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THE ROAD TO MADINAH

A Spiritual Journey to the City of the Beloved

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THE ROAD TO MADĪNAH
*A Spiritual Journey to the City of the
Beloved*

**Hadrat Maulānā Sayyid Abul Hasan 'Alī
Nadwī *rahimahullāh***

**Translated by
Maulānā Mahomed Mahomedy**

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INTRODUCTION

SHAYKH 'ALĪ TANTĀWĪ *rahimahullāh*

To my brother, al-Ustādh Abul Ḥasan:

The masses here in Syria have a saying: “The written word is recognized by its title”. The title of your book – *at-Tarīq ilal Madīnah (The Road to Madīnah)* – shook me before I could even open it.

I felt it moving me thirty three stations back in the journey of my life. It took me back a full one third of a century. I saw myself in the desert – the desert of the Ḥijāz – where my companions and I spent fifty days with the sun blazing down on us and the sand burning beneath us. A hill would elevate us, only to be seized by the next valley. Thirst was burning us while we were terrified by the fear of getting lost. All our hopes and wishes were confined to just one hope and just one wish; and that is to see Madīnah.

My brother, we were wandering in the deserts on “The Road to Madīnah”. We tasted the fire of hunger and the burning of thirst. We looked at death in the face and we swallowed the bitter gulps of fatigue and fear. An entire day passed like this. We had a Bedouin guide who was always silent – his tongue was locked and he had a permanent gloomy face. Suddenly his face began to beam and his tongue began to move. He said just one sentence. I would not have liked a thousand gold coins more than that one sentence. It was a statement which changed our fear to security, our hunger and thirst to fulfilment and satiation, and our fatigue to comfort and relief. His statement was magic – that is if words could have magic in them. He said: “Here is Uḥud.”

“Uhud” – just imagine a desert-dwelling lover who passed a long period of time separated from his beloved. His yearning has tormented him and suddenly he is informed: “Here is the house of the beloved.”

Bear in mind that that is physical love, and here we are talking about love of the soul. That is earthly desire which disappears, and this is heavenly love which will never end.

After more than thirty three years, I still remember how this statement instilled strength to our nerves. We immediately began hastening our vehicles and instructed our drivers to drive faster. We were in motor vehicles – the first to cross the desert between Syria and the Hijāz; and it was the first time this desert experienced this new mode of transport. The drivers became energetic. In fact, we felt as if the shiver of joy and intoxication of reaching [the beloved] which we experienced was being experienced by these cars as well, and they too got more power, moved faster and surged ahead.

When we drove around Mt. Uhud and the green dome appeared before us, our tongues were unable to express the emotions which our hearts were feeling – just as my pen is unable to express those emotions today.

We spoke with the tongue of lovers: with fluttering hearts and a rain of tears. Why should our hearts not flutter and our tears not rain down!? After all we had reached the abode of the beloved *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*. It is that abode in whose imagination we used to live and whose remembrance

was our food. When we read the *sīrah*¹ and mention is made of these places, we feel as though they are the abodes of our souls and the resting places of our hearts. The lands in which we were born were mere homes for our bodies. When did the home of the body ever be more beloved to a person than the home of the heart!?

Is there any Muslim on earth who will not sacrifice his homeland for the sake of the city of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* if [Allāh *ta‘ālā* forbid] it ever experiences any calamity? Will he not sell his house and the house of his family members for the sake of the House of Allāh if it is ever threatened with any mishap?

A person [who has an interest in literature] would love to visit the place where a certain litterateur was born and where he lived. He would love to see the place where a certain poet lived. He will travel to that place and spend a lot of money to reach there. In the course of his journey, he will savour the bitterness of fatigue and bear all the hardships of travel.

How, then, can the heart of a Muslim not melt out of yearning for the city on whose ground the greatest beloved [*sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*] of every Muslim walked, whose air he breathed and whose water he drank?! This lover walks on the same paths on which the beloved walked. He performs *ṣalāh* where he performed. He enters [the city of Madīnah] from the road which the beloved entered on the day when he emigrated from Makkah. He leaves from the road which the beloved left on the day when he went to Uḥud. He

¹ The life and biography of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*.

goes and observes the place where the battle took place, and stands over the graves of the martyrs.

He then returns to the Raudah¹ which is a piece of Paradise on earth. He stands before the room which embraced his body when he was alive, and has now been locked with him while he is deceased. This room will never be opened until the day of Resurrection. He says:

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا سَيِّدِي، يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ

Peace be to you, O my master. O Rasūlullāh!

I will never forget what I felt the first time I stood there.

What has happened to me now? How is it that I do not have the same yearning and do not experience the same joy?!

How is it that I read these impassioned poems written by the Arab poets which used to shake my heart violently as a farmer violently shakes a fruit-laden tree? Emotions and elevated thoughts would fall in my heart like fully ripened fruit fall from a tree which is shaken.

How is it that I read those poems today but nothing shakes from my heart except a few branches which the winter of my life has stripped of all leaves, and which have been reduced to firewood?!

Is it because of the passage of such a long time? Is it because my heart has become heedless? Is it because time has corrupted me? Is it because

¹ The blessed grave of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*.

previously we used to travel on land, spending many long weeks on the road to Madīnah, spurred on by yearning, and drawn by longing. Thousands of thoughts would come like waves in our hearts. Now we are able to go to Madīnah within two to three hours. We climb the steps of an aeroplane in Syria or Egypt, we have our meal, have a short nap; and suddenly we are getting down the steps of the aeroplane in Jeddah.

We may have gained time, but we have lost our emotions and feelings...

I had almost lost confidence in my own self. But when I read your book, *The Road to Madīnah*, O my brother, Abul Ḥasan! I could feel the yearning coming back and wrestling with my self. I realized that my heart was not completely empty of the essence of love. Rather, concerns of time and life, and a lengthy affinity had covered its essence with dust. So your book removed the dust from its essence.

I had almost lost confidence in literature when I no longer found the heavenly melodies which used to be sung from the time of ash-Sharīf ar-Raḍī¹ to al-Barʿī². But when I read your book, I found those lost melodies. I found them in your prose which is really poetry, but without the scales and rhymes of poetry.

¹ A well-known Hāshimī poet of the 'Abbāsī era. Some scholars consider him to be from among the greatest Arab poets. His poetry is compiled in a collection known as *al-Ḥijāziyyāt*.

² He is Sayyidī 'Abd ar-Raḥīm al-Barʿī. A famous poet whose *dīwān* (collection) of *na't* (poetry in praise of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) is well-known, and popular among the masses and scholars.

O Abul Hasan! I thank you for returning to me my confidence in my self, and my confidence in the literature of my language.

As for the introduction which you requested me to write, please excuse me from fulfilling such a request because you neither need it, nor does this book need it.

Introductions to books are like agents in the commercial world. A new trader needs an agent to market a new unknown product. What can an agent do if the customers know the trader better than the agent himself? What can an agent do if the customers are more enthusiastic about purchasing a product than the trader is in selling it?

Was salāmu ‘alayka wa raḥmatullāh
‘Alī Tanṭāwī
Makkah Mukarramah
12/2/1385 A.H.

FOREWORD

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ، وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى خَيْرِ خَلْقِهِ سَيِّدِنَا وَمَوْلَانَا مُحَمَّدٍ
وَأَلِيهِ وَصَحْبِهِ أَجْمَعِينَ.

The book before you is a collection of the author's different speeches and articles on the *sīrah*. They may be different and diverse depending on the time, occasion, place, background and function where they were delivered. However, there is a unity in this diversity, viz. they are all connected to one personality. That is, Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*, his pure life, his teachings, his message, his bestowals and favours, and their universal results and effects. The purpose of all is one, viz. to develop the greatness of this personality in one's mind and to create a love and emotional attachment for him in the heart. Thus, despite the differences and diversity in style, manner of speech, subject and theme; there is no conflict in these articles, and one will not perceive any repetition and duplication in them.

The majority of these speeches and articles were first written in Arabic. The author himself or his associates then translated them into Urdu. They were published in various reputable periodicals and magazines.

Since quite some time, the author has been perceiving and his heart has been thinking that the bond of many individuals belonging to the educated class in the Arab countries (especially those who have been influenced by Arab nationalism and become enchanted by this sorcery which was initiated some time ago in Egypt) has become weak and fragile with that personality who is the fountain and source of all

their accomplishments, and from whom they received worldly and religious honour. Their bond with him [Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*] has become restricted to an official bond, devoid of the burning of love, and earnestness of life. Whereas this personal and emotional bond in which the entire love for that personality ought to be more than one’s most beloved family and most beloved possessions. This is what is required according to the Qur’ān and Hadīth.¹ The greatest respect, esteem and reverence ought to be reserved for him. The Sharī’ah has made elaborate and judicious arrangements for this purpose, and wide-ranging guidelines and injunctions have been laid down.²

¹ A narration of Tabarānī states:

لا يؤمن أحدكم حتى أكون أحب إليه من نفسه الخ.

None of you can be a true believer until he loves me more than his own self...

Several Ahādīth of Sahīhayn make mention of one’s parents, children, and all humankind.

² For example, the Sahābah *radiyallāhu ‘anhum* were prohibited from raising their voices and speaking louder than him in his presence. Allāh *ta’ālā* states in Sūrah al-Hujurāt:

لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ وَلَا تَجْهَرُوا لَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ كَجَهْرِ بَعْضِكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ

O believers! Do not raise your voices over the voice of the Prophet, nor speak loudly to him as you speak loudly to each other, lest your deeds are wasted without your perceiving it. (Sūrah al-Hujurāt, 49: 2)

We are warned in this verse about the possibility of our good deeds going to waste without even realizing it.

Similarly, it is an extremely reprehensible act to stand outside his room and call for him in a loud voice. It is

This change [among the educated Arab class] is a sign of grave danger, and an indication of a major revolution and misfortune. Every discerning and concerned Muslim ought to be alarmed and terrified by it. Such a Muslim believes that the Arabs alone were the first and greatest custodians of this treasure, they are essential for the continued existence and establishment of the Islamic world, and they have always been the source of its strength, the guardians and protectors of this treasure, and from whom the Islamic world receives its blessings.

I was affected by this situation and felt it appropriate to collate and publish my Arabic speeches

considered to be very disrespectful to do this. Allāh *ta'ālā* says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُنَادُونَكَ مِنْ وَرَاءِ الْحُجُرَاتِ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ

Those who call you from beyond the dwellings – most of them do not have intelligence. (Sūrah al-Hujrāt, 49: 4)

To call him and address him as one would to any other person is also disrespectful and inappropriate. Allāh *ta'ālā* says:

لَا تَجْعَلُوا دُعَاءَ الرَّسُولِ بَيْنَكُمْ كَدُعَاءِ بَعْضِكُمْ بَعْضًا

Do not regard the calling of the Messenger among you like the calling of some of you to others. (Sūrah an-Nūr, 24: 63)

Marrying his pure wives after his demise has been made unlawful because if someone were to marry any of his pure wives, the respect and reverence which one ought to have cannot be maintained. It is this very same respect and reverence for him which is essential and beneficial for the safety of one's *īmān*. Allāh *ta'ālā* says:

وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَنْ تُنكِحُوا أَزْوَاجَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ أَبَدًا، إِنَّ دَلِكُمْ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ

عَظِيمًا

It does not behove you to hurt the Messenger of Allāh nor to every marry his wives after him. Surely this act of yours is a major sin in the sight of Allāh. (Sūrah al-Ahzāb, 33: 53)

and articles which had proved to be beneficial on their respective occasions and times, and which were approved and praised by Arab litterateurs and scholars. Perhaps this collection will be able to rekindle the heat of love in hearts which have become dispirited and cold, and serve to reduce the influence of nationalism. A person of non-Arab descent living far from the Arab world can do nothing more. Moreover, examples of the ardent love of non-Arab slaves [of Allāh *ta'ālā*] and their spiritual attachment [to Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*] should also be presented so that it strikes at Arab self-respect and honour, and the subdued embers of love may be shaken and reignited.

The plundering armies of western sciences, materialistic philosophies and modern education under the leadership of nationalism have left the non-Arab lands, entered the Arab lands, traversed the vast Islamic countries, and penetrated the very Haram [of Makkah and Madīnah]. In order to combat them and remove their effects, we felt the need to prepare a new army on behalf of the land of love – an army which will be at the forefront of fighting the forces of materialism. Love has always been successful in curtailing the success of defective intellect and superficial knowledge. Its burning and blazing fervour razed the jungle of detachment, insensitivity, self-conceit and selfishness, and reduced it to ash. It seems as if Iqbāl said the following couplet specifically for such an occasion:

From the kingdom of love, I raise a new
army. Because the Haram¹ is threatened by
revolt of the intellect.

¹ The holy sanctuary of Makkah.

This collection was arranged, and during my hajj journey of 1384 A.H., I presented it to a publisher in Madīnah Tayyibah – al-Maktabah al-‘Ilmīyyah – which was headed by a scholar by the name of Shaykh Muḥammad an-Namnakānī.¹

I gave it the title, *at-Tarīq ilal Madīnah (The Road to Madīnah)* because the Arabs will once again get guidance from Madīnah Tayyibah and the last centre of Islam. It is, as in the words of Iqbāl, a call to the adherents of modernism and supporters of Arab nationalism to return to their original centre; and a commentary of this couplet:

Take the wandering deer back towards the
Haram.² Give, once again, boundlessness of
the desert to the lovers of this city.

I requested my esteemed friend, Ustād ‘Alī Tanṭāwī [*rahimahullāh*] the ex-judge of the High Court of Syria, whom, I consider to be the greatest present day Arabic litterateur and writer, to write the Foreword or to write something as an introduction. He was very kind to fulfil my request in a manner which adds to the value of the book, and is a source of honour to both the book and to myself.

This entire collection has now been translated and published in Urdu because movements for nationalism, the effects of Western education, and the present materialism are making inroads everywhere. The heat and fervour of these movements are harming

¹ This book was published and printed in Jumādā al-Ukhrā 1385 A.H.

² Here it refers to the holy sanctuary of Madīnah.

the hearts which are the greatest assets of this *ummah*, and which have immense strength to combat these hostile influences.

I hope – Allāh willing - that the Urdu translation will prove to be equally helpful in stirring the hearts of the educated class, and fanning the flame of love in them.

Abul Ḥasan ‘Alī
Dā’irah Shāh ‘Alamullāh
28 Jumādā al-Ukhrā 1385 A.H.
24 October 1965, Sunday.

THE BOOK WHOSE FAVOUR I WILL NEVER FORGET

Today I will speak about a book whose favour was – and still is – very great to me. I always convey mercies to its great writer who gave to me a gift – through this book – which is the most treasured in my heart after *īmān*. In fact, it is one of the parts of *īmān*. The book I am referring to is *Sīrah Raḥmatul lil ‘Ālamīn* (*The Life of the Mercy to the Worlds*) written by Qāḍī Muḥammad Sulaymān Mansūr pūrī *rahimahullāh*.

There is a charming background to this book:

My elder brother¹ – who had taken charge of my upbringing and education after the demise of my father when I was nine years old – was fully inspired [by Allāh *ta‘ālā*] to select books which I ought to study in my early years.

The first book which he gave me to read was the book, *Sīrah Khayr al-Bashar*, which was written by an Indian author. My brother was very eager for me to study many books on the life and biography of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* because he knew that it was the greatest influence in moulding character, entrenching beliefs, character, and planting the seeds of *īmān*. Consequently, I grew up with a love for books on the *sīrah* and was very eager to acquire and study them.

I used to eagerly read the book catalogues which publishers and book-sellers used to send out. On one occasion, my eyes fell on the name of a book, *Raḥmatul*

¹ He is Dr. Sayyid ‘Abd al-‘Alī al-Ḥasanī, the ex-rector of Nadwatul ‘Ulamā’, Lucknow, India. He passed away on 28 Dhū al-Qa’dah 1380 A.H./1961 C.E.

lil 'Ālamīn. I sent an order for the book, of which two volumes had been printed. My limited budget – when I was just eleven or twelve years old – was certainly not enough to purchase this book. But little children – especially in the era which I am speaking about – do not understand the rules of budgets and economics. They are merely led by their innocent wishes and emotions.

One day, the post man arrived with the book together with the other post which he normally brings to our small village.¹ I realized I did not have the money to pay him for it. My mother – may Allāh *ta'ālā* bless her life² – excused herself from paying the money despite her eagerness to please her orphan child because she did not have that amount of money at the time.

I looked around and found no support and no intercessor at this important juncture except the intercessor which children constantly resort to. Children know that this is an intercessor who is never refused. It is the same intercessor which the young Sayyidunā 'Umayr ibn Abī Waqqās *radiyallāhu 'anhu* resorted to. Thus Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* accepted the intercession and allowed him to fight in the battle of Badr. That intercession is tears

¹ Dā'irah Shāh 'Ālamullāh, Rāi Bareilly. Rāi Bareilly is a village about 80 km from Lucknow.

² She passed away after this article was written on 6 Jumādā al-Ukhrā 1388 A.H. My mother – may Allāh *ta'ālā* shower His mercy on her – was a unique woman who had memorized the Qur'ān and used to compose poetry. She wrote several books and an emotional collection of *du'ā wa munājāt* (supplication and private conversation with Allāh *ta'ālā*).

and innocent crying, which is highly regarded and heard by Allāh *ta'ālā* and His righteous servants.

So did it happen in my case. The heart of my affectionate mother softened, she made some efforts to obtain the money for the book, handed it over and accepted the book [from the post man].

I began reading this book, and it began shaking my heart. It was not a violent jerking shake. Rather, it was a gentle affectionate shake. My heart began swaying and rejoicing like a flower-laden branch swaying in the morning breeze.

This is the distinguishing difference between the shaking which is caused by books written on the lives of brave men and great conquerors, and the shaking which is experienced by books written on the life of the greatest Messenger, Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*. The first shaking attacks the heart from outside and jerks it, while the latter emanates from within the heart of a believer and conveys comfort and solace to him.

My heart began responding to this book and absorbing it as though it had been waiting for it. I perceived a unique enjoyment in the course of reading it. It was an enjoyment which was different from all the other enjoyments which I had known in my childhood (add to it the fact that I was very perceptive from an early age). It was not the enjoyment of a delicious meal when one is hungry, not of wearing new clothes on the day of *'īd*, not of playing when desiring to do so, not of a holiday after continuous studies and preoccupations, not of winning a match, and not of a visit by an old friend or noble visitor. It was an enjoyment which was unlike any of these. It was an enjoyment whose taste I knew, but could not describe. I admit I cannot describe it accurately and express it with the correct word even

today. The most I can say is that it is an enjoyment of the soul. What! Do children not have souls and do they not perceive spiritual enjoyment? They most certainly do. By Allāh, innocent children have more sensitive souls than adults and more accurate perceptions even though they cannot express themselves.

In this astounding and delightful book I would read about some of the Quraysh who embraced Islam and how this resulted in severe torments descending on them. They would then bear all these torments with fortitude and patience, in fact, with joy and happiness. Consequently, I would feel that there is an enjoyment which is not known to many wealthy and powerful people, and people who are considered to be fortunate and lucky. It is when you have to bear a torment in the path of the truth, suffer oppression for the sake of your beliefs, and be humiliated in the course of inviting towards Allāh *ta'ālā*. The joy of power, victory and authority is nothing compared to this joy. I saw my heart wanting to have the good fortune of this enjoyment and this honour even if it was just once in my entire life.

I read the story of Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umayr *radiyallāhu 'anhu*. The same Muṣ'ab who was an icon of opulence and elegance when it came to his clothes and luxurious living. He was a fine youth of the Quraysh. When he used to come out for a walk in Makkah, he would be wearing clothes which used to be estimated at 100 dirhams. Young boys would follow him and he would be the talk of the town.

But once he places his hand in the hand of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*, he dusts his hands from those luxuries and comforts. He now wears coarse clothing and lives a simple life of abstinence. There are times when he has to hold together his sheet

with thorns of the acacia tree. This scene causes Rasūlullāh sallallāhu *'alayhi wa sallam* to shed tears and he thinks of the soft and luxurious life which he used to lead. When this youngster was martyred in Uhud, he had nothing but a sheet on his body. And that too, it was so short that if his head was covered, his feet would be exposed; and if his feet were covered, his head would be exposed. Rasūlullāh sallallāhu *'alayhi wa sallam* eventually said: "Cover his head [with the sheet], and place *idhkhir*¹ on his feet."

When I read this incident, it took over my heart and captured my soul. I realized that behind a life of opulence, elegant clothes, exotic foods and palatial homes man has another need which the wealthy and the kings have not understood. There is an enjoyment which those who follow their desires and demands of their bellies do not know about. When I examined myself, I found it desiring this need and yearning for this enjoyment. I found it having more value and worth for this reality than what it has for the clothes of the wealthy and their hollow manifestations of opulence.

I read the story of the emigration [of Rasūlullāh sallallāhu *'alayhi wa sallam* from Makkah Mukarramah to Madīnah Munawwarah]. I do not think I read a more powerful story and a more beautiful portrayal of this story which the author relates with honesty and simplicity. Rasūlullāh sallallāhu *'alayhi wa sallam* enters Madīnah Munawwarah. The hearts of the people are clinging to him and their eyes are staring towards him. One tribe after the other comes forward to him and says with genuine sincerity and honesty: "O Rasūlullāh! Come live with us. Everything

¹ A fragrant grass.

- our numbers, our preparations, our defences - is at your disposal.” Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* replies - may my parents be sacrificed for him - “Give way to it, this camel is under the order of Allāh *ta’ālā*.” It then sits at the spot where the door to Musjid-e-Nabawī is today. The camel refuses to get up from there, and Allāh *ta’ālā* had already decreed that this unparalleled honour should go to none other than Ḥaḍrat Abū Ayyūb Anṣārī *radiyallāhu ‘anhu*. Ḥaḍrat Abū Ayyūb *radiyallāhu ‘anhu* carries Rasūlullāh’s goods to his house.

I was reading about Ḥaḍrat Abū Ayyūb’s joy at this honour which Allāh *ta’ālā* conferred on him and his devoted hospitality which he showed to Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*. As I was reading all this, I found my heart leaving me and joining the camel of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* and entering Madīnah Munawwarah with him. I felt as though I was witnessing all this with my own eyes. I realized that all what I read about how kings, conquerors, commanders and the affluent used to enter with all their pomp and splendour was nothing and insignificant in comparison to this entry of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*. And that whatever love and devotion which one person had for another had melted and disappeared [in comparison to the love and devotion which was exhibited by the Ṣaḥābah *radiyallāhu ‘anhum* for Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*]. This entire scene became embedded in my heart and memory forever.

I also read the story of Uḥud. The qualities of loyalty, devotion, bravery, faith, conviction and noble character which manifested here were never witnessed by history in a greater, more unique and more beautiful manner.

I was completely shaken by the address of Hadrat Anas ibn an-Naḍr *radiyallāhu ‘anhu* to those who sat down and gave up the fight. They had said: “Rasūlullāh s*allallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* has been killed.” So Hadrat Anas *radiyallāhu ‘anhu* made that historical statement: “So what are you going to live for after him? You should also die for the cause for which Rasūlullāh s*allallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* died!”

[I was also shaken by the words of] the one who said: “I am getting the fragrance of Paradise from beyond Uḥud.” Then there was the one whose final wish was to meet Rasūlullāh s*allallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* while he was in the final stages of his life in this world. Some people carried him to Rasūlullāh s*allallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* while he was panting for breath. He took his final breath at the feet of Rasūlullāh s*allallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*.

Hadrat Abū Dujānah *radiyallāhu ‘anhu* made himself a shield to protect Rasūlullāh s*allallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*. All the arrows were landing on his back, while he was bending over Rasūlullāh s*allallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*. And many other stories of love and sacrifice. In this way, I continued reading this book. Sometimes my heart will be overtaken and I would be reduced to tears. Sometimes I would be overcome with joy and I would sway with happiness.

The favour of this book and its sincere author which I will never forget is that it stirred the love which was lying dormant in my heart – a love without which there can be no joy in this life and without which this

world has no value. A Persian poet¹ probably said on a similar occasion:

Miserable is the day which passes without my tasting the joy of love. There is no blessing in the hour which passes without a breeze of love blowing. Woe to that life if I spent all of it subjugating it to my intellect and logic.

In fact, love is the sum-total and core of life. A poet rightfully says:

I looked at this world and saw that it was a vast place where the harvest is collected and ground. When I looked at it, I realized that love made up just one grain of it, while the remainder was straw and grass.

The brave men, intellectuals and geniuses who distinguished themselves among their contemporaries did so through this very love. The weak and average people who left behind accomplishments and feats which the most powerful and wealthiest people could not accomplish did it through this love. A single person who possessed it was able to overpower nations. And when a nation had it, it conquered the world.

This is the love which the *ummah* has become bereft of in our times. Today it owns vast treasures of wealth, immense knowledge, wide-ranging authority and many countries. but it is deprived of the elixir of life. Thus, it has been reduced to a dead body which is being carried on the shoulders of life.

¹ He is the proficient Persian poet, Amīr Khusro.

The modernist educated section of the *ummah* is most bereft of this love. Thus, it is most hollow in spirit, weakest in the ability to combat and fight [the enemies of Islam], most ineffective and weightless, filthiest in life, and its efforts are most deviated and purposeless.

I am most grateful to this book and its author because it reawakened and stirred the dormant love which was in my heart. I am most grateful to him for having directed this vibrant and energetic love to the personality [Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam] who deserves it because of the beauty and kindness which he was naturally endowed with, and the miraculous splendour and perfection which he was bestowed. Allāh *ta'ālā* – the only Creator – did not create anyone more beautiful than him both in appearance and mannerisms, and more upright than him in character and form – sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam.

The greatest misfortune of this *ummah* is that it has cut off its contact with the heart, and has been deprived of the joy of love. The poet of Islam, Muḥammad Iqbāl, rightly said:

The misfortune of the Muslims of this era is that they have hearts but do not know the beloved. They possess the material for love, but do not know with whom to occupy it and where to direct it.

