

M O H A M M A D
the kindred to
HUMANITY

BY
HAZRAT MIRZA BASHEERUDDIN MAHAMUD AHMAD

Published by :—

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QADIAN—(India)

FOREWORD

This small booklet is the life-beautiful of that master-spirit of mankind, the Holy Prophet Mohammed (may peace and blessings of Allah be on his noble soul.)

It was first condensed and translated into English for free distribution in U. S. A. by the American Fazl Mosque, Washington.

At a time when Islam and its Holy Founder are misrepresented and misunderstood, I believe, this booklet would enlighten the Muslims and non-Muslim friends alike. It is a peep into the many aspects of a great man's life, who was sent by Allah as a "blessing and mercy" to mankind at large.

My intention in getting this booklet reproduced in India, is to present the Holy Prophet to the ignorant, mis-informed and ill-informed mind.

I would like the reader to pass on this booklet to his other friends and if need be, call some more from the following address.

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MUHAMMAD

The Kindred of Humanity

The Holy Quran says :

"Certainly an Apostle has come to you from among yourselves ; grievous to him is your distress ; exceedingly solicitous is he for you, and to the believers, compassionate merciful." (IX, 128)

It is a short verse but even so, it embodies five great qualities of the Holy Prophet. In the first place, God speaks of him as an Apostle. In the second place, as an Apostle who has been raised from amongst ourselves. In the third place, as one for whom it is hard to bear the pain of others. In the fourth place, as one who is supremely anxious for the welfare of human beings. And in the fifth place, as one who is compassionate and merciful to those who accept his teachings.

Muhammad—An Apostle

The first great quality of the Holy Prophet then, is that he is an Apostle. The Arabic word *Rasul* means one who has been sent. This one word *Rasul* points an aspect of the life of the Prophet which ordinarily remains hidden from many observers. It is a disregard of this aspect which has led many European writers to make unfounded attacks on his life. What aspect is this ? It is that as a *Rasul*, as one who was *sent*, the Prophet himself had no ambition for greatness or for rising above others, and becoming their leader. He never aspired to other people's admiration. On the other hand he took care to remain in the background, so that worldly great-

ness should not come to him except if it was the express purpose of God, that this should be so. Even before he announced his claim to being an Apostle of God he had all the qualities, the possession of which constitutes greatness in any human individual. Truthfulness, courage, fortitude, fellow-feeling, kindness, love, sociability, determination, thoughtfulness, a passion for the advancement of people, in short, all the great qualities which have ever been possessed by any leader of human beings, were together possessed by him singly. He had one and all of those powers which whether he was Apostle or not would have raised him to the leadership of the world. Yet it cannot be said of him that he ever wanted to use those powers in order to achieve personal greatness. He had those powers in an extraordinarily large measure, yet he did not spend his time striving for political, intellectual or economic leadership, but in the contemplation of the true Beloved, in the solitude of the cave Hira. We cannot but admit therefore that the Holy Prophet notwithstanding the possession of all kinds of talents and powers, never strove for personal success or individual greatness. For full forty years he remained in the background, and if after waiting so long, he did come to the fore-front, it can only be due to a constraint and compulsion which must have come from without and not from within him. As God has said, "an Apostle has come to you..." It means that when the Holy Prophet presents to his people, revelations which he has received from the Divine Being, it is not because he is working for any personal ambition. It is because he has been compelled by God's urgent command to do so.

Apostles other than Muhammad

In this respect, however, our Holy Prophet is like the other Prophets known to history, so that nobody should find it difficult to understand the distinction which the Holy Prophet possessed as an Apostle of God. Moses, Jesus, Krishna, Buddha, and Zoroaster have all been accepted by one people or another, as persons who were constrained to

come forward and lead their people. Why can they not say the same about our Holy Prophet? Of the great teachers who have had their advent in India, Buddha provides an obvious example. When he left his home, his beloved wife was asleep. He did not even wake her up to say good-bye to her, lest her loving eyes should keep him from going out. He left his hearth and home with the determination not to return until he had found God. Would there be a Hindu, Christian or a Muslim so hard-hearted as not to have his eyes bedewed with tears on reading so tender a story as that of Gautama Buddha? He went wherever he could. In Gaya where he attained to a great spiritual eminence, people would come to him and ask him to accept them as his devotees. But he continued to refuse until the word of God raised his brooding head and told him to go forward and preach to the people. In the same way, Moses occupied a position of dignity and respect amongst his people. Nevertheless, he did not aspire for leadership. In fact when he received God's summons he submitted that the Divine Commission had better been entrusted to his brother Harun. It was when God finally chose him, and not his brother, that Moses consented to come forward. Similarly when the first revelation came to our Holy Prophet saying "Read!" he replied, "I cannot,.....". We know from the commentaries that the Holy Prophet, at the time of the revelation, was not presented with anything to read. He was only asked to repeat certain words. But it was only after Gabriel had repeated three times the divine injunction to read that the Holy Prophet gathered courage to do so. All this meant that he himself was not aspiring for leadership. It was God who wanted to make of him a leader for all the world, and if God so wants, who is there to stop Him? In this respect, our Holy Prophet so closely resembles the teachers of other religions that if their followers take but a glance over their lives, they will at once realize that this aspect of the life of the Holy Prophet (on whom be peace) classes him with the Apostles of God, not with the men of the world.

