

Translation of Prophetic Biography

The Noble Man

Sanaullah Noori

English rendering: Shah Abdul Halim

In human life years, months and days come and go but nobody cares or tries to remember each and every day. There are, however, specific days that nobody forgets. The day we shall talk about, amazingly, nobody forgets. Nobody forgets that year even for a moment. This particular day is ever fresh and vivid in the mind of the people. People remember this day for many many decades. The day we are talking about has indeed kept the mind of the people engrossed with emotion for the last fifteen hundred years.

The day is shining in red letters in the history because of the birth of a noble man. Mankind has been remembering this great man, centuries after centuries. You may now be thinking that this man must have been an outstanding person. Yes. This man, although made of clay like us, is unparalleled. He is the crown of mankind.

He brought in the world great many changes
He brought light among people in darkness
He brought peace in the world in distress
He affirmed right against wrongness
He freed men from bondage of many gods
He found among all men equality and fairness
He elevated the consciousness

He did not, however, walk with pride over the land like Alexander. He was not a ruler like Hammurabi of Babylon. Like the Persian Cyrus, he had neither the spacious palace nor the throne made of jewels and marbles. Neither he fought like Julius Caesar many battles for valour and fame, nor he declared himself an emperor like Augustine.

Who then he is?

He was a greater conqueror than all the greatest conquerors of the world because he had fought against all kinds of falsehood, wrong, oppression, exploitation and dominance of ruthless polytheist tyrants. His valour was much greater than the gallantry of the greatest warriors of the world for he became great not by

dominating people but by winning their hearts. He also fought wars, but such wars were neither intended to establish supremacy nor to conquer lands. The wars were against oppression and persecution. The objectives of the war were to establish justice against injustice and wrong doings. To keep high the flag of truth, he fought wars either to be victorious or to embrace martyrdom. Indeed, he was a brave warrior of truth and justice. He never became shaky in the struggle against wrongs and injustices. His soldiers never took part in the killing of noncombatant innocent people and destruction of properties. His warriors never retreated, and preferred martyrdom to living an ignominious life.

He was greater than the greatest ruler of the world but he did not rule like a king. He treated everybody equally and ensured happiness, peace and prosperity for all without any discrimination and favouritism. He had no subjects, but only companions and followers. He taught them great ideals of a noble life. He showed them the correct path of truth and justice. His greatness is more than the worldly kings and emperors for he did not subjugate people by wealth and power, rather he earned great respect and admiration, honor and love in their hearts by sacrificing for them, enduring pain and agony for them, dispensing every wealth and resources for them, consoling them in their helplessness, showing them the right path when they were in the wrong, becoming friend and one with them in their distress and caring them with great affection.

No emperor could have ever imagined getting a place in man's heart with such glory and high esteem. People did not join his rank for money, honour and power as happens in the case of the followers of kings, military commanders and emperors, but they joined him imbued with the principles of justice, fair play and the great ideals of truth. They joined his camp being overwhelmed by his character. People joined him because they loved him

He had no palace of granite and marble but the small cottage made of clay was more lively, majestic and magnificent for he used to send to the whole world the message of truth, peace and tranquility from this cottage. People from far and wide used to visit him in this cottage for learning the true lessons of equality and brotherhood.

He had no throne made of jewels and marbles but his seat made of leaves of date-tree was more majestic, more dignified than the thrones of the kings and emperors for he used to accomplish the onerous and arduous duty and responsibility of ruling the vast country from this ordinary seat. Nobody feared him and everybody used to approach him for peace and justice.

Who is this great man? Who is this unusual, illustrious person that lived an ordinary life?

He was the Great Guide for the salvation of mankind, the Messenger to establish peace and tranquility, happiness and prosperity in the whole world. He was Prophet Muhammad¹. He brought a great number of people in the seventh century to light

and gave them the message of truth, justice, peace and good conduct and thus made great changes in the then world and saved it from imminent misfortune and catastrophe. He changed the face of the world and, therefore, the seventh century is considered as the greatest century of history.

Prophet Muhammad was born in Makkah in 570 A.D in the aristocratic and noble Quarish family. Prophet Ibrahim² was the first progenitor of the Quraish. He was one of the greatest teachers of ancient societies. He was the prophet or messenger of Allah. In the Old Testament he has been named Abraham. To the Muslims, the Bible is the Holy Book Injil. The Muslims consider Prophet Adam, Prophet Noah, Prophet

1. When the name of Prophet Muhammad appears in the text recite *sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam*, blessing and peace be upon Prophet Muhammad.
2. When the name of any Prophet other than Muhammad appears in the text recite *alayhi wa sallam*, peace be upon him.

way of the revelation of all ranks of the in this world. Prophet Ibrahim also invited people towards the fold and banner of Islam, the religion of peace. He, however, suffered much in the hands of misguided and strayed people. His life story is full of events.