Allāh's peace to you, O Sulaymān! I found two bounties in your book which cannot be surpassed by any bounty after the bounty of Islam. They are (1) The bounty of pure love. (2) The bounty of directing it to the correct place. These are really very great bounties.

A NEW WORLD¹

This world is said to be very old. However, it woke up after falling asleep several times; and came back to life after having died several deaths. The last time it woke up from its sleep of death and opened its eyes of intelligence and consciousness was when a grandson was born in the house of 'Abd al-Muttalib, the leader of Makkah. This grandson was born an orphan, yet he undertook the supervision of all humanity and injected a new life to the world. Can the life which passed in sleep really be called life? Can the time which passed in suicide be referred to as life? Thus, if the truth be told, the really worthy age of this world is no more than 1 400 years.

The vehicle of humanity had fallen into a steep path in the sixth century C.E. Darkness was pervading, the slope of the path was getting steeper, and the speed was increasing. The entire caravan of humanity and Hadrat Adam's entire family was on this vehicle. It was carrying thousands of years of cultures and the efforts of hundreds and thousands of people. In the meantime, all the passengers were either having a sweet sleep or fighting each other to get a better place. Some of them were short-tempered, so when they became angry with their fellow passengers, they would turn their faces away, and sit in another direction. Others would wield their authority over their own kind. Others were busy cooking and preparing food. Yet others were occupied in singing and dancing. But no one was looking at the ditch towards which the vehicle was heading and how close it was to falling in the ditch.

¹ A speech which was delivered over Lucknow Radio Station during Rabī' al-Awwal.

Man's body was fresh and vibrant, but his heart was infirm, his mind was fatigued, his emotions were dead, his pulse was decreasing and his eyes were unresponsive. Quite some time had passed since this humanity had lost the treasure of *īmān* and conviction. If you were to search entire countries, you will not find a single person of conviction [in Allāh *ta'ālā*]. The entire world was under the clutches of superstitions. Humanity had disgraced its own self. Man submitted before his slaves and servants, and he was prepared to leave aside one God and bow before everyone else. He had developed a fondness for the forbidden and unlawful.

Alcohol seemed to have become his second nature. Gambling was his occupation by night and day.

The kings were nurtured with the blood of others, they would plunder villages and occupy them, their dogs lolled in luxury while human beings were crying out for a single grain. The standard of living had become so high that it was twice as difficult to merely survive. Those who could not reach this standard were considered to be animals. New forms of taxation bent and broke the backs of the labourers and craftsmen. Fighting, wiping out people over trivial matters and destroying nations had become their past time. Every one was gripped by concern for his own life, and they were all weakened by oppression and tyranny. You would not find a single servant of Allāh *ta'ālā* in an entire country who was concerned about pleasing his Creator, and making a genuine quest for the straight path. In short, it was just a life in name but a wide and lengthy suicide in reality.

Reformation and rectification of the world was beyond humans. The water level had gone beyond their

heads. The issue was not of freedom for one country or progress for one nation. Rather, the issue was about the death of all of humanity. The question was not of one evil. Rather, every part of humanity was injured, every limb was shredded. Those who stepped forward for the sake of reformation had to step back saying:

On examining your heart, we realized that it needs a lot of mending.

Philosophers, sages, poets and writers – none were fit for the job; they all succumbed to this catastrophe. How can the sick treat the sick? How can the one who is devoid of conviction fill others with conviction? How can the one who is thirsty himself quench the thirst of others? A heavy lock had fallen on man's destiny, and the key was lost. The rope of life had become tangled, and its head could not be found.

The Master of this universe was not pleased with this state of His "house". He finally commissioned a Messenger from the simple freedom-loving Arabs, a people who were close to their roots. None apart from this Messenger could mend this ruined world. This Messenger's name is Muḥammad ibn 'Abdillāh. May hundreds and thousands of salutations be showered on him.

Whose name did I utter, O Allāh! That my speech came up and kissed my tongue?

All the ingredients of this life were intact but they were misplaced and disorganized. The wheel of life was turning, but in the wrong direction. The actual damage was that the axle of life had become loose. This is where all the damage was. What was this axle? It was correct knowledge of one's self and of the Creator of this universe. The decision to be His slave and to obey Him. The decision to believe in His Messengers, to

live one's life according to their directives and instructions, and to have conviction in the Hereafter.

Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* set right the axle of life, but by putting himself and his family in danger, and sacrificing everything which he had. He cast aside the crown of kingship for this purpose, rejected the largest offerings of wealth and luxuries, left behind his beloved homeland, spent his entire life in discomfort, tied rocks to his stomach, never ate to his full, and caused his house members to join him in his poverty. He was at the forefront of every sacrifice and danger, totally detached from every worldly enjoyment – but he did not leave this world until he placed it in the correct direction and changed the tide of history.

The direction of the world changed within twenty three years. The conscience of the world was awakened, an inclination for righteousness was created, good and evil were distinguished, the path to Allāh's worship was opened, man felt ashamed at kneeling before his fellow men and his servants, inequality was removed, racial and genealogical pride was broken, women received their rights, and the weak and downtrodden were emboldened. In short, wherever you looked, you saw the world had changed. Where not a single person who feared Allāh *ta'ālā* was to be seen in an entire country, now had hundreds of thousands of people who feared Allāh *ta'ālā* in the darkness of the night and the brightness of the day, who were embellished with the wealth of conviction, who meted out justice to their enemies, who did not bother about their children in matters of the truth, who were prepared to give testimony against their own selves, who would bear hardships for the comfort of others, who would give preference to the weak over the powerful, who were ardent worshippers by night and sword-wielding fighters by day. They had control over

everything – wealth, government, power, desires – and subjugated everything. But they were under the control of one Allāh, they were the slaves of just one Allāh. They filled this world with knowledge, conviction, peace, culture, spirituality and the remembrance of Allāh *ta'ālā*.

The season of time changed. As man changed, so did the universe, so did the earth and skies. This entire revolution was a result of the efforts and teachings of this Messenger *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*. No child of Hadrat Ādam *'alayhis salām* was as kind to mankind as Muḥammad Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* was. If what Muḥammad Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* gave to the world was to be taken away, human culture would go back thousands of years and humanity will have to be deprived of the dearest things of its life.

Why should the blessed day on which Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* was born not be blessed when the most blessed human of this world was born on that day!? After all, he was the one who bestowed the world with new *īmān* and a new life.

The spring which has now come to the world is a result of the seeds which were planted by him.

THE TRUMPET OF LIFE¹

Try to visualize life 1 400 years ago. Cast aside the towering buildings, the stylish and flashy clothes, and heaps of gold and silver. These are things which you will also see in old drawings and museums containing ancient relics. Rather, look if you can see humanity having life in any part of the East and West? Hold your breath and listen carefully, can you even hear its pulse moving and its heart pumping!?

You will see life like a large ocean in which the large fish are devouring the small fish. You will see humanity like a jungle in which the lions and dogs are preying on the pigs, wolves and sheep. Evil has gained the upper hand over good, despicability over nobility, desires over the intellect, and the demands of the stomach over the demands of the soul. However, despite the deplorable situation, there was none in this vast and massive world to object to it. No frown could be seen on the broad forehead of humanity.

The entire world had become an auction house in which every king and minister, rich and poor were being sold off at a very cheap price. There was no one whose humanness could rise above the enthusiasm of the buyers, who could announce: "This vast universe is not sufficient for my flight. This entire world and this whole life cannot match my aspirations. This is why another eternal life has been created for me. How can I

¹ First published as an article in *Ta'mīr-e-Hayāt*, Lucknow under the title, *The World Needs Us*. It was later published as a booklet by Maktabah-e-Islam under the title, *The Lighthouse*.

sell my soul over this temporary life, and for a small piece of this limited world?!"

Nations and countries, tribes and clans, and families and homes had all become minute and tiny toy-houses. Mighty and spirited men who used to make very high claims about their superiority and authority became accustomed to living in these toy-houses like dwarfs. None of them felt any restriction and constriction, and none imagined a larger and broader humanity. Life in its entirety had been reduced to interest [usury] and merchandising, and competing against each other in plotting and deceiving.

Humanity had become a cold corpse, devoid of the warmth of the soul, fervour of the heart and the heat of love. A dense jungle had sprouted from the surface of humanity. There were forests all over, with animals of prey and poisonous creatures. Or there were swamps which were infested with leeches, ready to enwrap a person's body and suck out his blood. This jungle contained every type of fearsome animal, every type of bird of prey, and the swamps contained every species of leeches.

But no human could be seen here. The humans who were existing were inside caves, on mountain tops and concealed in the solitude of monasteries and places of worship. They were either praying for their own welfare, living in this world but shutting their eyes from it by appeasing their hearts through philosophy, or diverting their minds through poetry. As for the field of life, there was no man who was man enough to go onto it.

Suddenly a burst of hot blood rushed through this cold corpse of humanity, its pulse began moving, and there was a motion in its body. The birds which had been roosting on this comatose and motionless

body now felt their roosting place moving and coming to life. Ancient biographers and story tellers would have described it as a shaking of the towers and turrets of Chosroes, and the extinguishing of the fires of the Mageans. Modern writers would describe it as an internal movement in the bowels of the earth causing a tremor on its surface. Huge concrete structures and fortified bridges being dispersed like leaves on an autumn day because of the internal motion of the earth causing a tremor on its surface. An earthquake has struck, every spider web has been broken, and every straw nest is dispersed in the wind.

If the internal motion of the earth can disperse fortified buildings, bridges and forts like leaves of a tree, why should the commissioning of Muḥammad Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* not shake the self-designed systems and administrations of Caesar and Chosroes? This hot blood which now flowed through the cold corpse of humanity is the incident of the commissioning of Muḥammad Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* in Makkah Mu'azzamah, the heart of the then civilized world.

His short message which he gave to the world encompasses all segments of life. History bears testimony that the force with which the roots of this false and deceptive life, and the foundations of these superficial oppressive systems were shaken, were never shaken before as they were with the announcement of the short message of:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللَّهِ

There is none worthy of worship except Allāh, and Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh.

The human mind was never before struck with such a forceful blow as it was struck with this

message. This foolish mind was injured, it went into a fit of rage and asked:

أَجَعَلَ الْآلِهَةَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا، إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عُجَابٌ

*Has he made the worship of so many gods into just one God? This is something very amazing.*¹

The leaders of this type of life believed it was a deep and organized conspiracy against their system which they had to combat.

وَأَنْطَلَقَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْهُمْ أَنْ امْشُوا وَاصْبِرُوا عَلَى آلِهَتِكُمْ إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ يُرَادُ

*The leaders among them went about [saying]: “Go and remain steadfast on your gods. Surely there is some motive in this.”*²

This call was a severe blow to the very concept of life and humanity which affected the entire mould of the mind and the edifice of civilization. This call meant – and still means – that this world is not a wild jungle left to grow on its own. Rather, it is a properly laid out garden planted, taken care of and supervised by Allāh *ta’ālā*. And man is the best flower in this garden – a flower which is a treasure house for thousands of springs. How can this flower become dry, trampled by people, pecked at by birds, or blown away by the wind when it has not fulfilled its purpose and not assumed the high position to which it is most suited? The true value of man cannot be estimated by anyone except Allāh *ta’ālā*. The unlimited quest which he has within him, his high aspirations, his lofty soul, and his

¹ Sūrah Sād, 38: 5.

² Sūrah Sād, 38: 6.

restless heart which the entire world cannot pacify – all these components do not permit him to be satisfied with this world. He needs an eternal life and an unrestricted world before which the present life is a drop, and the present world is a toy for children. The comfort and pain of this world are of no comparison to the comfort and pain of the afterlife.

This is why man's natural makeup demands him to worship one Allāh and his lofty self imposes on him to be content with nothing except the pleasure of Allāh *ta'ālā*. Man's honour compels him to strive in this path, and to spend his intelligence, faculties, wealth and earnings for it. There is no need for man to bow like a slave and be trampled upon like grass before any soul, a hidden and superficial force, a tree, a rock, any type of metal, inanimate object, wealth and treasures, authority, power, and any type of spirituality or eminence. He is the lowest before the only one highest Being, while man himself is the highest of the creations. The entire world is at his service, while he is the servant of the one Being. By ordering all the angels to prostrate before him and prohibiting him from prostrating before anyone except Allāh *ta'ālā*, Allāh *ta'ālā* made it clear that the angels who are the custodians of the forces of nature are subservient to man, and in return, man's head is in prostration before Allāh *ta'ālā*.

The mind of the world had become so paralysed that it could not operate easily beyond the realms of materialism, tangibles, the body and the stomach. The minds of people had become so hollow that they could not envisage a profound and sublime notion about anyone. They had laid down certain criteria with which they used to measure every new person. They had certain standards against which they would place every person.

They pondered and reflected deeply about Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam but could find no reason apart from the fact that he was seeking wealth and riches, authority and kingship, or a life of luxury and comfort. If we look at the situation realistically, people of courage and determination of that time did not look beyond any of these motives.

They [the unbelievers and polytheists of Makkah Mukarramah] sent a deputation to Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam. They represented the mentality and mindset of the people of that time, and whatever they said to him was really a true portrayal of the perceptions and outlook of those days. The reply which Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam gave was a genuine response of a Prophet and the essential exposition of the Muslim *ummah*. He frankly stated that he was not interested in any of the aforementioned things. His call was towards something which was much higher than these “lofty” things – higher than the distance between the earth and heavens. He was not concerned about his personal comforts and progress. Rather, he was restless for the salvation of mankind and for man’s comfort. He did not desire to make a cosmetic paradise for himself in this world. Rather, he wished to re-admit – forever - man to the true Paradise from which he was expelled. He was not striving for his own leadership. Instead, he wanted to remove all humans from the slavery of humans and admit them into the true slavery of Allāh *ta’ālā*.

This *ummah* was constructed on this foundation and it spread throughout the world on this foundation. His envoys, who had the true spirit of *da’wah* and the correct Islamic lifestyle, spoke forthrightly in the glamorous courts of Chosroes and Caesar:

Allāh *ta'ālā* appointed us to remove man from the slavery of man to the slavery of Allāh *ta'ālā*, from the constrictions of this world to its vastness, and from the injustices of religions to the justice of Islam.

When they got an opportunity to establish and run a government, their statements and the principles to which they invited others were fully supported by their actions and deeds. In the time of their sublime power, no man was worshipped; only Allāh *ta'ālā* was worshipped. The rule of any man or party was not promulgated; only the rule of Allāh *ta'ālā* prevailed. When the slightest human indignity was committed, their ruler – known as the *khalifah* – would frankly say:

These people were born free from the wombs of their mothers; since when did you enslave them?!

Their greatest rulers, living in the most powerful capitals, would live among the people like ordinary citizens. People would mistaken them to be labourers and place goods on their heads. These rulers would carry the goods for them and convey them to their homes. The wealthy among them would live as though he did not consider this life to be a life, and did not regard any of its comforts to be real comforts. His gaze was directed at another life, his quest was some other type of comfort.

The existence of this *ummah* announces in every corner of the world that there is a totally different existence removed from these materialistic tendencies and physical pleasures.

FROM THE CAVE OF HIRĀ¹

I climbed Mt. Nūr and stood at the entrance of the cave which is well-known as Hirā'. On reaching here, I thought to myself: This is where Allāh *ta'ālā* honoured Muḥammad *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* with messenger-ship and sent the first revelation to him. From here the sun rose, and whose rays poured a new light and a new life to the world. The world welcomes a new morning every day. But in most cases, there is neither any novelty in that morning nor any unusualness. Nor is every morning a good and happy morning. Very often, man wakes up in the morning but humanity does not wake up. The physical bodies wake up, but not the hearts and souls. How many dark days and false dawns we had to experience in the history of the world!? But from this cave, a true dawn appeared, whose light illuminated everything and whose arrival changed the course of history.

Before the arrival of this dawn, man's life was one of tightly-fastened locks, and heavy locks were placed on every door of his life. The mind was locked - the wise sages and philosophers failed to open it. The human conscience was locked - the orators and reformers failed to open it. The hearts were locked - the admonitory incidents in life and signs of Allāh's power failed to open them. The faculties were locked - education, training and the society could not open them. The *madrāsah* was locked - the '*ulamā*' and teachers failed to open it. The courthouse was locked - the oppressed and plaintiffs could not open them. The family was locked - reformers and thinkers could not

¹ Transcript of a speech which was delivered over Saudi radio in Makkah in 1950.

open it. The royal palace was locked - the oppressed nation, overworked farmer and exhausted labourer could not open it. The treasures of the wealthy and affluent people were locked - the hunger of the poor, the nakedness of the women and the crying of suckling infants could not open them.

Great reformers and senior legislators tried to open these many locks but could not open even a single one; they failed miserably. A lock can only be opened with a key which is made for that particular lock. Mankind had lost that key since many centuries. They tried to use the keys which were made by themselves, but they did not match the locks and were of no use whatsoever to them. Some of them tried to break these locks but they injured their hands and broke their tools in the process.

Now from this humble place [the cave of Hirā'] on a desolate and tiny mountain which was completely cut off from the civilized world – something which the large capitals of the world, celebrated centres of learning and voluminous libraries could not achieve, was realized here. This is where Allāh *ta'ālā* favoured the world with the messenger-ship of Muḥammad sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam. In his message, the lost key returned to humanity. That key is belief in Allāh *ta'ālā*, the Messenger sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam and the Last Day. With this one key, he opened these tight locks and locked doors one after the other. When he placed this prophetic key on the lock of the warped mind, it opened, became vibrant, was able to benefit from the signs of Allāh *ta'ālā* in the heavens and selves, to ponder over the universe and reach its Creator, to tear down the many veils and reach the Oneness of Allāh *ta'ālā*, to recognize the repugnance of polytheism, paganism, fabricated beliefs and false premises.

Whereas before, he would vociferously defend every issue irrespective of whether it was right or wrong.

Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* placed this key on the sleeping human conscience, and it immediately came to its senses. He placed it on man's dead faculties, and they began to move and life came into them. The *nafs-e-ammārah* which prompted him to evil was converted to *nafs-e-lawwāmah* and then to *nafs-e-muṭma'innah*.¹ Consequently, there remained no room for any falsehood to creep in, and a sin became unbearable for a person. So much so, he would go to Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* and confess his sin and insist on a painful punishment to be meted out to him. A woman comes to Madīnah and offers herself to be stoned to death – a torment which is worse than death. Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* defers the punishment on the basis of a Shar'ī excuse. She returns to the desert where there is no police appointed to keep watch on her nor is there anyone to ensure she returns to court for the penalty. Yet, she comes back to Madīnah on time, voluntarily presents herself for the punishment and happily insists that it must be meted out to her. During the conquest of Iran, the golden crown of Chosroes comes into the hands of a poor soldier. He conceals it among his clothes in order to hide his trustworthiness from the eyes of the people. He then hands it over to his commander because this wealth belongs to Allāh *ta'ālā*. Treachery in this regard

¹ *Nafs-e-ammārah* – the self which prompts man towards evil.

Nafs-e-lawwāmah – the self which reproaches/reprimands man for intending evil.

Nafs-e-muṭma'innah – the self which is at peace with Allāh *ta'ālā* for it is now free from all evil.

is impermissible, and at the same time, there must be no show of trustworthiness.

The hearts were locked – they accepted neither admonition nor did they have the fear of Allāh *ta'ālā*. They were neither affected nor did they soften. But when this key was placed on their hearts, they became fearful of Allāh *ta'ālā*, trembling before Him, learnt lessons from incidents and calamities, benefited from signs, softened for the oppressed and showed affection to the weak.

When Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* placed this key on the strangulated faculties and lost capabilities of man, they ignited like a raging fire, gushed forth like flood water and followed the right course of action. Consequently, the one who was herding and tending to camels was now tending to nations, and became a *khalīfah* who ruled over the world – bearing all the complicated issues and responsibilities of government. The person who, until yesterday, was a chief of a village, now conquered mighty empires which were steeped in power and majesty.

Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* placed this key on the locked *madrasah* which the teachers had abandoned and the students stayed away from. The value of knowledge had dropped and the teacher was scorned. Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* mentioned the honour of knowledge, and the merit of the scholar and student, the tutor and the teacher. He explained the mutual bond between religion and knowledge. Consequently, people became enthusiastic about the progress of centres of learning and knowledge. Every *musjid* and every house of the Muslims became a *madrasah*. Every Muslim became a student for his self and a teacher for others. His

religion in itself became the greatest motivation for the quest of knowledge.

Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* placed this key on the locked courthouse, and this resulted in every scholar becoming a just judge, and every Muslim judge became a justice-loving judge of the highest order. The Muslims themselves became the upholders of justice for Allāh's sake. When belief in Allāh *ta'ālā* and the day of Recompense was firmly entrenched, justice and fair-dealing spread, injustice and disputes ended, false testimony disappeared and oppressive laws ceased.

Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* placed this key on the locked family in which niggardliness had become common between father and son, brothers and brothers, and husband and wife. This spread from the limited circle of the family to the society at large. It manifested itself between the master and his servant, the ruler and his subjects, and the seniors and juniors. Each one was demanding his rights, but no one was prepared to fulfil his duties and responsibilities. They all became treacherous in their dealings: when they purchased a weighed or measured item, they ensured they received their full due. But when they sold a weighed or measured item, they did their utmost to give as little as they could.

Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* untied all these knots in society with the same key. He planted the seed of *īmān* in the family, warned of Allāh's *ta'ālā* chastisement, and read this instruction of Allāh *ta'ālā*:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا
 زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ
 وَالْأَرْحَامَ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا.

*O people! Continually fear your Sustainer Who created you from one soul and created from it its mate, and out of the two He spread out many men and women. Continually fear Allāh through Whom you ask of one another, and be mindful of your relatives. Surely Allāh is watchful over you.*¹

Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* placed certain responsibilities on every member of the family and society. He said:

“Each one of you is a guardian and each one of you is answerable for his charge. The leader is a guardian and is answerable for his charge. The man is a guardian over his family and is answerable for his charge. The woman is a guardian over her husband’s house and is answerable for her charge. The servant is a guardian over his master’s wealth and is answerable for his charge. So each of you is a guardian, and each one of you is answerable for his charge.”²

In this way, he established a family based on justice, mutual love and steadfastness; and a just society. He instituted in every member of society a deep perception of trustworthiness and a terrifying fear of

¹ Sūrah an-Nisā’, 4: 1.

² al-Bukhārī: 2751. Muslim, *Kitāb al-imārah*: 20

the Hereafter to the extent that the rulers and people of authority became abstinent and led lives of simplicity. The leader of the nation became its servant. The guardian of the *ummah* became like a guardian of an orphan – if the guardian was wealthy, he abstained from the orphan’s wealth; but if he was poor, he ate of it according to necessity.

Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* turned his attention to the wealthy and the businessmen. He made them abstinent with regard to matters of this world and desirous of the Hereafter. He taught them that wealth essentially belongs to Allāh *ta’ālā*, He merely made them His deputies in controlling it. He read the following verses to them:

وَأَنْفِقُوا مِمَّا جَعَلَكُمْ مُسْتَخْلِفِينَ فِيهِ

*Spend of that which He has made you trustees.*¹

وَأَتَوْهُمْ مِنْ مَالِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي آتَاكُمْ

*Give them of the wealth of Allāh which He gave you.*²

يَأْيُهَا الَّذِينَ أُمُوتُوا إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِنَ الْأَحْبَارِ وَالرُّهْبَانِ لَيَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ
بِالْبَاطِلِ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ط وَالَّذِينَ يَكْنِزُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا
يُنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ. يَوْمَ يُحْمَى عَلَيْهَا فِي نَارِ
جَهَنَّمَ فَتُكْوَى بِهَا جِبَاهُهُمْ وَجُنُوبُهُمْ وَظُهُورُهُمْ ط هَذَا مَا كَنْزْتُمْ
لَأَنْفُسِكُمْ فَذُوقُوا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْنِزُونَ.

¹ Sūrah al-Hadīd, 57: 7.

² Sūrah an-Nūr, 24: 33.

O believers! Many of the scholars and dervishes of the People of the Book devour the wealth of the people wrongfully and they hinder [others] from the path of Allāh. Those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in the path of Allāh, give them glad tidings of a painful punishment. On [that] day their wealth shall be heated in the fire of Hell, and with it shall be branded their foreheads, sides and backs. [They will be told:] “This is what you had hoarded up for yourselves. Now taste what you have been hoarding.”¹

Through his message and call, Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam produced an individual who was righteous, who believed in Allāh *ta’ālā* and feared His retribution. This individual was humble and trustworthy, gave preference to the Hereafter over this world and scorned materialism – overpowering it with his *īmān* and spiritual strength. He firmly believed the world was created for him while he was created for the Hereafter. When such an individual entered the world of trade and business, he was an honest and trustworthy businessman. If he was a poor man, he was an honourable man who exerted himself. If he was a labourer, he was hard working and gave good advice. If he was wealthy, he was generous and saw to the well-being of others. If he was a judge, he was just and understanding. If he was a governor, he was devoted and trustworthy. If he was a ruler, he was unassuming and merciful. If he was an attendant or hired labourer, he was fully capable and trustworthy. If he was put in charge of the public treasury, he was observant and cautious of how he spent.

¹ Sūrah at-Taubah, 9: 34-35.

These were the bricks on which the Islamic society stood and the Islamic government was established. The society and government were – on a larger scale – a manifestation of the character, psychology and lifestyle of the individual. The qualities which were found in the individuals were collectively found in the society. It was a righteous and trustworthy society which gave preference to the Hereafter over this world. It overpowered materialism and was not dictated by it. The honesty and trustworthiness of the trader, the abstinence and striving of the poor, the hard labour and good counsel of the labourer, the generosity and concern of the rich, the justice and wisdom of the judge, the devotion and trustworthiness of the governor, the humility and mercy of the ruler, the strength of the attendant, and the vigilance of the treasurer were transferred to it.

