

**ESSAYS
ON
PROPHET
MUHAMMAD
AND
ISLAM**

**Compiled by
KAMRUDIN A. RASHID**

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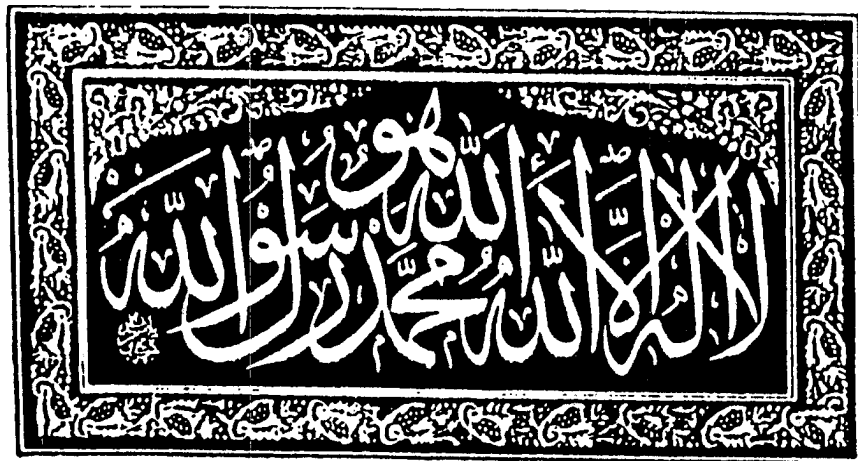
DAR ES SALAAM

*(Winning essays in the "Imamat Day Essay Competition,
1962" Organised by His Highness the Aga Khan
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*There is no god but Allah; Muhamnad is the
Messenger of Allah .*

Preface

This small booklet contains four of the winning essays in the Imamat Day Essay Competition 1962 on the subject "PROPHET MUHAMMAD AND ISLAM". The competition was organised by the Ismailia Provincial Library of Kisumu, Kenya. For the past many years, long before I was fortunate enough to win the first prize in this competition, it has been one of my ambitions to compile in the form of a booklet some features and occasions which have made Prophet Muhammad and Islam prominent in the history of the world. My humble success in the Essay Competition has at last enabled me to present this compilation of essays and fulfil my long cherished ambition.

It is my privilege and pleasure that this venture has graciously received Khudavind Hazart Mowlana Hazar Imam's Holy Blessings and I grasp this golden opportunity to quote the relevant part of Khudavind's Holy Communication to me:-

"Your idea of compiling a booklet of the best essays is a very sound one, and your gesture of donating the proceeds in Africa to the Aga Khan Library is a very generous one. I am happy and proud that a spiritual child should have undertaken this work and even if the booklet for one reason or another does not get published, you should rest assured that your effort is extremely worthy and commendable. I send you my affectionate loving blessings."

I must now first of all most sincerely acknowledge the kind permission, promptly and willingly extended, of His Highness the Aga Khan Shia Imam's Ismailia Provincial Library Committee, Kisumu, to publish the essays. Secondly, I must express my gratitude to all the three contributors who gladly made their essays available as soon as they were requested. These friends have contributed to a great extent in making this publication possible as without their support and co-operation this booklet could never

have seen the light of the day. The encouragement and assistance from Rafi Shamshudin G. Tejpar, President of Shia Imami Ismailia Association for Tanzania was one more helping hand extended to me for which I am deeply grateful. Thanks are also due to all others for whatever assistance and co-operation I received from them.

The purpose of this booklet is to place in the hands of Ismaili brethren the material which gives in simple language an outline of some prominent features of the history, tradition and culture of Islam. The significance of these essays lies in the fact that they portray events which have so far remained unknown to many. The Compiler and the publishers fervently hope that those who turn the pages of this booklet will not only try to understand and assimilate the significance of the great historic occasions embodied in it, but will also find themselves in a position to pass on something of the love and affection they themselves have enjoyed to others around them in their own homes, in their own villages, in their own towns.

Finally, with the great and noble cause of Islam and Ismailism in view, let us hope and pray that after having carefully read and re-read this booklet we shall derive inspiration and encouragement from Our Holy Prophet and from Our Lord of the Age, Khudavind Hazrat Mowlana Hazar Imam, His Highness Shah Karim Al-Husseini Aga Khan, as a result of which we can enrich our lives and beautify our souls. AMEN.

DAR ES SALAAM
9th December, 1967

Kamrudin A. Rashid
Compiler

PROPHET MUHAMMAD AND ISLAM

by : Kamrudin A. Rashid

The subject is so deep, so profound and so wide, that it is beyond the scope of being fully described or written at any one time. Volumes and volumes have been written about it. Quite obviously, therefore, it shall not be possible for me to cover its every aspect. Nevertheless, I shall try, in this small article, not to overlook significant points on the subject. I shall categorise my writing into two main sections :—

(a) Prophet Muhammad (May the blessings of God be upon him!)

(b) Islam — the religion which he taught, and shall first deal with each individually.

Muhammad, popularly known as the Prophet of Islam and who was the last of the Prophets, was born in the darkest period of human history, in the period called the "Age of Ignorance", and precisely in 571 of the Christian Era. Muhammad, the form which his name takes in the Holy Koran (the Gospel of the Muslims) means "highly praised".

The ignoble and degraded morality, universally prevailing in that period has been precisely and completely accounted for by the scholars from the East and the West who ascertained that neither women nor the orphans or the weak had any human right or dignity, and that superstitions and idol worship prevailed everywhere. I shall not, under this altogether different subject, make lengthy statements of such profound scholars but I shall cite that despite all such extreme views by the scholars, it remains almost impossible to import some subjective element into any account of life and work of Prophet Muhammad. Consequently, there are almost as many theories about Muhammad as there are biographers.

Muhammad was left an orphan in his early life. He lost his father before birth, his mother before he passed the

threshold of childhood and his delicate-hearted grandfather when he was still in the same stage. His new guardian, although a kind and warm-hearted uncle, was a poor elderly man who had a family of his own, much larger than what he could, effectively and financially support.

