the kind of life he led before the announcement of his Apostolic Mission; how he was invested with Prophethood; how the Divine Messages were transmitted to him; how he preached Islam; in what manner he faced opposition and resistance; how he prepared and trained his Companions; his domestic life; his conduct as a husband and father; his dealing with friends and foes; his precepts and practices, commands and warnings; the practices to which he did not object as well as the practices which he curbed- all these in their minute details may be read in the Books of Traditions and in the works on his pious life and character. The Holy Prophet (pbuh) was an ideal military general and we possess detailed accounts of all the battles fought under his command. The Holy Prophet (pbuh) was the head of state, and a complete history of his reign is available to us. He (pbuh) was a judge, and full proceedings of all the cases tried by him, along with the judgments awarded by him in those cases, are extant. The Holy Prophet (pbuh) visited the markets and watched how the people conducted their business. He (pbuh) forbade all he found to be unfair and fraudulent, while approving of all that was found to be just and equitable. In short, there is no sphere of life regarding which he did not lay down comprehensive guidelines. It is on this basis that we assert with full knowledge and conviction and without any prejudice that of all the Prophets (pbuh) and religious leaders, it is the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) alone to whom humanity can turn for advice and guidance, because the Book as presented by him has been preserved in its original text in its pristine form and his character, with all such details as are needed for guidance, has been reported to us through the most authentic and reliable sources. We shall now see what message and instruction his pious character bears for us.

The Message of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) Is for All Mankind

The foremost feature we observe in his apostolic mission is that he (pbuh) addresses man in his capacity as a human being, setting aside all distinctions of color, race, language or country. He (pbuh) propounds tenets for the welfare of all mankind. Whoever has faith in these tenets is a Muslim and enters the fold of the universal brotherhood of Islam. Black or white, belonging to the East or the West, the Arab or the non-Arab, wherever a human being may be living, whatever the country, nation or race in which he is born; irrespective of the tongue he speaks or the color of his skin, the call of the Prophet (pbuh) is addressed to everyone. Taboos, inequality, racial or class distinctions, linguistic, territorial or geographic bias-nothing that divides man from man has any place in the society of Islam.

The Best remedy for Racial Prejudice or Color Bar

On reflection, one comes to appreciate that this is a great blessing vouchsafed to mankind through the Arabian Prophet, Muhammad (pbuh). It has been this differentiation between man and man that has, more than anything else, ruined mankind. In some places, man was

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declared to be polluted and it was argued that since he was an untouchable he could not enjoy the same rights as the Brahmans. Then, according to some, man was considered to be good only for destruction, for he had the misfortune to be born in America, Australia, or Palestine in an age when the foreign immigrants badly wanted his eviction from the land. In places, man was hunted, enslaved and forced to work like an animal merely for the offense of being born in Africa and the color of his skin, black. In other words, these distinctions of nationality, country, race, color and language have, from time immemorial, been highly detrimental to mankind. These differentiations have caused wars. They have served as the basis of aggression by one country against the other. They have provoked a people to plunder another people. Generations of human beings have been subjected to ruthless genocide for the satisfaction of these prejudices. The Holy Prophet (pbuh) treated this malady so effectually that the enemies of Islam now admit that never were the problems of color distinction, racial prejudice and national bias so successfully solved as in the religion of Islam. When the famous leader of the African-born nationals of America, Malcolm X, who at one time led an extremist Black Nationalist Movement against the Whites, undertook Hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah) after embracing Islam, he saw people of all races, colors and nationalities speaking different languages and converging at one central place from the East and the West and from the North and the South. They all wore the same garment, the Ihram, all chanted Labbaik, in the same language; all mingled to perform circumambulation, and they all formed one compact congregation under the of one leader to offer worship. Malcolm X observed this and exclaimed that it was the only correct answer to the questions of race and color and that the measures hitherto adopted by his compatriots were wrong. Malcolm X was murdered, but his autobiography survives to bear witness to the profound impact Hajj had made on him.

Hajj is but one of the articles of worship in the Islamic faith. Whoever surveys the Islamic religion as a whole with open eyes will not find even the smallest point to which he can refer and say that here Islam has tilted the balance in favor of a particular nation, tribe, race or class. The entire code of Islam testifies to the fact that it is applicable to the whole of humanity. It affirms that all human beings who acknowledge the principles of Islam and enter the fold of the universal brotherhood of Islam are equal. Nay, the conduct of Islam towards the non-Muslim presents a happy contrast to the treatment of the Blacks by the Whites, and highlights, by contrast, the conduct of the imperialists toward the slave peoples as well as the behavior of the Communists governments towards their non-Communist subjects or toward their own dissident party members.