Just as the society was a manifestation of the excellent qualities of its individuals, the Islamic government also combined all these qualities. In fact, it had become a strong catalyst for them. It gave preference to principles over profits and guidance over taxation. The effect of this society and the influence of this government resulted in a life which was entirely filled with *īmān* and good deeds, honesty and sincerity, hard work and striving, justice in receiving and giving, equity with one's self and with others.

I was thinking all these thoughts in my heart while standing at the entrance of the cave of Hirā'. I became so immersed in my thoughts that I became totally unaware of my self. My imagination caused me to be separated from my present world. The general Islamic life of the first era came as a scene before me with all its beauty and minute details as though I was literally seeing them. I felt as if I was breathing its spiritually-filled air.

While imagining that world, my thoughts returned to the real world in which I was breathing and in which we are living. I said to my self: I see new locks on the doors of a successful and wholesome life. Life has traversed many stations and took many major steps. This has caused it to become complicated and twisted. Many new and diverse issues have cropped up. I asked my self: Is it possible to open these new locks with that old and ancient key?

Although this question came to my mind, I refused to make a decision until I tested these locks thoroughly and placed the key on them. When I touched and checked these locks, I realized that they were the same old locks, but only of a different colour. The problems we are facing today are the same as those experienced before. The greatest problem and the most fundamental challenge is that of the individual who is still the brick with which the society and the government is built. The condition of the individual at present is that he believes in nothing but materialism and power. He is not prepared to accept anything else. He has no concern except for his self and his desires. He has placed too much of value in this life. His worship of his self and pleasing his desires have gone beyond the limits. His bond with his Allāh, with the message of the Prophets, and belief in the Hereafter have been totally severed. Thus, it is this very individual who is the source of the wretchedness of civilization.

If this individual engages in trade, he is most selfish and engages in stockpiling – he withholds his goods when they are cheap and releases them when they are expensive. In this way, he is a cause of hunger and stress for the masses.

If this individual is poor, he is a revolting poor who tries to remove his poverty through the toiling of others and to freely eat the fruits of others while he himself must not experience any fatigue in the process.

If this individual is a labourer, he falls short in carrying out his responsibilities and duties but still demands his pay in full.

If this individual is a wealthy person, he is the most stingy and hard-hearted. He possesses neither mercy nor kindness.

If he is a governor, he proves to be a cheat who usurps the wealth of others.

If he is a leader, he is oppressive and self-seeking who looks at nothing except his own benefits and comforts.

If he is a servant, he is treacherous and most lazy in carrying out his duties.

If he is a treasurer, he is a thief who embezzles and misappropriates wealth.

If he is a president, minister or prime minister, he is materialistic and monopolistic – serving none but his own self and his party, and bothering about no one else.

If he is a leader, he is nationalistic and clannish. He worships his country and clan, while trampling over other countries and nations for the progress of his own country and clan.

If he is a legislator, he promulgates oppressive laws and imposes burdensome taxes.

If he is an inventor, he invents destructive weapons and explosives.

If he is a scientist, he discovers poisonous gases which completely annihilate nations, and the atom bomb which destroys people, animals, crops and plantations without distinction.

If this individual has the authority to use these destructive weapons, he will see nothing wrong in casting bombs on nations and countries, rendering vibrant and populated places completely ravaged and desolate.

Obviously, if a society is made up of good individuals and a government is composed of such individuals, it will be a reflection of the good qualities of its individuals and members. In the same way, a society and government made up of evil individuals will bear the evil ills of all its individuals and citizens. In such a case, it will be a materialistic society which contains the stockpiling and accumulation of the businessman, the revolutionary attitude of the poor, the little work and demand for more pay of the employee, the greed of the wealthy, the cheating habits of the governor, the oppression of the master, the treachery of the servant, the thieving of the treasurer, the self-motives of the ministers, the nationalistic tendencies of the leaders, the prejudices of the legislators, the excesses of the inventors and scientists, and the hard-heartedness of those in authority.

These materialistic predispositions gave birth to new challenges and complex problems which the entire humanity is complaining about and by which it is grieved. The natural consequence of this is the existence of a black market, proliferation of usury, highly expensive items, hoarding and inflation. Thinkers and legislators cannot find any solutions to these problems and challenges. In fact, when they find one solution, they fall into another problem. When they

untie one knot, they find themselves entangled in several other knots. We will not be wrong if we say that their short-sighted solutions and temporary arrangements are giving birth to new problems and challenges. Like the treatment of a pseudo-doctor: instead of treating an ailment, he causes the birth of new ailments.

They are trying new experiments on this ailing patient. They thought that kingship is the cause of all these ailments. So they put an end to it and established a democratic government. But when the problem was still not solved, some of them decided to adopt a dictatorship. When they saw even more harms and evils in this system, they went back to democracy. Similarly, they adopted a capitalist system, but when it resulted in even more complications, they thought socialism and communism were the cures for all their ills. But this did not improve the situation in any way. Problems either remained the same or became more complex. What is the reason for this?

It is because all these changes and alterations were superficial. As for the root of all the problems – that is, the individual – his corruption and crookedness were not touched. They are ignorant of the fact – or pretend not to know – that it is the individual who is corrupt and crooked. It is because of him that society and the government become crooked.

I can go one step further and say that if these thinkers and reformers fully understood this fact and found the root of all its evils, they would not have been able to reform this individual. This is because – despite their many educational institutions, centres of learning, training and propagation – they do not possess the thing with which they can reform the individual, straighten his crookedness, turn his focus

from evil towards goods, and from destructiveness towards constructiveness.

This is because their hearts and minds are devoid of spirituality. In fact, they are bankrupt as regards the soul and devoid of *īmān*. They do not have anything which could nourish the heart, plant the seeds of *īmān*, reconnect the bond between the slave and his Real Master [Allāh *ta'ālā*], establish a link between this life and the Hereafter, create harmony between the soul and the matter, and link knowledge with morals.

In fact, their spiritual bankruptcy, blind materialism and arrogance have prompted them to use all their destructive weapons to completely annihilate nations and to destroy the entire world. Allāh forbid, if the superpowers were to go to war against each other with these dreadful weapons, their new innovations will certainly put an end to civilization and humanity.

THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF PROPHET-HOOD¹

Allāh *ta'ālā* instructed His Prophets to rectify and reform humanity through revelation and prophet-hood. These personalities made man the focus of their call and efforts. Through the insight of the Prophets, Allāh *ta'ālā* exposed the point that the destiny of this world, its inhabitancy and its desolation are all dependent on man. If genuine human beings are found, this world will be inhabited and flourishing despite all its desolation and misery. But if genuine human beings are not found, it will be no better than a desolate and utterly destroyed place despite all its splendour, wealth and riches. The misfortune of this world is not based on a dearth and absence of tools and means, rather their incorrect use. The entire history of the world bears testimony to the fact that man's imprudence and waywardness destroyed the world. The tools and means merely added to the destruction and devastation.

Furthermore, based on the greatness, extent, centrality and wisdom of man, he was more deserving of being made the subject of endeavour and attention. This universe is filled with mysteries and rarities, it is most beautiful and splendid, and very huge and extensive. But it is of no comparison to the mysteries and rarities in man, his hidden treasures, the extents of his heart, the lofty aspirations of his mind, the

¹ This article was read on 19 December 1959 at the Union Hall of Aligarh Muslim University under the invitation of the Religious Studies Department. Subsequently, it was published in the monthly, *al-Furqān*, of Rajab 1379 A.H./February 1960. The introduction has been omitted here.

restlessness and passion of his soul, his never-ending hopes, his unfulfilled spirits and his unlimited capabilities. Many worlds like this and all these oceans will get lost in the depths of man's heart. The mountains cannot compare with his conviction, the fire cannot compete with the heat of his love and the oceans are nothing compared to his one single tear. Every beauty of this world is dim compared to man's beautiful life. Every power is divested before his resolution and will. Creating true conviction in man, genuine desires, proper capabilities, excellent character, and enabling him to carry out the vicegerency of Allāh *ta'ālā* – these are the essential achievements of prophet-hood.

Every prophet-hood accomplished this in its era and prepared individuals who pumped new life into the world, who made meaningful the life which had become meaningless by man's own disregard and inattention. The most glittering of all these achievements – which is shining brilliantly on the forehead of life – is the one of Muḥammad Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*, regarding whom the most details are preserved by history. The success which Allāh *ta'ālā* blessed him with in producing virtuous men is not enjoyed by any other man.

The level from which he commenced the task of constructing humanity was not encountered by any other Messenger, reformer and mentor. It was a level bordering between bestiality and humanity. And the level to which he conveyed this task was not reached by anyone in the field of constructing humanity. Just as he commenced his task from the lowest level of humanity, he conveyed it to its peak and highest level. Each individual prepared by him was a masterpiece of prophet-hood and a source of honour and pride for the human race. Apart from the Prophets and Messengers,

you will not find a more beautiful, attractive, appealing, and likeable picture not only within the border of humanity, but in the entire universe. The history of the world can find no equal to their firm conviction, deep knowledge, genuine heart, simple life, selflessness, Allāh-consciousness, chastity, purity, kindness, soft-heartedness, bravery, courage, desire for worship, yearning for martyrdom, horsemanship by day and engaging in worship by night, total disregard for worldly riches, disinclination from the world, justice and excellent administration.

The accomplishment of prophet-hood is that it prepared men who were genuine men in every way. Each one of them was such that – had history not testified to their existence and the world not affirmed it – they would have seemed to be figments of a poet's imagination or a fairy-tale. However, they are an essential ingredient of history. It was a human existence wherein the miracle of prophet-hood produced mutually opposed attributes and capabilities in them. A poet says:

He was a slave made of soil and light, with attributes of the Master. Indifferent to the riches of the world. His heart was independent.

His earthly hopes were few, his aspirations were high. His demeanour was enchanting, his glance won over hearts.

Soft in speech, fierce in the hour of pursuit. Whether in war or peace, he was pure in thought and deed.

His era was unique, his legends were astonishing. To the ancient era he gave the command to depart.

He gave to drink to men of taste. He was a horseman on the field of yearning. Pure and unadulterated is his wine, tempered is his steel.

When this individual was produced, he proved to be beneficial, prepared and valuable in every field of servitude [to Allāh *ta'ālā*] and every walk of life. When any service was delegated to him, he demonstrated his suitability, capability, consciousness of his obligation, perception of his responsibility, desire to work and enthusiasm to serve. When he was given the task of passing judgement and bearing testimony, he proved to be the best judge who maintained an absolutely just balance. When he was appointed as a soldier, he demonstrated his military acumen, vigilance, bravery and compassion. When he was given command over an army, he proved to be a capable, willing, brave and eager commander. When he was removed from the highest command of the armies, neither did a single frown of disapproval appear on his forehead nor did he utter a single word of complaint. People did not perceive any difference in his willingness, enthusiasm and vigour. If he was a master over labourers or an officer of the court, he was a worker who was conscious of his responsibilities and an enthusiastic labourer who was more concerned about doing more work instead of elevating his own position. If he was a poor man, he was one who was patient and content. If he was wealthy, he was grateful and concerned about others. If he was a scholar, he was most desirous of spreading his knowledge, showing the people the way to Allāh *ta'ālā* and most generous in distributing his knowledge. If he was a student, he was desirous of acquiring genuine authentic knowledge, considered it to be the highest form of worship; and therefore remained engrossed in its quest and bore the most

arduous hardships for its acquisition. If he was a ruler of a city, he would spend the night patrolling and the day meting out justice. In short, no matter what position and what field of human society this individual was in, he was attached to it like a gem is to a ring.

When the most sensitive and dangerous responsibility in the world was placed on his shoulders (i.e. the responsibility of ruling over a country), he demonstrated such a high level of abstinence, asceticism, self-sacrifice, solitariness and simplicity, that the world was left astounded and is just as astounded by it today. Come, let us read some incidents from the era of the first four Rightly-Guided Caliphs. A historian on the era of Hadrat Abū Bakr *radiyallāhu ‘anhu* writes:

The wife of Hadrat Abū Bakr *radiyallāhu ‘anhu* expressed her desire to eat sweetmeat, so he said to her: “I do not have anything with which we could purchase it.” She said: “If you permit, I will try and save a little from our daily expenses.” He said: “You may save a little if you wish.” She managed to collect a small amount after some days, and gave the amount to Hadrat Abū Bakr *radiyallāhu ‘anhu* so that he may buy the sweetmeat. When she gave him the amount, he said: “It becomes clear that the monthly wage which I am receiving is more than what I really need [or else we would not have been able to save this amount]. This extra money ought to be returned to the Bayt al-Māl¹.” He returned it

¹ The Islamic Treasury.

to the Bayt al-Māl and reduced his monthly wage accordingly.”¹

You may have heard about many of the official journeys and visits of the kings and presidents of many different countries. You may have observed the royal pomp, splendour and ceremony with which they travel. Now read about the official journey of Hadrat ‘Umar *raḍiyallāhu ‘anhu* - the most powerful and most commanding ruler of the seventh century C.E. In his magnum opus, *al-Fārūq*, Maulānā Shiblī *rahimahullāh* describes Hadrat ‘Umar’s *raḍiyallāhu ‘anhu* journey to Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) which he undertook in 16 A.H. The Maulānā relates this episode from authentic Arabic history books:

People will be anxious to know what a grand spectacle the journey of Hadrat ‘Umar *raḍiyallāhu ‘anhu* had presented, particularly when the object was to impress the people with the might and glory of Islam. But, in fact, he had not taken even an ordinary tent with him, what to speak of drums and trumpets, retinue and attendants, and an army with its baggage and camp-followers. There was only a horse for riding and a few Anṣār and Muhājirūn. Nevertheless, the earth shook as the news was received that Fārūq A’zam (the title of Hadrat ‘Umar *raḍiyallāhu ‘anhu*) had set out for Syria from Madīnah.

He made a long halt at Jābiyah, and it was here that the Bayt al-Maqdis Treaty was

¹ Maulānā Habīb ar-Rahmān Khān Sherwānī *rahimahullāh*: *Sīrah as-Siddīq*.

written. After the Treaty was concluded, Hadrat 'Umar *radiyallāhu 'anhu* decided to proceed to Bayt al-Maqdis. The hooves of the horse he was riding had worn out, and it had difficulty moving. On seeing this, Hadrat 'Umar *radiyallāhu 'anhu* dismounted, and a fine Turkish horse was provided by the people in its place. It was a spirited and feisty animal, and as Hadrat 'Umar *radiyallāhu 'anhu* mounted it, it began to strut. He addressed it saying: "You wretched animal! Where did you learn this proud and haughty gait?!" Saying this, he got off and proceeded on foot.

As he approached Bayt al-Maqdis, Hadrat Abū 'Ubaydah *radiyallāhu 'anhu* and other army officers came out to receive him. The Muslims felt ashamed at the ordinary clothes and other possessions which Hadrat 'Umar *radiyallāhu 'anhu* was carrying with him and thought about what the Christians would say. They presented a Turkish horse and a fine and expensive garment. Hadrat 'Umar *radiyallāhu 'anhu* said: "The honour which Allāh *ta'ālā* bestowed to us is the honour of Islam, and that is enough for us."¹

Here is another description of a journey which he undertook to Syria in 18 A.H.

Hadrat 'Umar *radiyallāhu 'anhu* resolved to go to Syria. He entrusted the governorship of Madīnah to Hadrat 'Alī *radiyallāhu 'anhu* and set out for Aylah. His slave, Yarfa', and

¹ *Al-Fārūq*, pp. 105-106.

several Sahābah *radiyallāhu ‘anhum* were with. As he approached Aylah, he gave his horse to his slave for some reason, while he himself seated himself on the latter’s camel. Along the way, the onlookers would ask: “Where is the Amīr al-Mu’minīn?” He would say: “He is in front of you.” This is how he entered Aylah where he stayed for a few days. His *kurtah* (long shirt) which was made of a coarse fabric had got torn at the back due to friction against the saddle. He gave this *kurtah* to the bishop of Aylah to mend it. The bishop patched it with his own hands and returned it to Hadrat ‘Umar *radiyallāhu ‘anhu* together with presenting a new *kurtah* to him. But Hadrat ‘Umar *radiyallāhu ‘anhu* preferred wearing his old *kurtah* and said: “It absorbs perspiration much better.”¹

Different aspects of the lives of the Righteous Caliphs and the Sahābah *radiyallāhu ‘anhum*, and their excellent qualities and merits are found scattered in many different books. If you were to collate and gather them all, you will come up with a detailed life-sketch and full picture of an individual. Fortunately, a full account of the life and moral disposition of one of them – Hadrat ‘Alī *radiyallāhu ‘anhu* – is available to us. Read it and see if a more captivating and beautiful picture of a person’s life and character is available. Look at the excellent specimens of human disposition and temperament which the teaching and training of Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam left behind. Dirār ibn Damurah, a constant companion of Hadrat ‘Alī *radiyallāhu ‘anhu*, describes him as follows:

¹ *Al-Fārūq*, p. 113.

He was a man of high aspirations, great courage and very powerful. He spoke decisively and passed judgement with justice. Knowledge would gush forth from all sides from him. Everything he said was filled with wisdom. He recoiled from the world and its splendour, but got solace from the night and its darkness. By Allāh, he used to shed tears copiously and spend long periods of time in thinking and reflecting. He would turn his palm over and address his self. He liked coarse clothing and unrefined food. By Allāh, he was just like one of us. He would answer us if we asked him a question. When we went to visit him, he would be the first to greet us and inquire about us. He would accept our invitation. By Allāh, although he took us close to his self, and despite his closeness to us, we would not speak to him out of awe for him and it would be difficult for us to initiate a conversation with him. When he smiled, his teeth appeared like a string of pearls. He accorded respect to the religious and loved the poor. Despite this humility, a powerful and wealthy person could not influence him to pass a wrong judgement or obtain a concession from him. At the same time, the weak had full faith in his justice and equity.

I take an oath in Allāh's name, I had seen him once when the night had cast the veils of its darkness and the stars had become dim. He was in the *mih̄rāb*¹ of his musjid

¹ A semi-circular enclosure at the front of a musjid.

with his hand holding his beard. He was mumbling like a person who has been bitten by a snake and crying like a grief-stricken person. I can still picture him repeating these words: “O world! O world! Have you come to tempt me or are you trying to deceive me? Never, never. Go and deceive someone else. I have issued three irrevocable divorces to you – you can never come back to me. Your life-span is short, your life is worthless, but the danger which you pose is grave. Oh! The provisions are so few, the journey is so long and the path is so dangerous.”¹

This achievement of prophet-hood is not restricted to the era of prophet-hood and the first century of the *hijrah*. The teachings of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* and the examples of life which were left by the *Sahābah radiyallāhu ‘anhum* continued producing great personalities in every department of life in the succeeding Muslim generations and the far-reaching corners of the Islamic world. The human greatness of these personalities is beyond doubt, misgiving and differences of opinion. The graduates and trainees of this eternal *madrasah* of prophet-hood (who had learnt the lessons of humanity, character, Allāh-consciousness, and human welfare solely from this *madrasah* of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) – are the jewels of their respective eras and sources of honour for humanity at large. The greatest historian, writer and research scholar cannot even present a mere list of these hundreds of

¹ Ibn al-Jauzī: *Sifatūs Safwah*, vol. 1, pp. 315-316, Dār al-Ma’rifah, Beirut, 1406 A.H./1986.

thousands of *ahl-e-yaqīn* and *ahl-e-ma'rifat*¹ who, as a result of this training and education, were born in various places and in different times and eras. As for encompassing their noble character, lofty humaneness and spiritual excellences; this is most certainly impossible.

The mind is left astounded when studying aspects of their lives (the little which history could preserve). How could this human who was created from soil reach such heights of spiritual progress, purity of the self, high aspirations, concern for fellow humans, generosity of spirit, giving preference to others over one's self, self sacrifices, independence from the wealth of the world, fearlessness before the rulers of the time, Allāh-consciousness and awareness, and faith and conviction in the unseen?! Their conviction filled the hearts of thousands of people with conviction. Their love for Allāh *ta'ālā* filled the bosoms of thousands with the heat of love, and ignited and illuminated their chests with it. Their character turned blood-thirsty enemies into devoted followers who were prepared to risk their lives; and thousands of barbaric humans were converted to genuine humans. Their blessings and influence created a general atmosphere of quest for Allāh *ta'ālā*, Allāh consciousness and love for one's fellow humans. Our country, India, is most fortunate for having countless such men of Allāh who – in their respective times and eras – elevated humanity and illuminated the name of man.

Read only about the life of Sultān Salāh ad-Dīn Ayyūbī *rahimahullāh* from among the long list of rulers

¹ Those who have firm conviction in Allāh *ta'ālā* and have truly recognized Him.

who were trained from the *madrasah* of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*. He was the most powerful ruler of the Middle East in the sixth century of the *hijrah*. He ruled from the mountains of Kurdistan to the Nūbah Desert. Read the testimony of his secretary, Qādī Ibn Shaddād *rahimahullāh*:

Throughout his life, he never had the occasion of zakāh becoming compulsory on him because he never owned such an amount by which zakāh becomes obligatory. All his wealth was spent in charity. He left behind only 47 Nāṣirī dirhams and one gold coin. Apart from this, he left behind no land, property, house, orchard, village or farm. Not a single penny was spent from his inheritance for his burial arrangements. Everything was taken on credit. Even the straw for his grave was bought on credit. Arrangements for his shroud were made by his minister and scribe, Qādī Fādīl, through a lawful and permissible manner.¹

The Sultān is also listed among the most phenomenal personalities as regards his human loftiness, nobleness and high aspirations. Contrary to what the Christian conquerors had done [when they let loose a reign of terror and blood-shedding], when the Sultān conquered Jerusalem, he displayed absolute affection, kindness and munificence. Stanley Lane-Poole writes in this regard:

“If the taking of Jerusalem were the only fact known about Saladin, it were enough to prove him the most chivalrous and great-

¹ *An-Nawādir as-Sultāniyyah*.

hearted conqueror of his own, and perhaps of any, age.”¹

You have now heard about the kindness and benevolence of a great ruler of the Middle East. Now listen to the following incident about a Muslim king of your own country [India]. He is another example of sincerity, benevolence, self-sacrifice and high aspirations. It is the story of a powerful and influential ruler of the tenth century of the *hijrah*. His name is Sultān Muẓaffar Ḥalīm (d. 932 C.E.) of Gujarat. He led an attack on Māndau and conquered it in order to help Maḥmūd Shāh Khaljī (who was removed from his throne and de-crowned, and his sultanate was taken over by his own servants and slaves). Listen to the story from a Gujarātī historian:

Muẓaffar Ḥalīm entered the fort after subjugating it. When his noblemen who had accompanied him saw all the riches and wealth of Malwah, and learnt about the lushness and greenery of the land, they took the courage of suggesting to Muẓaffar Shāh that since 2 000 of their horsemen had been martyred, it would not be appropriate after suffering such losses to hand over the country to a king who had lost it to Mandlī Rā’i on account of the formers incompetence. The moment Muẓaffar Shāh heard this, he stopped his procession, went out of the fort and instructed Maḥmūd Shāh not to permit any of those who had accompanied him to enter the fort. Maḥmūd insisted and begged Muẓaffar Shāh to spend a few days in the

¹ *Saladin*, pp. 233-234.

fort and to relax there. But he refused, and later said to him: “I waged this jihād and battle solely for Allāh’s pleasure. The suggestion of these noblemen created a fear in me that I may develop a corrupt intention in my heart and my sincere intention may be destroyed. I did not do Maḥmūd any favour, rather it is Maḥmūd who has been kind enough to me due to which I acquired this good fortune [of waging jihād and having so many of my men martyred for Allāh’s sake].”¹

I do not claim that all the sultans and rulers of the Islamic era were just like Nūr ad-Dīn, Salāh ad-Dīn, Nāṣir ad-Dīn Maḥmūd and Sultān Muẓaffar Ḥalīm. However, in whichever of the rulers you see the qualities of lofty humaneness, Allāh consciousness, poverty and abstinence, selflessness, spirit of sacrifice, kindness and benevolence; and you find them above the level of their era, aloof from the traditions of royalty and of high esteem in their era, you will find that they are solely the products of the blessings of prophet-hood and religious enthusiasm. If you were to study their lives and biographies you will not find it difficult to conclude that the bond and connection of all of them was this one single fountainhead of guidance (by virtue of learning, training, bond, love, obedience and emulation). It was this fountainhead which produced the greatest personalities in every era, no matter how distant they may have been in time. In essence, they are all graduates of this institute of prophet-hood which carried out the task of constructing humanity in the widest and highest level, and whose blessings are

¹ *Yād Ayyām* as quoted from *Mir’āt Sikandarī*.

still illuminating the lamp of mankind. Wherever you see any light, it is from this one single lamp.

Our modern culture, present thinkers, and those in-charge of taking care of human society have failed miserably in producing individuals and moulding human life. They are able to trap the rays of the sun, they can produce crafts which can traverse the atmosphere safely and swiftly, they are able to convey humans to the moon and the cosmos, they can put atomic energy to great use, they can alleviate poverty from the land, they are able to convey knowledge and crafts to the highest levels, and they can educate an entire nation and make all the inhabitants literate. No one can deny their successes and achievements. But they are totally incapable of producing righteous individuals and men of faith. This is their biggest failure and tragedy. This is why efforts and gains of many centuries are being destroyed, and the entire world has succumbed to despondency and confusion. And now, people are even losing confidence in their science and knowledge. This could result in a severe revolt against knowledge and civilization. Corrupt individuals have not only rendered sound and innocent means corrupt, but used them as weapons of corruption and destruction. Decayed and weak timber cannot be used to construct a good ship. It is a serious error and fallacy to think that although decayed timbers are separately and individually decayed and unreliable, when they are joined and attached to each other and a ship is built, they go through a transformation and become good and strong. It is a fallacy to think that robbers and thieves are separately and individually robbers and thieves, but when they form a group, they become watchmen and a responsible body of holy people!