In such conditions and in such environment Muhammad was born and had to spend his early life. He had no tutor to teach him, he was illiterate, he had no instructor to cultivate his mind and he had no reaches whereby he could acquire these things. His associates and companions were ignorant, primitive and stone worshippers. But instead of falling as a natural victim under the magical powers of the habits and practices of his associates, Muhammad kept away from evil and formed a character of his own. His pure character and excellent manners were so strikingly evident, that he was also called Al-Amin — the faithful.

It is quite natural that a poor orphan like Muhammad should grow according to the environment in which he was brought up, that his character should be formed and affected by the circumstances which surrounded him from his childhood, and further, especially as he had no riches whereby he could be independent, and no teacher to direct him to different ways. If things, therefore, went in conformity with natural laws and if Muhammad had not the divine care attending him from the childhood, he would have grown up mentally and morally degraded like any other individual, if not less in respect of manners, and like the rest he would have been a stone worshipper. But Muhammad was never attracted by or attached to any of the idols, and his belief was, thus, as pure as his character right from the beginning.

His education, therefore, and the formation and development of his character were not, and could not be, the effects of his environment and surroundings. They were due

to the divine care which graciously attended him since he breathed of life, so as to prepare him for the great task awaiting him.

Through his efforts Muhammad could have lead an easy and comfortable life, but riches and material gains were never his aim or concern. He was concerned with some other exalted ends, with the reformation of the degraded humanity and with the purification of his soul and those of mankind. And as he grew in years, he grew averse to all worldly occupations and within him grew keen desires for leading a solitary and contemplative life. Thus he devoted himself to meditation and worship and remained so engaged till the word of God came to him and ordered him to arise, to preach and perform his duty as the Prophet of God. This was 1400 years ago when "Islam" – the religion of peace was born.

At this stage, before I go further and explain how Prophet Muhammad succeeded in spreading the teachings of Islam, I shall make an attempt at an objective definition of What Is Islam ?

There are several interpretations of the word "Islam". Let us define some of them:—

(1) To a layman Islam stands for a religion preached by Muhammad, the Prophet, and practiced by a large section of mankind all over the Globe. This system preaches the unity of God and propounds a code of morals and behaviour as a means of deliverance;

(2) To an historian the word "Islam" suggests more than a system of theology. It stands for a distinctive civilization based on a form of practical theology. It has been evolving since the days of the Prophet;

(3) To an ordinary Muslim the word Islam is conceived as the name of his religion and as such comprises a system of life, guiding its followers individually and socially, besides regulating the relations of the individual to his or her concept of God;

(4) Koran, the sacred book of Islam, declares that all true religion or real communication with God, is Islam. The essence of the religion is submission to God.

I feel it quite appropriate to mention that the religion Islam is often being called "Muhammadanism" by non-Muslims and even some Muslims. This is very misleading. Islam is not merely a religion preached by the Prophet Muhammad, but is the religion preached by different prophets, at different times, and in all parts of the world, even though their teachings may not be preserved. Further the word Muhammadanism suggests to many, the idea of worshipping Muhammad as a God or Semi-God. This idea is quite contrary to the teachings and traditions attributed to Muhammad, the Prophet, who stressed the fact that he was a mortal human being. It would be fortunate enough if those who are misled tried to take out this false impression from their minds. Islam can never be called Muhammadanism.

The basic principle of Islam is, the belief in the unity of God and hence Islam finds peace through complete submission to the Will of God. This concept of unity and submission to His Will is understood to lead to a unity of thought which is meant to culminate in unity of action. Submission, therefore, is in reference to the whole sphere of man's activities and hence there is no distinction between the religious and the secular in Islam. This concept is expected to bring about peace and mutual understanding amongst the many different groupings of men, as a result of peace with God. The attainment of such peace is the ultimate purpose of

a. Muslim's life. I must emphasize that this belief is much more than a mere profession of faith. It is a way of life. The other basic features of Islam, besides belief in God and the Prophethood of Muhammad, point the way towards the attainment of peace with God and amongst men. Of these prayer, fasting, alms-giving (zakat) and pilgrimage (Hajj) stand out prominently.

In the preceding paragraphs it must have been observed that the definition of Islam is a rather complex task. There are several definitions possible, which are neither exclusive nor even to a higher or lesser degree true, but refer merely to different aspects and view-points of Islam. It will be appreciated that the more concentric the position of the observer is, in regard to Islam, the more difficult becomes the definition.

As it might have been seen, one point of view has not at all been touched upon by me, and that is the point of the ISMAILIS among Muslims. To live in complete submission to God has a still deeper, and still more comprehensive meaning to them, which, however, lies outside the scope of this brief introduction into the problem of merely defining—“What is Islam”?

Now let me resume to say how the teachings of Islam were spread by the Prophet Muhammad. In discharging the duty assigned to him by God, the divine inspiration urged Prophet Muhammad to rise and inform the people that they were not taking the right path. It was the revelation of God which was so self-evident that he needed no further evidence to convince him of the truth of his mission. That is why he was so daring, so courageous, that he not only stood alone fighting various forms of evil, but was also praying for welfare and right guidance of his people. Was it possible, therefore, to find a better proof supporting his claims than his own personal

qualities? Undoubtedly it was the Providence of God which enshrined him and equipped him with such wisdom and capacity that within a short space of less than twenty three years, Prophet Muhammad succeeded in bringing about a complete change in the lives of the people. They were materially and morally and spiritually raised to a very high level of human progress, the complete results of which can be seen by us through the vast volumes of literature, art and culture.

