

Muhammad ﷺ:

The Glory of the Ages

BY

His Eminence

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CONTENTS

Preface	3
Preface: To The Second Edition	13
Chapter I	15
Christian References To Muhammad (Peace) And His Religion.	
Chapter II	24
Pen-Pictures Of The Holy Prophet (Peace)	
Chapter III	26
Condition Of The World Before The Advent Of The Holy Prophet (Peace)	
Chapter IV	33
The Birth Of Muhammad ﷺ: The Meccan Period Of His Life Or The Period Of Passive Resistance.	
Chapter V	58
The Medinite Period: The Establishment Of The Republic, The Kingdom Of Heaven!	
Chapter VI	104
Muhammad's ﷺ Character And Achievements In The Eyes Of His Opponents	
What Islam Is?	122
Islam—A Life To Be Lived	
Islam And Progress	
Bernard Shaw On Islam	

PREFACE

This manuscript was perused by my revered teacher Maulana Shah Muhammad Abdul Aleem Saheb Siddiqui Al-Qaderi (R.A) and Mr. Mahmoud Ahmad, M.A., L.L.B., of the Department of Philosophy, Muslim University, Aligarh, whose very valuable suggestions were responsible for certain additions. I owe thanks to them and also to my beloved elder brothers, Muhammad Jalil Ansari, Esquire, of the U.P. Canals Engineering Service, and Mr. Muhammad Jamil Ansari who rendered me some very valuable help during the preparation of this book.

Though there are a number of biographies of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (on whom be peace and eternal felicity!) written by eminent Muslim scholars in the English language, yet this humble little book meets a long-felt and unfulfilled need. There is so much prejudice in the mind of the average Christian that he seldom cares to read a book written by an Eastern Muslim writer in defence of Islam and the Holy Prophet. Our first consideration therefore should be to employ every means which may interest him in the subject. A quotation from a Western authority is often more convincing for him than our research based on original sources. This idea forced me to write this book in which Western authorities have been freely quoted on the subject, especially on controversial points, and though it may not be able to present to the reader all the greatness of the Holy Prophet's personality, yet I am sure, it would be read with greater interest than some of the other books written by the Muslim authors on the subject and would prepare the non-Muslim reader to proceed, further in his study of the subject.

I plan writing a series of three books on the life of the Holy Prophet. This book is the first of the series and concerns itself particularly with depicting the birth and the struggle of Islam during the life-time of Muhammad (peace be upon him!).

In the second book I propose to deal with the Holy Prophet as an ideal man proving conclusively that every conceivable virtue found its most glorious manifestation in his person and character. In the third book I propose to prove that Muhammad (pbuh) was the ideal and the

greatest reformer that the world has known.

A great need has been felt since long to bring out the cheapest possible edition of a book on the life of the Holy Prophet. The Anjuman Himayat Islam, Nairobi, British East Africa should be heartily congratulated on meeting this grave need by publishing this book.

Before I conclude I deem it necessary to quote the following from the writings of the late lamented Dr. Khuda Bakhsh, D.C.L, who wrote it a few days before his sad demise. He says:

“Who was it that within a brief span of mortal life called forth a nation, strong, compact, invincible, out of loose, disconnected, ever-warring tribes animated by a religious fervour and enthusiasm unknown in the history of the world before, and set before it a system of religion and a code of morals marked by wisdom, sanity and sweet reasonableness? Who was it?

It was none other than Muhammad, the Prophet of God.

It was he who launched the new faith on its world-wide career. It was he who attacked heathenism in its very stronghold, its cherished sanctuary, at Mecca, the central point of Arabian idolatry.

“The light dawned upon him and the inner voice spoke unto him, the decision was formed; a decision firm and irrevocable, a decision for all time. The whole history of the Prophet is an eloquent commentary on the genuineness of this conviction. Battling against the whole force of his country arrayed against him, he stood undaunted, unshaken in his resolve. Is there one single instance of lapse from the position thus taken up?

No consideration could induce him to give up that

which he considered as a duty entrusted to him by the Most High, the duty of proclaiming Monotheism, in its undefiled purity, and of bringing back his erring countrymen, nay, the erring world, to the path of the true faith. Could anything but a conviction of the truth of his mission have sustained him in that terrible struggle?

“When enthroned as spiritual and temporal chief, what did he do to justify the most distant suggestion that he had altered or changed? Did he change his mode of living? Did he surround himself with the pomp of power? Did he keep a retinue of bodyguard, or did he indulge in any one of those outward manifestations of earthly glory with which the monarchs of the earth, ancient and modern, have loved to surround themselves? Did he amass wealth, or leave a large fortune behind? In fact in no one single respect did he change. Power notwithstanding, and stupendous power too, for he exercised a power which the greatest of monarchs might have envied, he remained to the last simple, unostentatious, free from pride, living with his people in a noble self-effacement; and a self-sacrifice rarely to be seen in life.