The individuals which the modern intellectual leadership has given to the world are bereft of faith and conviction, devoid of human emotions, deprived of moral consciousness, ignorant of the meaning of love and sincerity, and heedless of human dignity and honour. They only know the philosophy of pleasure and power. They only recognize tribal patriotism and nationalism. Whether such men are leaders of a democratic or socialist system, they can never establish a righteous social order, a peaceful environment and an Allāh-fearing society. They can never be trusted with the destiny of Allāh's creation and humanity.

Only prophet-hood was able to produce the most righteous individuals and the purest of societies. Prophet-hood alone has the ability to change and ignite hearts, subdue the self and give it steadfastness, create love for righteousness and chastity, instil aversion for sin and evil; and to combat the enchanting allure of wealth, gold, dominion, power, authority, influence and domination. Only individuals who possess these qualities can save the world from destruction and the modern culture from annihilation.

Prophet-hood did not give science to the world; it did not give it innovation and invention. It neither claims to have done this, nor is it ashamed and apologetic for not doing it. Its achievement is that it gave to the world individuals who themselves can tread the correct path and lead the world onto that path. Who can derive benefit from every good and convey good to others. Who can utilize every capability and bounty as they ought to be utilized. Who know what the purpose of their life is and are fully conscious of their Creator. Who have the ability to derive benefit from Him and acquire more bounties and favours from Him. The existence of such individuals is the essential

capital of mankind, and their training is the real achievement of prophet-hood.

THE GIFT OF PROPHET-HOOD¹

There were many individuals and groups in history who served humanity and played a role in the construction and progress of the world. Today, they all emerge on the platform of history, present themselves as architects and servants of the world, and are hopeful of being judged and evaluated by this standard. This is acceptable and they should be given such an opportunity. Their services and contributions ought to be gauged and we should then decide which of them fulfils this standard to perfection.

Firstly, a dignified and imposing group makes its appearance. It is made up of sages and philosophers. This group comprises of great Greek philosophers and also senior sages of India. Our minds have always been intimidated by philosophy. On seeing them, we think to ourselves that these people raised the head of mankind and filled its side with pearls of wisdom. But just free yourself from fanaticism and devotion for a while and think: Can we claim on their behalf, and will it be correct for us to say that they proved to be a source of mercy for humanity? I am asking a question: What did mankind receive from them? What thirst of mankind did they quench? What pain of mankind did they treat? If we think about all this, we are left despondent.

Study philosophy and observe the life of philosophers. We will clearly conclude that philosophy was a small island in the vast ocean of life. It was one

¹ Transcript of a speech which was delivered in Rabī' al-Awwal 1374 A.H./November 1954 at the Amin ad-Daulah Park in Lucknow, India. It was attended by a large number of non-Muslims. The speech was penned simultaneously, and a few changes and additions were made to it later on.

protected area and one confined circle. These philosophers and sages were spending all their mental capabilities and Allāh-given powers in this confined circle. The issues of mankind which need immediate attention, which cannot be deferred in the least and without which the vehicle of mankind cannot proceed, were neither touched by these philosophers, discussed by them, nor did they help mankind in this regard in any way. They were spending a life of wellness in their intellectual island, but the rest of humanity was not confined to these small islands.

While there were many Greek philosophers, Greece was not filled with philosophers alone. They certainly delved into the stars and planets and engaged in polemics on the celestial bodies. But what guidelines did they provide for life? Apart from the intellectual class, how did they guide the other classes of humanity? What did they do for the wandering and struggling humanity? They were living in this world but were removed from life. They built a wall of knowledge and wisdom around themselves and concentrated on only a few academic issues.

This is a political era and our country [India] has got freedom [from colonialism]. You will probably be able to understand the position of the philosophers from this example. Your country has embassies representing several countries, e.g. the American, Russian, Egyptian and Iranian embassies. There is life and movement within these embassies. There are many people there who are occupied in reading and writing. It also has some senior thinkers and politicians. But they are totally divorced from the internal affairs of our country. They have nothing to do with our mutual relationships and domestic disputes. They are not concerned about our wealth, poverty, moral progress or retrogression. They have a restricted and limited sphere

of work, and they do nothing else. Thus, although they are living in our country, they are not here. In the same way, philosophy was like a foreign embassy and the philosophers worked as representatives of knowledge and wisdom within the walls of these embassies, while being totally unconcerned about the issues and challenges of life.

The next group which comes before us comprises of poets and the literati. You and I – we all – have a taste for poetry and literature. We do not look down at it, but forgive my impoliteness. The poets and litterateurs too did not treat the suffering of humanity. They certainly provided us with means for our entertainment and enriched our language and literature, but they did not bear the pain of reforming humanity, nor could they have done it. The ups and downs of life continued, humanity rose and fell, while they continued conveying to us their sweet talk.

You can understand this by the following example: People are suffering in their own calamities and hardships. There is a fight and dispute somewhere. Others are suffering the challenges of life. In the meantime, a flautist passes by nonchalantly, playing his flute. You may take some enjoyment from him for a short while, you may turn your attention to him for some time, but you can neither solve the problems of your life from his tune nor can you acquire any message from it. No matter how essential poetry and literature are for our lives, no matter how much our soul grows from them, and no matter how much freshness our minds acquire from them, they can neither solve our problems nor treat our pain. Furthermore, the poets and litterateurs had no set purpose before them nor did they strive towards any specific goal. Neither could they make any sacrifices for

it. Whereas these are essential ingredients to bring about change and reform.

The conquerors are the next to appear on stage. They are the ones who conquered lands and subjugated nations by the strength of their swords. We are also quite intimidated by this group. The clanging of their swords is still ringing in our ears. The loud clamour which these conquerors make causes us to assume that they rendered great services to humanity. But what kind of memories do their names evoke? Are they of justice and equity, or of bestiality and blood shedding? When the name of Alexander is mentioned, memories of his acts of oppression and tyranny are rekindled. Was he a benefactor to humanity? He had subjugated all the lands extending from Greece to India. Country after country was robbed of a life of peace and security because of him. Even after his death, this country could not regain a footing after so many years. The same is the situation with Caesar, Genghis Khan and other notorious conquerors. A conqueror may be a benefactor and mercy for his own country, but he is a scourge and torment for other lands and countries.

The next group to appear consists of the liberators of their lands and national leaders. When they are mentioned, we bend our heads out of respect. The fact of the matter is that they rendered sterling services for their country. But what did they do for those who are living beyond this country? You probably heard of Abraham Lincoln. He was the architect of the new America [the USA]. But tell me, of what benefit was he to India, Egypt, Iraq and other similar countries? Based on the consequences, he created an imperialist power and added one more ring to the chain of the slavery of the world. Who was Sa'd Zāghlūl? He was the benefactor of Egypt and its most popular leader in the

liberation struggle. But what did he do outside Egypt and how are we indebted to him? This nationalism is really a calamity for other countries and nations because its foundation is based on worship of one's own nation while scorn for other nations. In most cases, it involves superiority for one's own nation and the exploitation and enslaving of other nations.

The fifth group comprises of those who are known as scientists. They are the ones who invented new things and made many useful items. This group has undoubtedly done a great service to humanity. All these inventions which are of use to us, e.g. electricity, aeroplanes, railways, the radio, are all the products of scientists for which they worked very hard. There is no doubt about their benefit to mankind. But if we were to ponder over the matter, we will conclude that these inventions on their own are insufficient. If they are not accompanied with good intentions, if there is no patience and restraint, there is no enthusiasm to serve the creation of Allāh *ta'ālā*, and if the essential issues and problems of mankind are not solved through them, then tell me, are these inventions a mercy or a curse for mankind?

They may have given these inventions to man for him to use, but they did not give him the correct attitude to use them. They did not create that mind and temperament from which they could benefit, use correctly and abstain from their misuse. Our experience in the last two World Wars shows that in the absence of moral training and Allāh-consciousness, these inventions and means are a curse and torment for mankind; not a mercy and comfort. I am not disparaging these scientists. But I will certainly say that the achievement of these inventions is incomplete in the absence of noble intentions, moral strength and mental balance. As long as noble intentions are not

present in man's heart and he does not have the personal motivation to do good, the means, instruments, occasions, possibilities, comforts and easiness cannot make him righteous. Assuming I have a lot of money to give as charity and there are many poor people waiting to receive it. No one is stopping me from giving the charity, but the spirit of charity and the desire to help [others] is not within me. Who, then, can persuade me to give it?

Now another group appears before us. It is the group of *Ambiyā'* (Prophets '*alayhimus salām*). This group does not claim to have invented things and made discoveries. They neither claim expertise in the sciences nor do they boast about poetry and literature. They neither sing their own praises nor are they unduly modest. They state, frankly and simply, that they give three things to the world:

1. Correct knowledge.
2. Conviction in that knowledge.
3. A will and enthusiasm to practise on that knowledge, and live one's life in accordance with that conviction.

This is the essence of the teachings of all the Prophets '*alayhimus salām* from Hadrat Ādam '*alayhis salām* to Hadrat Muhammad sallallāhu '*alayhi wa sallam*.

I will now tell you what that correct knowledge is which a Messenger gives to humanity. It entails knowledge of who created this world and why it was created. A Messenger says: The first thing we have to know is who created us and why we were created. If we do not know this, every step we take will be wrong and we will have no right to derive any benefit from this world. This is because whatever is happening in this

world – walking about, moving around, eating, drinking, etc. – is a small insignificant part of this grand design of Allāh *ta'ālā*. As long as we do not know the nucleus of the universe and are not in agreement with its total purpose and objective, we have no right to take benefit from its different parts. Without it, it is even impermissible for us to break a single piece of bread.

We are an insignificant part of this universe and a seed of grain which we use is also a small and insignificant part of it. In fact, the planet on which we live is also a small fraction of it. What is our position in this vast planetary system of the universe? If you were only to learn your position between this earth and the sun, or among the other planets, you will be ashamed of your very own existence and of your magnificent country.

Who is it who created a link between you and other parts of this universe? It is the Creator of the universe and His grand design. If you do not recognize this Creator of the universe or do not believe in Him, and you do not agree with His grand design, you have no right to derive benefit from any part or iota of this universe.

I ask you: If the piece of bread which you have in your hand were to ask you: “I have recognized my Creator and, as per His order, sacrificed my existence for my master. O man! You neither recognized your Creator nor did you worship Him. So what right do you have to derive any benefit from me?” What answer will you give to it? In the same way, it is wrong to use anything of this world for as long as you do not recognize its Creator, and what the purpose of its creation is. It is a serious tragedy when everything is going on in this world – there is a lot of movement in

the market places, relationships are being established, vehicles are moving, major works are taking place – but no one has the time to stop and think about who created all this and what His purpose is in creating them?

When the Messenger came into this world, the vehicle of humanity was travelling aimlessly. The philosophers, scholars, litterateurs, conquerors, rulers, farmers and traders were too busy in their occupations. There were the rulers and the ruled. The oppressors and the oppressed. But all were unmindful of their actual purpose and unaware of their Creator.

A tall man appears before all these humans who appear like dwarfs and asks those in whose hands the reigns of humanity is: “Tell me, what wrong have you committed against mankind by estranging it from its Master and the King of this universe, and made it your slaves? What right did you have in holding the hand of this immature humanity and placing it on the wrong path? O you cruel driver! In which direction did you drive the vehicle of humanity without consulting your passengers?”

He stands in the midst of the heart and soul of life, addresses mankind and calls out to it. His question cannot be ignored. Humanity gets divided into two groups: one group accepts what he says, the other rejects it. The world has to choose one of the two paths.

The Prophets *'alayhimus salām* never claimed that they have come to expose the secrets of nature, to subjugate the natural forces or to make new inventions. They do not make claims of expertise in the fields of geography and geology. They say: “We have come to impart correct knowledge and understanding of the Creator of this world, of His being and His attributes. The knowledge which we impart has been

given to us by the Master of this world and the Creator of mankind. Others can now obtain this knowledge only through us.”

They teach us that the Creator of this world is One, and that it is functioning according to His will and command. He is controlling it without any partner. This world was neither created in vain nor is it functioning without a purpose. After this present life there will be another life in which man will have to give an account for his first life. In the other life, he will be rewarded for good deeds and punished for evil deeds.

The Prophets *'alayhimus salām* are the ones who bring the laws and are the interpreters of Allāh's *ta'ālā* intent. They went to every land and nation, and brought Allāh's *ta'ālā* message. The path of Allāh *ta'ālā* cannot be traversed without them. These are points which are unanimously agreed upon by the Prophets *'alayhimus salām*; there is no difference among them. The philosophers and sages have severe differences among them. Just two from among them cannot agree with each other on any single point. But here [among the Prophets *'alayhimus salām*], there are no differences between any two Prophets on even a single issue.

Conviction is necessary for knowledge. Today we have so much of knowledge and we know so many things but our conviction is very little. Knowledge does not always create conviction. Many of the past philosophers were deprived of conviction and were prone to doubts. Even today, instead of their knowledge creating conviction, it is creating doubts. Even today, many erudite scholars are thirsty for conviction.

The Prophets *'alayhimus salām* do not convey genuine knowledge alone; they bestow conviction as well. Knowledge is a very valuable treasure but

conviction in it is much more valuable. Knowledge without conviction is a mere verbal exercise, amusement for the mind and hypocrisy for the heart. The Prophets *'alayhimus salām* conveyed genuine knowledge to their adherents, coupled with firm conviction. They believed in whatever they learnt, and then sacrificed themselves for it. Their minds were illuminated by this knowledge and their hearts were fortified with this conviction. You can read stories demonstrating their conviction in the books of history and see the results of their conviction in the world.

If there was conviction today, why would there be immorality? Why would oppression spread? Why would bribery be so common? Are all these evils prevalent because of a lack of knowledge? Do people not know that stealing is a crime? Do they not know that bribery and pick-pocketing are unlawful? Can anyone claim not to know all this? In fact, we notice that where there is more knowledge, there are more evils and vices. Those who write a book on the harms and evils of bribery, and record its history are the very ones who accept bribes the most. Those who know the harms and consequences of stealing are the ones who are stealing the most. Look at pick pockets. You will find many among them who have been caught and punished for this crime several times. Can there be anyone more knowledgeable than them as regards the consequences and punishment for picking pockets? If knowledge alone was sufficient, then after being punished for stealing, this crime would have automatically left a person. If a person was punished once for having committed a crime, he would not have committed it again. But this is not the case. This shows that knowledge alone is not enough.

We have learnt that knowledge is essential and so is conviction. But what guarantee do we have that

the urge to practise on it will be created? There are many who know and are convinced that alcohol is an evil. They have also experienced its harms and are convinced of them. Yet they drink it. There will be many doctors in your city who do not abstain from harmful foods. They have full conviction of their dangers but will still consume them. The fact of the matter is that the urge to practise is not there. They do not have the desire to abstain from the harmful foods and are not averse to them. Instead, they desire these harmful foods and do not fight against their desires.

Together with knowledge and conviction, the Prophets '*alayhimus salām* bestow this third strength, viz. the strength to practise on one's knowledge and conviction with desire and enthusiasm, and the ability to combat one's evil desires. Consequently, the person derives full benefit from his knowledge and conviction, and spends his life accordingly. His conscience supervises him and restrains him at the time of committing wrong.

Every Prophet bestowed these three treasures to his respective nation in their respective times. Consequently, the lives of hundreds of thousands of people changed for the better and the pivot of their lives came into place. A true and genuine favour to mankind was done by these Prophets. Allāh's peace and salutations to all of them for having steered humanity and rescued it from the brink of destruction.

However, these treasures gradually became rare in the world. Correct knowledge was lost, the lamp of conviction was extinguished and the desire to do good deeds died. These three treasures had become so rare in the sixth century C.E. that it had become extremely difficult to detect them. In entire countries and whole continents you will not find even a single servant of

Allāh *ta'ālā* possessing the treasures of correct knowledge and strong *īmān*. The religion which was brought by the Prophets '*alayhimus salām* and the conviction which had spread far and wide had shrunk gradually until they were reduced to a small dot. The light of knowledge and conviction would shine dimly in the pitch darkness of doubts and inaction just as a glow worm gives off a dim light on a dark rainy night. There was such a dearth of people possessing genuine conviction in Allāh *ta'ālā* that an Iranian youngster by the name of Salmān Fārsī [*radīyallāhu 'anhu*] goes out in search for people of conviction and good actions. He travels through Iran, goes to Syria and proceeds to the Hijāz. While searching in these three countries, he comes across just four people of conviction.

The Final Prophet of Allāh *ta'ālā* arrives in the midst of this pitch and universal darkness. He proliferates and spreads these three treasures in a manner which was unprecedented. The treasure which was a rarity in a select number of hearts, which could not leave the home and spread into the residential area, and from there to the rest of the city; had now become so common that it spread to every house extending from the East to the West. A poet says:

Neither the inhabitants of the oceans nor of the lands were deprived of it. All the orchards of Allāh *ta'ālā* became lush and green.

Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* did not merely dictate these three facts [i.e. knowledge, conviction and practising on both]. Rather, he blew their "trumpet" in a manner that even a single hearing person could not claim that he did not hear it. As for the one who did not hear it, it is the fault of his ears and not of the announcement. Is there any corner in

the world today where the melody of *Ash-hadu allā ilāha illallāhu wa ash-hadu anna Muḥammadar Rasūlullāh*¹ is not heard? When all the sounds of the world become tired and fall asleep, when a death-like sleep pervades a vibrant city, and when locks fall on the tongues; this call still falls in the ears: *There is none worthy of worship except Allāh, and Muḥammad Rasūlullāh is Allāh's Messenger.*

Today, sounds reach all corners of the world through the radio and messages are conveyed to every house. But has any radio – whether of America or England – ever spread a fact or any knowledge as this knowledge [of Allāh *ta'ālā*] was spread throughout the world? The call which the unlettered Prophet of the Arabs made while standing on Mt. Safā?

Man is sometimes overcome by emotion and says certain things in his childish innocence to his Master [Allāh *ta'ālā*]. In a similar emotion, Iqbāl said the following on behalf of humanity in the court of his Master:

Even angels could not inhabit Your desolate world.

Will the lowest servant of Muḥammad Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* be wrong if he were to say today: “O Allāh! I take an oath by Your divinity! You are the Creator of Muḥammad Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*, You are the Creator and Master of the entire world and You have power over everything! But is there anyone from among Your servants and Your creations who spread Your name in

¹ I testify that there is none worthy of worship except Allāh and I testify that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh.

the world and conveyed it to every corner as was done by Your servant and Messenger, Muḥammad Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*?”

This is not a statement of disrespect and rebellion. It is also in praise of Allāh *ta‘ālā* who sent a Prophet like Muḥammad Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* and gave him the strength and inspiration to spread His name and illuminate his *Dīn* in this way.

When Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* placed his earnings and efforts of 14-15 years for the help of Allāh’s *Dīn* on the battlefield of Badr, and brought 313 men to stand and face an army of 1 000, he said this very thing to his Master: “O Allāh! If You pass a decision to destroy this handful [of Muslims] today, You will not be worshipped until the day of Resurrection.”

No religion of this world, no philosophy and no mind remained unaffected by the call of *tauḥīd*¹ which Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* had made. Ever since the world heard that it is disgraceful for any human to submit before anyone other than Allāh *ta‘ālā* – He instructed the angels to prostrate before Ḥaḍrat Ādam *‘alayhis salām* so that all forms of prostration may be prohibited to his progeny, they may understand that since the managers² of this universe have been made to prostrate before us, how can it be permissible for us to bow before anything of this world? Ever since the world heard this proclamation of *tauḥīd* and man heard of his true position, polytheism automatically

¹ Belief in the oneness of Allāh *ta‘ālā*.

² Referring to the angels who are appointed by Allāh *ta‘ālā* to fulfil various tasks in the administration of the universe.

became detestable in its own eyes and it was engulfed by an inferiority complex. You will notice a change in its tone after the commissioning of Muḥammad sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam [as Allāh’s *ta’ālā* Messenger]. It no longer boasts about its actions. It resorts to philosophical terminologies and explanations which is proof that the call of *tauḥīd* has found a place in its heart.

Furthermore, together with this knowledge and conviction, Muḥammad Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam engendered a strength which is more powerful than thousands of policemen, courts and governments. It is the strength of the conscience, the enthusiasm to do good, detestation of evil and introspection of one’s self.

It is a wonder of this very strength which causes a Sahābī radiyallāhu ‘anhu to become restless when he commits a major sin and his conscience is pricked. He presents himself before Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam and says: “O Rasūlullāh! Purify me.” Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam turns away from him. The Sahābī goes in that direction. Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam turns away again. The Sahābī goes in that direction and stands before him. Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam then inquires whether he has lost his mind. When it is established that he is mentally sound, Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam metes out the punishment to him. Now what was it that prompted him to offer his self for the punishment? What drew him to present himself before Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam [and confess his sin]?

Let’s go further. There was an illiterate Ghāmidīyyah woman who used to live in some village. She commits a major sin which was neither witnessed

nor heard by anyone. However, there was a thorn in her heart which neither permitted her any peace nor allowed her to enjoy her meals. When she used to eat food, her heart would say to her: “You are impure.” When she used to drink water, her heart would say to her: “You are impure. How can an impure person eat and drink? You will have to purify yourself first.” This sin can only be purified through punishment.

She voluntarily presents herself to Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, requests purification and insists on it. When he learns that she is pregnant, he says: “It is no fault of the infant. Why should it lose its life with yours? When the child is born, you must return to me.”

Just imagine. It must have certainly taken some time for the child to be born. She must have definitely consumed food and drink. Life itself must have certainly made demands on her. The enjoyment of food and drink must have certainly created an urge to live within her. It must have told her to cancel her intention of returning to Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*. But this servant of Allāh *ta’ālā* remained true to her word. She returned with the child after some time and said: “O Rasūlullāh! I have given birth. Why should there be any delay in my purification now?” He replied: “No, no. You must breast-feed this child and return to me when it is weaned.”

It must have taken her at least two years to breast-feed the child and eventually wean it. What a test these two years must have been for her. There was no police, no one to watch over her, no bail, no guarantee. What thoughts must have passed her mind! The face of the innocent child before her must have drawn her to want to live. Its smile must have created an urge for life in her. The child must have said in its

broken language: “Mother! I will be reared in the lap of none but yours. I will walk by holding your hand alone.” But her conscience was saying to her: “No. Your mother is impure. She has to purify herself first.” The conviction of her heart was saying to her: “You will have to present yourself before the Most Just of all judges. The punishment of that Day is severe.”

She presents herself once again before Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*. A piece of bread is in the child’s mouth. She says: “O Rasūlullāh! Look, my child has been weaned and it can eat bread now. Why should my purification be delayed any longer?”

The punishment is eventually meted out to this true and devoted servant of Allāh *ta‘ālā*. Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* confers the glad tidings of this deed by saying: “She has offered such a genuine repentance that if it were to be distributed among all the people of Madīnah, it would suffice them.” May Allāh *ta‘ālā* be pleased with her and bestow her His pleasure.

What was it which draws her and brings her to Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* without the pressure of any shackles, bail, guarantee, and without the imposition of any police? What draws her to insist on the punishment being meted out to her? Today, there are thousands of educated people, there are countless professional men and women whose knowledge and certainty about the harms do not restrain them from wrong doing and do not propel them towards good.

Muḥammad Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* conferred these three priceless pearls to the world: correct knowledge, absolute conviction, and the innermost enthusiasm to do good. The world never

received a greater capital than this, nor did anyone do a greater favour than Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* to the world.

Every human in the world ought to be proud over the fact that our human race has such a human being through whom humanity's head was raised high and whose name was illuminated. What would have been the condition of this world had he not come into it? Whom would we have presented to display the honour and greatness of the human race? Muḥammad Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* belongs to everyone. Muḥammad Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* is the splendour for this world and the eminence of mankind. He is not the property of any nation, he is not the monopoly of any country. He is a source of pride for the entire human race. Does a man of any country not say with pride and joy that he belongs to that species in which a perfect human like Muḥammad Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* was born?

Is there any class of humanity which is not, directly or indirectly, indebted to Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*? Are the men not indebted to him? Did he not teach them the lessons of chivalry and politeness? Are the women not indebted to him for having shown them their rights, giving guidelines to them and advising how they should be treated? He said: "Paradise lies beneath the feet of the mother." Are the weak not indebted to him for having come to their defence, when he said: "Fear the supplication of the oppressed for there is no veil between him and Allāh *ta'ālā*." "Allāh *ta'ālā* says: 'I am with the broken-hearted.'" Are the men of power and rulers not indebted to him for having taught them their rights and obligations? He showed them their limits, and gave glad tidings to those who mete out justice and fear Allāh

ta'ālā. He said: "A just ruler will be in the shade of Allāh's mercy." Are the traders not indebted to him for having taught them the virtues and merits of engaging in trade? Moreover, he added to their honour by engaging in trade himself. Did he not say: "The honest and trustworthy trader and I shall be close together in Paradise"? Are the labourers not indebted to him when he said: "Pay the labourer before his perspiration dries up." Are the animals not indebted to him when he said: "Provide comfort to every creature which has life and consciousness." Did he not say that feeding them and providing them with water is an act of charity?

Is the entire human race not indebted to him when he used to get up at night and testify by saying: "O Allāh! All Your servants are brothers to each other."

أنا شهيد أن العباد كلهم إخوة

I testify that all servants are brothers.

Is the entire world not indebted to him for being the first to say that Allāh *ta'ālā* is not the property of any country, nation, progeny or family? He is for the entire universe and for all humans – He is for the Aryans, the Jews, the Egyptians, the Iranians, and so on. This is why we say:

الحمد لله رب العالمين

All praise is due to Allāh, the Master of all the worlds.

This fact was announced and made a part and parcel of salāh.