One of Ourselves

The second great quality which the verse has pointed out is contained in the words "from among yourselves". On a superficial view to be "from among yourselves" may seem a minor attribute, but on reflection it turns out to be an attribute which serves to distinguish the Holy Prophet from the other teachers of the world. The purpose which all teachers have proclaimed of their advent, is that they should lead their people to righteousness and serve them as exemplars of moral conduct. It is obvious that an exemplar to be a real exemplar, must experience, the urges and the constraints which all men have to experience, and confront the conditions which they have to confront. Without these, he will be ill-fitted to be an exemplar to others. It was because of this that Christians were led to believe that though Jesus was the son of God, and was, therefore, in a way, himself God, yet he came to the Israelites in human form. For without even the externals of humanity about him, he could hardly have served as an exemplar to human beings. Similarly, the Hindus have been led to believe that the Avtars or incarnations of God come to us in human form or in the form of other creatures, so that they should become exemplars to ordinary creatures. It seems, therefore, that all religions are agreed that one who is to be an exemplar to any class must be one of that class, though as a member of that class there would be a world of difference between his powers and the average powers of the class. Here then is the point of this great attribute of the Holy Prophet pointed out in the words 'from among yourselves'. In another place in the Quran, God enjoins on Muhammad to say, "I am but a man, like any of you." This means that the conditions which confront ordinary human beings individually, have been in their entirety reproduced in the life of Muhammad whose career therefore is a pattern for all human beings.

A Many-sided Life

It is in this respect that our Holy Prophet has risen above all other Prophets. There can be no denying,

for instance, that Jesus was a true and a great Prophet of God, but we cannot say that he was or could be an exemplar to all times and all kinds of people. We know that Jesus did not marry. He cannot, therefore, serve as an exemplar to married people, in the problems and responsibilities of domestic life. Nor did he become king that kings today could claim him as one of themselves and as an exemplar to them in the problems of government. But Muhammad, we have been told, is *one among ourselves*. Among the poor, poor ; among the rich, rich ; among the kings, a king ; among the subjects, a subject ; and among the oppressed, an oppressed one ; in short, he is one among ourselves whatever our conditions or circumstances. It seems as though God, in this verse, has addressed all mankind and said, "O, my people whatever your calling, rank or position, there is none amongst you whose peculiar conditions have not been reproduced in one form or in another in the life of Muhammad the Prophet. Whether a king or a subject ; whether in authority over others or of those whose lot it is to be oppressed ; whether of those who are married and have to look after the young ; or of labourers, farmers or traders ; in short, whatever your calling or station in life. 'We' says God 'have sent to you an Apostle from amongst one and all of you.'

Let none amongst you think that Muhammad would not know the peculiar difficulties of his station or function. Let not kings think that Muhammad would not know the difficulties and dangers kings have to face, nor let the oppressed think that Muhammad would not know what it is to suffer oppression. Muhammad has had the experience of all conditions of human life. He has had occasion to know first hand the difficulties and desiderata of all classes of people ; he has had the opportunity to appreciate the innermost feelings of all of them. Being rich in the experience and the vicissitudes of life, he offers himself as a guide to you *all*, and in respect of *all* the conditions that human beings have to live under.

The Prophet's Childhood

Take his earlier life. He had to experience the lot of an orphan. His father died before he was born, and mother died when he was quite young. But living first under his grandfather, and later under his uncle, he showed how an orphan should conduct himself. An orphan either grows to be petted and spoilt, or growing under a sense of oppression, he becomes a despairing, despondent child. If he is living with people who think far too much of him, their indulgence will indeed spoil him. On the other hand, if he lives with people who take him for a stranger and treat him unkindly, he will tend to get disheartened, and develop a gloomy outlook on life. Placed in so delicate a situation as a child, he displayed a remarkable character. His companions of those days tell us that he had excellent table manners. He would not spring upon things to eat, but would wait aside with dignity. Not until his aunt sent for him, would he come forward to take his share of the food of which he would then partake with the same dignity which characterized the rest of his bearing as a child. His foster-mother has reported that he was so good-natured that even his fellow children were impressed by him. His foster-brothers have reported that he took no part in vain and wasteful sport. He had his juvenile pranks but he hated being anything other than truthful. He was so full of sympathy for his fellow children that even at that age they regarded him as a sort of a chief.

His early life, in short, was so pure that the most bigoted Western writers have had to admit it. They have, no doubt, suggested that goodness of such a high degree in a child, denotes an abnormal and, as it were, an unsound mind. But that is only an after-thought. And in any case, it is an explanation of his juvenile goodness which we have reasons to discount. The truth therefore is that Muhammad was an extraordinarily good child. He loved his guardians and conducted himself with affection towards them. The way he regarded his uncle Abu Talib, is hardly equalled even by one's

own children. After the fall of Mecca, when he was asked in what house he would reside, he remarked lovingly, "Has Aqil left a house that we might rest in one of our own?" He meant that his cousins had sold all their ancestral dwellings. He loved Abu Talib as he would have loved his father. He taught his followers not to say a word in contradiction to their parents, his own conduct in this respect being an embodiment of his teaching.

