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THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHET'S SEERAT

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86
37

The Message of The Prophet's Seerat

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*In the Name of Allāh, the Most Merciful,
the Most Beneficent.*

**THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHET'S
(peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)**

CHARACTER

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

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, President of the
Students' Union, Ladies and Gentlemen !

I have been invited to speak in this assembly
on the Message of the Holy Prophet's (peace
and blessings of Allāh be upon him) Character.
While dealing with this subject in logical
order, the first question that presents itself
is, why the message of the *seerah* of a Prophet
only, and why not of anyone else? And if it has
to be that of a Prophet, why, in particular, that
of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (peace and bles-
sings of Allāh be upon him) only, and not of any
of the other Prophets (on whom, too, be peace),

or that of any of the founders of other religions? We must deal with this question at the outset in order that our mind may be fully satisfied that, in fact, we can obtain guidance not from any other personality of ancient or modern celebrity, but from the character and personality of a Messenger of God alone, and of all the Messengers of God and Leaders of Religion it is the Life of Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) alone from which can be derived true and comprehensive guidance of which we stand in sore need today.

Need for the Guidance of Allah

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

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

For information on this category of things, no revelation from heaven is needed. This is the province of your personal discovery, exploration, meditation, reflection, research and deduction. It has been left to you to explore the world around you and discover forces which operate in various things and understand the laws under which these things function, so that you may stride forward along the path of development. Nevertheless, in this matter, too, your Creator has not deprived you of His help.

All along the course of history, Allāh has been unfolding before you, though imperceptibly, His created world through an evolutionary process. He has opened up new vistas of knowledge before you, and at certain points in

history He has inspired men to invent a new thing or to discover a new law. The fact remains, however, that in this domain man must gather knowledge by himself without requiring the help of a Divine Messenger or a Divine Book. Man has been endowed with all resources to collect the requisite information in this sphere.

The second category of things 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 of gaining knowledge which we have at our disposal. The theories of philosophers and scientists on this subject are mere conjectures which do not come under the purview of knowledge. These things are ultimate Realities and rational theories about them cannot be taken as definitive even by the exponents of these theories. If the authors of these theories possess any awareness of the bounds of their limited knowledge, they cannot have faith in the validity of their notions, nor can they call upon others to believe in them.

Need for Following the Precedent of the Prophets (peace be on them)

Knowledge in this sphere is obtained through the Guidance of Allāh, for Allāh alone is aware of realities. Allāh vouchsafes this knowledge to man by means of Revelation which is transmitted to none but the Prophets (peace be on them). Never has Allāh published a Book and, having distributed it to each individual, told him to study it and ascertain for himself the reality of his own existence and that of the universe and to realise his role in the practical world in the context of this reality. Allāh has always appointed the Prophets (peace be on them) to convey this knowledge to man, so that the Prophets (peace be on them) should not rest content with the mere propagation of their mandate, but drive it home, demonstrate it in action, recall to the right path those who defy the Divine mandates and organize the believers into a society every aspect of which 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 (peace be on him). A non-Prophet who is a disbeliever in a Prophet is not eligible to be our leader, even though he may be a sage, deeply learned and wise. This is so because such a man does not possess the knowledge of reality and a person bereft of this knowledge is incapable of devising a true and just system of life for us.

Why can't we obtain Guidance from the Prophets other than Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) ?

Let us now take up the question as to why of all the venerable personages whom we know as the Prophets and all the leaders of religions who conceivably may have been Prophets, we prefer to seek a message from the Character of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him). Do we suffer from 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 personages who have been named in the Holy Qur'ān as

Prophets. But, then, information with regard to the teaching and character of none of them has been bequeathed to us by any reliable or authentic sources to enable us to follow their lead. There is not a trace of doubt about the Prophethood of Hadrat Noah, Ibrahim, Ishāque, Yusuf, Moses and Jesus Christ (peace be on them) and we believe in all of them. However, 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 (peace be on them) has been handed down by any foolproof and authentic means to enable us to emulate their example in the various spheres of individual and collective existence.