The wise sages, philosophers, men of letters, poets, conquerors, warriors, political and national leaders, inventors and scientists all came into this world of ours. But which of them brought that spring

which came with the arrival of the Prophets *'alayhimus salām*? Then lastly, which of them brought that spring which came with the last and greatest Prophet, Muḥammad Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*? Who is it who brought that lushness, those blessings, mercies for the human race, those gifts and bounties for humanity as brought by Muḥammad Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*. The 1 300 year old human history addresses you and says with full confidence:

Green be the grass on which you tread.
Flourishing be the tree beneath which you
rest.

DELEGATIONS OF THE UMMAH IN THE COURT OF RASŪLULLĀH¹

May Allāh *ta'ālā* pardon the historians and those occupied with a study of history because their historical temperament and inclination does not leave them even when they are in the most sanctified places and the best of times. No matter where they are, they live in what they studied and connect the present with the past.

Yesterday, I was in the *Raudah*² in al-Musjid an-Nabawī. I was surrounded by a large crowd of worshippers and people in *ṣalāh*. Some of them were in the bowing posture while others were in prostration. Yet others were reading the Qur'ān. Their recitation reverberated in the masjid and sounded like the buzzing of bees. All this ought to have caused me to forget about historical personalities for a little while. However, old historical memories pervaded my mind and heart like a cloud, and I could not repulse them.

It seemed to me as if the illustrious personalities of this *ummah* were given a new life, and were coming into this sanctified Masjid in the form of delegations, one after the other. They were performing *ṣalāh* here, offering *salām* to this affectionate Nabī [*sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*], fulfilling the obligation of respect and honour to him and acknowledging his favours to

¹ Translation of an Arabic speech delivered in Dhū al-*Hijjah* 1381 A.H./1962 C.E. over Saudi Radio in Jeddah.

² Referring to the area between the pulpit and blessed grave of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* in Masjid-e-Nabawī.

them. They were testifying – despite their different ranks, positions and eras – that it was he who removed them by Allāh’s *ta’ālā* permission from the pitch darkness to light, from wretchedness to happiness, from the worship of the creation to the worship of Allāh *ta’ālā* alone, from the injustices of religions to the justice of Islam and from the constriction of this world to its vastness.

They were acknowledging that they were indeed the products of Islam, and their very existence and entire life are indebted to prophet-hood. If – Allāh forbid – they were divested of whatever Allāh *ta’ālā* honoured them with through this Nabī [*sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*] and the gifts which they received from his prophet-hood were snatched away from them, they would become mere bodies without any soul and a few obscure lines and shapes with no purpose. They would return to the pitch dark era of history where the rule of the jungle and laws of tribalism prevailed, and the milestones of the present civilization and culture would be obliterated.

My eyes suddenly looked up in one direction and I saw a group entering from Bāb Jibra’īl¹ (which was closest to where I was sitting). These people were immersed in peace and dignity. The effulgence of knowledge and abundance of intelligence were clearly visible on their foreheads. They filled the entire area between Bāb Jibra’īl on the left and Bāb ar-Raḥmah on the right. It was not possible to count how many they were. I asked the guard: “Who are these people?” He

¹ Bāb Jibra’īl is one of the important and old entrances of Musjid-e-Nabawī. It is closest to the blessed grave of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*.

replied: “These are the great personalities of the *ummah*, the imāms of knowledge, the benefactors of humanity and the most distinguished examples of the human race. Each one of them is an imām of an entire *ummah*, he is a library himself, the founder and originator of a discipline and the tutor of an entire generation. Their contributions remained eternal and extended over different eras and various regions. Several generations travelled in the light of their knowledge, investigations and research.”

The guard even named some of them hastily for me: Mālik ibn Anas, Abū Hanīfah an-Nu‘mān, Muḥammad ibn Idrīs ash-Shāfi‘ī, Abū ‘Abdillāh Aḥmad ibn Hambal, Layth ibn Sa‘d al-Miṣrī, ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn ‘Amr al-Auzā‘ī, Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad ibn Hajjāj al-Qushayrī, Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī, Taqīyy ad-Dīn ibn Taymiyyah, Muwaffaq ad-Dīn ibn Qudāmah, Abū Is-ḥāq ash-Shāṭibī, Kamāl ibn al-Humām, Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd ar-Raḥīm ad-Dehlawī (Shāh Walī Allāh). Although there were major differences among these personalities as regards their eras, the countries from which they came, the lands which they inhabited and their academic and religious positions, they all offered their respects in the court of Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam and shed tears of remorse.

I saw them commencing with *tahīyyatul musjid*¹ – performing it with humility and presence of heart. They then proceeded with respect and humbleness towards the blessed grave [of Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam]. They offered *salām* to their Prophet

¹ An optional prayer performed when entering a musjid as a mark of respect for the musjid.

sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam with words which were very concise but had a lot of meaning, were deep-rooted and very lofty. It is as though their voices are still echoing in my ears. Their eyes were welling with tears and their voices were subdued. They were saying:

O Rasūlullāh! Were it not for you and were it not for your tolerant and extensive Sharī'ah which is eternal through time, were it not for its principles which concur with natural dispositions, its wise and miraculous system which prompts a person to ponder and provides him with the ability to extract and derive rulings, were it not for humanity's need for it in every time and clime – this grand jurisprudence (*fiqh*) would not have been codified and this wise Islamic law which no other nation and human society possesses would not have come into existence. Nor would this massive Islamic library come into existence, a library before which every other religious library is irrelevant. Were it not for your efforts in spreading knowledge and encouraging people to use their intellects and to ponder over the signs of Allāh *ta'ālā*, neither would knowledge have survived nor would it have spread as widely as it did. The human intellect would not have been freed from its shackles and the world would have been deprived of light.

I still did not finish looking at this group to my heart's desire when my eyes fell on another group which was approaching from Bāb ar-Raḥmah. The effects of righteousness, piety, abstinence and worship were clearly visible on their faces. I was informed that this group comprises of people like: al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī,

‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, Sufyān ath-Thaurī, al-Junayd al-Baghdādī, al-Fuḍayl ibn ‘Iyād, Dāwūd at-Ta‘ī, Ibn as-Simāk, ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī, Nizām ad-Dīn (Auliya’) al-Budāyūnī, ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Muttaqī¹ and others like them.

These people followed the first group, and after performing their ṣalāh, they stood before the blessed grave [of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*]. They conveyed salutations to their Prophet, imām and leader. They were saying:

O Rasūlullāh! Were it not for the practical example which you left for us, were it not for the lighthouse which you established for those after you, were it not for your statements: “O Allāh! The real life is the life of the Hereafter”, “Live in this world as though you are a traveller or one who is crossing a path”, and were it not for your life as described to us by Umm al-Mu‘minīn Hadrat ‘Ā’ishah *radiyallāhu ‘anhā*: “One crescent rose after another crescent, and one month followed another month without a fire being lit in your house and without a pot being placed on the stove” – it would not have been possible for us to give preference to the Hereafter over this world. It would not have been possible for us to suffice with the bare minimum of life and the least of possessions. We would not have been able to control the demands of our self nor would we

¹ Al-Budāyūnī and al-Muttaqī were two erudite scholars, senior ascetics and illustrious Sufī masters who were born and flourished in India.

have been able to combat the deceptions of wealth, positions and authority. We were able to do all this [by your virtue], without forbidding on ourselves the wholesome things which Allāh *ta'ālā* permitted to us and without scorning the favours which Allāh *ta'ālā* showered on us. It is indeed as a result of the true faith of a believer, giving preference to the Hereafter and its bounties over the attractions of this world, an averseness to desires and an abhorrence for hankering after the vanities of the world.

Their wise and touching words had not settled in my heart and mind as yet when my eyes fell on another group which was entering from Bāb an-Nisā'¹ with real dignity and decorum. This group was totally protected from and devoid of the external beautification and displays which are in total contradiction to Islamic principles and etiquette. It comprised of righteous women belonging to different nations and coming from far off lands. They were the virtuous and righteous women from the Arab and non-Arab lands, from the East and the West. They were expressing their sentiments of gratitude and devotion in soft tones, with full respect and deference. They were saying:

O Rasūlullāh! We send peace and salutations to you. Peace and salutations from a group which is very much indebted to you. Through the permission and power of Allāh *ta'ālā*, you rescued us from the shackles and restrictions of *jāhiliyyah*, from

¹ An old entrance of Musjid-e-Nabawī which had always been reserved for women.

jāhili customs, from the oppressions of society, and the excesses of men. You put an end to the custom of burying daughters alive and you warned against disobedience to mothers. You said: "Paradise lies beneath the feet of mothers." You included us in the inheritance and allotted a share for us as a mother, sister, daughter and wife. You did not forget us in your famous and historical sermon on the day of 'Arafah. You said: "Fear Allāh *ta'ālā* with regard to your women because you have taken them under your wing through the name of Allāh." In addition to this, you encouraged the men on many occasions to be just to women, to fulfil their rights and to treat them kindly. May Allāh *ta'ālā* reward you on our behalf with the best rewards which are reserved for the Prophets, Messengers and Allāh's righteous servants.

These soft and subdued tones were still ringing in my ears when I heard the arrival of another group entering from Bāb as-Salām. When I looked at this group, I realized it comprised of formulators of sciences and codifiers of different branches of knowledge. They were the imāms of grammar, language and rhetoric. It included personalities like Abū al-Aswad ad-Du'alī, al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī, Sībawayh, al-Kisā'ī, Abū 'Alī al-Fārisī, 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, as-Sukākī, Ibn Manzūr, Majd ad-Dīn al-Fīrauz Ābādī and Sayyid Murtaḍā az-Zabīdī.

They were conveying the greetings of their sciences and paying tribute to their popularity and literary eminence. I heard them saying in very eloquent and articulate words:

O Rasūlullāh! Were it not for you and the Book which was revealed to you, were it not for your Ahādith and the Sharī'ah before which the entire world has submitted and which compelled the world to study Arabic and gain mastery over it, these sciences on account of which we enjoy leadership and prominence would not have existed. There would have been no grammar, no rhetoric and no eloquence. These voluminous dictionaries would not have been compiled and a detailed examination of Arabic words would not have been undertaken. We would not have been prepared to undertake such a long and arduous struggle in this path. The non-Arabs who had no dearth in their own languages would not have had any enthusiasm to study Arabic and gain mastery over it. Nor would have these authors and men of letters been born among them whose remarkable literature and language were acknowledged by Arab litterateurs themselves.

O Rasūlullāh! You alone are the link between us and these sciences which developed in Islam and which were born during your era. You alone are the link between the Arabs and non-Arabs. It is solely through you that Allāh *ta'ālā* filled this vacuum, joined the distant with the near and caused the non-Arabs to embrace the Arabs. We are so indebted to you for our intelligence and erudition. We are most beholden to you for the treasure of knowledge, the products of our intellects and whatever our pens have achieved.

O Rasūlullāh! Were it not for you, this Arabic language would have been obliterated just like so many other languages and dialects. Were it not for the Glorious Qur'ān in the pure and clear Arabic language, this language would have been mutilated and altered like so many other languages. Non-Arabic words, local dialects and intonations would have absorbed and swallowed it up. Its authenticity and originality would have ceased. It is your blessed presence, your eternal Shari'ah, your universal religion, and the miraculous Book of Allāh *ta'ālā* which prevented it from obliteration, enforced its authority and influence over the entire Islamic world, and planted love and respect for it in the heart of every Muslim.

So it is through you that Allāh *ta'ālā* ensured the immortality of this language and guaranteed its continued existence, spread and proliferation. So every person who speaks this language, writes it, acquires a high position through it, or invites to it is indebted to you. He can never deny nor disregard this debt which he owes to you.

I was still listening to their expressions of gratitude and acknowledgements when my gaze suddenly fell on Bāb 'Abd al-'Azīz¹. A group comprising of different nations and having various complexions entered. It contained the most powerful rulers of the

¹ A new entrance to Musjid-e-Nabawī which was added next to Bāb Majīdī after the new extensions to the Musjid. It is named after Sultān 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Sa'ūd.

world and the greatest kings who were ever known to history. It included personalities like al-Walīd ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, Hārūn ar-Rashīd, Maḥmūd al-Ghaznawī, Malik Shāh as-Saljūkī, Salāh ad-Dīn al-Ayyūbī, az-Zāhir Baybars, Sulaymān al-Qānūnī al-‘Uthmānī and Aurangzeb ‘Ālamgīr at-Tīmūrī al-Hindī.

They left their attendants and guards outside and were coming forward with absolute awe and humility, with their gazes cast down, and speaking in low tones. Their identities, eras in which they ruled, the vast world which they governed, and the phenomenal authority which they wielded and enjoyed all came before my eyes. My eyes traversed through the lengthy and vast world which they had controlled, the mighty nations of the world which they ruled and the immense power which they wielded over the powerful sultanates and tyrant kings.

Among them was the one¹ who ruled a country which could not have been traversed in less than five months on the swiftest of camels. Among them was the powerful caliph² who once addressed a cloud and said: “You may go and rain down wherever you like, your *kharāj*³ will eventually reach my treasury.” There was among them the great ruler⁴ who ruled over half the

¹ This refers to al-Walīd ibn ‘Abd al-Malik.

² This refers to Hārūn ar-Rashīd.

³ Land tax.

⁴ This refers to Malik Shāh as-Saljūkī. The extent of his kingdom can be gauged from the following: The shippers of Jayḥūn (the famous river of Turkistan) had hired their ships

earth. Then there was the one by whom the whole of Europe was awe-struck. The honour which the Muslims enjoyed during his rule was such that if they had to go to any country in Europe, the Christians would stop ringing the church bells out of respect for the religion of the Muslims, and as a homage to their Sultān.¹

I do not know how many other similar kings and rulers were present in this group. They were proceeding forward to perform ṣalāh in the Musjid of Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam, and to offer peace and salutations to him. They considered this to be the supreme honour for them, and the greatest good fortune. They were hoping this ṣalāh of theirs would be raised to Allāh *ta‘ālā*, their salutations to him would be accepted by Him, they would be able to stand at the spot where Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam used to perform ṣalāh, be able to stand before his resting place to carry out the obligation of tribute to him and to acknowledge his favours.

I saw them moving forward with short stumbling steps, and with hearts filled with trepidation. They continued until they reached Suffah, the living quarters of the poor Sahābah radiyallāhu ‘anhum. They stood before it for a short while, looking at it with mixed

to him. Malik Shāh as-Saljūkī instructed the governor of Antokia (in Shām/Syria) to pay the shippers their wage from his treasury [i.e. from the treasury of Antokia]. Furthermore, when the Roman envoy came to him in Iṣfahān to pay the annual tribute, Malik Shāh went to Kāshgar, accepted the tribute there and sent off the envoy from this place. (*Nizām al-Mulk Tūsī*, p. 622)

¹ This refers to Sulaymān ibn Salīm al-‘Uthmānī, the most powerful Ottoman Turk ruler.

feelings of respect and reverence, shame and bashfulness. Although it was a place of poor and needy Muslims, these kings and rulers were prepared to use the dust of this place as antimony for their eyes.

They performed *tahīyyatul musjid*¹ near Suffah and proceeded towards the blessed grave [of Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam]. They then greeted their Prophet as their love, respect, knowledge and *īmān* dictated to them. But they did this while bearing in mind the etiquette prescribed by the Sharī‘ah, confining themselves to the dictates of pure *tauḥīd*². I heard them saying:

O Rasūlullāh! Were it not for your jihād and your call which extended to all corners of the world and conquered huge countries, were it not for your *Dīn* which our forefathers embraced and through which they came out of a life of obscurity, insignificance and solitude from the world; towards an expansive life of honour, high aspirations and courage; consequently, they established mighty sultanates, conquered distant lands, and collected *kharāj* from nations which were previously ruled by an iron rod and herded like sheep; had it not been for this journey from *jāhiliyyah* to Islam, from obscurity and the restricted tribal life to subjugation of the world which was accomplished through your blessings,

¹ An optional ṣalāh performed when entering a musjid as a mark of respect for the musjid.

² Monotheism, absolute oneness of Allāh *ta‘ālā*.

neither would our flag have been raised in any part of the world nor would our lives and biographies been related. We would have remained in our dry and arid deserts, and in our narrow and dark valleys – fighting and killing each other, the strong devouring the weak, and the senior oppressing the junior. Our food was the most insignificant and our standard of living was the most wretched. We never had the ability to imagine a life beyond our small village in which we lived, or a larger population than our small and restricted tribe. We were like fish in a pond and frogs in a well. We were caught in the web of our limited experiences, singing the praises of our ignorant and foolish forefathers.

O Rasūlullāh! You gave us a special light of your *Dīn* through which our eyes opened, our minds developed and our gazes expanded. We then carried this expansive and comprehensive *Dīn* and this spiritual bond, and spread out into the vast earth of Allāh *ta'ālā*. Our dead and lifeless capabilities came to life and were revived. We then used them to fight idolatry, paganism, ignorance and oppression. We established such mighty countries in whose shade we, our children and our brothers lived a life of comfort for several centuries. We have now come to stand before you, convey our salutations to you, and to pay the “tax” of respect, adulation and love. It is a tax which we are paying willingly and out of our own choice. In fact, we are honoured to be able to pay it. We acknowledge our failings with

regard to your *Dīn* through which Allāh *ta'ālā* had changed our fortunes. [We acknowledge our shortcomings] in applying the rules of this *Dīn* and promulgating its laws. We seek forgiveness from Allāh *ta'ālā*, surely He is all-forgiving, most-merciful.

I was focussed on these kings, looking at their humble faces, and listening to their sincere and heartfelt words which I had never heard from them before. Suddenly another group came forward walking through the rows of the kings without any consideration. It seemed as though they neither feared the authority of these kings and rulers, nor were they intimidated by them. I thought to myself that these are either poets or revolutionaries. My estimation of them was not wrong because this group comprised of both. It included people like Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn al-Afghānī, Amīr Sa'īd Ḥalīm, Maulānā Muḥammad 'Alī Jauhar, Shahīd Sayyid Ḥasan al-Bannā, and also the Turkish poet, Muḥammad 'Ākif, and the Indian poet, Muḥammad Iqbāl. They chose the last, Muḥammad Iqbāl, to speak on their behalf. He expressed his emotions as follows:

O Rasūlullāh! I have come to complain to you about a people who are still eating from your blessed table, who find no refuge except from your cloud of mercy, and are eating the fruits of the orchard which was prepared by you. They are living in those lands which you liberated from the shackles of oppressors and which you conveyed [from darkness] to the light of the sun. Today they are living freely and ruling according to their desires. But these very people now want to destroy this edifice on which the foundation of this great nation rests. Their leaders want to

divide this single nation into many nationalities and factions. They want to revive what you put an end to, and are destroying what you had constructed. They want to once again take this *ummah* towards the *jāhiliyyah* which you had expelled forever and ever. They want to emulate and follow Europe which itself is prone to mental bankruptcy, degradation and confusion. They want to change the favours of Allāh *ta'ālā* with ingratitude and thereby convey their people towards the abode of destruction. The conflict between your glittering lamp and the ember of Abū Lahab has commenced once again. Many of those who claim to be Muslims and speak your language [Arabic] have joined the ranks of Abū Lahab.¹ Today, they are singing the praises of their pagan forefathers and the idols which you had utterly destroyed. They are traders who demand the full weight when buying, but give less when selling. They acquired every good from you, and every power with which they were honoured. But now they are dragging the peoples whom they are ruling and want to fling them into the laps of Europe and its ignorant philosophies of nationalism, socialism and communism.

The idols which you cast out from within the Ka'bah are coming back or being brought back to the innocent Muslim populations

¹ The arch enemy of Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*. Reference is made to him in Sūrah Lahab in the Qur'an.

under different names and guises. I see in some sections of the Arab world, which ought to have been your centre and fort, a general revolution and rebellion for which there is no Fārūq¹ [*radīyallāhu ‘anhu*]. I see in these lands a fire of mental apostasy which is spreading swiftly, but there is no Abū Bakr [*radīyallāhu ‘anhu*] who could extinguish this fire with courage and determination.

From my self, and on behalf of all my companions whom I have the honour of representing and expressing the sentiments which are in their hearts, I convey the most superior greetings and the most honourable salutations. I stress, and I make Allāh *ta‘ālā* witness to what I say, that we absolve ourselves from and disdain these leaders who have turned their faces towards the West, and turned away from the *qiblah* of Islam. They are people who have no bond with you and no attachment to your *Dīn*. We once again proclaim our loyalty and obedience to you. We will – Allāh *ta‘ālā* willing – continue to hold on firmly to the rope of Islam until the promise of Allāh *ta‘ālā* arrives, and we meet Him.

These words which were filled with *īmān* and conviction had not come to an end as yet when the

¹ Hadrat ‘Umar *radīyallāhu ‘anhu*.

loud voice of the *mu'adhdhin*¹ was heard from the minarets of Musjid-e-Nabawī:

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ

Allāh is the greatest, Allāh is the greatest. Allāh is the greatest, Allāh is the greatest.

I immediately came back to my senses and left the world of thoughts and history in which I was swimming. I returned to this world from which I had departed. Some people were in ṣalāh, others were occupied in reading the Qur'ān, and delegations and groups from different parts of the world were entering and offering their peace and salutations to Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam. Despite their different languages and dialects, the unity of their sentiments and emotions had created a unique feeling and atmosphere.²

¹ The one who calls out the *adhān*.

² The original Arabic of this speech was written at the house of the author's dear and esteemed friend and host, Hājī Arshad Marḥūm (chief telecommunications engineer in Saudi Arabia).

MESSAGE OF THE SĪRAH TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY WORLD¹

When the word *jāhilīyyah* is mentioned to us, our minds spontaneously picture the dark scene of the sixth century C.E. when Muḥammad Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* was commissioned as a Prophet by Allāh *ta‘ālā*, and in which the first and most striking miracle of the guidance and teachings of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* was manifested. The moment we hear the word *jāhilīyyah*, we think of the Arab nation with all its ignorant peculiarities and characteristics as portrayed and depicted to us by our scholars of the *sīrah*.

However, *jāhilīyyah* is not confined to that era. Islam defines this word as any era or time which is deprived of the guidance of divine revelation and prophet-hood, where the light of the Prophets *‘alayhimus salām* did not reach at all, or reached, but the people shut their eyes to it. This is irrespective of whether it was the universal *jāhilīyyah* which pervaded the world in the sixth century C.E., the dark middle centuries in the history of Europe, commonly known and remembered as the Dark Ages, or the “enlightened” and brilliant era of civilization and progress of the twentieth century which we are presently experiencing.

The Qur’ān teaches us that there is only one type of light in this world, and its source is also one.

¹ This article was written for the annual conference of Majlis-e-Sirat of Peshawar in 1944, at the request of its General Secretary, Hājī ‘Abd ar-Rashīd Arshad *Sāhib Marhūm*. Subsequently, it was published as a booklet by Idārah Ta‘līmāt of Lucknow.

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

Allāh is the light of the heavens and the earth...¹

However, there are multiple forms of darkness which are unlimited and uncountable. If Allāh's light (which comes solely through the Prophets *'alayhimus salām*) was not lighted, there would be no limit to darkness in the world. Every station and every turn of life would be in absolute darkness.

أَوْ كَظُلُمَاتٍ فِي بَحْرٍ لُجِّيٍّ يَغْشَاهُ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ سَحَابٌ ط
ظُلُمَاتٌ بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ ط إِذَا أَخْرَجَ يَدَهُ لَمْ يَكِدْ يَرَهَا ط وَمَنْ لَّمْ
يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ نُورٍ.

Or [their deeds are] like the pits of darkness in a deep sea covered by a wave, topped by another wave, overcast by clouds – pits of darkness one above another. When he holds up his hand, he can hardly see it. He to whom Allāh gives no light shall find no light at all.²

Whenever the Qur'ān mentions light and darkness together, light is mentioned in the singular (*nūr*) while darkness is mentioned in the plural (*ẓulumāt*). This shows that darkness can be multiple in number while light will only be one. If a glitter of this natural light was not present, no manufactured light will be able to brighten this pitch darkness. Moreover, this bright, living and vibrant world would be a grave where no light can creep in. A poet says:

¹ Sūrah an-Nūr, 24: 36.

² Sūrah an-Nūr, 24: 40.

Even if you were to light the candles, there would be no light.

أَوْ مَنْ كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ كَمَنْ مَثَلُهُ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِّنْهَا ۗ كَذَلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ.

Can he who was dead and whom We gave life thereafter, and gave him a light whereby he walks among people – [can he be] equal to the one whose condition is that he is lying in the pits of darkness from which he cannot emerge? In this way, the actions of the unbelievers have been beautified in their eyes.¹

It seems as though very little of the light of prophet-hood was able to reach the West (where the sun does not rise, but sets). Here, the absence of divine light has always been tried to be filled with human light. The golden ages of the Greek and Roman empires are most certainly brilliant eras as regards progress in human sciences and arts. But when it comes to the teachings and guidance of prophet-hood, these eras are just as dark as the darkest eras of *jāhiliyyah*. When it came to the being and attributes of Allāh *ta'ālā*, they resorted to conjecture and self-opinions without any enlightenment and guidance. Allāh *ta'ālā* says:

مَا لَهُمْ بِذَلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ، إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ

They have no knowledge whatsoever thereof. They are merely guessing.²

¹ Sūrah al-An'ām, 6: 122.

² Sūrah az-Zukhruf, 43: 20.

The magic spells of metaphysics and philosophy which were cast by the sages and philosophers of these lands were no less in their fanciful imaginations and fairy tales of the East. Glimpses of the effects of prophetic teachings are certainly found in the statements and moral teachings of Socrates and Plato. But these are like the glow of a firefly on a dark rainy night. From this we can conclude that some of the teachings of the Prophets '*alayhimus salām* must have fallen in their ears. But this light was not so intense and not long enough to enable them to complete their journey.