Prophet Ibrahim originally came from Uru region in Babylon. The people of Babylon, who lived about four thousand years ago, used to worship the sun, the moon, the stars and other celestial bodies as deities. The ancestors of Prophet Ibrahim, even his father, used to worship those deities. They used to make images of clay and worship them, but Prophet Ibrahim, since his boyhood, had developed a dislike for worshipping deities made of clay. He was imaginative and always used to contemplate. He thought over and reflected for days together as to how an idol made of clay by man can be more powerful than man. Why does man worship such idols as being the ones that determine man's good and bad, fate and destiny? Such idols can be destroyed by a simple stroke of a finger. How insignificant are such idols? He looked towards the sky. Are the sun and the moon *illah* or the creator of man? How can this be so? The sun sets in the evening and the moon disappears as the sun rises in the morning. The sun and the moon are really rendering service to man. The sun shines the whole day and the moon spreads light the whole night. How then the sun and the moon can be the objects of worship of man? The sun and the moon, in truth, follow the commands of others; swim in the orbit in the path designed by others.

The young boy Ibrahim deeply thought over the matter. The Creator of man must be the One Who decides good and bad for man. He must be Omnipotent, All-powerful. Others must obey Him and be His subordinates. The Creator, however, cannot be like the insignificant fragile idol. The Creator is One Who cannot be like the sun and the moon, which rise and set. Prophet Ibrahim, after deep reflection and meditation, attained the absolute knowledge and the ultimate truth. He realized with the core of his heart that the One Who has created the sun, the moon, the stars, other celestial bodies, the clay, the fire, the wind and the earth and the One Who has employed these for the good service of man, is the All-majestic Creator of man. No one has power equal to Him. He is aware of all secrets of His creations. He is the One and He

has no partner. The sun and the moon rise and set at His command. He is above everybody and, therefore, man can worship Him alone and none else deserve to be worshipped.

Prophet Ibrahim began to worship One Allah. He submitted himself to the Will of Allah. He surrendered himself to Him. This surrender to Allah is the way to truth, dignity, peace and happiness. Man can achieve the ultimate salvation in this way. Man can make his life decent in this world by following this path. The name of this way of life or life style is Islam. Prophet Ibrahim invited the people of Babylon to this path of peace and happiness. The people first considered him a lunatic but later when they saw him calling them sincerely and wholeheartedly to worship One Allah in place of worshipping idols of their forefathers, they started oppression and persecution over him. However, those who were conscious and honest they responded to the call of Prophet Ibrahim.

In the face of extreme enmity and hostility of the people of Babylon, Prophet Ibrahim (A), along with his disciples, adherents, followers and members of his family left his homeland for Canaan. Canaan was a land bordering the Mediterranean Sea. Here he preached the religion of monotheism and the message of peace, happiness and prosperity for a long time. He moved to many townships. On being ordained by Allah, Prophet Ibrahim took his infant son Ismael and wife Hager to a place called Makkah, and left them there. In course of time a settlement grew up there. Since the establishment of this settlement more settlements were set up here. The trade caravans of the desert started to pass through this route as a result of which a township developed here within a short period. This township is today's Makkah. Prophet Ibrahim built here a House for the Worship of Allah. This House is Kaaba. It is narrated that the ancient House of Worship of Prophet Adam was also built at this place. It is for this reason that the Kaaba is considered to be the most ancient House of Worship of the world. The descendents of Prophet Ibrahim (A) later looked after this House as its servants. The principal lineage of this family is Quraish. It was the Quraish that looked after the Kaaba as its servants for decades.

The Quraish, being the descendents of Prophet Ibrahim and servants of Kaaba, were always highly respected in the Arab society. Precious gifts and endowments used to come to Kaaba from all over Arabia and other countries for which the Quraish did not worry for their living. Many of them were also engaged in trade and business. But with the passage of time they became totally changed. They completely forgot the teachings and ideology of their great ancestor Prophet Ibrahim. They became fully drowned in darkness. The Arab nation in the neighbourhood also along with them plunged into a deep darkness. That was the time of *aïam e jahiliya*, Dark Age, through which the whole world was passing. The whole Europe had sunk into darkness around 500 A.C when the Romans were defeated in the hands of illiterate and half-educated Titans.