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

The Jewish Scriptures and the Prophets

It is said that an account of Moses and the later Prophets (peace be on them) and of their teachings is contained in the Old Testament. But look at the Bible from the historical viewpoint. The original text of the Torah, as revealed to Hadrat Moses (peace be on him), had been destroyed at the time of the sack of Bait-ul-Maqdas in 6 B.C., and along with it had perished the Scriptures of the former Prophets (peace be on them). In 5 B.C., when the tribe of Israel after their release from the Captivity in Babylon arrived in Palestine, the Prophet Ezra with the help of some venerable collaborators prepared an account of the character of Moses (peace be on him) 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.

Subsequent to this, in the period falling between the fourth and second century B.C., various authors (unknown) penned down the Scriptures (from which sources we know not) of

those Prophets who had preceded them by several centuries. To take an instance, in 300 B.C., an unknown person wrote a book in the name of Haḍrat Yunus (peace be on him) and incorporated it in the Bible, despite the fact that Haḍrat Yunus was a Prophet of the 8th century B.C. the Zubūr (Psalms) was committed to writing five centuries after the death of Haḍrat Da'ud (peace be on him) and to it were also added sonnets composed by about a hundred poets. We have no knowledge of the sources from which the compilers of the Zubūr had gleaned those Sonnets.

Haḍrat Sulaiman (peace be on him) departed from the world in 933 B.C., and Amsāl-i-Sulaimān (An Anthology of Solomon's Proverbs) was compiled in the year 250 B.C. which also incorporated the maxims of several other sages.

In short, no book of the Bible bears an authentic connection with any Prophet (peace be on him) to whom it is ascribed. What's more, even these books of the Jewish Bible perished at the second sack of Bait-ul-Maqdas in 1970, leaving extant only their Greek Translation, which dates back to the period falling between 258 B.C. and the first century B.C.

In the second century A.D., 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 extant now dates back to 916 A.D. Apart from this, no other Jewish manuscript exists anywhere today.

The Jewish scrolls discovered from the cave of Qumrān on the Dead Sea are not older than the first and the second century B.C., and even these contain a few scattered fragments of the Bible.

The earliest manuscript comprising of the first five Books of the Bible current among the Samaritans was written in the eleventh century A.D. The Greek Translation prepared in the second and the third century B.C. was marred by countless errors. A retranslation from Greek into Latin was done in the third century A.D. By what standard can you adjudge this material as an authentic source of the life histories and teachings of Moses (peace be on him) and the later Prophets of the Jews ?

In addition to the above, there were certain unwritten legends called 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 A.D., 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 the 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 obtains in the case of Hadrat 'Isā's character and teachings. Jesus conveyed orally to the people the Bible that God had originally revealed to him. His disciples, too, propagated it among the people by the spoken word in such a

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 (peace be on him) or even in the period following him. It fell to the lot of the Christians whose vernacular was Greek to transform the oral traditions into writing. It must be borne in mind that Christ's native tongue was Syriac or Aramaic and his disciples, too, spoke the same language.

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 70 A.D.; there is not a single instance in these works where the author has cited an authority for an event or maxim attributed to Hadrat 'Isā (peace be on him) in order that we might construct a chain of transmission. Furthermore, even their works have not survived. Thousands of Greek manuscripts of the New Testament were collected, but none of them is older than the 4th century A.D.; rather the origin of most of them does not go beyond the period intervening between the 11th and the 14th centuries.

Some scattered fragments on papyrus found in Egypt claim no greater antiquity than the third century. Who translated the Bible from Greek into Latin and when did he do it, we cannot say.

In the 4th century A.D., the Pope commissioned a review of the Latin translation. In the sixteenth century, this was discarded and a fresh translation from Greek into Latin was prepared. The Four Bibles were more probably rendered into the Syriac language from Greek in 200 A.D., nevertheless the oldest Syriac manuscript extant was written in the 4th century. A hand-written copy dating back to the 5th century A.D., contains in most parts a different version.