There is a remarkable incident belonging to the years after he had announced his claim to being an Apostle of God. The Quraish chiefs warned Abu Talib that if he would not stop his nephew Muhammad from preaching, he himself would have to suffer for it. Abu Talib got upset over the warning. When Muhammad came home, the uncle thus addressed him, "My boy, the chiefs of Mecca have warned me. Is it not possible for you somehow to conciliate them?" The holy Prophet was never more depressed than he was at this moment. There was, on the one hand, one who had tended him with loving care, whose slightest mishap Muhammad would not be able to bear, being threatened with disgrace and dishonour by a whole community; there was, on the other, his duty to proclaim the truth as had been communicated to him by God. Muhammad could not contain himself any longer. He wept and said, "Uncle, I can stand every conceivable torture, but I cannot stop proclaiming the message of God." Abu Talib knew well that Muhammad would never stop proclaiming, not even if he had to shed the last drop of his blood. So, on hearing his nephew's firm reply, he himself became firm, and said, "Go your way, my boy. Do not spare proclaiming the word that God has sent you. I am with you." This is how he acquitted himself as an orphan and could anybody have acquitted himself better?

The Prophet's Youth

Now as to the period of his youth. Youth is typically the period of lack of self-restraint. In the Arabia of those

days, there were no laws that had to be observed, nor moral code that was considered more or less binding on human beings. There were those who prided themselves on having illicit connections with the wives or daughters of others. It is obvious that young people, living in such an environment, cannot show any high degree of restraint. But the Holy Prophet living in an environment of such abominable laxity, displayed such an excellent character as a young man, that people gave him the title of Al-Amin and Al-Sad-ooq. To say that he did not lie is to insult him. For he was so ideally truthful that it is impossible to find a parallel to him. Also, we must remember that the positive virtue of truthfulness is far higher than the negative virtue of never telling a lie. His excellence consisted not so much in the fact that he never told a lie, but rather in the fact that he never said anything other than what was positively and strictly truthful. He concealed nothing, kept nothing and made no attempt to circumvent anybody. That was why his word was accepted as soon as it was uttered. Even Christian biographers have had to concede that his early life was a strictly truthful life. He asked the people of Mecca, "Would you believe me, if I told you that you are in imminent danger of being attacked by an army behind this mountain!" And to a man they said, they would. Yet the part of the country of which he spoke was an open waste, and from over the hills of Safa and Marwa, they could run their eyes over long distance. To believe anything that they were told about it merely because it came from the lips of Muhammad, simply meant that they were willing to distrust their own eye, but not distrust the words of Muhammad. It was possible their eyes were wrong. But it was not possible that Muhammad was wrong. When all agreed that they would accept his word, he announced that God had sent him for their regeneration, and that they ought to accept him. But when he said this, they would not have him.

Of his strict truthfulness we have the testimony of an arch enemy of his. When the Meccans apprehended that Muhammad would win over some of the pilgrims visiting

Mecca for the Haj, they began to forge plans by which to prejudice all visitors against him. One said "Let us proclaim him to be a poet." Another said, "No, not a poet but a simple liar." Still another, "No, neither a poet nor a liar but a mad man." Upon hearing all this, an unrelenting enemy of his, one whose hostility remained unabated to the end of his days, intervened and said, "You can only say something that can make a plausible impression on the people. When, for instance, you describe Muhammad as a liar, would not the people ask, 'Then why have you, for so long, sworn by his sincerity and truthfulness?' How can a man who has been truthful all his life, suddenly turn out a liar? You have to forge a plausible account about him." But they could forge no such account.

The Holy Prophet has himself told us that on two occasions during the period of his youth he desired to go to an entertainment such as a juggler's performance. But it was so ordained that on both occasions instead of being able to carry out his desire he went off to sleep. His youth, in short, was as pure as the rest of his life, unequalled by anybody known to human history. Nor is the Prophet one of those heroes, the facts of whose lives are not well-known. There is nothing in his life which we should like to know and of which a fair account is not preserved for us in the traditions.

Daring Solicitude for the Poor

Let us now turn to another point. Let us describe the moral side of his character and the solicitude he had for the poor and the down-trodden. In this respect too, we cannot find his equal in the entire history of man. It is said that some Meccans got together and founded an association whose purpose was to protect the rights of the poor. As the names of most of its founders end with Fazl, the inauguration of the association is known in history as the *Hilf-ul-Fazul* (or the Oath of the Fazul). The Holy Prophet was also one of its founders. This was before he

had been called to prophethood. Later, on one occasion his companions asked him as to what the oath was about. The Holy Prophet understood at once that what they wanted to know was how he, a Prophet divinely appointed to lead people, could have joined an organization in which he must have had to work under others. So he answered, "The idea of this organization is so dear to me that if it were to be initiated even to-day, I should gladly join it." In short, when it was a matter of serving the poor, the Holy Prophet was not ashamed of working under others.