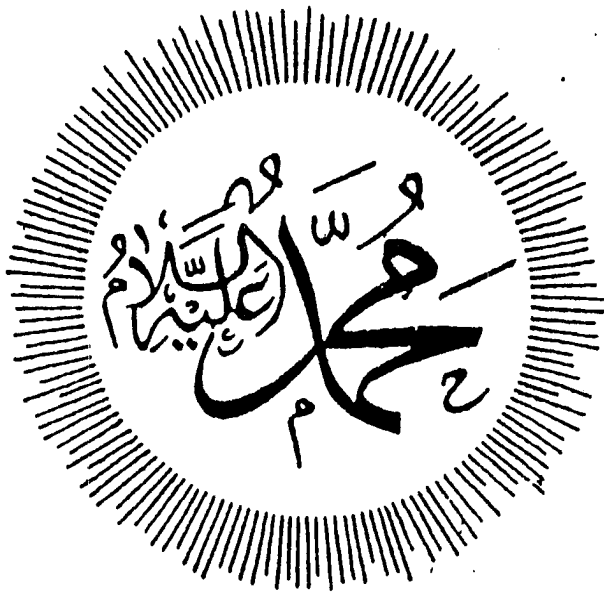
Islam accords the greatest sanctity to work, and all work must find favour with us. Have we not the personal example of our great Prophet and at the present moment of his 49th direct descendent – Lord of the Age, Imame Zaman, His Highness Shah Karim El-Husseini, Hazar Imam? The material and spiritual well-being of Islam can only be achieved by work, and for this each one of us is personally responsible, and if we are sincere in our desire for the regeneration of the Islamic world this must be our guiding light and constant aim.

The Islamic conception of the unity and oneness of mankind instituted 1400 years ago, is nowadays appreciated and is gradually, though slowly, having more adherents every day. The benefits and effects of this mission of the Prophet Muhammad are not only enjoyed by the millions of Muslims scattered nowadays all over the world, but also have reached every other individual, every other society and nation.

I venture to think that what is needed above all in the Muslim world is a sense of duty, an awareness that God sees our every action and that the time will come when He will call us to account for our actions. This must be a personal matter for every man and woman who is proud to proclaim Islam as his or her religion and way of life. How can Islam spread and prosper and be honoured in the world if we Muslims, individually or collectively, show a bad example? Let us all be grateful to Prophet Muhammad, and solemnly decide to do

our best, and try to realize the universal brotherhood and universal peace which he sincerely advocated.

In conclusion the words of His Highness Shah Karim el-Husseini, Hazar Imam (from his speeches made at Karachi and Dacca in 1958) would be a very suitable illustration. They are – "If Islam aspires, as I believe she must, to recapture the glories of the past, she must be ready to adapt – I do not say abandon her own traditions – to the entirely different circumstances of to-day. If we fail to do this, not only shall we fail to progress ourselves, but the younger generation will become disillusioned and fall prey to alien and materialistic creeds, which have nothing whatever in common with Islam".



MUHAMMAD

("May peace be upon him!")

PROPHET MUHAMMAD AND ISLAM

by Miss Mehroon E. Hassam

From time to time, both before and after Abraham, God raised up prophets in the world – different prophets for different nations; but when, in the Infinite Wisdom of God, the time was ripe for merging all religions systems into one, under a single and universal brotherhood, He, as promised through the prophecies of the former prophets, raised up the World-Prophet Muhammad on the sands of Arabia.

The holy Prophet was born on the 12th day of Rabi Al-Awwal (570 A.D.). At the age of six years his mother died and Muhammad was then taken care of by his grandfather Abdu-Al-Mttalib, whom he lost three or four years later, but he died before two years had elapsed.

Then at the age of eight his guardianship passed to his uncle Abu Talib. Even in the prime of his life, Muhammad's integrity and truthfulness won him fame in Mecca, his birth place, and soon earned him from his compatriots the glorious appellation of "Al-Amin".

At the time of the Prophet's birth Arabia was steeped head over heels in the worst form of idolatry that has ever prevailed in any other country. The people were debauchees and adulterers and institution of prostitution wore a halo of social sanctity round it. "But Muhammad's Character", admits a very caustic Christian critic of Islam, Sir William Muir, "was marked, even in his years of majority, for its purity of feeling, sincerity of heart and honesty of purpose." At the age of twenty-five Muhammad married an affluent widow Khadija, and harmony and happiness form the chorus of this marital union.

After Khadija's death, Muhammad married a number of times variously put between ten and seventeen – but the fact that he did so between the age of fifty-four and sixty-

three descends with hollowess the critics' view that Muhammad's character was dominated by sensual appetite.

On a certain night during the month of Ramazan, at the age of forty, while wrapped in one rapt meditation of the Divine in the historical cave of Ilira, the Divine Radiance Eternity dawned upon Muhammad in all its resplendence, announcing that he was the chosen Prophet of God. Now was to come on the stage of the world a Saviour, a representative of the culmination and, incidentally, the termination of the Prophethood in general, a Prophet who was to give an abiding colour of reality to the Decalogue of Moses and the Sermon of the Mount of the Master of Nazareth.

In twos and threes the Arabs began to embrace Islam and within three years were some forty converts in all. The people of the Quraish, however, decided to exterminate this new religion root and branch from the very face of the earth. The organized and systematic Quraish persecution grew so fierce and relentless that the Prophet was obliged to advise his bank of followers to migrate to Abyssinia and when the Quraish tempo of persecution could not still be assuaged, the Prophet himself made good his flight known as "Hegira" from Mecca to the Asylum of Medina (622 A.D.)

Not content with having driven the Prophet and his followers out of their homes and hearts, the Meccans did not leave them unmolested even in their distant asylum. They made three repeated attacks on Medina, and the Muslims, having no alternative left, turned to bay and gave enemy manly battle. In all the three battles of Badr (624 A.D.) Uhud (625 A.D.) and Khandaq (627 A.D.) the might of the Meccans was numerically far superior to that of the Muslims and yet in the first of the battles the Meccans were defeated, in the second the issue remained undecided and in the third the Meccans and their confederates after a month's futile struggle got exhausted and the victors of this battle were the victors