Let us now turn to the rules for human welfare which the Holy Prophet (pbuh) propagated through the teachings of Islam and the seizure of power to enable him not only to guarantee human well-being but to unite all human beings in one Ummah.

Widest Conception of the Oneness of God

The foremost of these principles is the belief in the Oneness of God, not just in the sense that God exists, nor merely that there is only One God, but in the sense that the Creator, Master, and All-Wise Sovereign of this universe is Allah alone. There is no comparable authority in the whole universe which is sovereign and has the right to command or forbid; or has the power to make certain things lawful and others unlawful by decree. These powers are vested in no one, save Allah. It is the sole prerogative of the Creator and master to allow certain things in this world at Will and to prohibit certain things at Will. Islam preaches that the belief in Allah signifies the acknowledgement of all these Powers of God. The belief in Allah is tantamount to the affirmation that we show allegiance to no one except Him and that no power on earth has the right to enact a law that is inimical to His Commandments. The belief in Allah implies that man's head is made to bow to God alone and is consequently rendered incapable of bending down before anyone else. The belief in God carries the meaning that only Allah has the power to make or unmake our destiny; that He has absolute power in regard to life or death. He can take away our life whenever He pleases and He can keep us alive as long as it pleases Him. When he chooses to end our life,

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no power on earth can save us from death; when He chooses to give us life, no power on earth can put us to death. This, then, is the Islamic concept of God. According to this concept, the whole universe which stretches from the earth to the heavens operates under orders from Allah. It, therefore, behooves man, who subsists in this universe, to devote his life to carrying out the Will of God. Should man obtain a license to do what he likes or own obedience to some other power, his pattern of life would run counter to the entire system of the universe. This may be expressed in other words better to grasp the point. That the whole universe functions under orders from God are an established fact which is unalterable by any power. Hence, if we carry out the behest of some authority other than Allah or follow an independent course of our own choice, our life would move in the direction opposite to the one the entire universe is taking. In this way, we shall be in a state of constant collision with the system of the universe.

Let us view this from another angle as well. The Islamic concept of God Affirms that the only valid way of life for man is to abide by the Will of Allah, for man is the creature and Allah is his Creator. As a creature, it is wrong on the part of the man to be independent of his Creator. It is also betrayal for him to offer worship to any other than the Creator. Either of these acts is opposed to reality. Whoever defies reality comes to grief. The reality stands inviolate.

The Call to Worship the Lord

The Holy Prophet (pbuh) calls for an end to this defiance. He (pbuh) teaches that the rules and patterns of our life should conform to the system which governs the whole universe. A person should neither assume the right of legislation nor acknowledge the prerogative of any other person to enact laws for God's creatures living on God's earth. The only valid law is the law given by the Lord of the Universe. All other laws are false and void.

The Call for Rendering Obedience to the Holy Prophet (pbuh)

We now come to the second point of the Holy Prophet's (pbuh) message. He (pbuh) categorically declared: "I am the Messenger of Allah. Allah has sent His mandate for mankind through me. I, too, am subject to this mandate. I can make no alterations in it. I have been appointed to obey the mandate, not to introduce innovations into it. The Qur'an embodies the Law which Allah has revealed to me and my practice is the law which I promulgate by the order and sanction of Allah. I am the first to render obedience to the Law of God, and having done so, I call upon all men to relinquish their allegiance to every other law and abide by the Law of God alone."