The Arabs plunged into unfathomable darkness even before that. Very little of laws, manners and customs were left with them. Prophet Ibrahim and his great followers had built a model ideal society. With the passage of time that cultured society became uncivilized. They deviated so much that in the Kaaba, where Prophet Ibrahim used to worship the Omnipotent One Allah, they placed idols of 360 deities and started worshipping them by ascribing partnership with Allah. Like the people of Babylon they considered that these deities control their destiny. They thus plunged deep into superstition and confusion.

In history, this phase of the Arabs is being depicted as the period of *aiam e jahiliya*. In Arabic *aiam* means days or age and *jahiliya* means ignorance. It means, that age of the Arabs was a period of ignorance and barbarism. In other words, it was the era of darkness. They, however, plunged into such a deep ignorance that they even did not know that they were living in ignorance for the ignorant never thinks himself or herself to be ignorant and the barbarian does not consider himself or herself to be barbaric. There was no conscience or human quality among them. To harass and oppress the weak, killing for no reason, committing sins and doing immoral indecent practices became just an ordinary matter to them. The society got divided into many tribes. If someone of one tribe killed someone of another tribe, a war would start and continue for years between the two tribes to take revenge. This would result in unnecessary bloodshed and loss of many lives. They used to value aristocracy, familial nobility and high birth more than truth and justice. Alcohol, gambling, nakedness and adultery became part of their everyday entertainment. To rob the property of enemy tribe and kidnap their beautiful women were matters of heroism and pride for them. Nothing of the due process of law and justice was left with them. They had no relations with civilized and well-mannered life. In a word, barbarism was their self-identity.

They considered false beliefs as religious conviction

They considered baby daughter as curse and would bury them alive

They considered homicide and looting as heroic acts

They remained busy in bloody tribal strife's

They looked upon slavery with approval

Prophet Muhammad was born during those days of great degeneration and decadence of the Arabs. But who then knew that this child would one day proclaim the end of Dark Age and usher in the beginning of a great era in the world history.

While in his mother Amena's womb, this great child lost his father Abdullah. He was deprived of the affectionate motherly care and love of Amena, the warmth of her lap when he was only six. This great infant thus became an orphan in his childhood. Grandfather of the child, Abdul Muttalib, the headman of the Quraish tribe, therefore, took upon himself the responsibility of the child. But soon Abdul Muttalib died. Thus Muhammad lost the protection of a powerful Arab tribal leader in his boyhood. Allah created this circumstance in his childhood to train him to struggle against all odds for He decided that in future something great will be accomplished

through him. His uncle Abu Talib of course did not abandon him; he looked after him, patronized and supported him when Abdul Muttalib died.

The baby Muhammad was sent to the foster mother Halima's house according to the Arab tradition. Halima reared him with motherly care and affection. The sons of Halima used to go to the field to graze sheep. The child Muhammad often used to go to the field with them. He used to become astonished to see the vastness of the field embracing the sky. When alone, he used to reflect. He was, by nature, imaginative and thoughtful. He did not have greed or strong desire for anything. He would not demand or ask for anything. He did not know what is a lie or falsehood. He was, by nature, different from other boys of his age. It was Halima who first observed and identified the wonderful and amazing traits of his character. She could realize that in future this child would become a great man.

Muhammad came back to his uncle Abu Talib after staying six years in the house of his foster mother and then became an apprentice in the business of Abu Talib. Abu Talib at that time often went to Syria for trade and business with the caravans of camels. Muhammad thus did not get the opportunity for learning, as he had to start life struggle at the early days of his life. He, therefore, remained unlettered for the rest of his life. He was later named *nabi al ummi*, meaning the unlettered prophet. In other words, he did not learn from anybody. He was, however, a wise man although unlettered. He was not a usual wise man but was unparalleled in wisdom and understanding. Allah opened up before him the infinite and never-ending store of knowledge of the nature and made him wise.

He went to Syria on a business trip along with his uncle Abu Talib while he was twelve. He was then a good-looking, handsome boy. His eyes and face emitted simplicity and divine soothing light. His face, above all, was adorned with the sweet grace of intellect and wisdom. His broad forehead was illuminated with unusual divine light. No other boy was so eye-catching and sharp like him.

During this business trip Abu Talib met a Christian priest. The boy Muhammad was present in this meeting. The Christian priest Bahira gazed at the boy with great surprise. Bahira took a deep, attentive look, a penetrating glance over the face of the boy. He then enquired with great curiosity from Abu Talib about the antecedent and conduct of the boy. He was further taken aback when Abu Talib explained to him in detail about the background of the boy. With great respect, the priest nodded, and then, told Abu Talib very gently: "Be careful about the protection and security of this great boy". He then soliloquized: I see clearly in his face all signs of the great man. He is, the greatest, promised future prophet who will show the right path to the misguided people. Bahira regretted for his ill luck, as he would not be alive when the truth would fully come out.