of Badr. A year later (628 A.D.) the Prophet set out for Mecca to perform the pilgrimage and at Hudaibiyya, just outside Mecca, a battle was imminent but the Prophet averted it by concluding a truce with the Meccans for ten years at most humiliating terms. But within two years of the Truce the Meccans violated one of the terms of the treaty by attacking a tribe in alliance with the Muslims. The Prophet marched on Mecca which gave in without bloodshed. "This day", the Prophet said to his bitterest foes, "there is no reproof against you!" When in 631 A.D. the Prophet went to meet the hostile Christian tribes in Northern Arabia, he saw no enemy on the battlefield but he did not either attack the Romans or declare war against them. Critics often lay an unjust charge at the door of Islam that it spread at the point of the sword. Does not the Treaty of Hudaibiyya with the Meccans, does not Muhammad's kind treatment of the Jews after their surrender at the battle of Khyber (628 A.D.) by restoring to them one-half of their possessions—do not these historical facts give an outright lie to this misguided and misleading accusations against the Religion of Peace? Islam spread not because of the sword, but it spread in spite of the sword and herein lies the true glory of Islam. In his "New hopes for A Changing World," Lord Bertrand Russell admits that Europe has been the most persecuting continent, compared to which the history of Islam affords a much cleaner, a much brighter record.

By the years of 631 A.D. and 632 A.D, the years of 'deputations', the beams of Islam found their way into almost every nook and cranny of Arabia. The sunlight of Islamic civilization was rapidly dispelling the old cobwebs of paganism from the peninsula which was soon to exert a paramount civilizing influence on the history of the World, and was to extend hegemony from Spain to India, including North Africa. Subsequent to the death of the Prophet, many attempts were made for the extinction of Islam but Islam marched on the

the course of its illuminating history from strength to strength. How true are the words of Dr. Iqbal, "Islam is like a rubber ball, that bounces the higher the harder it is His" The Quraish may try, try may the Jews and the Gentiles to exterminate Islam, but its spirit is invincible, unconquerable.

The principles of Islam, the religion which calls for "complete submission to the Will of Allah", are five, namely;—

- (1) The belief in One God
- (2) The belief in God's Prophets
- (3) The belief in Divine revelations
- (4) The belief in after-life
- (5) The belief in God's angels.

The Ismailies add to these the belief in the Imamate of the Manifest Imam, the "Imamim Mubin" mentioned in the Holy Qur'an in Ayat 12 of Sura Yasin. The practical side of Islam involves the observance of four principles:—

- (1) Salat or Prayers, five times a day
- (2) Fasting during Ramadhan.
- (3) Zakat or Poor-rate, being one-fortieth of all the money saved
- (4) Pilgrimage at least once in a lifetime provided one has means to do it. The Ismailis however, place an esoteric rather than an exoteric emphasis on the nature of these ritualistic observances.

Before Islam, the Arab world exhibited no signs of intellectual growth. The Prophet's teaching turned the Arabs' attention to the studies of science and literature and the nucleus thus formed in his lifetime blossomed, later on, into universities of Bagdad, Salerno, Cairo and Cordova, in their days great sanctuaries of learning both for the Orient and the Occident. One of the many "obiter dicta" of the Prophet was: "To attend a lecture on science and learning is more meritorious than attendance at a thousand funerals of martyrs". Likewise in architecture, music and other fine arts, the super

iority of the Muslim was established. The glorious remains of the Saracenic art still evoke the wonder and admiration of whole world. In his speech on "Philosophy of God-existence" delivered in Nyasaland in 1956, Dr. Radha Krishna said, "Modern European Renaissance is the product of the enlightenment brought to Europe by the Arab translators of the great Greek works, and those Muslim theologians, Averroes and Avicenna have contributed a great deal to the development of Christian thought".

Not only intellectual, but also social and civic reforms make the advent of Islam. The institution of marriage was made sacred and women were made absolutely equal with men in respect of law, privileges and actions, for was not paradise at the foot of one's mother. Islam did not adopt polygamy, it found it flourishing at its advent. All it did was to restrain polygamy by limiting the number of wives to four and enjoined monogamy where injustice and dissatisfaction were likely to result. As to the political ideal of Islam, absolute equality of all the children of Adam, the head of the state not excepted, is enjoined in order to stabilize this political democratic concept. Islam begins with the spiritual democratic concept by rejecting the necessity of "Priestocracy" as mediator between man and his creator". We cannot deny that the conception of brotherhood of Islam transcends all barriers of race and nationality, a feature which does not characterize any other religion", says Sir Dr. Radhakrishna in his 'East and West in Religion' "Colourbar, the anathema of the West and 'cast-slavery' the anathema of the Hindu society, are singularly absent in Islam."

The post-Prophet divergence of the streams of thought within the bosom of Islam needs mention. The world of Islam came to be divided into two major sects – the Sunnis and the Shias. The Sunnis are the people of the "Sunnah" or tradition, their profession of faith being "There is no god but

Allah, and Muhammad is the Apostle of God". The Shias go further and profess Hazarat Ali as the first MANIFEST IMAM after the death of Prophet Muhammad. The Sunnis, however, consider him the fourth in the succession of Caliphs to temporal power. To the Sunnis the Imam is only concerned with temporal while to the Shias He is also concerned with spiritual matters. The Sunni church is still divided into four main denominations, differing from each other on many questions of dogma and ritual, these four denominations being El-Hanbaly, Esh-Shafaiy, El-Maliky and El-Hanafy. Of the Shias there are many subdivisions. The Zaidas believe that the Imam descended from Zain-ul-Abidin to Zaid not to Mohammed-Al-Bakir. The Ithnasharies believe that the Imam is now held by a living Imam Mehdi, the twelfth from Ali, who is alive unseen but seeing. The Bohoras claim that the Imam descended from Mustansir to Musteali, and not to Nizar as is believed by the Ismailies. According to us Ismailis, our Present Imam Shah Karim is a direct descendant of the Prophet and Hazarat Ali and the "Hujjat" of God on earth, he is the "Paraceletes" promised in the Bible, the "Sambavami-yuge-yug" promised in the Geeta and the "Imame-Mubin" promised in the Koran. Though they had to pass through many trials and tribulations, our Imams never thought it fit as the "Spiritual Guides" to hide themselves behind any mysterious veil or into any mysterious cave, thus fulfilling to its very letter the Prophet's prophecy that the Ahl-Bayat and the Holy Koran will remain manifest in the world till the very day of the Judgement.