Next to God, Obedience is due to the Messenger of God (pbuh)

No one should feel cynical as regards the query: How could the Holy Prophet (pbuh) be deemed to have obeyed and followed his own practice when it was really his personal precept or action? The truth of the matter is that just as the source of the Quran was God, so the source of all exhortations, prohibitions and regulations propagated by the Holy Prophet (pbuh) was also God. This is denoted by the term "Sunnah of the Prophet." The Holy Prophet (pbuh) himself followed the Sunnah in the same manner as it is obligatory for all the believers to follow it. This point was made abundantly clear on occasions when, in certain matters, the illustrious Companions (pbuh) used to ask: "Allah's messenger, are you conveying the Will of God or is this personal view?" The Holy Prophet (pbuh) used to observe: "No, this is not the Will of God; it is my opinion." On such occasions, the illustrious Companions (pbuh) differed with the Holy Prophet (pbuh) and put forth their own way of thinking and the Holy Prophet (pbuh) allowed their suggestions to supersede his own opinion. Similarly, this point also became obvious on occasions when the Holy Prophet

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(pbuh) took counsel with his illustrious Companions (pbuh). This consultation in itself was proof positive that Allah had revealed no mandate regarding the matter under consideration, for had the Divine Will been known in the matter, it could not have become subject for discussion. Such occasions, which have been elaborately recorded in the collections of Traditions, often arouse in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (pbuh). The illustrious Companions (pbuh) they have reported: "Never did we see a person who was engaged in council more often than the Holy Prophet (pbuh)." If you reflect on this point, you will realize that holding council in matters which God had not revealed His Will was also the Sunnah (Traditions) of the Holy Prophet (pbuh). When the Holy Prophet (pbuh) himself did not deem it proper to impose his personal opinion on the people as an inexorable law, what authority is there for another ruler to enforce his will upon the people? Thus did the Holy Prophet (pbuh) teach his Ummah to conduct their affairs by consultation and instructed the people to render unqualified obedience to the Will of God in those matters in which the Lord had not manifested His Will, the Holy Prophet (pbuh) exhorted the people to exercise their right of freedom of speech without fear.

True Charter of Freedom

This is the "Charter of Freedom" which only the true religion has conferred upon mankind. The creature of Allah should be the slave of Allah alone and owe service to none else, nay, not even as a servant of the Holy Prophet (pbuh). This charter freed man from offering worship to all others, save One God; and it terminated the divinity of man over man once and for all. Simultaneously, the greatest blessing conferred by this mandate upon mankind is the Supremacy of the Law, the Law which no monarch, dictator, democratic parliament or assembly of believers in Islam is empowered to tamper with for the purpose of altering it. This law bestows on man permanent values of Good and Evil, and no one has the power to transmute these values with a view to changing Good into Evil or vice versa.

The third message which the Holy Prophet (pbuh) preached to the servants of God was: "You are all answerable to God. You have been given un chartered freedom to act as you deem fit and to forage whatever pasture you like without being answerable to anyone. Rather you shall be held accountable before your Creator for each act, each word, in fact, for the whole course of your life wherein you have been given limited autonomy. You will be raised after death and presented in the court of your Lord for reckoning." When human conscience is permeated with such a stupendous moral force, it will be as if every human being were being guarded by a sentinel who challenges every evil thought that enters one's mind and hinders all action that may arise from an evil thought. Irrespective of the existence or non-existence of a vigilant police force and a retributive government in the external world, a censor will always preside over the human soul, and fear of seizure will deter a person from transgressing the Will of God even in privacy, in darkness or in a deserted wasteland. No greater means than this can be devised for the moral degeneration of man and for the forging of a stable human character. All other means which purport to reform the moral aspects of human character do not go beyond the dicta that is in this world "Good begets good and Evil begets Evil " and " Honesty is the Best Policy." Carried to the logical conclusion it clearly implies that if evil and dishonesty be found profitable for policy reasons, these should be freely practiced without compunction. It is in consequence of this philosophy of life that the same person who behaves well in his private life turns to being faithless, deceptive, rapacious, callous and ruthless in the conduct of his public life-nay, even in their private life, such people are good only in certain respects and very wicked in many other ways. You will find that, on the one hand, these people are fair and courteous in their business dealings, while on the other hand they are the worst drunkards, fornicators and gamblers, being the most depraved and wicked of people. Their motto is that a man's public life and his private life are two different spheres, distinct from each other. To one who accosts them on some faults in their private life, they offer a tailor-made answer, "Mind your own business." Contrary to this, there is the belief in Eternity which enjoins that evil remains evil in all circumstances, regardless of whether it proves profitable or disadvantageous in the world. The dichotomy between public and private spheres cannot exist in the life of a person who has a sense of accountability to God. This person does not adopt honesty just because it is the best policy, but because the person

has cultivated honesty in his soul and nothing could be more distant from his thoughts than the practice of dishonesty. His belief teaches him that dishonesty must debase him to a level inferior to that of animals. As the Holy Quran observes: "We created Man in the finest form and then We turned him upside down and degraded him to a position lower than the lowest." In this way, by the kindly favor of the Holy Prophet's (pbuh) guidance, man has not only obtained an immutable law embodying permanent moral values, but also an unshakeable foundation on which to build individual and national moral character. Man, therefore, does not require the agency of a government, a police force or a court of law to deter him from crimes and keep him on the right path.