From his childhood, Prophet Muhammad was thoughtful like his ancestor Prophet Ibrahim. Why does his community worship fragile idol of clay; why do they ask for benefit in a plaintive tone from the fragile powerless idol; how can the idol be the

master of people's fate, the controller of their destiny, their luck – good or bad? All these questions made him extremely distressed. He realized that the Creator of the worlds, Omnipotent Allah, is the Creator of man. He controls the destiny. It is He Who alone is to be worshipped by man. Because of this realization he used to abhor and dislike the worship of idols and other ghosts and spirits from his childhood. His character was clean and unblemished from his childhood. No wrong or shameful act ever touched his life. A peep into his whole life will reveal that the young boy Muhammad was the miniature of the future greatest perfect man and the last Prophet Muhammad. It seems that Allah kept his character stainless and sinless from childhood for He decided to greatly honour him with the responsibility of prophethood in future. Truthfulness, fairness, feelings for others were the excellent traits of his character. He was so truthful that in his boyhood he became popular in the Makkan society as *al amin* or the trustworthy. He was so sharp in intelligence and judgment that when a serious dispute arose among the clans of Makkah as to who will place Hajr al Aswad, the sacred Black Stone, in its position, the people without any disagreement accepted his decision although he was only twelve at that time. Which clan will carry the sacred Black Stone? That was the point of dispute. Everyone wanted to carry the stone and earn blessing and reward. The stone was, however, so small that it was not possible on the part of all to participate in carrying it to its place He thought over the solution of the problem and found a wonderful way out. He spread a sheet of cloth and put the stone on it and then urged the leaders of the opposing clans to hold the hems of the sheet and carry the stone to the wall of Kaaba. Then he himself put the stone to its niche. Everybody was happy with this fantastic solution for every clan could participate in this virtuous work. Everybody was amazed by the singular judgment of boy Muhammad.

He was very faithful and trustworthy from his childhood. The people of Makkah used to keep their valuable goods in his custody. Later, those who started opposing him tooth and nail for his belief and creed still considered him as the best keeper of their goods. He had many things with him that belonged to those who opposed him and he, in the face of extreme enmity and danger from the Quraish, returned those to their owners at the time of leaving Makkah.

The innocent and kind Muhammad was pained to see the degeneration of the society stricken by conflict, rivalry and wrongdoing for he used to think always for the people and contemplate what shall bring good to them. He wanted them to forget their rifts and differences and live in a healthy society free from misdeeds. At that time an eight year long brutal war was going on between different tribes in which many people got killed. Burial of the dead and attending the injured became a big problem. He was sad on seeing the appalling condition of the people. He used to think how to overcome this awful condition. To mitigate the sufferings of the people and to render services to the distressed humanity he established, when he was only seventeen or eighteen years old, with the support of the prominent persons, a welfare society along with a group of youths. This society is known as *hilful fudul*. It rendered, for a long period, excellent services and accomplished many admirable works.

He married Khadijah at the age of twenty-five. Khadijah was a rich lady from an aristocratic family. She, at the time of marriage with Muhammad, was a widow of forty-year old. She had many decent traits and used to respect people's noble and splendid qualities. She was above all a warm, kindhearted and affectionate lady. She used to help her noble and righteous husband in all matters and spent all her wealth and resources for spreading the message and teaching of Islam by her husband. She was the source of inspiration and strength of Prophet Muhammad during his difficult days.

Prophet Muhammad was imaginative from his childhood. He used to remain busy alone in the meditation of Allah and noble thinking and after the marriage often used to visit the isolated cave Hira on the outskirts of Makkah and meditate. He spent a great deal of time in this cave contemplating the absolute truth and reality. One day he heard a startling voice while in meditation in the cave. What an excellent and graceful voice! He heard someone telling him: Peace and blessings be upon you. O Messenger of Allah, read. He did not see anybody anywhere. He only listened that magnificent voice with wonder. He heard that voice but could not understand its meaning and significance. When he was invited for the second time to read, he said in fear: I do not know how to read. Then the voice said: Read (or proclaim or recite) in the name of thy Lord who created. Created man out of leech-like clot. Read, and thy Lord is the Most Bountiful. He Who taught (the use of) pen. Taught man that which he knew not [Al Quran 96 (Sura Iqraa): 1-4].