A poor man had some money owed to him by Abu Jahl, a malicious enemy of the Holy Prophet and a chief of the Quraish. Not caring much for the poor, Abu Jahl did not seem anxious to pay it off. The poor man went one after the other to the leaders of the association who had taken the famous Oath, and asked for the restitution of his loan. None of the leaders however dared to approach Abu Jahl. So the man at last went to Muhammad, who was then a Prophet, and said, "You are one of the leaders who took this oath to protect the poor. Why not then ask Abu Jahl to make good the money he owes me?" This was the time when Abu Jahl had declared Muhammad an outlaw and had put a prize on his head. Everybody in Mecca was a declared enemy of the Prophet. Yet the Prophet without a scruple, went right up to Abu Jahl's house and knocked at his door. Abu Jahl enquired. "Who is there?" The Prophet replied, "Muhammad". Abu Jahl was startled; he wondered as to what might be the case. He opened the door at once and asked. "Is anything wrong?" The Prophet answered, "Why do you not pay off this poor man?" at which Abu Jahl said he would presently do so. So he went in and brought the money. When Abu Jahl's friends heard of it, they made fun of him, and taunted him saying he had been afraid of Muhammad. But Abu Jahl protested and said "Would you not believe me? As soon as I opened the door, I saw as though Muhammad had two wild camels

with him, one on his right and the other on his left, and the beasts seemed ready to run at me."

It may be that it was a miracle. But whether it was so or not, all of us know that truth has its own terror. Abu Jahl was simply overpowered by truth. The point however is that in order to restore to a poor man his due, the Holy Prophet did not hesitate to put his own life in danger. He thus demonstrated what moral courage, even without power and means, man can show.

The Prophet's Trustworthiness

When he married Khadija he was absolutely without means. Some have reported, that his father left to him five goats and one or two camels. Others have said that he inherited nothing at all from him. In any case, even if he had some property left him it was as good as nothing at all. But born in want, he never seemed really to want any thing. His satisfaction with whatever he had was complete though situated as he was, he might easily have desired the things he did not have. He was called Al-Amin *i. e.*, the Trusted One. The title Al-Amin would be given only to him who demonstrates his trustworthiness in and through all kinds of ordeals. If a man has a million dollars it is no great virtue on his part if he can be trusted with a thousand. The Holy Prophet was at grips with terrible poverty and lack of means, yet he was trusted with the safe custody of both life and property, and he proved through his conduct that he was contented with what he had and unmindful of what he did not have. Indeed but for this, he would never have been honoured by his people with the distinguished title of Al-Amin. And later when he had all the wealth he could desire he continued to live a poor man as before. On one occasion he was distributing money between the poor. In the course of it, he dropped a *dinar* and forgot to pick it up. He went to lead prayers in the mosque. As soon as he had finished he got up all at once, and forcing his way across rows of worshippers went straight home. On his return the

bewildered companions enquired, "What was the matter O Prophet of God." He answered, "I had dropped a *dinar*, and having remembered it, I wanted to give it away as soon as I could."

Notwithstanding his wealth, he lived as one of the poor. Some of his poor companions complained of the richness of others. On this the Prophet smiled and touching their shoulders said, "Do you not like that you and I should belong to the same class." He had ample wealth but he was so contented without it that we cannot but wonder when we think of it. Whatever he had, he would give away in the name of God. His household was without means. Aisha reports that for months and months they would have nothing to cook and would live on dates and milk, unless, of course, some neighbour thought of sending them some food. Often they had to go without food of any kind. This would happen, remember, when he was growing in wealth and prosperity. It is amazing therefore, that Western writers should have found fault with this very period of the Prophet's life. It has been said that when wealth came to the Prophet his head was turned, while the truth is that when he died his armor was found mortgaged for a few pounds of barley. The Holy Prophet in short had the experience of being poor as well as rich, but in either case he lived up to his own high ideal, and wealth made no difference to him—so that even when he was rich he lived in poverty.

The Prophet's Married Life

Let us turn now to his married life. When he was single he lived up to such a high ideal that the world wonders over it to this day. He did not marry until he was twenty-five. This is a late age for marriage in Arabia. In the hot climate of that country boys of sixteen and seventeen years are ripe for marriage. The Holy Prophet, however, not only married later than most young men of his country but he married a widow as old as forty years.

At a time when youth is full of longing he married a woman who had practically run her course of life.

After marriage, Khadija (God be pleased with her) laid all her wealth at the feet of the Prophet. But the first thing the Prophet did was to use the wealth to set free all her slaves. So that after his marriage, as before, the Holy Prophet displayed unequalled moral qualities.

In regard to his marriage with Aisha (God be pleased with her) it has been said that the Prophet was an old man while Aisha was a girl barely nine years of age, and so great a disparity between the ages of the two was nothing but tyrannical to Aisha.