The existence of sectarianism in Islam has been productive of dissention and strife. It is inimical to the concept of the Islamic Fraternity. If a large-hearted spirit of tolerance permeates through and through all the sects, if all the Muslims pool their resources together to bear on the greater cause of Pan-Islamism, Islam has that capacity, as the late Agakhan says in his Memoirs "to be a moral and spiritual force of

enormous significance". Every Muslim must address himself conscientiously to the task of bringing about the long-awaited Renaissance in Islam.

"Surely the true religion with God is Islam" (The Quran 3:18). Should we not, all the Muslims therefore, work together in a spirit of harmony and concord for the greater glorification of this richest heritage bequeathed to us - this Religion of God Himself.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

"And We have not sent you (Muhammad) but as a mercy to mankind" (The Qur'an, 21 : 107).

PROPHET MUHAMMAD. AND ISLAM

by Miss Zaitun B. G. Moosa

'Allahu Akbar! La illaha Ill'Allah Muhammad-ur-Rasulillah!' – 'God excelleth in greatness; there is no god but Allah, Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah!' – the cry from the minarets echoes down the centuries. In these words, the glory and greatness of Almighty has been extolled; in these words the heavenly reminder has been proclaimed.

Muhammad, the holy Prophet of Islam, was born in Mecca on the twelfth Rabiul Awwal 570 A.D. His father Abdullah died before his birth, and according to the tribal custom, Muhammad was handed to the care of a Bedouin nurse, Haleema. At the age of five, he returned to the care of his beloved mother Amina, but she died a year later. Muhammad lived with his grandfather, Abdul-Muttalib for three years and after whose death, he was brought up by his uncle Abu-Talib, as one of the family members.

Muhammad, as he grew up,, accompanied his uncle on trading journeys. These journeys gave him his first impressions of the outside world and of the contrast and similarity in the beliefs, customs and civilizations of different countries and peoples. Later when Abu-Talib's business dwindled, Muhammad earned his livelihood as a shepherd. But whatever his pursuit and whatever the duties or transactions he was entrusted with, he discharged them all with such honorable sincerity, as to win for himself, by common consent, the title of Al-Amin, the Trustworthy.

Muhammad later joined the service of Khadija, a wealthy widow and took charge of her caravans. His nobility of character, his simplicity, his sincerity of heart and his wisdom attracted Khadija to such an extent that she sought his hand in marriage. Muhammad married her when he was

twenty-five, though Khadija was fifteen years his senior; their twenty-six years of married life were extremely happy.

Deeply religious by nature, Muhammad often retired to the cave of Mount Hira, some three miles to the North of Mecca, and sat there in contemplation of God. It was on one of these occasions that he received the call from Almighty. Angel Gabriel confronted him and uttered the word "Iqraa!" meaning "Read". At first Muhammad was dazzled. He did not know how to read, but the angel told him to read in the name of God. Muhammad repeated the words, and this was the beginning of his prophetic mission.

Among Arabs, plunged in the sea of ignorance and darkness, he was asked to declare with unfatring voice the unity of God, and the brotherhood of men. He was to overthrow idolatry and revive the ancient lusture of the true religion.

On returning home, Muhammad recounted his experience to Khadija, who was the firts to accept the truth of his mission. The other two were Abu Bakar and Zaid. These were his first converts — a woman, a businessman and a freed slave, all banded together in the equality of Islam. Ali ofcourse, was the Champion of Islam, from its very inception.

For a year or two, Muhammad preached among his friends and relatives and made several converts but the Meccans as a whole regarded him with indifference, as one who had become mad. Muhammad condemned his people's idol-gods and met with bitterest opposition. He was persecuted, stoned, insulted and his very life was in danger; his followers were relentlessly oppressed. But Muhammad faced all this with the determination to wring success out of tortures.

The Arabs tried to compromise, offering to accept Muhammad's religion if he agreed to their idols being worshipped as intercessors to his God. When this negotiation failed,

a deputation was sent to Abu-Talib, offering Muhammed wealth and power as an inducement to stop preaching and they threatened that unless he did so, Abu-Talib would bear the consequences with him. Muhammad, on being informed of this, said: "Though they may give me the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left to turn me back from my undertaking, yet will I NOT pause till the Lord carry His cause to victory or till I die for it."

In the thirteenth year of his mission, finding his enemies all banded against him, forty sworn men, one out of every tribe, waiting to kill him, Muhammad accompanied by Abu-Bakr fled to Mecca in 622 A.D. They took refuge in the cave of Thaur, and on the third night they set out for Yathreb (Medina) This was Hijrat, the migration of the Prophet.

It was not till the eighth year after the Hijrat that the Muslims were able to put an end to this strife by obtaining a bloodless victory over the Meccans. This proved to be the greatest triumph of Islam. The sacred house of Ka'ba was purified of idols and the Muslim call to prayer rung through this ancient sanctuary. The Arabs, a fallen nation, wild and uncivilized, steeped in the vilest vices, underwent a complete change; and this is the grandest landmark in the world history. They who did not believe in God, became so very faithful to Him that they did their best to spread Islam, so that before long, arose an Arabia, united in the worship of the One true God!

Muhammad forbade drinking, gambling, usuary and all other vices. He abolished the horrible practice of female infanticide prevalent among the pagan Arabs. He was probably the greatest champion of women's rights the world has ever seen. He preached that a woman must not be a despised creature, to be ashamed of and to be illtreated, but a person to love, cherish and respect; at her feet lay the gates to Paradise.

Muhammad preached that all men were responsible for their actions and would have to render their account before God. It cannot be that the good and the virtuous are to go unrewarded and the evildoers escape their punishment simply because they have successfully eluded the police.

'Muhammad told mankind, first, that the Infinite sustainer and container of all existence had justice, mercy and love as well; secondly, that man through these qualities and through gentleness and kindness, prayer, awe or wonder could get — howsoever infinitesimal proposition — direct communion with the all-embracing power in which he lived and moved and had his being' (Mowlana Sultan Mohammad Shah).