كُلَّمَا أَضَاءَ لَهُمْ مَشَوْا فِيهِ، وَإِذَا أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُوا

*When it lightens upon them, they begin walking in its light. And when it darkens, they stand still.*¹

Strangely enough, the guiding light of Hadrat Masīh '*alayhis salām* (Jesus) continued combating the unfriendly wind in the East for two centuries but was extinguished under the skirts of its adherents in the West. In other words, the teachings of Hadrat Masīh '*alayhis salām* lost their originality in the West where Christianity had, for the first time, acquired power and authority. A current of polytheism and idolatry began flowing in the middle of the river of Christianity. There is probably no convert to any faith who proved so unblest and ill-fated for it than the conversion of King Constantine and St. Paul to Christianity. After the extinguishing of the divine light of Christianity, the leaders of the Church held religious councils and lit camphor candles in an effort to convince the Christian world that they still have the light which Hadrat Masīh

¹ Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2: 20.

'alayhis salām had come with. But the fact of the matter is that this light had been lost many centuries ago in the pitch darkness.

كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا فَلَمَّا أَضَاءَتْ مَا حَوْلَهُ ذَهَبَ اللَّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ
وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِي ظُلْمٍ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ.

*Similar to the person who kindled a fire. Then when the fire lit up all that was around him, Allāh took away their light and left them in utter darkness (where) they could not see anything.*¹

Despite all this, we have to acknowledge the fact that, thanks to Christianity, belief in God and a concept of the Hereafter is found in the West. In reality, no matter how much a heavenly religion changes, the concepts of God and the Hereafter flow so deeply in the veins that they can never be removed. The movement of rationalism and – in fact, the movements of materialism and eroticism – which were born in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries C.E. openly led the West towards materialism. Europe gradually became so materialistic that there remained no place for Allāh *ta'ālā* and the Hereafter in its intellectual organization. Although Europe did not publicly announce its rejection of Allāh *ta'ālā* and the Hereafter, its life was moulded in a manner as if neither Allāh *ta'ālā* existed nor was there to be an afterlife. It will be absolutely correct for us to say that today the religion of Europe is not Christianity but materialism. Europe remained idolatrous for a long time but claims to be Christian. But never has it displayed such devotion to and enthusiasm for these creeds [idolatry and Christianity]

¹ Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2: 17.

as it has for this “religion” of materialism. The temples and churches (factories, business centres, and amusement houses) of this new “religion” are humming with life by day and night. The high priests of this “religion” (the bankers, capitalists and industrialists) are held in the highest esteem. In fact, they are worshipped. On the other hand, Christianity has been left in the shade in the West.

All the effects of this self-forgetting are becoming manifest in the West and are the unavoidable consequences of this mentality and way of life. One of the consequences is that Western man has discarded one God and held on to thousands of other gods. He raised his head from one threshold which could have made him independent of all other thresholds, and is now rubbing his forehead at every other lifeless threshold. This has always been Allāh’s way of punishing those who abandoned the worship of one Allāh. These “lords apart from Allāh” are, in large numbers, controlling the West, and the entire Western world is caught in their grip. In some places, they are the political leaders, at other places they are the financial tycoons, in some places they are the self-designed standards of living, and at other places, the self-imposed obligations and essentials of life. These things have embittered the lives of their followers and enslaved them in a manner which would have made submission before Allāh *ta’ālā* a thousand times better.

Their followers are compelled to carry out tasks which are not asked of from even dumb animals and lifeless machines. They are demanded to make sacrifices which, till now, were never made for any deity. There is a severe conflict and clash in the aims and objectives of these “lords apart from Allāh”. Their clash of objectives is destroying the entire world and turning it upside down.

Among these modern idols is the large idol of the country which is always demanding the offering of human blood and the sacrificing of human lives. The other idol is the stomach, for which the twentieth century human is enslaved by night and day, but is still not satisfied.

Sir Oliver Lodge said some time back:

The simplicity of life has become a dream. There is no high aim or ideal today. Everyone is toiling, day and night, like an ox in his office or factory. An outcome of the invention of fast-moving vehicles is that man is always in a hurry.¹

Another consequence of abandoning Allāh *ta'ālā* is that man himself has been forgotten. The Qur'ān explains this fact by saying that the punishment for forgetting Allāh *ta'ālā* is to forget one's own self. Allāh *ta'ālā* says:

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنسَاهُمْ أَنفُسَهُمْ

*Do not be like those who forgot Allāh and so Allāh caused them to forget their own selves.*²

Twentieth century man is a total manifestation of self-forgetting. He has completely forgotten his nature, his human distinction, his goal in life and the purpose of his birth. He has chosen a total animalistic or inanimate way of life. He has become a money-making machine which cannot derive any benefit from

¹ *Guide to Modern Wickedness*, p. 241.

² Sūrah al-Hashr, 59: 19.

the money it makes. He has become so “dead” that the bodily comfort, and internal peace and satisfaction which could have made all this toiling valuable are neither enjoyed in his life nor is he conscious of their absence. Professor C.E.M. Joad is right when he says:

Disraeli remarked of his contemporaries that they talked of progress because ‘by the aid of a few scientific discoveries they have succeeded in establishing a society which mistakes comfort for civilization.’ To adopt Disraeli’s remark ourselves, we might merely substitute ‘speed’ for ‘comfort’... Speed, indeed, is his (contemporary man’s) peculiar god, and, upon its altar quiet, comfort, security and consideration for other persons are ruthlessly jettisoned.¹

The very subject of man has changed in this environment of self-forgetting and bewilderment. He has left his own field of progress and made tremendous progress in other fields. But he has made no progress whatsoever as a complete human being. In fact, his human peculiarities are deteriorating by the day. If you were to assess his current progresses, you will see that they are a conglomeration of abilities of some animals, birds and fish. A Western writer acknowledges this fact in most uncertain terms. He says:

This contrast between the marvels of our scientific achievements and ignominy of our social childishness meets us at every turn. We can talk across continents and oceans, telegraph pictures, install wireless sets in the homes, listen in Ceylon, the Big Ben

¹ *Guide to Modern Wickedness*, pp. 262-263.

striking in London, ride above and beneath the earth and the sea. Children can talk along wireless, typewriters are silent, teeth filling painless, liners have swimming-baths, crops are ripened by electricity, roads are made of rubber, x-rays are the windows through which we behold our insides, photographs can speak and sing, murderers can be traced down by wireless, hair is waved by electric current, submarines go to the North Pole, aeroplanes to the South...Yet, we cannot, in the midst of our enormous cities, provide a little space where poor children might play in comfort and safety, with the result that we kill them at the rate of nearly 2 000 (children only) and injure them at the rate of 90 000 a year. As an Indian philosopher said to me once, in acid comment upon my conventional praise of the wonders of our civilization – some motorist had just succeeded in driving his car at the rate of 300, or was it 400? – miles per hour along the Pendine sands; or an aeroplane had just flown in 20 – or was it 50? – hours from Moscow to New York: “Yes, you can fly in the air like birds and swim in the sea like fishes; but how to walk upon earth you do not yet know.”¹

In the face of this world of self-forgetting, it will be futile for the West to complain about forgetting Allāh *ta’ālā*. The West is the true addressee of the following couplet of Iqbāl:

¹ *Guide to Modern Wickedness.*

Since you removed from your self, why do you look for a friend? When you cannot reach out to man, how are you going to reach out to Allāh?

Now let us look at the West's detachment from the Hereafter. The first and natural outcome of rejecting the Hereafter is that it has created a madness and critical situation of taking joy from this worldly life and worldly things. Enjoyment itself has been made the objective of life. Today, the cry of "eat, drink and be merry" is raised from every nook and corner of the Western world. Its entire life and all its means are utilized in competing against each other for the acquisition of worldly comforts and pleasures. This competition has turned life into a never ending race-course. Everyone is seized by an unquenchable thirst and insatiable appetite for life. The following cry is heard on everybody's lips:

هَلْ مِنْ مَّزِيدٍ

*Are there any more?*¹

The necessities of life are increasing by the day. Fulfilling the demands of the self, and variety in pleasures and comforts are on the increase. This has resulted in countless social problems and issues. Rivalry and competition in trade is causing a frightening rise in the standard of living. So much so, when each person looks up towards his destination, he finds it further away, and his goal has gone higher. Consequently, his hopes and efforts in acquiring of this

¹ This is a reference to the Qur'anic verse: "The day when We shall say to Hell: 'Are you filled?' It will reply: 'Are there any more?'" (Sūrah Qāf, 50: 30)

life result in frustration and discontent. He remains caught up in a continuous torment of greed and avarice, and his life is reduced to an endless struggle. Patience and contentment which are the best means of peace and tranquillity are non-existent in Europe since a long time.

The desire for pleasure and enjoyment which comes after rejection of the Hereafter or disregarding it, and which we Muslims consider to be a type of madness, is considered to be absolute wisdom according to those who reject the Hereafter. When a person does not possess any concept of an afterlife, why should he lag behind in taking maximum benefit from this life and from fulfilling his desires? For which day should he save his pleasures and enjoyment? This is why the Qur'ān says:

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يَتَمَتَّعُونَ وَيَأْكُلُونَ كَمَا تَأْكُلُ الْأَنْعَامُ وَالنَّارُ مَثْوًى لَهُمْ

As for those who are unbelievers, they are enjoying themselves and eating as animals eat. And the fire is their abode.¹

Allāh *ta'ālā* says elsewhere:

ذَرُّهُمْ يَأْكُلُوا وَيَتَمَتَّعُوا وَيُلْهِمُ الْأَمَلُ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ

Leave them to eat and enjoy themselves, and to be preoccupied by hope. Soon they shall come to know.²

Another natural consequence of rejecting the Hereafter is that the world, things of this world, and

¹ Sūrah Muḥammad, 47: 12.

² Sūrah al-Hijr, 15: 3.

deeds which would aid a person in this world seem to be more appealing, more coherent and more logical. It results in a materialistic mentality and creates a superficial outlook which cannot fathom the realities. Allāh *ta'ālā* says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ زَيَّنَّا لَهُمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَهُمْ يَعْمَهُونَ

*Those who do not believe in the Hereafter – We beautified their actions to them, and so they wander aimlessly.*¹

قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا. الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعِيَّهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا. أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَلِقَائِهِ فَحَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فَلَا نُقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَزْنًا.

*Say: Shall We inform you of those who are the greatest losers in respect of their deeds? Those whose endeavours were always going astray in the life of this world and were on the assumption that they were working very well. It is they who rejected the signs of their Sustainer and of meeting Him. Their deeds therefore went to waste. So We shall assign no weight for them on the day of Resurrection.*²

Another consequence of rejection of the Hereafter is that the proportion of earnestness and seriousness is becoming less than that of play and amusement. A major portion of life is surrounded by amusements, diversions and sporting activities. Critical

¹ Sūrah an-Naml, 27: 4.

² Sūrah al-Kahf, 18: 103-105.

and dangerous times and events do not change their engrossment in sports and other amusements. Allāh ta'ālā says:

وَذَرِ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَهُمْ لَعِبًا وَلَهْوًا وَعَرَّتْهُمْ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا

*Leave those alone who consider their religion to be a play and amusement, and whom the life of this world has deluded.*¹

Rejection of the Hereafter also results in their inability to consider the real reasons and causes of calamities and incidents. They remain confused in a few superficial things and cannot fathom the depths of matters. Consequently, their engrossment with diversions and their heedlessness do not decrease even during critical times and situations. They will cast aside these events with shallow explanations, search for some alleged causes and be satisfied with them. All this will not cause any fundamental change in their outlook.

The Qur'ān describes the psychological condition of the materialists and nations which consider things on the surface in the following words:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمَمٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ فَأَخَذْنَاهُم بِالْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ
يَتَضَرَّعُونَ. فَلَوْ لَا إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا تَضَرَّعُوا وَلَكِن قَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَزَيَّنَ
لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ.

We had sent Messengers to many nations before you. Then We seized them with difficulties and hardship so that they may implore humbly and earnestly. Then why

¹ Sūrah al-An'ām, 6: 70.

*did they not implore humbly and earnestly when Our punishment befell them? But their hearts became hard and Satan beautified for them that which they were doing.*¹

Pride is one of the special attributes of rejection of the Hereafter. There is nothing to prevent the rejecter of the Hereafter from pride and haughtiness. If a person does not believe in a power above him, does not believe in an afterlife, and has no conviction whatsoever in the day of Recompense, what is there to prevent him from behaving like an uncontrollable animal and a rebellious human being? This is why Allāh *ta'ālā* mostly discusses pride with rejection of the Hereafter. It is as though the two are complementary to each other.

فَالَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ مُنْكَرَةٌ وَهُمْ مُسْتَكْبِرُونَ

*So those who have no conviction in the life of the Hereafter - their hearts do not accept and they are haughty.*²

Allāh *ta'ālā* says with reference to Pharaoh and his army:

وَاسْتَكْبَرَ هُوَ وَجُنُودُهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا يُرْجَعُونَ

*He and his armies behaved proudly in the land without any justification and thought that they would not be brought back to Us.*¹

¹ Sūrah al-An'ām, 6: 42-43.

² Sūrah an-Nahl, 16: 22.

Materialistic nations and those who reject the Hereafter rule with an iron rod, they are oppressive when they capture, and their invasion is like an earthquake which turns countries and cities upside down.

وَإِذَا بَطَشْتُمْ بَطَشْتُمْ جَبَّارِينَ

*When you exercise your power, you do so like tyrants.*²

إِنَّ الْمُلُوكَ إِذَا دَخَلُوا قَرْيَةً أَفْسَدُوهَا وَجَعَلُوا أَعْرَءَ أَهْلِهَا أَدْلَءَ ج وَكَذَلِكَ يَفْعَلُونَ

*When kings invade a town, they ruin it and turn its noble people into the most abject. In like manner will these also do.*³

The West has also been deprived of the wealth of belief in prophet-hood. Although it has accepted Hadrat 'Īsā 'alayhis salām as the “son of Allāh”, it does not accept him as a guide for one’s entire life and as a Messenger who is to be practically emulated. The first aspect of their belief [i.e. believing in Hadrat 'Īsā 'alayhis salām as the “son of Allāh”] was only a matter of belief and faith. Accepting it does not influence one’s practical life, character and actions. Had Westerners accepted him as the absolute guide for their lives, had they accepted his way of life as a beacon for their own lives and as a perfect example for them; the direction of their lives would have changed. But the West did not

¹ Sūrah al-Qaṣas, 28: 39.

² Sūrah ash-Shu‘arā’, 26: 130.

³ Sūrah an-Naml, 27: 34.

do this nor was it possible to do it easily. This is because it has a record of just three years of Hadrat 'Īsā's life before it, and that too, offered very little as a model for emulation.

If Westerners wanted to make the ways, statements, guidance and teachings of Hadrat 'Īsā *'alayhis salām* their guide in life, there were practical complications to it. The representatives of Christianity did not have any reliable religious treasure through which they could have fulfilled the responsibility of guiding their people. Neither did they possess any religious wisdom and foresight through which they could keep the rising Western nations within the circle of religion together with material progress. Consequently, Christian nations freed themselves from the leadership and supervision of Hadrat 'Īsā *'alayhis salām* in their practical lives and began leading a life as though they do not belong to any Prophet. The pure teachings of Hadrat 'Īsā *'alayhis salām* could not make a deep impression in their hearts and minds. They were deprived of the moral and spiritual training which the followers of Prophets receive. They acquired countless material resources, but the inclination to do good can only be acquired from the teachings of a Prophet, from his training and his rectification. Inclination to do good could never be acquired from material sciences and inventions, nor can they ever be acquired in this way. Consequently, all these resources and powers which, together with an inclination for good, could have been a means for the betterment of the human world, became instruments for exploitation and corruption on earth. The reason for this is that those who possess these resources and tools are not acquainted with the following call:

تِلْكَ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُرِيدُونَ عُلُوًّا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا،
وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ.

*That abode of the Hereafter – We shall give it to those who do not seek to exalt themselves in the land, nor to cause corruption. The blessed end is for those who fear.*¹

The result of disregarding Allāh *ta'ālā*, disregarding the Hereafter and paying no attention to the teachings of the Prophets *'alayhimus salām* is that the West is so bright that its night is like the day. At the same time, it is so dark, that its day is like the night. In this era of enlightenment and progress, we are experiencing all those which were considered to be the peculiar traits of barbarism and savagery. Mir Akbar Husayn Ilāhābādī Marhūm said:

The pen of sorrow will write in the history of the world: darkness was pervading under the electric light.

Lloyd George had said at the end of World War One:

Were Jesus to return to the world, he would not live for long. He would see that even after two thousand years, man was pre-occupied, as usual, with corruption, bloodshed and destruction. What is more, as a result of the greatest war in history, blood, today, is dripping from the body of mankind, the world has been laid to waste, and the spectre of starvation is stalking over the earth. And what will the Lord see? People shaking

¹ Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ, 28: 83.

hands with one another in a spirit of equality and brotherhood or preparing for a more fearful way, inventing deadlier weapons, and devising newer ways of torture.

And Anthony Eden said at the beginning of World War Two:

Unless something can be done, the people of this world, in the latter part of this century, are going to live as troglodytes and go back to the days of cave-dwelling. It is fantastic that all countries are now spending millions on protecting themselves against a weapon of which they are all afraid, but on the control of which they cannot agree. I, sometimes, wonder how the world today would strike a visitor from another planet who would find us preparing the means of our own destruction and even exchanging information on how we are to use it.¹

The world which was under the control of the Roman and Persian Empires of the East more than 1 350 years ago is very much similar to today's world. Man had totally disregarded Allāh *ta'ālā*, and thereby disregarded his self. Belief in Allāh *ta'ālā* was nothing more than a historical view. People believed that there was some time in history when Allāh *ta'ālā* created this universe.

وَلَيْنِ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ

¹ Reproduced from Alexis Carrel: *Man, The Unknown*, pp. 234-235.

If you were to ask them: “Who created the heavens and the earth?” They would most certainly reply: “Allāh.”

But there remained no practical bond with Allāh *ta’ālā*, and they were living as if Allāh *ta’ālā* either did not exist, or (Allāh forbid) He chose to remain in seclusion and abdicated His power in favour of others. The entire world was engulfed in worship of “Lords apart from Allāh”. Somewhere idols were worshipped, somewhere it was the worship of a race and people, elsewhere it was power and authority, somewhere it was of kings and rulers, and elsewhere it was the worship of rabbis and monks. Man had forgotten the purpose of his creation, his origin and his destiny. By forgetting the true functions of life, he became immersed in gradual suicide and false functions of life.

The entire world was engulfed with total disregard of the self. The ruling classes indulged in oppression and tyranny, high-handedness and despotism, self indulgence and lavishness. The wealthy were intoxicated in their luxurious enjoyment. The standard of living had become so high and the essentials of life had become so many that they could not be acquired even through new ways of income, fines and oppressive acts. The standard of society and the concept of life had become so high that if a person did not possess the essentials of affluence, he was not considered to be a human and was not treated as one in society. The lower and middle classes were forever worried about becoming people of worth and value. The middle classes, in their imitation of and race towards the upper classes, were left with no opportunities. The poor who were weighed down by subjugation, slavery and new sources of income, did not have the opportunity to raise their heads. They remained eternally subjugated – like dumb animals – in fulfilling their masters’ lawful and unlawful demands for luxury

and comfort. If they ever got a break or a holiday, they would pacify their hearts and try to ward off their grief by indulging in carnal pleasures and intoxications. You will not find a single person in an entire country who had any concern for his religion, for the Hereafter, or who thought of death. Innocent citizens were caught up between the two grinding stones of greed and territorial plundering of the rulers.

The Persian Empire, without any sensible reason and need, attacked the Christian kingdom of Syria and blighted the land of Allāh *ta'ālā* by shedding the blood of 90 000 innocent souls. In reply, the Roman Empire completely vanquished the Iranian Empire and caused peaceful citizens to exact revenge from peaceful citizens. These bloody wars continued for many years without any noble purpose and moral reason. Citizens and the most progressive humans of two civilized empires of the world were at each others throats like wild animals. The entire world was pervaded in darkness at the time. The ill ways of man had caused a universal gloom and an all-pervading destruction.

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي
عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ.

*Corruption has spread on land and in the sea on account of what the peoples' hands have earned. [So now] He ought to make them taste the consequence of their doings, so that they might return.*¹

It was at this time, and away from this civilized world (which had been utterly destroyed from within), but very close to and right between these two rival

¹ Sūrah ar-Rūm, 30: 41.

empires of the East and West – that Allāh *ta'ālā* commissioned an unlettered Prophet among an unlettered nation so that he may rescue the world from the torment which was inflicted on it for so many centuries, warn them of the punishment of the Hereafter which is to come, remove them from the pitch darkness to the worship of Allāh *ta'ālā*, and to break all the chains and shackles in which they were bound.

يَأْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَاهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ
الْحَبِيثَاتِ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ.

*He enjoins righteousness to them and forbids them from evil. He makes lawful to them all pure things and forbids to them impure things. He relieves them of their burdens and those restrictions that were upon them.*¹

This unlettered Prophet (*sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) sent a letter and message in 7 A.H. (630 C.E.) to the Roman emperor, Hercules. His call to him was:

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا
نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ.

*O People of the Book! Come to one fact that is common to us and you - we do not worship anyone other than Allāh, and we do not ascribe any partners to Him, and no one should take anyone else as lords apart from Allāh.*²

¹ Sūrah Āl 'Imrān, 3: 157.

² Sūrah Āl 'Imrān, 3: 64.

Hercules accepted the truthfulness of this invitation, but due to his weakness, he could not give up the lordship which he was enjoying. He could not save himself from the torment of the Roman way of life until the Muslim armies brought the lands of Syria and Rome under their wing of mercy.

On the other hand, the downtrodden Arabs accepted the message of the unlettered Prophet *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* and acquired all the blessings which are the results of this message. All the chains of their slavery broke automatically, and once they bowed at the threshold of Allāh *ta'ālā*, they became independent of all other thresholds of the world. Neither did the slavery to the carnal self remain nor the servitude to kings and governments. Neither did ignorant ways and customs prevail nor the oppressive impositions of society. Neither did self-inflicted hardships remain nor those which were imposed on them by others.

Allāh consciousness and knowledge of Allāh's power and greatness broke the spell of the greatness of man-made gods and cast them out of their sight. These poverty stricken Arabs who were wearing tattered and torn coarse garments, who had never left their deserts and rural areas, and who had never seen any display of pomp and splendour were now able to look at these non-Arab kings straight in the eye and speak to them without any reservations, and were able to totally disregard their courtly displays as if they were images made of clay and toys, made of paper which have been merely embellished with small flags. The truth had dawned upon them so clearly and forcefully that hollow manifestations of pomp and splendour did not affect them in the least, and they were not prepared to deviate from their principles and high moral code in the least. They felt they were duty bound and sent [by

Allāh *ta'ālā*] to readmit Allāh's servants to the servitude of Allāh *ta'ālā* and to break the spell of human claims to divinity.

When the commander-in-chief of the Persian army, Rustam, asked to meet one of the Muslims, Hadrat Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās *radiyallāhu 'anhu* sent Rib'iy ibn 'Āmir as his envoy. The Persians prepared their court very elaborately. Mats woven with gold threads and carpets of silk were laid out. Sapphires and other glittering stones dazzled the eyes. Rustam was seated on a golden throne with a golden crown on his head, and wearing garments of gold brocade.

On the other hand, Rib'iy ibn 'Āmir entered the court wearing thick and coarse clothing, a sword and a shield in his hand, riding a short breed horse, and proceeded nonchalantly towards Rustam. He dismounted his horse, tied it to one of the cushions of the court and proceeded while still wearing his helmet and weapons. The guards instructed him saying: "Remove your weapons and leave them aside." He replied: "I did not come here of my own will. I came here on your request. If you do not want me to enter in this manner, I will go back." Rustam said to his guards: "Allow him to come in."

Rib'iy proceeded with his spear in his hand, holding it as a walking stick and piercing the carpet in several places as he proceeded. He went right up to Rustam and sat next to him. Rustam asked: "What is your purpose in coming to our country?" Rib'iy replied: "Allāh *ta'ālā* appointed us to remove, by His will, servants from the servitude of servants to the servitude of Allāh, to rescue them from the constriction of this world towards its wide expanse, and from the tyranny and oppression of religions to the justice and equity of Islam. He sent us with His religion to His creation so

that we may invite them towards it. If they accept, we will go back from where we came. As for the one who rejects, we will continue fighting him until we receive Allāh's reward."

Rustam asked: "What is that reward?" Rib'iy replied: "Paradise for the one who dies in this cause, and Allāh's help for the one who survives." Rustam said: "I have heard what you said. Can you give me some time so that I could consult with the seniors of the state?" He replied: "Yes. How much time do you need, one or two days?" Rustam said: "What can we do in such a short time? We will have to write and correspond with our seniors, and gauge their views." Rib'iy said: "The Messenger of Allāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* did not leave a precedent of more than three days to the enemy to decide while in a state of war. You should therefore hasten in your decision, and decide on one of the three (either embrace Islam, pay the *jizyah* or be ready to go to war)." Rustam asked: "Are you the leader of the Muslims?" Rib'iy replied: "No. The Muslims are one body. The lowest among them has the right to give protection against the highest."

Hadrat Mughīrah *radiyallāhu 'anhu* also went as an envoy, and the court was fully laid out. The Persians made a grand display of their pomp, splendour, wealth and forces. Hadrat Mughīrah *radiyallāhu 'anhu* proceeded casually towards the chief (Rustam) and sat right in front of him, touching his knees with his own. The Persians never witnessed such a scene and could not tolerate it. They caught hold of Hadrat Mughīrah *radiyallāhu 'anhu* and removed him from the throne. He said: "This is not an appropriate way of treating your guest. We are not accustomed to having one person sitting like a god while everyone else stands before him like slaves." When Hadrat Mughīrah's

statement was translated, a pin-drop silence pervaded the assembly and they all acknowledged their mistake.