Among the Arabic translations made from Syriac none is known to have been prepared before the 8th century A.D. It is a strange fact that about seventy different versions of the Bible were prepared, four of which were approved by the leaders of the Christian religion, while the rest were rejected by them. We have no information as to what were the

grounds of their approval or rejection. However, can this material be credited with authenticity to any extent as regards the character and message (Gospel) of Jesus Christ (peace be on him) ?

The situation with regard to other leaders of religion is not dissimilar. Take, for example, Zozoaster, the period of whose birth is still shrouded in mystery. The most that can be said about him is that the evidence of his existence about 250 years before the subjugation of Persia by Alexander is available. In other words, his existence can be dated some five centuries before Christ (peace be on him). His book 'Avasta', in its original language, is now extinct ; the language, too, in which the book was written or orally propagated is dead.

In the 9th century A.D., a translation of 'Avasta' along with commentary was published in nine volumes, out of which the first two volumes perished. The earliest surviving manuscript of the book dates back to the middle of the 13th century. Such is the condition of Zozoaster'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 later, King Gustaph became his disciple and Zozoaster's creed turned into State religion. Zozoaster lived for 77 years, and after his death, as time rolled on, strange yarns were spun around his life, all of them apocryphal.

• One of the renowned religious personalities of the world was Buddha. Like Zozoaster, he might have been a Prophet. Yet he gave no book, nor did his followers say that he had given one. A hundred years after his death, a movement was started which continued for several centuries to collect his maxims and the account of 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 on 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 (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) who left a trustworthy Book free of any excisions or adulterations; the Prophet whose detailed history, sayings and practices were transmitted to us by authoritative sources in order that we would be guided by his example. Such a leader in the entire history of the world could only be found in the sublimely gifted person of Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him). The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) put forth a Book (the Holy Qur'ān) 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 (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him); rather the inclusion in this Book of any sayings of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) has been scrupulously avoided.

In this Book, the Holy Prophet's life (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him), history of the Arabs and the events which

occurred during the period of the revelation of the Qur'ān have not been mingled with the Divine Verses, as is the case with the Bible. The Qur'ān is the pure Word of God. Not one word therein is undivine. 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 Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him). From the time the Book began to be revealed, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) had dictated its text to the scribes. Whenever some Divine Message was revealed, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) would call a scribe and dictate its words to him. The written text was then read out to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him), who, having satisfied himself that the scribe had committed no error of recording, would put the manuscript in safe custody. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) also used to instruct the scribe about the sequence in which a revealed message was to be placed in a particular Sūrah. In this manner, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings

of Allāh be upon him) continued to arrange the text of the Qur'ān in systematic order till the end of the chain of revelations. Again, it was ordained from the beginning of Islam that a recitation of the Holy Qur'ān must form an integral part of worship. Hence the illustrious Companions (Allāh be pleased with them) would commit the Divine verses to memory as soon as they were revealed. Many of them learned the whole text by heart and a far larger number had memorised different portions of it.

Besides, of the Companions (Allāh be pleased with them) those who were literate used to keep a written record of several portions of the Holy Qur'ān. In this manner, the text of the Holy Qur'ān had been preserved in four different ways during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) :

- (1) The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) had got the whole text of the Divine Messages from the beginning to the end committed to writing by the scribes of revelations.

- (2) Many of the Companions (Allāh be pleased with them) learned the whole text of the Qur'ān, every syllable of it, by heart.
- (3) All the illustrious Companions (Allāh be pleased with them), without an exception, had memorised at least some portion of the Holy Qur'ān, for the simple reason that it was obligatory for them to recite it during worship. An estimate of the number of the illustrious Companions (Allāh be pleased with them) may be obtained from the fact that one hundred forty thousand Companions (Allāh be pleased with them) had participated in the Last Pilgrimage performed by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him).
- (4) A considerable number of the literate Companions (Allāh be pleased with them) had kept a private record of the text of the Qur'ān and satisfied themselves as to the purity of their record by reading it out to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him).