Muslims believe that while praying, they are in the presence of God; and they pray in a respectful attitude. They turn their faces towards Mecca, not to worship anything or anyone there, but as a central point round which, at this time are focused the religious thought of all Muslims. Though so widely separated, a living spirit of brotherhood binds together the followers of Islam to-day, just as it did when the first few embraced this religion.

Muhammad did not claim to be the founder of a new religion. His mission was to restore the earlier religions to their pristine beauty. A Muslim accepts the Prophethood of all Prophets and that they had the same identical message for mankind, with such variation and differences as the social conditions of the times required. Muhammad came to complete the code of morality started by his predecessors and he, being the last and final Prophet is known as 'Khatimul Ambiya'.

The whole life of the Prophet was a practical demonstration of how to lead one's life in accordance to the Will of God. His teachings were fountain of mercy and wisdom, which abolished cruelty and ignorance. He gave warning to those

who had gone astray, assurance to those in doubt and hope to those in despair. He took special care of all those neglected and oppressed by the world.

The doctrine of one supreme God, to whose Will it is the duty of every man to surrender himself, is the Kernal of Islam, the truth for which Muhammad lived, suffered and triumphed. Islam also means peace, greetings, safety and salvation.

It is wrong to say that Islam was spread by means of the sword. It is only when her liberty and particularly her right of freedom of worship was threatened, that Islam seized the sword in self-defence. Islam spread because "it is not only a faith, but a legal and social system as well." It possesses a brotherhood which is a unifying factor amid the clashes of colour, race, nationality and class. By offering this equality, Islam keeps alive the spark of human dignity in the souls of millions of down-trodden people.

"Islam is a profound and true cult that strives to uplift its votaries from the depths of human darkness upwards into the higher realm of Light and Truth. Islam is a creed of practice, not theory. By practice it was formed and on practice it lives. It was because Muhammad practiced what he preached, that the small seed of his original idea blossomed, at last into the great banyan tree of existence" — Major Arthur G. Leonard.

In Islam there is no priesthood. Men and Women are not called upon to abandon their homes and practice asceticism. Muslims are expected to live in the world and yet to sit in the corner of a mosque in the expectation of prayers (Saying of Prophet Muhammad). In Islam, the proper discharge of one's duties is regarded as best form of worship.

Speaking of Western Civilization and Religion,

Bernard Shaw says: "If any religion has the chance of ruling over Europe, it can only be ISLAM. It is the only religion which possesses the assimilating capability to the changing phase of existence, which can appeal to every age. I believe that if a man like Muhammad were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring it much needed peace and happiness"

Prophet Muhammad, during his life-time, performed many pilgrimages, and when returning from his farewell pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajjat-ul-Wida), he received the message from God: "O Apostle! deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord; and verily if you did not do this, you have not delivered His message" (V:70). Upon hearing this Muhammad gathered a crowd at the field of Ghadire-Khum. Standing on a raised platform, he took Hazarat Ali by the hand and declared, "Ali is the Lord of those whose Lord I am". Further he declared; "I am leaving two things behind me - The Qur'an and my descendents. They are tied with a long rope and cannot be separated till the day of Judgement. Verily if you cling to them you will never go astray" (Muslim Vol II p.230). Turning to Ali he said, "O, Ali! you are my brother, and father of the Imams from my progeny." After the people had sworn their allegiance to Ali, Muhammad received his last message: "This day I have perfected your religion and completed my favours on you and have chosen ISLAM as a religion for you" (V:4). The above day is famous as 'Yom-ul-Ghadeer' in the annals of the world-history.

Thus having captured the hearts of millions and having completed his mission, Muhammad passed away in 632 A.D., in the youthful arms of his wife, Bibi Ayesha. His last thoughts, his last words were still of heavenly things, "Allah Eternity in paradise The blessed companionship on High".

The Holy Qur'an received through the Holy Prophet remains to this day a guide for all Muslims. The Ismailis seek the true interpretation of the teachings of the Holy Qur'an in the guidance of the Manifest Imam to remain 'Innul Waqt' meaning "The people of The Time".

*" There has come to you indeed from Allah
a LIGHT and a clear Book"*

Sura V: 15

قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَصَائِرُ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ أَبْصَرَ فَلِنَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ عَمِيَ فَعَلَيْهَا

"Clear proofs have indeed come to you from your Lord ;
so whoever sees, it is for his own good ; and whoever is blind,
it is to his own harm" (The Qur'an, 6 : 105).

PROPHET MUHAMMAD AND ISLAM

by Miss Farial D. Alibhai

"ISLAM is indeed the religion of the thinking human being—and therefore the religion which humanity especially needs in its present difficulties. It hates blind thoughtlessness. It proposes a finest use of common sense and a deeper insight into things. On the other hand, by the study of Islam our thoughts gain an extraordinary independence and power, for the Prophet did not lay down a rule with only one interpretation as for example "Marriages are inseparable" or "You should never take up arms", but he showed us the law with its subtle individual differences according to which we must regulate our daily lives as each individual case demands and according to which we can also decide what is right and what is wrong. Islam does not desire serfs but free men, men of science, aristocrats, who are able to decide for themselves."

Islam is not the religion of some devotees who have turned their backs on the "pact".

Muhammad, the Holy Prophet of Islam was born and grew to manhood in Arabia a land at that time considered as beyond redemption and in something like 20 years not only had he made the Arabs, a people of outstanding excellence both in manner and men, but he had fixed them with a zeal that carried them to many lands and climes. Wherever they went they revolutionized thought and life, working a change, whereof the results are seen today in the greatness of many nations. To appreciate rightly the power of the teaching of the Holy Prophet Muhammad and the miracles which they have wrought, it is necessary to describe the Arab lands and days before Islam.