Hadrat Mu'adh ibn Jabal *radiyallāhu 'anhu* went as an envoy to a Roman court which was laid out with a thick velvety carpet. Hadrat Mu'adh *radiyallāhu 'anhu* sat on the bare ground and said: "I cannot sit on a carpet which was made after usurping the rights of the poor." The Christians said: "We laid it out in your honour. But what can we do if you are not bothered about your own honour!?" Hadrat Mu'adh *radiyallāhu 'anhu* sat up on his knees and said: "I have no concern for what you consider to be honour. If sitting on bare ground is the practice of slaves, who can be a greater slave of Allāh *ta'ālā* than me?"

One of those who was present asked: "Is there anyone greater than you among the Muslims?" Hadrat Mu'adh *radiyallāhu 'anhu* replied: "Allāh forbid! It is more than enough for me that I am not their worst." The Romans expressed their pride over their king. Hadrat Mu'adh *radiyallāhu 'anhu* said: "You are proud of being the subjects of a king who has control over your lives and wealth. Whereas the person whom we have as our ruler cannot give preference to his self in any matter. He will be lashed if he fornicates, his hand will be chopped off if he steals, he does not keep aloof from us, he does not consider himself superior to us, and he has no privilege over us as regards wealth and riches."

The mental revolution which took place as a result of believing in one Allāh as the true God and Rabb, caused a complete transformation in the lives of the Arabs. Those who had animalistic qualities became humans possessing angelic attributes. Those who were raiders and highway robbers now became the protectors of the lives, wealth and honour of others.

Those who made rivers of blood flow over a trivial thing like whose animals should drink water first at a watering hole, now preferred to die of thirst for the sake of providing water to others. Those who used to bury their daughters alive with their own hands now emptied their own laps to take care of the daughters of others. Those who considered the belongings of others to be their own now believed their own belongings to be the property of others. Those who were so audacious as to steal the belongings of others in the broad daylight could now conceal the crown of the Persian King which was valued in the millions in his blanket in the darkness of the night, and then hand it over to his commander [the next day].

The quest for Allāh *ta'ālā* rendered lifeless the quest for this world and sustenance, both of which had narrowed the wellness of this world and reduced it to a market place and bazaar. The natural instinct of competition which awakens the dormant capabilities and causes its jewels to glitter, which was previously directed towards the world and made life into an endless conflict, and caused rivalry between brothers; was now directed towards *Dīn*, resulting in the reawakening of noble human attributes and the purification of life. There was still a race to surpass each other among the different human classes and within the classes themselves. But this race was now for the sake of righteousness, reward, and for the acquisition of Allāh's forgiveness and His pleasure. Some poor Muslims complained to Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* saying: "Our wealthy brothers are surpassing us. They perform *ṣalāh* and keep fast as we do, but we cannot be on their level in giving charity." Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*

taught them a form of *dhikr*¹ whereby they could surpass their affluent brothers. When the wealthy brothers came to know of it, they also began engaging in the same *dhikr*. The poor Muslims went back to Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* and complained to him thus: “We are lagging behind once again because our wealthy brothers are also engaging in the same *dhikr* which you taught us.” Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* pacified and consoled them.

Abstinence and contentment had turned the world into a paradise in which a spark of [the following verse] was clearly seen:

لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

There is neither fear on them, nor shall they grieve.

With the disappearance of greed, desire and competition for wealth from the hearts, it resulted in such love and affection that:

نَزَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِمْ مِّنْ غِلٍّ

*We shall have removed from their hearts all resentment.*²

An attribute of the dwellers of Paradise was now observed in the world. The demand for rights was replaced by a consciousness to fulfil one’s duties, greed was replaced by such a strong disposition of self-sacrifice that:

¹ Remembrance of Allāh.

² Sūrah al-Hijr, 15: 47.

يُؤْتِرُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ

*They give preference to them over their own selves even though they may be experiencing poverty.*¹

Was clearly seen by all. The naked eye saw, with astonishment, how a host put off his hungry children to sleep, extinguished the lamp, and thereby convinced his guest that he was also eating with him. The guest got up fully satiated from the meal, while the host, his wife and his children spent the night in hunger.

This entire reformation and progress was as a result of accepting Allāh *ta'ālā* as the only One worthy of worship, handing one's self over to Him, and offering one's self to be under the supervision and training of a pure and sinless Prophet. It was as if the pivot of their lives was now seated in its place and everything was now correctly in place.

The Christian world did not appreciate this message. Its Eastern part yielded very quickly to those who bore this message and who were the deputies of their Messenger [*sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*]. But the Western and Northern sections (Europe) remained out of the circle of the *mujāhidīn*² and the callers towards Islam. They spent a full 900 years (or 1 000) years in that era of ignorance and darkness which they themselves refer to as the Dark Ages. Europe will always feel ashamed and it ought to always bow its head in remorse over this lengthy period of human history which was spent in savagery, ignorance,

¹ Sūrah al-Hashr, 59: 9.

² Those fighting in Allāh's cause.

intellectual enmity, superstition, the tyranny and inhumanity of monasticism, enraging misdeeds of the clergy, and the tyrannical inquisition. All this was a result of worship of the creation.

إِتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ

*They took their scholars and dervishes to be lords to the exclusion of Allāh, and also Masīh, the son of Maryam.*¹

When the West opened its eyes in the 16th century, it thought that the sole cure for all its ills lay in obtaining liberation from the slavery of the Church. However, it did not complete the full journey of *Lā ilāha...* (there is none worthy of worship...) and mistook *Lā kalīsā...* (there is no church) to be synonymous to *Lā ilāha...*In this way, it rejected the Church and imposed new gods over its self without even completing the journey of *illallāh* (except Allāh). During the last three most important centuries of its history, the West was offended by one god after another, and began carving new gods for its self. In so doing, it had to continually witness the scene of:

أَتَعْبُدُونَ مَا تَنْحِتُونَ

*Why do you worship something that you have carved!?*²

Even today, the West seems to be very displeased with its ancient gods, but is continuing to carve out other false gods such as democracy, dictatorship, capitalism, socialism, national socialism, nationhood, homeland, and so on. The West is

¹ Sūrah at-Taubah, 9: 31.

² Sūrah aṣ-Ṣāffāt, 37: 95.

continually doing and undoing the design of its life and trying to gather the scattered pieces of the clock of its life, but nothing is falling into place. For many years it is trying to untangle the knots of its destiny through its planning and plotting, but the more it tries to unravel it, the more tangled it is becoming, to the extent that its very fingers have become entangled and are refusing to come out.

The West may draw a thousand plans of life, make thousands of alterations to it, give them as many different names it likes, distribute the responsibility of one person among many individuals, or entrust the responsibilities of many people to one selected and most responsible person, and bind him to countless restrictions and regulations – but as long as the heart of that body does not change, then whether the appointed person is one individual, a group or an entire nation; as long as it does not consider itself to be accountable to one all-knowing and all-seeing Power, as long as it does not have the fear of Allāh *ta'ālā* in its heart and the apprehension of the reckoning of the Hereafter, as long as it is not inclined towards good and a perception of righteousness and trustworthiness; the mere changing of names, rules and regulations will not bring about any real change in the reality.

The fundamental message of the life of Muḥammad *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* to the world of the twentieth century which is currently under the control of the West, is this: O you who are fleeing from Allāh, run towards Allāh and do not consider anyone apart from Him as a God.

فَفِرُّوْا إِلَى اللَّهِ، إِنِّي لَكُمْ مِنْهُ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ. وَلَا تَجْعَلُوا مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ، إِنِّي لَكُمْ مِنْهُ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ.

*So hasten towards Allāh. I am a clear warner to you from Him. Do not assign to Allāh any other deity. I am a clear warner to you from Him.*¹

The life of Muḥammad Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam delivers this message to the world every year, and is conveyed to every corner of the world. The wind, on its shoulders; and the oceans, on their waves, carry this message and invitation to the countries and nations of the world. If the noise and din of the world, which is not allowing the people of the world to hear, were to subside a little, the voice which called out to the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) of the first century will be heard even now:

قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُبِينٌ. يَهْدِي بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ
سُبُلَ السَّلَامِ وَيُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ
مُّسْتَقِيمٍ.

*Surely there has come to you, from Allāh, a light and a manifest Book. Through which Allāh guides, those who became subservient to His pleasure, to the paths of peace. He removes them from darkness into light with His order, and He leads them to the straight path.*²

The Messengers ‘alayhimus salām are the only sailors of the ship of humanity. They were the ones who steered the ship of humanity to the shore in every era. It was not peculiar to the son of Ḥaḍrat Nūḥ ‘alayhis salām. Rather, anyone who made the claim of:

¹ Sūrah adh-Dhāriyāt, 51: 50-51.

² Sūrah al-Mā'idah, 5: 15-16.

قَالَ سَأُوِي إِلَى جَبَلٍ يَعْصِمُنِي مِنَ الْمَاءِ

He replied: "I shall take refuge in a mountain which will save me from the water."¹

He received the reply:

قَالَ لَا عَاصِمَ الْيَوْمَ

He said: "There is no saviour today..."²

After the arrival of Muḥammad Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam, individuals and nations, Easterners and Westerners, past peoples and future peoples – to all of them Allāh *ta'ālā* has decided that success lies solely in remaining attached to him. Separation from him will result in wretchedness, destruction, deprivation, failure and nothing else.

Muḥammad (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) of Arabia – the pride of both the worlds. Whoever is not the dust of his threshold, may dust be on his head.

¹ Sūrah Hūd, 11: 43.

² Sūrah Hūd, 11: 43.

MESSAGE OF THE SĪRAH TO PRESENT DAY MUSLIMS

Everyone knows that at the time when Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam was commissioned, the world was neither a desolate place nor a graveyard. Life was carrying on at that time in a similar fashion as it is today, albeit with a slight difference. All trades and occupations were carrying on as they are at present. Business deals were made, farming was practised, there were those who were running governments and ensuring that its machinery was running smoothly. The people of that time were totally content and happy with their lives, and they did not perceive any need for renovation, reformation or alteration.

But Allāh *ta'ālā* was totally displeased with the state of His earth and the condition of the world. The Hadīth makes reference to that time as follows:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ نَظَرَ إِلَى أَهْلِ الْأَرْضِ فَمَقَّتَهُمْ، عَرَبَهُمْ وَعَجَمَهُمْ، إِلَّا بَقَايَا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ.

Allāh looked at the inhabitants of earth and He detested them intensely – both the Arabs and the non-Arabs – except for a handful of the People of the Book.

Allāh *ta'ālā* commissioned Muḥammad sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam under such conditions and provided him with the means for the creation of an entirely new nation. Obviously, He must have created them for a certain purpose which could not be fulfilled by any other nation. The task which they were carrying out with full engrossment and enthusiasm obviously did not need the creation of a new nation, and the calm ocean of human life did not need any new waves which

resulted with the arrival of Muslims who caused a tremor in the land.

When Allāh *ta'ālā* created Ḥaḍrat Ādam *'alayhis salām*, the angels said: “We are more than enough to glorify You and extol Your greatness. We do not understand the need to create this creature of clay.” Allāh *ta'ālā* replied:

إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

I know that which you do not know.

In this way, Allāh *ta'ālā* made reference to the fact (and later expounded it) that Ādam *'alayhis salām* was not created for the task which was being fulfilled by the angels. Allāh *ta'ālā* intended to take some other work from man.

If Muslims were created solely to engage in trade and business, the traders of Makkah who used to travel to Syria and Yemen, and the big Jewish businessmen of Madīnah who had established huge business houses would have had the right to ask: “Are we sinners not enough for this service that an entire new nation is being created for it?!” If it was for the sake of agriculture, the farmers of Madīnah and Khaybar, Tā'if and Najd, and the agriculturalists of Syria, Yemen and Iraq would have had the right to ask: “Are we failing in any way in our farming and agricultural efforts that a new nation has to be commissioned for this purpose!?” If there was a need to merely fit in place the moving machinery of life, if the running and administration of governments and other office duties were to be carried out in exchange for wages and salaries, then the Roman and Persian government agencies would have had the right to ask: “We are more than sufficient for these duties. In fact,

many of our brothers are out of jobs. What is the need to bring in new hopefuls!?”

The fact of the matter is that the Muslims were being created for a completely new and unique task which was not being carried out by anyone in the world [at the time], and could not be carried out by anyone. There was a need to commission an entirely new community for this purpose. Allāh *ta'ālā* says in this regard:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ
وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ

*You are the best of all nations which has been sent into the world - you enjoin good and forbid evil, and you believe in Allāh.*¹

It was for this purpose that people left their homelands for good, caused losses to their livelihoods, lost their life's savings, destroyed their well-established businesses, desolated their farmlands and orchards, gave up their comforts and luxuries, shut their eyes to all the successes and prosperities of the world, lost golden opportunities, shed their blood as if it was water, orphaned their children and widowed their wives.

There was no need for all this disturbance and commotion for the fulfilment of these objectives and occupations over which the Muslims today appear to be content. The path to acquiring and realizing all these was level and free from all danger. There was no major conflict and clash with the contemporary world on this

¹ Sūrah Āl 'Imrān, 3: 110.

path. Nor was there any reason for complaint by the Arabs and other nations of the world. They had always offered and presented the things after which the Muslims are hankering today. But on each occasion, the inviters towards Islam opposed these things. They rejected wealth, power, luxurious living, comfort and ease.

Now if the Muslims were to stoop to the level on which all the unbelieving nations were at the time when Muḥammad *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* was commissioned, and on the level on which all non-Muslim nations are at present; if they were to become immersed and drowned in the same occupations and distractions in which the Arabs, Romans and Persians were drowning; if they were to consider the same achievements and opportunities to be the objectives of their lives – achievements and opportunities which their Messenger *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* had turned down when they were offered to him – then it would be synonymous to betraying the early history of Islam, and it would be an open declaration that the valuable blood of humans which was shed at Badr, Hunayn, Aḥzāb, Qādisiyyah and Yarmūk was shed unnecessarily.

If the Quraysh leaders were able to speak today, they could address the Muslims and say: “The things after which you are running hastily and which you are considering to be the objectives of your lives are the very same things which we had offered to your Messenger (*sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*). All those things could have been acquired without the shedding of a single drop of blood. So was this way of living which you have chosen for yourselves the net result of all that striving and toiling, and the value of all those sacrifices?! Is it this level of life and morality with which you are content today?!”

If any of those Quraysh leaders who were the enemies of Islam had the opportunity to level this accusation against us today, even our most noteworthy advocate and lawyer would not be able to provide a convincing and silencing answer. The *ummah* would have no alternative but to be ashamed of its self. Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* had the very same fear about the Muslims. That is, they must not fall headlong into the world and thereby forget their goal in life. They must not reduce themselves to the general level of the world [they have to be on an elevated plain]. He delivered a speech close to his demise wherein he addressed the Muslims saying:

مَا الْفَقْرَ أَخْشَى عَلَيْكُمْ، وَلَكِنِّي أَخْشَى أَنْ تُبْسَطَ عَلَيْكُمُ الدُّنْيَا كَمَا
 بُسِطَتْ عَلَى مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ، فَتَنَافَسُوهَا كَمَا تَنَافَسُوهَا، فَتُهْلِكُكُمْ كَمَا
 أَهْلَكْتَهُمْ^١.

I do not fear poverty for you. Rather, I fear that if the world is laid open to you as it was for those before you, you would compete against each other for its acquisition as they had competed against each other, and it may destroy you as it had destroyed them.

The Anṣār of Madīnah wanted a few days' break from the occupations of jihād and other striving and toiling so that they could set right their farms, orchards and businesses. They wanted permission to remain occupied with their livelihoods for a short while. They could never have even imagined that they would leave the other pillars of Islam like ṣalāh, fasting, ḥajj and zakāh for these few days while they were occupied with their livelihoods. Despite this, this temporary break

^١ رواه البخاري ومسلم.

from practical striving for the sake of Islam, the propagation of *Dīn* and striving for its supremacy was considered to be synonymous to suicide. The following verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah was revealed, and it was explained by Hadrat Abū Ayyūb Ansārī *radiyallāhu ‘anhu* as follows:

وَأَنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ ۚ وَأَحْسِنُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ.

*Spend in the path of Allāh and do not throw your lives into destruction. And do good, surely Allāh loves the doers of good.*¹

The fundamental constitution of a Muslim’s life is that he is either involved in inviting towards Islam and striving practically in this regard, or he is supporting and helping those who are striving for the propagation of Islam. Together with this, he must have a firm determination and an enthusiasm to be a part of this practical striving and struggle. The life of a carefree city dweller or a businessman is not an Islamic life. It can never ever be the purpose of a Muslim’s life. Lawful occupations of life, and lawful sources of livelihood are certainly not forbidden. In fact, they are means of worship and proximity to Allāh *ta’ālā* if done with the correct intention and a desire for reward. But this is only when they are in the shade of *Dīn* and are means for correct objectives, and not the objectives in themselves.

This is the greatest message of the *sīrah* of Muḥammad *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* which is addressed solely to the Muslims. If attention is not paid

¹ Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2: 195.

to this message, one would lose sight of one's objective in life, and it would entail turning a blind eye to the most fundamental reality which the life of Muḥammad Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* presents to the Muslims.

MUHAMMAD IQBAL IN THE CITY OF THE MESSENGER¹

Dr. Muḥammad Iqbāl's entire life was filled with love for Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* and a yearning to visit his city [Madīnah]. He sang their praises in his timeless poetry, but towards the latter part of his life, his "tumbler" of love had become so filled that the moment Madīnah was mentioned, his eyes would well with tears and they would flow spontaneously. He was not destined to perform ḥajj and visit [the grave of] Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* due to his weak and frail body which was suffering many illnesses and ailments for quite some time. However, he travelled to the Hijāz [Makkah and Madīnah] by the strength of his thoughts, his fresh and sweet poetry, and his yearning and restless heart. He was able to circle and hover over these cities again and again, and his flying thoughts repeatedly presented themselves at this nest or at this threshold.

He presented his heart, his love, his devotion and his loyalty before Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*, spoke to him about his self, the era in which he was living, and presented a picture of his community before him. The acumen of the poet is clearly portrayed during these occasions. The fountains of meanings would gush forth and the reins of facts which he had been firmly holding would be unveiled, fully displaying their true colours. He felt this was the time to release the reins – this was the time and place to give vent to his feelings. He addresses his self:

¹ This is a translation of an Arabic speech which was delivered over Damascus Radio in 1956.

The world of desire could have been expressed in a single word, but I prolonged the story to stay in his presence.

His words on this topic are most vibrant, powerful and emotive. They are a true expression of his sentiments, the essence of his experiences, and a reflection of his era and his most sensitive feelings.

In the couplets which will be presented further on, he undertakes an imaginary journey to Makkah and Madīnah. In this imaginary scene, he is proceeding forward with the caravan of anticipation on the soft desert terrain. In his desire to present himself [before Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*], his yearning and his love for him, the burning sand seems to be softer than silk. In fact, it seems as if every particle of sand has turned into a pulsating and throbbing heart, and he is asking the camel-driver to be considerate of these pulsating hearts and to tread carefully.

Blessed be the desert whose evenings are as cheerful as the dawn. Tread softly, O traveller, tread softly. Each particle [of soil] is afflicted like us.

On hearing the song of *Hadī Khwān*,¹ his blazing yearning intensifies, the wounds of his heart re-open, the heat traverses his entire existence, spurs his poetic sentiments, and couplets of breath-taking beauty gush forth from the depths of his existence.

¹ The song-leader of a caravan.

Then in the same imaginary world, he presents himself before the Muwājajah Sharīf,¹ and sends peace and salutations to Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*. The tongue of love and yearning becomes the interpreter of his heart. He takes full benefit from this blessed and valuable moment and describes the condition of his heart. He unburdens himself of the conditions of the Islamic *ummah* and the Islamic world, the issues and challenges which it faces, and the tests and tribulations which it is going through. He complains about how the Islamic world has surrendered to Western culture and materialistic philosophies and movements, its powerlessness, his own estrangement in his own country, and the disregard of his people to his message. His eyes sometimes well with tears, and sometimes the feelings of his heart are expressed by his tongue.

Iqbāl titled this collection of poetry, *Armughān Hijāz* (A Gift of the Hijāz). In reality, it is a very blessed gift for the entire Islamic world and a fragrant draught of the morning breeze of the Hijāz.

The morning breeze is very fragrant today.
The beloved’s locks of hair are probably open
in the direction of the breeze.

Iqbāl’s spiritual journey was undertaken when he was more than sixty years old, and his strength had waned. It was an age when people prefer taking a rest and remaining in solitude. Illness and old-age had weakened him, the journey to the Hijāz is difficult and tiring, doctors and beloved ones advised him to take it

¹ The gated section in Musjid-e-Nabawī where a person stands and sends salutations to Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*.

easy. Yet he does not pay any heed. So what was it that prompted him to undertake this long and arduous journey? What else can we refer it to except that it was in response to the bidding of his heart and in fulfilment of his life's ambition? He says:

I headed for Madīnah despite my old age.
Singing and composing lines of poetry with
joy and love. There is nothing to be
astonished because a bird flies the entire day
in the desert, and when day ends and night
approaches, it flaps its wings and heads
towards its nest to take refuge and spend the
night there.

He asks: Why are you surprised if I headed for Madīnah – the nest for the bird of the soul and the refuge of the believer – in the evening of my life and at a time when the sun of my life is about to set? Have you not seen how the birds hasten to their nests in the evening! In the same way, my soul wants to return to its original nest.

When his camel moves speedily in the course of his journey between Makkah and Madīnah, Iqbāl addresses it: "Your rider is very frail, ill and old." But the camel does not pay heed to him. It walks in a frenzy and with ecstasy as though the desert beneath it is not soil, but a silken carpet laid out for it.

In the morning, I told the camel to take it
easy because its rider was frail, ill and old.
But it paid no heed, as if the sand beneath
its hooves was silk.

This caravan to Madīnah is moving ahead bearing the valuable gift of peace and salutations. In the midst of these emotional surroundings, he wishes he could make one prostration on this hot desert sand which will become an eternal mark on his forehead,

and which will also encourage his friends to make such a prostration.

When he is overcome by even more yearning and longing, the poems of 'Irāqī and Jāmī¹ spontaneously gush forth from his tongue. People look at him in confusion, thinking to themselves: "In what language is this non-Arab singing these poems which we cannot understand, but are filling our hearts with such pain and love that we are forgetting the pangs of hunger and thirst!?"

O leader of this caravan! Who is this non-Arab? His song is not of Arabia, yet it is so refreshing to the heart that we could live in the desert without water.

Iqbāl takes delight from all the hardships and difficulties of the journey. He takes joy from the sleeplessness, discomfort, and shortage of food and drink. But he does not consider the journey to be long, nor does he have the desire to reach quickly. Instead, he requests his camel-driver to take a longer route so that the period of yearning and desire may prolong, and the enjoyment of waiting (which is considered to be the provision of lovers and a refreshment for beloveds) may double.

Let the traveller's suffering be more blissful, and his lamentation more intense. Take a longer route, O camel-driver, so that my fire of separation may burn more intensely.

¹ Names of two Persian poets whose poems in praise of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* are very popular among the Muslims.

He traverses this path in a state of happiness, yearning, desire and ecstasy; and reaches Madīnah Tayyibah. He says to his travelling companion: “Come, O my friend! We are captives of the same lock of hair. Today we have the opportunity to fulfil our heart’s desire and to spread our eyelashes beneath our master’s and beloved’s feet. We should therefore give free reign to our eyes, and let the flood of tears which was agitated and restless for a long time flow freely.”

Come, friend, let us weep together. We are both victims of beauty’s golden crown. Give a free reign to what is buried in the hearts, and rub our eyes at the master’s feet.

Iqbāl then turns to his self and marvels at how he came to enjoy this good fortune and joyous occasion. He is astonished at how a donkey like himself, together with his unworthiness, was favoured with presence in the royal court where many great intellectuals and kings were not given admission.

There is nothing to be astonished about, because lovers and beloveds are more honoured in this court than wise men and philosophers. How blessed, indeed, and how fortunate – the door of the sultan was opened to a beggar.

But even in that hour of joy, ecstasy, emotion and enthusiasm, Iqbāl does not forget the Muslim *ummah*, especially the Muslims of India. With genuine honesty and absolute eloquence he opens the pain of their hearts like a book, and places it [before Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam]. He says:

This Muslim – a beggar with the airs of kings. The smoke of sigh has departed from his heart. He weeps, but does not know why. O Rasūlullāh! Bestow a glance at him.

He says that a great tragedy with the *ummah* is that it has fallen from a great height; and the higher a person falls from, the worse his injury.

What can we say of the afflicted beggar? This Muslim of noble descent. May Allāh bless the diehard, for he has fallen from a great height.

He says that a major cause for the stress of the *ummah* as regards livelihood, its disorganized condition and its terrible situation is that the Muslims have a group, but no leader; they have individuals, but no system.

The blue sky is still unkind, and the caravan is nowhere near its destination. What can we say about their disunity? They are a people without a leader.

Iqbāl continues: The blood of the Muslims has run cold, they no longer have the capability of producing men of calibre which was once their distinguishing mark. For a long time now their sheath is without a sword, and their sowing field is lying desolate, deprived of tulips and roses.

His blood no longer possesses any heat, no longer do tulips grow in his garden. His sheath is as empty as his wallet, while the Book [Qur'ān] remains untouched on the shelf.

This *ummah* has been robbed of its capital of hopes and the enthusiasm of inquiry. Instead, it has become captivated by the attractive colours and fragrances of this world. Its ears have become accustomed to soft music, while it has become disinclined to the calls of men who are fighting for freedom.

His heart, he made a captive of hues and scents; and emptied it of the joy of longing. He seldom hears the shrill cry of the falcon, but his ears have become accustomed to the humming sound of the gnat.

There is neither the light of conviction in his eyes nor the joy of love. His heart is neither intoxicated with the love of anyone, nor is his chest filled with memories of anyone. He is very far from the presence [of Allāh *ta'ālā*], does not know his destination, and has remained aloof from it.