The first thing that he listened in the cave Hira was the call towards knowledge. He started his great journey with knowledge, for it is light that is required foremost to bring an end to the Dark Age. Allah, therefore, revealed to him first the verses concerning wisdom. The soul that carried this holy message is angel Gabriel ³. That excellent and superb voice in the cave Hira was that of Gabriel. On listening this voice, Prophet Muhammad went home shivering being scared and explained everything to Khadija. The wise and farsighted Khadija was able to comprehend that the message Prophet Muhammad received in the cave Hira is the words of Allah and through this revelation her great husband has been bestowed with the honour of prophethood. She consoled him and said: You have been conferred, from today, the status of prophethood. Khadija further realized that there is none, other than her great husband, to show the correct path to the misguided people. She firmly believed in Prophet Muhammad for:

As a man he was dignified
As a youth he was unparalleled
As a juvenile he was above all
As a boy he was gentle without per
As a child he was without equal

Khadija also firmly believed in the goodness of her husband who always worked for peace, prosperity and happiness of the people and never did any harm to anyone.

There was none like him who used to give refuge to people who had no shelter, consoled people who were scared, helped people who were in distress and looked after the sick. There was none like him with such pristine character. Neither falsehood nor evil or deceit ever touched him. He was the excellent embodiment of the greatest human qualities. He was the example of the perfect noble character. Khadija, therefore, affirmed full faith in him and took from him the lesson of truth and goodness.

What is this way of goodness?

This is Islam whose message had been preached by Prophet Ibrahim and other prophets. This is the message of monotheism that invites people towards good of the common people that Arabs and other nations had forgotten and thus plunged into ignorance. The message was revealed to Prophet Muhammad, the Greatest Guide of mankind, in the cave Hira for preaching the great teachings of Absolute Truth to the misguided people. The revelation is the guidance coming from Allah. It is called *wahy* in Arabic. Only the great prophets or the messengers received revelation or *wahy*. Prophet Muhammad received revelations through angel Gabriel for long twenty-three years, from the age forty to sixty-three years. The revelations describe how man should behave in the face of various difficulties, in which way lies his well-being and where lies harm and misfortune. In other words, Allah, through His sacred revelations, has taught man the lessons of Islam, the message of peace,

3. When the name of angel Gabriel appears in the text recite *alayhi wa sallam*, peace be upon him

tranquility, happiness and security. These revelations have been recorded in the Holy Quran, the great store book of knowledge and wisdom.

Prophet Muhammad preached the core or the central message of Islam, the monotheism. The Creator of the worlds-the Majestic and Magnificent Allah is the controller of man's fate, good and bad. He is the only *Ilah*, the only Lord to be worshiped. Muhammad, the messenger of peace and happiness, is His Prophet. In brief, this is monotheism. This is what the last Prophet has affirmed. He said: There is none to be worshipped other than Allah and Muhammad is His Prophet.

The essence and sprit of the message of Islam is: Not to bow before anybody other than Allah. Not to accept anybody other than Allah as the controller of destiny. Allah is the Greatest Creator. He is One. He has no partner. Neither idol nor powerful ruler or any other creatures can be His partners. This means: There is none between man and Allah. There is no creator other than Allah. Man is the representative of Allah. As the vicegerent of Allah in this world all men ought to enjoy equal rights and equal freedom and are supposed to establish justice, truth, peace and happiness as ordained by Allah, spread the glory of Allah and worship Him with devotion. Peace and happiness can be achieved only by submitting to Allah, the source of supreme welfare. This is the essence of Islam.

Islam is an Arabic word. It is derived from the root word *silm*. It has two meanings. One meaning is surrender or submission. In other words, it means surrender to the Will of Majestic and Magnificent Allah. The other meaning is peace. The two meanings are, in fact, complementary for real peace can be achieved only through absolute surrender to the Will of Allah. Absolute peace is established where the canons and doctrines of Islam are fully pursued in real life and society. Such a society is identified as a land of peace. In Arabic it is described as *dar al islam*, meaning the land of peace.

Islam is not a religion in the usual sense of the term. It is, in fact, a balanced way of life to establish peace and happiness.

The doctrine of Islam is the eternal principle of monotheism or the Oneness of Allah. It has to be established in words and deeds, in individual and social life. Man, as the vicegerent or the representative of Allah, has to dedicate him to establishing equality, freedom and justice. If this principle is established, peace will reign in the world. It is for this reason that the message of Islam is termed as the message of peace. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the greatest guide of Islam, therefore, opened the door of Islam for everybody. In Islam there is no distinction between man and man. Islam has denounced injustice, wickedness, inequality and dominance. In Islam good governance is looked upon with great admiration and respect. The advent of Islam is indeed a great revolution in the human history.