The condition of affairs in Arabia and of the Arabs before the advent of Holy Prophet Muhammad was calamitous. The whole land was plunged in a sea of ignorance and dark-

ness. Justice and truth, the two fundamentals of civilized life, were unknown. Morality was at the lowest ebb. Religion was at its lowest depth. The lives of the people were little better than those of beasts and finer qualities inherent in man were dead.

Some redeeming points there still may be. Hospitality, bravery, generosity, manliness and tribal fidelity were some of the noble traits in their character, but what were these few virtues in comparison with the general life of corruption and brutality that they were leading? These few qualities were easily drowned in an extravagance of sin, free and open indulgence in adultery, gambling, drinking, highway robbery, uncleanness and every kind of abomination.

Not only were these vices indulged in, but they were actually praised and made the themes of poets' songs. In place of the one True God, omniscient and omnipresent they worshipped gods and goddesses made of stone. There were about four hundred such deities in all, the belief being that each one god was powerful to discharge a certain function.

For everything which they desired they turned to these idols, in asking their help and blessings, and in addition they regarded the sun, moon, the stars and the air, all as gods, worshipping them and believing them to be controllers of their destinies. These people had fallen so low that they even worshipped stones, mud, trees, and before any shapely piece of stone on their way they would prostrate themselves.

As far as the social condition of the Arabs is concerned, it was everywhere as bad as their beliefs. The various clans and families were always at war with one another. Anger and hatred were their chief characteristics and revenge their main life force.

Fighting and shedding of the blood over trifles were

the commonplaces of their existences. They were ignorant of every social principle and did not know that it was to lead peaceful and settled life. They wandered from place to place with their cattle, halting when and where they chose. A few settled in villages and towns, but wherever they went there was always constant fighting and bloodshed.

Women were in those days considered as mere chattles — things scarcely human. It was this low esteem in which they were held that established the custom of infanticide. In many tribes, it being reckoned a disgrace and ignominy for a man to have a daughter. Those girls who by any chance escaped death at birth were cruelly treated. When they grew up, they were made to work like beasts of burden and regarded as being without a soul, feeling or even emotions. Women were entitled no share in the prosperity of their fathers or husbands and in the absence of male issue the property would go to the nearest male relative, but not to a daughter.

A man had as many wives as he wished, as well as any number of mistresses. Prostitution was life among them. For this reason, when a daughter was born, her father would bury her alive or have her killed most cruelly, and often the poor mother herself was made to kill her own daughter.

As for education, there was none among the Arabs in those days. Ignorant and superstitious, they believed in all sorts of queer things such as evil spirits, charms and incantations. They believed that the soul was a special germ that got into the body of a child at birth and went on growing, leaving the body only after death, when it assumed the form of an owl and hovered over the tomb.

Their superstitious knew no bounds. They had great faith in fortune-tellers and believed all that was told by them.

Such, then, was the degrading and most pitiable

condition of the Arabs before the coming of Islam. When ignorance and darkness had reached its height, when irreligion had become rampant and cruelty and oppression of the lords of the land had reached the severest point, then, like day after night, like rain after intense heat, God in His infinite mercy of love for the human race made Muhammad His Prophet and sent him to lead those who had gone astray back to the right path.

Like the sun that dispels darkness, the rains that enliven the dead earth, Muhammad the Prophet came and enlightened the dark age. The Arabs, a fallen nation, wild and uncivilized, steeped in the vilest vices, underwent a change that made them the most learned and most civilized of beings. Polytheism was forgotten and the Unity of One God became their firm belief.

They, who knew not One God, were in a short time so faithful to Him that they did their best to spread Islam the world over and they did succeed in spreading that "True Light" which the Holy Prophet Muhammad brought for the whole of humanity to make it a one single family.

The Holy Prophet consolidated the Arabs, from a divided people they soon became a united nation, each and every individual working together and sympathising with each other, instead of fighting as before. God in Quran says: "And remember the favour of God on you when you were the enemies (of one another) then He united your hearts, so by His favour you became brethren, and you were on the brink of a pit of fire, then He saved you from it".

He (Prophet) made the life and the working of the slave tolerable, by enforcing the same treatment for him as a member of the family. The Islamic brotherhood which the teaching of the Prophet Muhammad brought into being did away with all social inequalities between man and man, and

man and woman. He taught them to treat slaves with kindness and love, and made the liberation of a slave a meritorious deed.

He insisted that no free person should by force be made a slave and that those who were already slaves should be treated as members of the family and granted freedom gradually.

The Holy Prophet made it obligatory to pay a certain percentage of the revenues for the purpose of the liberation of the slaves from the Government exchequer.

The Holy Prophet removed all misconceptions about women. He taught the Arabs to regard them (women) as friends and companions and to be kind and loving to them. He said "A person who does not show kindness should not expect any kindness from God". He taught them to regard infanticide as abominable and most displeasing to God and thus it soon came to an end.

He had a great regard for the rights of women, and since the passing away of the matriarchal form of the society, women were for the first time emancipated by the Holy Prophet. He showed by his example, the love, care and respect that was due to them and so women once deemed the lowest of the low were raised to a position of great dignity.

But before he actually achieved success in his mission, he had to go through many difficulties. His preachings evoked furious outburst of persecution against him and his followers. Some wicked people began to plot against him and forgot his goodness. They called him a liar, a magician and a madman. They beat him with sticks and stones and threw ashes on his head. They even desired to kill him. They would not let him say his prayers. They were his bitter enemies and wished to destroy Islam. But nothing could break the spirit of Prophet.

Moreover, Arab chiefs tried several times to win him over by bribes. They said; "We will give you plenty of gold and land, but you must give up the worship of ONE GOD and preaching of Islam. We will make you our King!" But the Prophet replied "If you will place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left, even then I will not give up my mission". And yes! he did complete his mission successfully. "Allaho Akbar", the Muslim call to prayer, can be heard from minarets in every country of this world.

His message "Ali is the Master of those whose Master I am" to 1,40,000 Muslims at Gadir e Khum, was the one to seal the completion of his mission.

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ

وَأَتَمَّمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

"This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favour to you and chosen for you Islam as a religion" (The Qur'an, 5 : 3).