Aisha's Testimony

First of all, it is not true to say that Aisha was only nine years at the time of her marriage. We have conflicting account of Aisha's age. According to the most plausible account she must have been about thirteen, and if some other accounts are to be believed, she might even have been above seventeen years of age. Thirteen, however is the most correct measure. But even so, she must have been quite young at the time. The point however, is that the only person to judge or feel the pain of this disparity between husband and wife was Aisha herself. Those Western writers who have written tearfully about it, cannot have known the pain better than the lady Aisha herself. She married at thirteen. Nine years later, the Holy Prophet died, so that at twenty-two, Aisha was left a widow. Would you say that Aisha had her life ruined by her marriage? No, because if you try to peep into the depth of Aisha's own heart you find quite another story. You find there nothing but unmixed love for the Holy Prophet. Only see her, years after the Prophet's death. She is rich; indeed exceedingly so. Gifts pour in from all sides: We have it in the traditions that sometimes she would receive gifts worth thousands of dollars on a single day. But nothing seems to change her simple mode of living. Whatever she receives

on any single day, she gives away in charity before the end of that day. One day, we are told, she gave away a considerable sum of money in the course of the day. A girl friend, learning of this said to her "You are observing a fast today, my dear, you might spare at least a few pennies for your evening meal." To which Aisha replied that the good friend who now advised her might have done so a little earlier. Were it not for the love of the Prophet and the deep impression he had made on her, she would certainly have gone on to live a different life, now that she was a woman of means. But she was far and away from changing her very simple ways.

On one occasion she had for her meal, some bread baked out of fine flour. Soft and light bread being a delicacy unknown in the Prophet's days, they ought to have given her all the pleasure she could want out of eating. But strange it was she wept as she ate them. A friend, again, asked her about it and she answered, "I was thinking of the Prophet. That is what made me weep. Were he alive, I would have served him today with this soft bread." Just see how deep the Prophet's impression must have been on her. How many there are who remember their dead like Aisha remembered the Prophet. Every moment of her life was evidence of the affection she bore towards him. Yet there have been people who have suggested that the Prophet was bebatch. Is it thus that the wives of debauches remember their husbands? Do they not rather, hate the thought of them and regard their death as a prelude to their own salvation?

Courtesies to Wives

The Holy Prophet as a married man, therefore, lived to a noble ideal. In many small ways he treated his wives so as to promote relations of love with them. He would for instance, drink from the cup from which they drank, and touch the cup where they touched it. If they had to climb on to a height, he would bend his knee, which

they would step on and help themselves to the height. The ignorant men of the West who themselves regard these courtesies a woman's due, begin to complain when they find the Holy Prophet practicing the same. That which in any ordinary person they would regard as evidence for the respect he has for womankind, becomes, in the Prophet, evidence of debauchery and pleasure-making.

Lesson to Hussain

Let us, however, go on. We know that when people come to have their own children, they become indifferent to the rights of others. But the Holy Prophet, even in this respect observed an extraordinary measure of austerity. On one occasion a quantity of dates arrived for public charity. The great Hussain, his grandson, then a child, put one date in his mouth. But the Prophet said "No, it is not for you, it is for the poor."

How many people there are, who would conduct themselves with such severity? We do not mind children doing such things. Yet here was a child of the Prophet's old age. And he took but one date and put it in his mouth. The Prophet however, did not let him have it. Instead, he took it out of the child's mouth saying, "It is for the poor."

The Holy Prophet's Daughter

Fatima was the Prophet's much beloved daughter. Of all his children she was the only one who lived. And she was so exceedingly good that you will find it hard to point to another woman as good as she was. In great distress one day, she went to her father the Holy Prophet and showed him the calluses on her hands which grinding her own corn had given her. "Can't I have a maid to help me?" she asked, "now that we are so well off?" The Prophet said, "Come Fatima, I will give you something even better" and as he said this, he taught Fatima some prayers to remember and reflect upon. How many there

are, I ask, who have such chaste emotions ? The Prophet had no male children. Such as were born had died early, so that he was almost without a child of his own. Fatima was his only daughter and only child. Yet when she comes to him in such distress and asks for help, he a father with the usual paternal instincts, thus disposes of her ! In every respect, therefore he was far above ordinary human beings.

The Prophet at Taif

In showing forbearance to the tyrannies of the enemy, he displayed unequalled bigness of heart. They stoned him on one occasion, and insulted him on another, by throwing on him the entrails of a camel as he prayed silently in the courtyard of the K'aba. When he went to preach to the people of Taif, the Meccans had long before sent word to them to say that a mad man was coming to visit them. These cruel men of Taif set their street boys and their swift dogs on him. The boys volleyed him with stones while the hunting dogs ran furiously at him. The Prophet was wounded from head to foot. While returning he heard the voice of God, saying that divine punishment would visit the tyrants if he but desired. But the Prophet said, "No, they are only an ignorant lot."

Amnesty to Meccans

Whenever they stood in need, the Prophet helped even his enemies ungrudgingly. Nobody who ever approached him was refused. They were always received by him kindly. You remember the tyrannies he had met at the hands of Mecca and its people. Yes his own town Mecca from where he had to escape quietly at night. And the very same people of this town who had rent asunder the bodies of his companions by tying them to camels running in opposite directions ; who had murdered his womenfolk brutally, thrusting spears into their private parts ; and who had tortured his men by dragging them on the burning sands. Yet when these very people were brought to him

on the historical occasion of his victorious re-entry into Mecca, all he said was, "This day, no blame attaches to you."