Practice of Morality in the Mundane Activities of Life: Monasticism Rejected

The Holy Prophet's (pbuh) call bears yet another important message for us, which is that morality is not the preserve of the monks, to be practiced in the monasteries, nor the privileged of the mystics, to be observed within the precincts of the shrines. Morality is meant for practical application in all spheres of life. The highest spiritual and moral standards which the world sought in monks, priests and the mystics were transferred to the Holy Prophet (pbuh) to the seat of Government and the Judges' bench. He (pbuh) exhorted the businessmen to fear God and practice honesty in their dealings and transactions. He (pbuh) taught the policemen and the soldiers the lesson of piety and restraint. The Holy Prophet (pbuh) dispelled man's misconception that one who renounced the world and commemorated God in the wilderness was the friend of God.

He (pbuh) denied that true fellowship with God consisted in being a hermit. On the contrary, true saintliness consisted in participating in the affairs of the world as a ruler, magistrate, army commander, police inspector, businessman, and industrialist. In fact, displaying through all other activities of the temporal life, a pious and honest character whenever one's faith is put to the test. In this way, the Holy Prophet (pbuh) retrieved morality and spirituality from the restrictions of monasticism and brought them into all spheres of practical life. He (pbuh) enforced morality and spirituality in economic, social and political affairs and in the conduct of peace or war, establishing the supremacy of the righteous moral code in all these fields of life.

The Blessings of the Holy Prophet's (pbuh) Teaching

It was through this blessed guidance that those whom the Holy Prophet (pbuh) had found to be thieves at the beginning of his Prophethood were transformed into trustworthy protectors of life, prospect and honor of the common people by the time the Holy Prophet (pbuh) departed from the mortal world; those whom he had found usurpers of rights were remolded by him into upholders, protectors and champions of the rights of the people. Prior to his time, the world had known only rulers who issued their "Divine Writs" from magnificent palaces and held their subjects down by repressive measures. The Holy Prophet (pbuh) gave the world rulers who walked in the bazaars like ordinary people and held sway over the hearts of the people through an administration of justice and equity. Before him, the world had known armies penetrating into a country carrying fire and steel in all directions, raping the women of the prostrate people. The Holy Prophet (pbuh) introduced the world to the armies which after a triumphant entry into a city molested none except the enemy troops; and after a departure from a captured city returned the very taxes already received from its inhabitants. Human history is replete with accounts of conquests and victories over cities and countries. But the conquest of Makkah has no parallel in history. The Holy Prophet's (pbuh) triumphant entry into the city whose inhabitants had persecuted him and his adherents for thirteen long years was marked by glorious humanity, his sacred forehead leaning on the saddle of his camel in a posture of bowing before God. In his demeanor there was no trace of pride and arrogance. When the same people who had tormented him for thirteen years and forced him to migrate from the city of his birth, and even after his migration, had fought battles against him for eight years, were brought before him as supplicants, they begged him for mercy. Instead of wreaking vengeance upon them, the Holy Prophet (pbuh) observed: " Today there is NO censure upon you, now go, you are free."

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Anyone who wishes to assess the impact of this precedent of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) on the Muslims should look at the pages of history. He should compare the behavior of the Muslim conquerors as they entered Spain with the conduct of the Christians as they subjugated the Muslims; and he should observe the contrast between the treatment meted out to the Muslims when the Christians sacked Bait-ul-maqdas during the Crusades and the dispensation which the Christians received when the Muslims recaptured Bait-ul-Maqdas from them.

Gentleman! The personality of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) is a vast ocean of wisdom, and no work, however elaborate, can encompass it. A single address could hardly do justice to this subject. Nevertheless, I have endeavored to focus attention on some of the outstanding aspects of the Holy Prophet's (pbuh) personality. Fortunate, indeed, are those who follow the lead of this Supreme Guide.

In the end, we should say that all Praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Universe.



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