It is an incontrovertible historical truth that the text of the Holy Qur'ān extant today is, syllable for syllable, exactly the same as the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) had offered to the world as the Word of God. After the demise of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him), the first Caliph Ḥaḍrat Abu Bakr (Allāh be pleased with him) assembled all the *Huffāz* and the written records of the Holy Qur'ān and with their help got the whole text written in Book form. In the reign of Ḥaḍrat 'Uthmān (God be pleased with him) copies of this original version were made and officially despatched to the Capitals of the Islamic World. Of these two copies exist in the world today, one in Istanbul and the other in Tashkent. Whosoever is so inclined may compare any printed text of the Holy Qur'ān with those two copies, He shall find no variation. And how can one expect any discrepancy, when there have existed several million *Huffāz* in every generation that has passed between the time of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) and our own time? Should any one alter a syllable of the original text of the Qur'ān, these *Huffāz*

would at once expose the mistake. In the last century, an Institute of Munich University in Germany had collected forty-two thousand copies of the Holy Qur'ān including manuscripts and printed texts produced in each period in the various parts of the Islamic world. Research work 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, even though they belonged to the period between the first century Hijra to the 14th century Hijra and had been procured from all parts of the world. This Institute, alas! perished in the bombing attacks on Germany during World War II, but the findings of its research project survived in the world. Another point that must be kept in view is that the word in which the Qur'ān was revealed is a living language in our own time. It is still current as the mother tongue of about twelve million people from Iraq to Morocco. In the non-Arab world too, 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 intact for fourteen hundred years.

The modern Arabic-speaking person can comprehend the Word of the Holy Qur'ān with as much proficiency as did the Arabs of fourteen centuries ago. This, then, is an important attribute of Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), which is shared by no other Prophet or Leader of Religion. The Book which God had revealed to him for the guidance of mankind is found today in its original language without the slightest alteration in its vocabulary.

Authenticity of the Character and Precedent of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)

Take now the second attribute of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) in which he stands unique among all Prophets (peace be on them) and leaders of religion, *i.e.*, like the Book transmitted to him, accounts of his character have also been preserved which can serve as a beaconlight for us in all walks of life. From early childhood till

the close of his life, a far 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 on to their successors. Some of the research scholars believe that the number of those who had passed on to the next generation eye-witness accounts or reports of events that they had heard during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) counts up to a hundred thousand people. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) himself had dictated some commands and handed or despatched them to certain people. These were later bequeathed to the succeeding generations.

There were at least six Companions (God be pleased with them) who had recorded the Traditions of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) and tested the authenticity of their records by reading them out to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him). These writings were also inherited by the posterity. After the demise of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon

him), some fifty Companions (Allāh be pleased with them) undertook to collect in writing accounts of the circumstances and incidents of the Prophet's life and his holy utterances. The material collected from this source also came to the hands of those who in later times accomplished the task of collecting and compiling the Traditions of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him).

Besides, as I have mentioned earlier, the number of the Companions who transmitted orally their knowledge of the Holy Prophet's character (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) runs into one hundred thousand, according to the estimate of some researchers. Little wonder, then, if we take into account the fact that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) performed his last Ḥajj, known as the Farewell Pilgrimage, in the company of one hundred and forty thousand people ! All these persons saw him at the time of Ḥajj, learned from him the rituals of Hajj and listened to the addresses which the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) delivered during this Last Pilgrimage. It is

improbable when this assembly, who had attended such an important occasion as that of Hajj, dispersed to their own places, their relations, friends and fellow-citizens should not have questioned them on the circumstances of their journey or failed to ascertain from them the injunctions about Hajj. You could well judge from this, after the great personage as the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) had departed from the world, how eagerly the people must have questioned those, who had seen him and listened to his speech, as regards the circumstances 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 (Allāh be pleased with them) was that whosoever ascribed an event or a saying to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him), he had to state his source and also furnish a chain of evidence. In this way, the sources of a particular tradition were traced through all the connecting links up to the time of the Holy

Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) in order to determine whether their connection with the person of the Prophet of God (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) was demonstrably true. If any links were found missing in the chain of its transmission, the authenticity of a 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 (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him), and even one of the reporters along the line had been recognized as unreliable, the tradition was discarded. If you consider a while, you will realise that circumstances relating to some other man in the world have not been recorded by such rigorous methods. It is the distinction of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) 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 (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him), but each one of the successive transmitters was carefully scrutinised 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 whose 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 having ever met him. Information on all the reporters has been documented on such a comprehensive scale that today we can easily judge 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 one 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 to cast doubt on the

authenticity of the traditions is jealousy, for they know full well that the authority for 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, too, that they have dispensed with all intellectual honesty in their criticisms on Islam, the Holy Qur'ān, and the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him).

All aspects of the Holy Prophet's Life are open and fully known

The authenticity of the sources for a reconstruction of his life and character is by no means the only distinction of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him). 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 in respect of other historical personages. What was his family background; what kind of life did he lead before the announcement of his Apostolic Mission; how was he invested with Prophethood; how were the Divine Messages transmitted to him; how

did he preach Islam; in what manner did he face opposition and resistance; how did he prepare and train his Companions; what was his domestic life; what was his conduct as a husband and father; what were his dealings with friends and foes; what were his precepts and practices, commands and warnings; what were the practices to which he did not object as well as the practices which he curbed—all these in their minutest details may be read in the Books of Traditions and in the works on his pious life and character. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) was an ideal military general and we possess detailed accounts of all the battles fought under his command. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) was the head of the state, and a complete history of his reign is available to us. He (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) 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 (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) visited the markets and watched how the people conducted their business. He (peace and

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blessings of Allāh be upon him) forbade all that was found to be unfair and malafide by him, while approving of all that was found to be fair 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 (peace be on them) and religious leaders, it is the Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) 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 the 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 see now what message and instruction his pious character bears for us.

**The Message of the Holy Prophet
(peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)
is for all Human Beings**

The foremost feature which we observe in his apostolic call is that he (peace and blessings

of Allāh be upon him) addresses man in his capacity as a human being, setting aside all distinctions of colour, race, language or country. He (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) propounds a few tenets for the welfare of all mankind. Whosoever 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, wheresoever a human being may be living, whatsoever be the country, nation or race in which he is born ; irrespective of the tongue he speaks or the colour of his skin—the call of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) is addressed to one and all. 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 Colour Bar

On reflection, you will come to appreciate that this is a great blessing vouchsafed to mankind through the Arabian Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him).

It is this differentiation between man and man that has, more than anything else, ruined mankind. At some places, man was 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, at some patter places, man was considered to be good only for destruction, for he had the temerity to be born in America or Australia 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 offence that he was born in Africa and the colour of his skin was black. In other words, these distinctions of nationality, country, race, colour, and language have, from time immemorial to the present times been, highly calamitous to mankind. These differentiations have caused wars. These have served as the basis of aggression by one country against the other. These have provoked a people to plunder another people. Generations of human beings have been subjected to ruthless butchery for the satisfaction of these prejudices. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) treated this malady so effectually

that the enemies of Islam now admit that never were the problems of colour 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 the extremist Black Nationalist Movement against the Whites, undertook Hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca after embracing Islam, he saw people of all races, colours, 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 the circumambulation, and they all formed one compact congregation under the direction of one leader to offer worship. Malcolm X observed it and exclaimed that it was the only correct answer to the questions of race and colour and that the measures hitherto adopted by his compatriots were wrong. Malcolm X was killed by a tyrant, but his autobiography survived which bore 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 favour of a particular nation, tribe, race or class. The entire code of Islam testifies 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-Muslims presents a happy contrast to the treatment of the Blacks by the Whites, also bringing into prominence, by contrast, the conduct of the imperialists towards the slave peoples as well as the behaviour of the communist governments towards their non-communist subjects or even towards their own inconvenient party members.