On another occasion, when he was resting under a tree, his sword hanging from one of its branches, an unrelenting enemy of his got hold of the weapon and waking him up asked "Who can now save you?" To which the Prophet replied "Allah". This simple and short reply and the faith which prompted it struck terror into the man who at once dropped the sword. And now it was the Prophet who picked up the sword and asked, "Who can save you?" The man might have answered as the Prophet had done before, but he merely said. "It lies with you to spare me or not." The Prophet let him go unharmed. There are countless such incidents which leave us wondering, and which together constitute an ideal pattern of life for all men whatever their different callings. In a battle for instance, he saw a wounded woman in the enemy's ranks. Notwithstanding the fact that she was one of the combatants, he got very angry over it. His companions report that he had never before been so angry. When Muslim combatants went out, it was his wont to remind them of their duty not to touch women, children, old men, nor those who were diseased, nor monks or priests of any denomination.

The Prophet's Multi-sidedness

He was a judge but one who lost not, in the slightest degree, the confidence of his people.

He was a military commander who not only never made any mistake in his command, but who taught humanity many points in the strategy and ethics of warfare.

He preached without temper, and without the least bitterness in either word or deed. Preachers tend to be clever and sharp-tongued. But not so the Prophet.

He would always hear the other side devotedly. Negotiating for peace, he would accept the humblest terms

very much as in fighting, he would display the highest of daring. In the battle of Hunain, the whole of the army took to flight. Perhaps it was because the army on this occasion was accompanied by non-Muslim allies, and they did not have the same degree of ardour for the issue as their Muslim fellow-combatants. Whatever it was due to, the whole army took to flight. Only a band of twelve were left with the Prophet. Some of these got hold of the reins of his dromedary, and advised him to run away. "To stay here," they said, "is to plunge ourselves into the well of destruction." But the Prophet refused saying, "Leave me alone. I cannot show my back to the enemy." And then, even while he was so dangerously exposed, he proclaimed, "I am a Prophet; I am no false one. I am of the progeny of Abdul Muttalib," and advanced as he proclaimed, "In the battle of Uhd" reports a companion, "I saw one who was drenched in blood. From every side he was being attacked and alone he encountered these attacks. When I went near I found he was no other than the Holy Prophet (on whom be peace and blessings of God!)" Of such a valiant character, who can say that when he accepted humiliating terms for peace, he did so out of fear? When the peace of Hudaibiya was being settled, his companions were greatly agitated. Their swords were all but unsheathed over the humiliation they thought they were being put to. Still he said he would have peace and not war.

The Prophet was engaged in commerce for a time. Here again, we know on the testimony of Khadijah's slaves that nobody ever displayed so high a degree of integrity as he did. The largest profits in the caravan came to him. If his wares were soiled or otherwise inferior, he would himself point out the defect to his customers. So they flocked to him.

Dealings with the Poor

His dealings with the poor and the low were singularly beneficent. Once a man put a rope around the Prophet's

neck and asked him for something. The Prophet was far from being offended. All he said was, "I am not niggardly: if I had anything I would have gladly given you of it." He had ten thousand companions at the time. The slightest indication of displeasure on his part would have exasperated them into taking the offender's life. But the Prophet showed not the slightest sign of displeasure, so the companions restrained their exasperation. Do you know of any people who would thus treat their inferiors ?

Dealings with the Arab Chiefs

Once a deputation from the tribe of Hatim of Tai came to see and judge for themselves whether it was worth their while to negotiate for a peace with Muslims. The chief of the deputation had said he wanted to see whether Muhammad was a Prophet or a king. He saw that a poor old woman came and took Muhammad aside. He stood there listening to her for a long time. The chief decided at once that Muhammad was a Prophet not a king. There were ambassadors from other nations present at the time, yet he continued to listen attentively to a poor old woman until she herself broke off and went away. He had to deal with the nobles and the chiefs, as with the poor. In every case he acquitted himself admirably and with due dignity. The Persian Monarch sent orders to the Governor of Yemen for the arrest of Muhammad and his despatch to the Persian Court. The Governor obeyed and sent two men to the Prophet with the message. The men tried to induce the Prophet to go. "We will try," they said, "to see that no harm comes to you. But to refuse on your part to go will be disastrous. Chosroes rules over half the world and if angered, he will work destruction in the whole of Arabia."

The Prophet appointed a day for reply, When the men came on the appointed day to receive their reply he told them to go and tell their Governor that Muhammad's God had killed the Governor's Monarch. The men said, "Right, we will go back. If what you say, turns out to be true there can be no doubt that you are a true Prophet of God." A few days

later, a ship from Persia brought a letter addressed to the Governor of Yemen. The Governor wondered on looking at it, as it bore a new seal. He opened and read, and found it was from the Chosroe's son, who tired of his father's tyrannies, had deposed and killed him. The letter continued to speak of the cruel orders of the late Chosroes about "a man of Arabia" and said that those should be considered null and void. Mark the Prophet's deference towards a poor old woman and his firmness towards a proud and powerful Monarch.

Dealings with Foreigners

When it came to dealing with foreigners his demeanour was equally appropriate. When Salman the Persian came to him, as a stranger he felt estranged and ill at ease among Muslims. The Prophet however showed his solicitude for him by announcing to his companions, "Salman is one of our own kin," and he could hardly have desired more to reassure himself about his safety.

In short, the Prophet's life is so rich in incident and in the variety of its aspects, that all people whatever their station or situation in life can claim Muhammad as their kindred, as one of themselves.