“But it is so difficult for a European to understand, the Oriental’s attitude towards life and religion. With the Oriental, every act of his has a religious bearing, a religious significance. His whole life, from the cradle to the grave, is one series of religious performances. There is no sharp dividing line between religion and politics. There is no such thing as “give unto Caesar what is Caesar’s and unto God what is God’s”. Caesar is but a representative of God and obedience to him is obedience to God. Muhammad combined the two functions. He had not only to regulate the ritual, frame religious ordinances, direct the worship of his followers, but he had also to

attend to their material wants, to guide their political destiny.

“And what Prophet of Israel from Samuel to Isaiah was not a maker of kings and constitution? At Mecca his sphere of activity was necessarily narrow and confined. At Medina, the slow march of events added to his prophetic office the arduous duties of the head of a State. It was not a purely ideal code of ethics and morals that he was called upon to administer, but a code workable in daily life and in conformity with the existing moral standard of the age and people among whom he lived.

“He would have failed most egregiously if he had dealt with the political problems in the spirit of a visionary, in the fashion of an idealist. Take, for instance at his attitude towards the Jews. Could we, in the light of the facts that we do know, find fault with him for his attitude towards them? Modern statesmanship would, perhaps, have taken a far less merciful view than the Prophet did. He tried his utmost to placate them, but they took up an attitude of positive, aggressive hostility. They formed alliances with his enemies, and they even secretly helped them. Was he to let them alone to destroy what he was painfully and laboriously building up?

“No statesmanship would have permitted or indicated any course other than the one adopted by Muhammad.”

“Take again his triumphal entry into Mecca. What a glorious instance of forbearance! Arabia lay prostrate at his feet, and Mecca, the stronghold of opposition, was entirely at his mercy. Did he, then, show a spirit of revenge? And could he not, if he had so willed, have cut off the heads of every one, those implacable enemies of his, who gave him no quarter, who forced

him to leave his native land to seek shelter elsewhere, who held him up to scorn and ridicule, who persecuted him with a rancour and bitterness which was at once cruel, fierce and heart-rending. But the personal element never entered into his actions—not once. He rejected every token of personal homage, and when the haughty chiefs of the Quraishites appeared before him, he asked: “What can you expect at my hands?” “Mercy, O generous brother” was the supplication. “Bet it so, you are free”, he exclaimed. His simplicity, his humanity, his frugality, his firmness in adversity, his meekness in power, his forbearance, his earnestness, his steadfastness, his anxious care for animals, his passionate love for children, his unbending sense of fairness and justice — is there another instance in the history of the world where we have the assemblage of all these virtues woven into one character?

“Muhammad set a shining example to his people. His character was pure and stainless. His house, his dress, his food they were characterized by a rare simplicity. So unpretentious was he that he would receive from his companions no special marks of reverence, nor would he accept any service from his slave for work which he could do himself. Often and often was he seen in the market purchasing provisions; often and often was he seen mending his clothes in his room, or milking a goat in his courtyard. He was accessible to all and at all times. He visited the sick and was full of sympathy for all. Unlimited was his benevolence and generosity, as also was his anxiety for the welfare of the community. Despite innumerable presents, which from all quarters unceasingly poured in for him, he left very little behind, and even that little he regarded

as State property!¹

“But if Muhammad as a man, stands as a peak of humanity, his work, no less, is strong with the strength of immortality. True, the political power of Islam has ebbed away, but its spiritual power is as young and vigorous today as it was when first launched on its wondrous, world-wide career. In India, in Africa, in China the Muslim missionaries have won laurels. They have succeeded signally and succeeded where Christianity, with all its wealth and organisation, has failed most hopelessly. But its success has been confined not only to backward races. Has it not secured proselytes even in cultured Europe?

And what is the secret of its success? The secret consists in its remarkable freedom from the fetters of embarrassing ritual and bewildering articles of faith. Islam is the simplest of all revealed religions, and it is, therefore, a religion compatible with the highest as well as the lowest grade of civilization. Its simplicity is attractive and appealing alike to the man in the street as to the philosopher in the closet.

“Goethe fell into raptures over the Qur’an, and Gibbon saw in it a glorious testimony to the unity of God. Belief in one God and belief in Muhammad as the Prophet of God; such is the quintessence of our faith. This theoretical belief, however, is allied with a principle of infinite grace and wisdom; namely, that it is not mere faith in the theoretical belief, but purity of life and honesty of purpose, sympathy with the afflicted, and love of our fellow beings; it is the conjunction of the two, the theoretical and the practical which ensures salvation. This is a lesson which must needs be taught if we would make

¹ Dr. Gustave Weil.