Let us now turn to the rules for human welfare which the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) propagated through the teachings of Islam and wrested out the power which enabled 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 Allāh 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 the others unlawful by decree. These powers are vested in no one, save Allāh. 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 Allāh signifies the acknowledgment of all these Powers of God. The belief in Allāh is tantamount to the affirmation that we owe allegiance to no one except Him and that no power on the earth has the right to enact such a law as is inimical to His Commandments. The belief in Allāh implies that man's head is made to bow to God alone and consequently rendered incapable of bending down before

any one else. The belief in God carries the meaning that only Allāh has the power to make or unmake our destiny; that He has absolute power in regard to life and 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, no power on the earth can save us from death; when He chooses to give us life, no power on the earth can put us to death. This, then, is the Islamic concept about God. According to this concept, the whole universe that stretches from the earth to the heavens is operating under orders from Allāh. It, therefore, behoves man, who subsists in this universe, to devote his life to carrying out the Will of God. Should man obtain a licence to do what he likes or own obedience to some other power, his pattern of life will run counter to the entire system of the universe. This may be expressed in other words for a better grasp of the point. That the whole universe is functioning under orders from God is an established fact which is unalterable by any power. Hence, if we carry out the behests of

some authority other than Allāh. or follow an independent course of our own choice, our life would move to the direction opposite to which the entire universe is moving. In this way, we shall be in a state of constant collision with the system of the universe.

Let us view it 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 Allāh, for man is the creature and Allāh is his Creator. As a creature, it is wrong on the part of man to be independent of his Creator. It is also heretic for him to offer worship to any one other than the Creator. Either of these acts should be opposed to Reality. Whosoever defies reality comes to grief. The reality stands inviolate.

The Call to Worship the Lord

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) calls for an end to this defiance. He (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) 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
Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be
upon him)**

We now come to the second point of the Holy Prophet's message. He (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) categorically declared: "I am the Messenger of Allāh. Allāh 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'ān embodies the Law which Allāh has revealed to me and my practice is the law which I promulgate by the order and sanction of Allāh. I am the first to render obedience to the Law of God (الاول المسلمين), and having done so, I call upon all human beings 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
(peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)**

No one should feel cynical as regards the query: How could the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) 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 Qur'ān was God, so the source of all exhortations, prohibitions and regulations propagated by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) was also God. This is denoted by the term 'Sunnah of the Prophet'. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) 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 (God be pleased with them) used to ask: "Allāh's Messenger, are you conveying the Will of God or is it your personal viewpoint?" The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) used to observe: "No,

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this is not the Will of God; it is my opinion". On such occasions, the illustrious Companions (God be pleased with them) differed with the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) and put forth their own line of thinking and the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) allowed their suggestions to supersede his own opinion. Similarly, this point also became obvious on occasions when the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) took counsel with his illustrious Companions (God be pleased with them). This consultation in itself was the proof positive that Allāh had revealed no mandate regarding the matter under consideration, for had the Divine Will been known in the matter, it could not have become a subject for discussion. Such occasions, which have been elaborately recorded in the collections of Traditions, often arose during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him). The illustrious Companions (God be pleased with them) themselves have reported: "Never did we see a person who was engaged in counsel more often than the Holy Prophet (peace and

blessings of Allāh be upon him).” If you reflect on this point, you will realize that holding counsel in matters about which God had not revealed His Will was also the Sunnah (Traditions) of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him). When the Holy Apostle of God (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) 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 (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) teach his *Ummat* to conduct their affairs by consultation and instructed the people to render unqualified obedience to the Will of God in those matters in which God had vouchsafed His Commands. In those matters in which the Lord had not manifested His Will, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) 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 Allāh should be the bondsman of Allāh alone and owe service to none else—nay, not even be a servant to the Holy Apostle of Allāh (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him). This charter freed man from offering worship to all others, save One God; and it terminated the divinity of man over man once for all. Simultaneously, the greatest blessing conferred by this mandate upon mankind is the supremacy of Law—the Law which no monarch, dictator, democratic parliament or an assembly of believers in Islam is empowered to tamper with for the purpose of altering or trimming 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 (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) preached to the servants of God was: “You are all answerable to God. You have not been given unchartered freedom to act as you deem fit and to forage whatever pasture you like without being answerable to any one.