The Prophet's Kinship to Non-Muslims

Let me admit, however, that the examples I have given can gladden and inspire the heart only of a Muslim, one who believes implicitly in the value of the Prophet's teaching, and who will, no doubt, find in the Prophet one who has been through difficulties same as his, and who can now brighten up and make worthwhile his own journey of life. But how about a non-Muslim, one who does not believe, as a Muslim believes in the apostleship of Muhammad? What affinity or sense of kinship can he discover in the life of our Holy Prophet?

Remember in this connection, the claim of the Quran according to which all that is best and essential in the teach-

ing of former prophets is embodied in the book. Ad non-Muslims then, whatever their denominations can regard Muhammad as one of their own, he having rehabilitated as it were, in his own teaching, what was best and lasting in the teaching of his fore-runners.

All Teachers Acknowledged

Also, our Prophet testified to the truth of them all. God taught him and through him all the world "there has not been a people but have had a warner."

If all the different peoples of the earth have each had a warner, or a Prophet, and if all Prophets as our Prophet further taught, are brethren, are we not justified in concluding that Muhammad is a brother to them all, a kinsman of theirs? To Rama Chandra as well as to Krishna, to Moses as well as to Jesus, to Zoroaster as well as to Confucius, he is but a brother. All of us, therefore, whether Indians, Persians, Egyptians, Japanese or Chinese can claim, as the Quranic verse has taught us to claim, that Muhammad the Prophet, is one of ourselves. Because Muhammad has testified to the truth of the teachers of all nations much as the followers of these teachers testify to their truth.

Muhammad, therefore, is one with all the nations of the world. Every nation can regard him as their own. I know of Christians who regard our Prophet as a good Christian. The truth, however, is that our Prophet was not only a good Christian, but also a believer in Moses or a believer in Buddha or a believer, for that matter, in any other great teacher. He was one and all these at the same time, because he was a Muslim, and because a Muslim is one who believes in all the great truths vouchsafed by God to his Prophets. While the Quran claims that Muhammad the Prophet is one of us, the life of Muhammad, in all its various bearings offers one continuous proof of this claim.

Sensitiveness to Others' Distress

The third excellence of our Prophet pointed out by the Quran is contained in the words "Hard for him to bear is your distress." The original which I have rendered as "hard" contains the further sense that the Prophet wants to see you raised high up in the moral scale. Both senses are important. I propose to show how solicitous the Prophet was about the distress of others and how equally solicitous he was about seeing his people raised to a great moral and spiritual height.

On one occasion, Abu Bakr was talking to a Jew. The Jew claimed superiority for Moses over Muhammad, upon which Abu Bakr gave him a blow. The Jew brought the complaint to the Prophet who admonished Abu Bakr saying, "Don't quarrel for my superiority over others." It has been said by some that the incident belongs to the earlier part of his life, to a time in fact, when he did not regard himself superior to Moses. This, however, is a mistake. The Prophet knew from the first day the distinctiveness of his rank.

In the admonition to Abu Bakr he taught his followers not to say things which may hurt others' feelings. Great therefore was his concern for the feeling of others. What he meant when he admonished Abu Bakr was that his superiority such as God had conferred on him, was something to be properly inculcated in the course of preaching, not something to quarrel about in an excited discussion. If this caution was not observed the respect which he wanted Muslims to pay to the great teachers the world has known, was liable to be obscured. The Prophet taught us to respect the teachers respected by others, and not to talk lightly of them, nor to find faults with them. He even forbade disrespect to idols, the gods set up by their worshippers as being equal to the One True God. Says the Quran :

Do not talk disrespectfully of even the idols of others, for their worshippers will in turn talk disrespectfully of Allah and will thus unknowingly

earn the wrath of Allah. What a high regard for justice and fair dealing this is !

Respect for Feelings of the Enemy

The inculcation of fair dealing with the enemy is equally wonderful. We are taught to act justly even in time of war. If anybody wrongs us we are allowed to wrong him to an equal extent but not more, and if the party show the slightest inclination for peace we are expected to call off the dispute, even though the issue is likely to be decided in our favour. The practical effect of this teaching is writ large on the pages of history. Not a single instance is known to history of Muslims having rejected an offer of peace. The draft of the peace of Hudaibiya was being dictated by the Prophet, and Ali, the scribe wrote, "*The conditions of peace between Muhammad the Prophet of God, and.....*". But the disbelievers took exception to the words, "*Prophet of God.*" The Prophet, accordingly, ordered Ali to cross out the words. But Ali did not do so, whereupon the Prophet himself took the pen and crossed out the objectionable words. He might not have done so at all. He might have replied, for instance, that the words in question were being recorded over his own name. They were his, and the enemy were not being asked to subscribe to them. But the Prophet was mindful of the enemy's feelings and wanted peace before everything else.

Solicitude for the Oppressed

At the advent of the Prophet, there were three classes of people who were being particularly mal-treated. These were the slaves, the women and the depressed classes. He brought freedom to them all. And why not? "Hard it was for him to bear others' distress." He could not possibly have tolerated the tyranny and torture to which these classes were being subjected. So not until he had freed them all did he rest. When killing of slaves was considered nothing heinous, he ordered that slaves who were mal-treated shall be set free. Further, the

slaves were to be fed and clothed in the same manner as their masters and were not to be asked to do what the masters themselves would not do. If a master, for instance, would not do scavenging himself, he had no right to ask his slave to do it. Further the slaves were to be helped in whatever they were asked to do. In this way the Prophet cut short by a stroke, as it were, the miseries of slavery.