ALLAHO AKBAR

APPENDIX

NON-MUSLIMS ON ISLAM, PROPHET MUHAMMAD, HOLY QUR'AN AND HAZRAT ALI

(1) ISLAM - A RATIONAL RELIGION

"Islam is a religion that is essentially rationalistic in the widest sense of this term, considered etymologically and historically. The definition of rationalism as a system that bases religious beliefs on principles furnished by the reason, applies to it exactly. A creed so precise, so stripped of all theological complexities and consequently so accessible to the ordinary understanding, might be expected to possess and does indeed possess a marvellous power of winning its way into the consciences of men."

Edward Monte in 'La Propagande Chretienne et Ses Adversaires Musulmans', as quoted by T. W. ARNOLD in his 'THE PREACHING OF ISLAM'.

(2) ISLAM - A GREAT POWER

"Islamism has been and still is a great power in the world. There is much in it that is calculated to purify and elevate mankind at a certain stage in history. It has the power of reclaiming the slaves of degraded polytheism from their low, grovelling conceptions of God to conceptions which are higher; it has set an example of sobriety to the world and has shielded its followers from the drink plague which destroys the strength of nations."

BISHOP BOYD CARPENTER in his 'THE PERMANENT ELEMENT IN RELIGION'.

(3) MUHAMMAD - NO NAME SHINES SO BRIGHT

"Judged by the smallness of the means at his disposal, and the extent and permanence of the work he accomplished, no name in the world's story shines with a more spacious lustre than that of the Prophet of Mecca. To the impulse which he gave, numberless dynasties have owed their existence, fair cities and stately palaces and temples have arisen, and wide provinces became obedient to the Faith. And beyond all this, his words have governed the belief of generations, been accepted as their rule in life and their certain guide to the world to come. At a thousand shrines the the voices of the Faithful invoke blessing on him, whom they esteem the very Prophet of God., the seal of Apostles, now passed into the highest heaven as their intercessor with the All-Merciful Allah. Judged by the standard of human renown, the glory of what moral can compare with his?"

W. H. STOBART in 'ISLAM AND ITS FOUNDER'

(4) MUHAMMAD'S MAGNANIMITY.

"There was now nothing left in Mecca that could thwart his pleasure. If ever he had worn a mask at all, he would now, at all events, have thrown it off; if lower aims had gradually sapped the higher, or his moderation had been directed as Gibbon supposes by his selfish interests, we should now have seen the effect; now would have been the moment to gratify his ambition, to satiate his lust, to glut his revenge. Is there anything of the kind? Read the account of the entry of Muhammad into Mecca, side by side with that of Marius or Sulla into Rome. Compare all the attendant circumstances, the outrages that preceded, and the use made by each of his recovered power, and we shall then be in a position better to appreciate the magnanimity and moderation of the Prophet of Arabia. There were no proscription lists; no plunder, no wanton revenge."

R. BOSWORTH SMITH in 'MOHAMMED AND MOHAMMEDANISM'

(5) SPREAD OF ISLAM

"History makes it clear, however, that the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of the sword upon conquered races is one of the most fantastically absurd myths that historians have ever repeated."

DE LACY O'LEARY in 'ISLAM AT THE CROSSROADS'.

"The picture of the Muslim soldiers advancing with a sword in one hand and a Koran in the other is quite false."

(6) WOMEN IN ISLAM

A. S. TRITTON in 'ISLAM'.

"You can find others stating that the religion (Islam) is evil, because it sanctions a limited polygamy. But you do not hear as a rule the criticism which I spoke out one day in a London hall where I knew that the audience was entirely uninstructed. I pointed out to them that monogamy with a blended mass of prostitution was a hypocrisy and more degrading than a limited polygamy. Naturally a statement like that gives offence, but it has to be made, because it must be remembered that the law of Islam in relation to women was until lately, when parts of it have been imitated in England, the most just law, as far as women are concerned, to be found in the world. Dealing with property, dealing with rights of succession and so on, dealing with cases of divorce, it was far beyond the law of the West, in the respect which was paid to the rights of women. Those things are forgotten while people are hypnotised by the words Monogamy and Polygamy and do not look at what lies behind it in the West — the frightful degradation of women who are thrown into the streets when their first protectors, weary of them, no longer give them any assistance."

ANNIE BESANT in 'THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF MUHAMMAD'.

(7) THE MIRACLE OF THE QURAN.

"That Muhammad's boast as to the literary excellence of the Quran was not unfounded, is further evidenced by a circumstance, which occurred about a century after the establishment of Islam. The story runs that in those days a body of religious 'Nihilists', by seeing the enormous power which the Quran exercised over the hearts of the Faithful, commissioned a certain Ibn al Muqaffa, a man of profound learning, unsurpassable eloquence and vivid imagination, to produce a book to rival the emanation of Muhammad's pen. Ibn al Muqaffa agreed, but stipulated that he should be allowed a period of twelve months wherein to accomplish his task, during which time all his bodily wants should be supplied, so that he might be enabled to concentrate his mind on the task which he had undertaken. At the expiration of half the allotted interval his friends, on coming to make inquiries as to his progress, found him sitting pen in hand, deeply absorbed in study, while before him was a blank sheet of paper, and around his desk a wild confusion of closely-written manuscripts torn into pieces, and scattered indiscriminately over the apartment. In good truth he had tried to write a single verse equalling the Quran in excellence and failed; and he confessed with confusion and shame that a solitary line had baffled all his efforts for six months, so he retired from the task hopeless and crest-fallen."

WALLASTON in 'MUHAMMAD: HIS LIFE AND DOCTRINES'

(8) THE LAWFUL HEIR

"Had the principle of hereditary succession (in favour of Ali) been recognised at the outset, it would have prevented the rise of those disastrous pretensions which engulfed Islam in the blood of Moslems . . . The husband of Fatima united in his person the right of succession as the lawful heir of the Prophet, as well as the right by election. It might have been thought that all would submit themselves before his glory; so pure and so grand. But it was not to be."

SEDILLOT in 'HISTOIRES DES ARABES'