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, the thing 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, the fear of whose seizure will deter a person from transgressing the Will of God even in privacy, in the wood, in darkness or in a deserted wasteland. No greater means than this can be devised for the moral regeneration of man and for forging a stable human character. All other means which purport to reform the moral aspect of human character do not go beyond the dicta that 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 practised without compunction. It is in consequence of this philosophy of life that the same person that behaves well in his private life turns to be 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, but on the other they are the worst drunkards, fornicators and gamblers, being the most depraved and wicked 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 default 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 this 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 the 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 the animals. As the Holy Qur'ān observes :

لقد خلقنا الانسان في احسن تقويم ثم رددناه اسفل سفلين

“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 favour of the Holy Prophet’s guidance, man has not only obtained an immutable law embodying permanent moral values, but also an unshakable foundation on which to build up 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 Eschewed

The Holy Prophet's call bears yet another important message for us, which is, that Morality is not the preserve of the monks to be practised in the monasteries, nor the privilege 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 the mendicants and the mystics were transferred by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) to the seat of Government and the Judges' bench. He (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) exhorted the businessmen to fear God and practise honesty in their dealings and transactions. He (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) taught the policemen and soldiers the lesson of piety and restraint. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) dispelled the misconception of man that one who renounced the world and commemorated God in the wilderness was the friend of God. He (peace and blessings of Allāh be

upon him) 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, industrialist and, in fact, displaying through all other activities of the temporal life a pious and honest character whenever one's faith is put to a test. In this way, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) retrieved morality and spirituality from the grooves of monasticism and brought them into play in all the spheres of practical life. He (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) enforced morality and spirituality in economic, social and political affairs, in adjudication 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 Teaching

It was through his blessed guidance that the people whom the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) had found thieves at the beginning of his Prophethood were transformed into trustworthy protectors of

the life, goods and honour of the common people by the time the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) departed from the mortal world; those whom he had found usurpers of rights were remoulded by him into upholders, protectors and champions of the rights of the people. Prior to his time, the world had known only such rulers as issued their 'Divine Writs' from magnificent palaces and held their subjects down by repressive measures. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) made the world familiar with the rulers who walked in the bazars like ordinary people and held sway over the hearts of the people through even administration of justice and equity. Before him, the world had only known of armies that while penetrating into a country carried fire and sword in all directions and went about raping the women of the prostrate people. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) introduced the world to the armies that on making triumphant entry into a city molested none except the enemy troops; and on making an exit from a captured city returned even the taxes already received

from its inhabitants. Human history is replete with accounts of conquests and victories over cities and countries. But, the conquest of Mecca has no parallel in history. The Holy Prophet's triumphant entry into the city whose inhabitants had persecuted him and his adherents for thirteen long years was marked by glorious humility, his sacred forehead leaning on the saddle of his camel in a posture of bowing before God. In his demeanour (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him), there was no trace of pride or arrogance. When the same people as had tormented him for thirteen years and eventually 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 suppliants, they begged of him for mercy. Instead of wreaking vengeance on them, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) observed :

لا تثریب علیکم الیوم اذہبوا فانتم الطلقاء

“Today there is no censure upon you, now go, you are free”

Any one who wishes to assess the impact of this precedent of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) on the Muslims should look at the pages of history. He should compare the behaviour of the Muslim conquerors while entering into Spain with the conduct of the Christians as they subjugated the Muslims; and he should see 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 had re-captured Bait-ul-Maqdas from them.

Gentlemen ! The Character of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) 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 endeavoured in the briefest possible terms to focus attention on some of the outstanding aspects of the Holy Prophet's character. Fortunate, indeed, are those who follow the lead of this Sole Guide.

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