He further taught his followers to set the slaves free as an act of benevolence, or let them off in return for compensation. He ruled that nobody could be a slave all his life. This was absolutely forbidden. A slave was a slave only so long as he did not pay his indemnity or was not set free in some other way. The lawfulness of taking prisoners of war and restricting their liberty is certainly recognized by Islam. And nobody can blame it for this, because without it, a people would either put an end to their own existence or else, others would bring them to naught.

Solicitude for Women

Then take the other class of the oppressed—the women. How pitiable was their plight! They were but chattels and were treated and divided as part of one's inheritance. Baby girls were buried alive in the earth. In short they were treated as a wretched and fallen lot. The Prophet taught "The best amongst you is he who is best towards his womenfolk," and thus succeeded in correcting the wrongs from which women were suffering. He protected the interest of women by teaching that whosoever had but two daughters and he gave them proper education and good moral training, will have his abode in paradise. About mothers, he taught that not the slightest disrespect was to be shown to them. In short in the words of the Holy Quran, hard it was for the Prophet to bear their distress.

Solicitude for the Depressed

The third class of people whom he liberated were those usually called the depressed. Of them he said, "The

high in rank in God's view are those who are high in morals." That is to say, they were not to think of one as high and another as low. In the eyes of God, height of rank was determined by the height of one's moral works. How great and grand these words! Simple; yet all at once they seem to raise the most depressed class to the highest height conceivable.

National Rivalries Condemned

Then again, some people regard themselves superior to others. For instance, some Americans today, seem to regard themselves as being different from ordinary men. The pain which these superior airs on the part of any people could inflict on others is well minded in the teaching of Islam.

"It does not become an advanced people," says the Quran, "to look down upon another less advanced. It is possible that tomorrow the advanced may come to a fall and the less advanced go forward. This has been so from the earliest times. Now one people, then another come to the fore. Therefore treat one another with respect."

The Holy Prophet, to conclude, established in the world, a grand conception of humanity. He liberated humanity from all its fundamental inequities, and this is just the claim which the Quran has made for the Prophet. For addressing all mankind, it has been said of the Prophet: "Hard it is for him to bear your distress."

Solicitude for Ends Not Means

The fourth excellence pointed out in the verse is contained in the words "solicitous about you." It is a most remarkable distinction of our Holy Prophet. The Prophet's solicitude about us *men*, means that his care and concern was the widest human good, not the success of his teaching or the victory of his principles. A common failing amongst human leaders is to exaggerate their devotion to a

single principle. They forget what ends the principle was to secure and whether the principle when applied to any concrete instance will in fact secure those ends. To them the success of the principle becomes the main thing to achieve. Those who thus wrangle between themselves forget that God has endowed all kinds of things with potentiality for human good.

The Quran appropriately describes Muhammad as being primarily solicitous about *us*, our good and our welfare. We find this solicitude for us running throughout his teaching. It is enjoined on us, for instance, to pray standing, but if we cannot do so, we may pray sitting, or if necessary even lying down. Nor do we have to give in charity in the course, say of a year, any specific amount of money, but only what suits our situation, so much so that if we can afford nothing, we may rest content merely with the goodness of the heart. In short, the Muslim teaching is capable of a wonderful adaptability to varying conditions of life. The Muslim teaching as to fasting, pilgrimage, legal alms, and other such things, provides for suitable alternatives. Charity and *Jehad* also have alternatives, and you could earn the pleasure of God without them as well as you could, with them. The Holy Prophet once going on *Jehad* said "There are people who have not joined us, but not a valley that we cross, in which they are not present with us, and not a reward that we reap in which they are not our co-sharers."

The companions inquired how it was that without the actual privations of *Jehad* such people could reap the same reward as the others. The Prophet answered, "I was thinking of the maimed and the crippled, who grieve in their hearts over their inability to join *Jehad*. God will not withhold from them the reward of actually joining it."

The teaching of our Prophet provides for the spiritual requirements of all men, situated in all conditions of life. It does not inculcate just one principle and adherence to just that principle. It teaches broad principles which can be suitably adapted to varying situations and which are calculated primarily to secure salvation for man.

“The Compassionate, the Merciful”

The fifth great quality of our Prophet, pointed in the verse is contained in the words “to the believers compassionate, merciful”. A common human failing is that when a leader lays the world or any particular people under some sort of a debt, he begins to expect some recognition and thankfulness on the part of those indebted to him. He expects them to acknowledge whatever he has done for them. But as the Quran points out, the Holy Prophet is far above this human failing. Instead of expecting acknowledgement and thanks from those whom he lays under his debt, he himself feels grateful and indebted to them, and wants to serve them all the more. Being good to others, he feels as though it is the others who are being good to him. He is thankful to others when others have more cause to be thankful to him.

It is the very highest pinnacle of spiritual greatness, and only he can reach it who cares not for personal greatness, who is an Apostle, a messenger who stands up not on his own account but on account of the compelling message he receives from on high,

(Translated and Condensed)

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