In his eye there is neither light nor joy. Nor is the heart in his bosom restless. O Allāh! Help the Muslim community which is living, but whose soul does not know the pleasure of reaching [Allāh *ta'ālā*] and presence [before Him].

He then compares the glorious past of the Muslims (when they enjoyed the special affection of Allāh *ta'ālā*) to their present plight and woeful situation. He addresses Allāh *ta'ālā* with real eloquence and in a sweet style by saying: "Those whom You had fed fruits and various other produce, and whom You had maintained in luxury, are today seen wandering in the deserts seeking their sustenance, and are forced to go around knocking on one door after another.

Ask me not his condition. The earth is just as mean to him as the sky. The bird which You had reared on fruit is now distressed for having to search the desert for a grain.

Iqbāl speaks about the rising storm of atheism which is advancing rapidly towards the world of Islam. Dr. Muḥammad Iqbāl (who himself was an expert in philosophy, politics and economics, and who had

observed these subjects very closely) knew very well that the biggest causes of atheism were: an absolute materialistic view of life, spiritual vacuum, and coldness of the heart. An extravagant and affluent lifestyle is adding fuel to the fire. He was fully convinced that if there was anything which could combat this flood of atheism and materialistic philosophy, it was abstinence and love [for Allāh *ta'ālā*]. If there was anything to vanquish it, it was the lifestyle of Hadrat Abū Bakr Siddīq *radiyallāhu 'anhu* – the true ascetic and lover. Iqbāl is hoping for the Muslims, this ideal life of asceticism and love which must pervade every department of their lives. He knows fully well that if such a lifestyle comes into existence, the entire world will be compelled into submitting before the Muslims and looking up to them with respect.

Irreligiousness has turned the world upside down. From the attributes of the body they are trying to deduce about the soul. From the asceticism which You bestowed to [Hadrat Abū Bakr] Siddīq, produce restlessness in this lover of ease.

Iqbāl does not consider poverty, impoverishment and a dearth of materialistic means to be the causes of Muslim degeneration. Rather, he considers it to be the extinguishing of the flame of love which, at one time, was burning relentlessly in the hearts of the Muslims.

He says that when these ascetics did not prostrate before anyone other than Allāh *ta'ālā* and refused to accept the authority and influence of anyone else, they had the collars of the kings in their hands. But when this ember [of love] became cold, they had to take refuge in the shrines and Sufi lodges.

As long as the fakirs remained attached to the musjid, they tore the collars of the kings. But when the fire in their chests died, the Muslims sought shelter in the shrines.

Iqbāl examines the history of Muslims and turns its every single page. In many places he finds facts and points which would cause a Muslim to bow his head in shame and regret. Many things are revealed which have nothing to do with the prophet-hood of Muḥammad *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*, its teachings, and its lofty values and principles. He finds therein, many instances of pagan behaviour, worship of others apart from Allāh *ta'ālā*, adulation and praises of tyrant and oppressive kings and rulers; all of which are enough to fill the forehead of any self-respecting and upright person with perspiration. Iqbāl silently observes these things one after the other, and finally acknowledges and speaks out very frankly, but with eloquence and to the point. He says: The fact of the matter is that if we were to consider these points of degeneration, we are definitely not worthy of being called your followers [O Rasūlullāh]. It is a glaring act of insolence to claim our affiliation with you.

We can blame none but our own selves. We proved unworthy of your name.

As a precaution, Iqbāl re-examines the world of Islam which he had seen, witnessed, and was known to him. The essence of his re-assessment is that on one hand, the cups and tumblers of the Sufi lodges are empty. They neither have the nourishment for the heart nor do they bear the message of love. On the other hand, the centres of learning are devoid of originality and inventiveness. They are merely pursuing the beaten track again and again – merely repeating what they received from the past. Literature and poetry

have become dead and lifeless, deprived of emotions and sentiments of the heart. It is merely cold poetry emanating from a cold heart; dead literature issuing forth from a dead litterateur.

The goblets of the Sufi lodges contain no wine. The centres of learning are pursuing the beaten track. From the company of the poets, I got up dejected. Melody from the reed comes out dead.

Iqbāl says that he travelled through all corners of the Muslim world and found the cities filled with Muslims who feared death. As for the Muslim who did not fear death, but is feared by it, he did not come across a single one.

I flew with the wings you gave me, and burnt myself with the fire of my song. The Muslim who made death tremble with fear, I looked for him, but in vain.

He explains the mystery behind the weakness of the Muslims, their perplexity, and the destitution of their name and character. He says: Every individual or group has a heart, but not the power to love. They have love, but do not know the beloved [i.e. they do not know on whom they must shower their love]. They are always deprived of presence of heart and peace. All their powers are going to waste, and their efforts are never focussed on a single goal and never devoted to a centre.

One night, I cried before Allāh and asked: “Why are the Muslims so down in the world?” The reply came: “Don’t you know? This community possesses the heart, but not the beloved.”

Despite all these hopeless conditions, Iqbāl has not lost hope in the Muslims, and is not despondent of

Allāh's mercy. Instead, he is severely critical of those who rely on others and look at everything with the eyes of others. With real pain, he says that the custodians of the Haram¹ have become guards of idol-houses. Their conviction is dead and decrepit, and their eyes too are borrowed from others and indebted to them.

The custodian of the Haram has become the architect of the idol-house. His faith is dead, and his eyes are not his own. From his look it is clear that he has lost hope in every possibility of good.

He says that although they are horseless and have no royal guards, the Muslims are more high-minded than kings and their gazes are loftier than the sultans. If they were given their rightful place for a short while, their world-illuminating charm can still be a world-conquering force.

Although the Muslim is without an infantry and a cavalry, his soul is the soul of a king. If he is given his rightful place again, his charm and might will conquer all.

Iqbāl speaks about his self and his era against which he is doing battle, and which is a trial and tribulation for him at every step which he takes.

Occasionally I fall, and occasionally I rise.
What blood do I shed without a sword? Cast
a loving glance from the terrace, for I am up
in arms against my era.

Undoubtedly, his entire life was spent in conflict against the modern world. Not only did he refute

¹ The Sanctified Sanctuary of Makkah and Madinah.

Western civilization and materialistic philosophy, he went one step further and criticized it severely, and challenged it. Then with much courage, enlightened conviction and thoroughness, he proved that it was a façade. He tore open its deceptive veil with which it had been concealing its actual and ugly face. Iqbāl really was a guide for the new generation, a bearer of conviction and self-reliance, a representative of the complete Islamic personality, and a vociferous refuter of materialistic foundations and ways of thinking. He had the right to say:

Like Rūmī, I called out the *adhān* in the Haram. From him I learnt the mysteries of the self. He revolted against the devilry of by-gone days, while I revolted against the mischief of the present era.

He makes a very bold claim about his revolt against Western sciences, about how he escaped from the web of Western education, and how he was able to preserve his creed, his *īmān* and his individuality. He says that he displayed the courage of Hadrat Ibrāhīm *‘alayhis salām* against Western philosophy and culture, which he likens to the fire of Namrūd. He announces with pride and joy how he acquired the core of Western sciences, and then threw away their peels. Not only that, he came out safe and sound from their webs. Furthermore, he split into smithereens their captivating spells with which they had enchanted the East and the West.

I broke the spell of modern education. I was like a bird which is cast in a net. I pecked away the net, took the grain, and escaped. Allāh knows, how in the manner of Ibrāhīm [*‘alayhis salām*], I sat bravely in its fire, and came out of it safe and sound.

Iqbāl describes his life which he spent in the capitals of Europe. All he could obtain from them were “dry” books, intricate philosophical discussions, alluring beauty and captivating sights. If there was anything which he learnt there, it was forgetting of one’s self which nearly deprived him of his selfhood.

I gave my heart to Frankish idols, and I melted in the heat of temple-dwellers. Such a stranger I became in my own eyes, that when I looked at my self, I could not recognize it.

Even now, when he recalls the desolateness and darkness of those days, he trembles and recoils. He says with real fervour that he experienced nothing but headaches by sitting in the taverns of the West. He does not remember more depressing, more gloomy and more unfeeling days and nights than those which he spent in the company of European intellectuals.

I drank wine in the taverns of the West, and with my life, I purchased headaches. I sat among wise men of the West, and never did I have a more frustrating experience.

Iqbāl then addresses Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* with intense agony, saying: “I have been nurtured by your affectionate gaze. All these intricate arguments and heavy discourses of the people of intelligence and wisdom have given me a headache and left me sick. I am a pauper at your door alone. I am a beggar from your street. Why should I bash my head against the hard thresholds of others and test my fortune in this way?”

I am indeed a beggar, and I ask from you alone whatever I have to ask. I pierce the heart of the mountain with a blade of grass. Philosophical discourses give me a

headache, for I have been nurtured by your affectionate gaze.

He then turns his attention to those who are supposed to be representatives of knowledge and *Dīn*. He complains about their “dryness”, inactivity, inertness, deprivation of love and pain [for the *ummah*], mere interest in facts, and engrossment with weighty definitions. He expresses this in a very poetic and eloquent manner by saying that their Arabian desert neither has the Zam Zam well nor the House of Allāh [the Ka’bah]. If these two landmarks are not present, of what use are its burning sands and silent mountains?

In the same way, look at how bankrupt and indigent that scholar of Islam is who, despite possessing profound knowledge, having great oratory skills and being sharp-minded, his eye does not have a single drop of tear of love, and his heart is devoid of a tremor. All that this scholar took from the Holy Land is its aridness and hardness, and not its moisture and wetness.

The heart of the *mullā*¹ is devoid of grief. His eye is seeing, but is not moist. I got up and left his seminary because, in his Arabian desert, no Zam Zam flows.

Iqbāl then speaks about his self: Once I relied on others beside Allāh *ta’ālā*, and as a consequence, I fell down two hundred times from my position. It is a position in which neither physical strength nor ingenuity of the mind is of any avail. Only Divine

¹ Another title for ‘*ālim*, *maulānā* (Islamic scholar, theologian).

Decree (*taqdīr*) and Divine Will prevails. A single slip up in this regard can plunge a man to the pits.

I did not sell my self to anyone, and I did not seek anyone's assistance to solve my problems. This is because I relied on someone other than Allāh *ta'ālā* on one occasion. Consequently, I fell down two hundred times from my position.

He says that in these deceitful and heartless times which know nothing apart from profits and gains, and whose imitation or animalistic heart is devoid of every subtle perception and sincere feeling are nothing but synonymous to burning in a blazing fire, and drinking the blood of one's liver.

My eye is indifferent to what it sees, my heart melts in the inner fire. Me and these heartless and unsympathetic times: what a mystery it is, tell me!

Iqbāl says: I have no friend and well-wisher in the East and the West. I am relating the sorrow of my heart to my own heart, and giving solace to my own self.

I am a stranger in the East and West. I am friendless and forlorn. I have no confidant. I relate my anguish to my own heart. Look at how innocently I cheat my loneliness.

His complaint is that no one has paid heed to his sincere advice and good counsel. No one harvested the fresh dates from the date palm of his poetry. The unseen which he expressed via his poetry has fallen on deaf ears. Instead of looking at him as an expresser of the realities, they are all looking at him as a poet and lyricist.

They do not understand the secrets which I reveal, nor do they eat the fruit of my tree. I seek justice from you, O leader of nations. They consider me to be a mere reciter of love lyrics.

Iqbāl complains to Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* saying: You instructed me to convey the message of life and eternity to the people. But these heartless people are asking me to be like any ordinary professional poet who composes eulogies of the dead, and records their dates of death.

You command me to sing of eternity and impart the message of life to the dead. But heartless friends demand that I record the dates of the death of this person and that person.

He complains with much pain and anguish, and with real remorse and bitterness that people are most disinterested with the knowledge and message contained in his poems; which are their real soul and actual value. The people have proved to be most content [with the superficial content of my poems], and indifferent to their message. I displayed all my goods in the market-place, but I found no buyers for this rare commodity. I tried to offer the core of my heart, but even in this case I did not see anyone to appreciate it. Who could be more lonely, friendless and lonesome than me!?

I offer my heart, but there is no taker. I possess the merchandise but where is the plunderer? Come and make my heart your bode. There is no Muslim lonelier than me.

In the end, Iqbāl addresses King 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Sa'ūd – because he was the king of Arabia at the time – but his address is really meant for all Arab kings and

all leaders of the Islamic world. He warns him of the consequences of relying on foreigners; on European countries. He calls on him to firstly rely on Allāh *ta'ālā* and then on his self.

He says to him: If the rope is yours, you can pitch your tent wherever and whenever you want. And you can make any place your station. But if it does not belong to you, you will have to borrow it, and you will not be able to take a single step freely.

He says: You should at least try to recognize your self. You enjoy a position whose evening is clearer than the dawn of others.

Your place in the arid desert is such that its evening is as bright as the dawn. Pitch your tent wherever you want, but to borrow a rope from others is forbidden.

THE JOY OF PRESENTING ONE’S SELF IN MADĪNAH¹

Look up and you will see a train of mountains on both sides. The camel of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* may very well have passed through this way. The attraction of this place and the aroma of the surroundings is probably due to it. A poet says:

ألا إن وادي الجزع أضحي ترابه – من المسك كافورا وأعواده رندا
وما ذاك إلا أن هندا عشية – تمشّت وجرت في جوانبه بُردا

The dust of the valley of al-Jaza’ began to smell like camphor, and its bushes were transformed into fragrant plants. This is solely because Hind had passed through it in the evening, and her cloak had rubbed against the ground.

Look, we have reached Masijid, and Bīr ‘Alī (Dhūl Hulayfah)² is to follow soon.

As the beloved’s town draws near, the flame of desire burns stronger.

Salutations are flowing from the lips and the heart is overflowing with eagerness. The Arab driver is wondering what this non-Arab is reading and why he is crying. Sometimes he is mumbling something in Arabic and sometimes he is reading poetry in other languages.

¹ Adapted from the author’s article, *Apne Ghar se Baytullāh Tak* (From your house to the House of Allāh). It forms part of Hadrat Maulānā Manzūr Nu‘mānī’s *rahīmahullāh* book titled, *Hajj Kayse Kare?* (How to perform hajj).

² These are names of stop-over points along the road to Madīnah Munawwarah.

The breeze is gentle and the moonlight is soft. The freshness of the air, the sweetness and coolness of the water is increasing as we draw closer to Madīnah. At the same time, the burning of the heart is becoming more intense. Listen, someone is saying:

The morning breeze is very fragrant today. The beloved's locks of hair are probably open in the direction of the breeze.

Although he passed by here just once, the winds of Allāh's mercy are still blowing here.

What is there to be astonished about if the moon and a cluster of small stars become my prey! After all, I have bound my head to Rasūlullāh's *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* saddle-bow.

That finder of paths, seal of the Messengers, master of all who bestowed to the dust of the path the splendour of the Sinai valley.

The dust of Madīnah is more pleasant than both the worlds. Look at how cool the city is where the beloved lives.

Muḥammad (*ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) of Arabia – the pride of both the worlds. Whoever is not the dust of his threshold, may dust be on his head.

Look, here is Dhūl Ḥulayfah. We will spend the rest of the night here. We took a bath and applied perfume. You may rest for a while and stretch your back. In the morning, we performed ṣalāh, and the car started. What! Are we going to travel by a car to that place where we ought to enter by walking on our heads!? Nevertheless, sitting next to the driver proved to be to my advantage. He will drop me off at Wādī 'Aqīq near Bīr 'Urwah. Our luggage, women, and the old and

frail will continue by car. While talking to ourselves, we reached Bir 'Urwah. We alighted by saying *Bismillāh* (in the name of Allāh). Look, we can now see Mt. Uhud

ذَلِكَ جَبَلٍ يُحِبُّنَا وَنُحِبُّهُ

That is a mountain which loves us, and which we love.

The dark patches of the trees of Madīnah are also seen. Are those the same trees regarding which Shahīdī Marhūm had said:

How I wish when my soul's cage is broken, it flies and sits like a bird on the trees of your Raudah.

The Green Dome is now visible. Control yourself and proceed respectfully. I now enter Madīnah, and walking under the wall of Musjid-e-Nabawī, I pass through Bāb Majīdī, and stop at Bāb Jibra'īl. I give something in charity as an expression of gratitude to Allāh *ta'ālā* for having conferred me with this opportunity of presenting my self here. I go in, and first perform two *rak'ats* of *ṣalāh* at the Mihrāb-e-Nabawī. I wash my sinful eyes with the tears of my heart, and then present my self in the court of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*.

الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ،

الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ،

الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا حَبِيبَ اللَّهِ،

الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا صَاحِبَ الخُلُقِ العَظِيمِ،

الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا رَافِعَ لَوَاءِ الحَمْدِ يَوْمَ القِيَامَةِ،

الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا صَاحِبَ مَقَامِ المَحْمُودِ،

الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا مُخْرِجَ النَّاسِ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ مِنَ الظُّلْمِ إِلَى التُّورِ،
الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا مُخْرِجَ النَّاسِ مِنْ عِبَادَةِ الْعِبَادِ إِلَى عِبَادَةِ اللَّهِ
وَحُدَّهُ،

الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا مُخْرِجَ النَّاسِ مِنْ جُورِ الْأَدْيَانِ إِلَى عَدْلِ الْإِسْلَامِ
وَمَنْ ضَيَّقِ الدُّنْيَا إِلَى سَعَةِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ،
الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا صَاحِبَ النِّعْمَةِ الْحَسِيمَةِ،
الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا صَاحِبَ الْمِنَّةِ الْعَظِيمَةِ،
الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا أَمَنَ خَلْقِ اللَّهِ عَلَى خَلْقِ اللَّهِ،
أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ وَأَنَّكَ عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ،
قَدْ بَلَغْتَ الرِّسَالَةَ وَأَدَّيْتَ الْأَمَانَةَ وَنَصَحْتَ الْأُمَّةَ وَجَاهَدْتَ فِي اللَّهِ حَقَّ
جِهَادِهِ، وَعَبَدْتَ اللَّهَ حَتَّى أَتَاكَ الْيَقِينُ،

فَجَزَاكَ اللَّهُ عَنِ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةِ خَيْرَ مَا جَزَى نَبِيًّا عَنْ أُمَّتِهِ وَرَسُولًا عَنْ خَلْقِهِ،
اللَّهُمَّ أَتِ مُحَمَّدَ الْوَسِيلَةَ وَالْفَضِيلَةَ وَابْعَثْهُ مَقَامًا تَحْمُودَانِ الَّذِي وَعَدْتَهُ،
إِنَّكَ لَا تُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ،

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَعَلَى آلِ
إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ، اللَّهُمَّ بَارِكْ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا بَارَكْتَ
عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ.¹

¹ This salutation was said spontaneously by the author on the first occasion when he presented himself before the blessed grave of Rasūlullāh *sallāllāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*. It is not taken from any book.

Salutations and peace to you, O Rasūlullāh!

Salutations and peace to you, O Prophet of Allāh!

Salutations and peace to you, O beloved of Allāh!

Salutations and peace to you, O the one who possesses impeccable character.

Salutations and peace to you, O the one who will carry the flag of praise on the day of Resurrection.

Salutations and peace to you, O the one who will have the praiseworthy position [on the day of Resurrection].

Salutations and peace to you, O the one who removed people from the pits of darkness to the light by the permission of Allāh ta'ālā.

Salutations and peace to you, O the one who removed servants from the worship of servants to the worship of Allāh alone.

Salutations and peace to you, O the one who removed people from the injustices of religions to the justice of Islam, and from the constriction of this world to the wide expanses of this world and the Hereafter.

Salutations and peace to you, O the greatest benefactor to mankind.

Salutations and peace to you, O the most affectionate to mankind.

Salutations and peace to you, O the one who was most kind among Allāh's creation to the creation of Allāh ta'ālā.

I testify that there is none worthy of worship except Allāh, the One, and that you are His servant and Messenger.

You most certainly conveyed the message and fulfilled the trust which was entrusted to you. You advised the

ummah, you strove for Allāh's cause to the maximum, and you continued worshipping Allāh ta'ālā until your demise.

May Allāh ta'ālā reward you on behalf of this ummah with the best reward He ever gave to a Prophet on behalf of his ummah, and to a Messenger on behalf of His creation.

O Allāh! Confer on Muḥammad ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam the proximity, high rank and praiseworthy position which You promised. Surely You do not go back on Your promise.

O Allāh! Shower mercies on Muḥammad ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam and his family as You showered mercies on Ibrāhīm 'alayhis salām and his family. Surely You are worthy of all praise, the all-majestic. O Allāh! Confer blessings on Muḥammad ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam and his family as You conferred blessings on Ibrāhīm 'alayhis salām and his family. Surely You are worthy of all praise, the all-majestic.

I then paid tribute to Rasūlullāh's two companions and ministers [referring to Hadrat Abū Bakr radiyallāhu 'anhu and Hadrat 'Umar radiyallāhu 'anhu] in the form of greeting and supplication; and proceeded to my place of stay.

Now there is just you and Musjid-e-Nabawī. Your heart must have no other desire. There can be no better time and place to send salutations [to Rasūlullāh ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam]. If you cannot go and present yourself [at his grave] now, when will you go? Try to perform ṣalāh in Riyāḍ al-Jannah¹ but be careful

¹ The area between the pulpit and blessed grave of Rasūlullāh ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam.

not to inconvenience anyone in the process. It is abhorrent to push, shove, crowd, reserve a place for yourself, and to run in any masjid of the world. But it is far more detestable to do any of these things in the masjid from which these injunctions were issued, and then spread to all parts of the world. Be careful not to raise your voice:

أَنْ تَحْبِطَ أَعْمَالِكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ

*Lest your deeds are wasted without your perceiving it.*¹

There must be no worldly talks here, the masjid must not be made a thoroughfare; as far as possible, abstain from entering it without *wudū'*, and desist from any form of business transactions.

You may go and present yourself and offer salutations as many times as you like during the day. The gates of good fortune have been opened for you; why, then, should you lag behind!? However, ensure that each time you go, you proceed with absolute dignity, respect, yearning and love. Our hearts never remain the same; they also sleep and wake up. When your heart is awake, you must conclude that your good fortune has opened up for you. So go and present yourself and say:

Remove the sleeve from my eyes, and behold
the pearl.

Sometimes you may feel like presenting yourself in the company of slaves – when floods of tears flow from the eyes of true lovers who spent their days and nights in the agony of separation, a few splashes may

¹ Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt, 49: 2.

fall on you as well. When the winds of mercy blow, a draught may touch you also.

Sometimes you may feel like proceeding silently, away from the gazes of people and in absolute solitude. Fulfil all the desires of the heart in this regard and let there be no remorse. Let your tears do all the talking sometimes, and at other times, you may make a presentation of yearning and love with your tongue. There are both long and short forms of salutation. You may choose whichever ones you like, and whatever creates enthusiasm in you. However, you must be wary of trespassing the limits of *tauhīd* because you are standing before the one [Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*] who could not tolerate hearing the words:

مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ وَشِئْتَ

مَنْ يَعِصْهُمَا

Whatever Allāh wills, and whatever you will.

Whoever disobeys them [Allāh and Rasūlullāh].¹

¹ It is mentioned in a Hadīth that a person said to Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*:

مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ وَشِئْتَ

Whatever Allāh wills, and whatever you will.

Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* said to him:

أَجَعَلْتَنِي لِلَّهِ نِدًّا؟

Have you made me an equal to Allāh!?

مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ

It is only what Allāh alone wills.

Another narration states that while a person was delivering a talk, he said:

مَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ رَسَدَ، وَمَنْ يَعِصْهُمَا فَقَدْ عَرَى

Let alone permitting anyone to prostrate to him.¹

There must not be the slightest taint or hint of partnership in the power, functions, will and choice of Allāh *ta'ālā*. Whether you recite the verses of Jāmī or the supplications of Hālī, just remember you are standing before the greatest and final Messenger of *tauḥīd* [*sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*] who could not tolerate the slightest hint of polytheism.

We are now living in Madīnah Munawwarah, to sweep the ground of which was considered an honour by the close friends of Allāh *ta'ālā* and kings. You are there all the time. Consider each day and each moment to be a boon. Perform the five *ṣalāhs* in Musjid-e-Nabawī with congregation. Even if you have to go out, ensure it is at a time when you do not miss any congregational *ṣalāh*. Present yourself at the time of *tahajjud* as this is a time of peace and tranquillity. People normally rush and run towards the Raudah, and it is difficult to get a place there without a struggle. But if you come to the Muwājahah Sharīf at this time

Whoever obeys Allāh and His Messenger is on the right path, and whoever disobeys both of them has gone astray.

Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* disliked any reference to himself with words which apply to both Allāh *ta'ālā* and himself at one and the same time, for this could convey the impression of equality between the two. This is why he said to the person:

بِئْسَ خَطِيبَ الْقَوْمِ أَنْتَ

You are a bad speaker.

¹ Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* said to Hadrat Qays ibn Sa'd *radiyallāhu 'anhu*: "If you were to pass by my grave, will you prostrate to it?" Qays *radiyallāhu 'anhu* replied: "No." Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* said: "Then you should also not prostrate to me during my lifetime." (*Abū Dāwūd, Kitāb an-Nikāḥ*)

[of *tahajjud*], you will probably find no one except the guards. You may offer salutations calmly, and then perform optional *salāhs* wherever you get a place. You may leave the Musjid after performing the *fajr salāh* and the *ishrāq salāh*.

Come, let's go to Baqī' today. After the graves of the Prophets '*alayhimus salām*, Baqī' is the greatest graveyard of truthfulness and devotion. A poet says:

Nowhere else will such a treasure be buried.

If you have studied the life of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*, the *Sahābah radiyallāhu 'anhum*, their life conditions and ranks, you will experience a genuine feeling on entering Baqī'. You will want to irrigate every mound of soil which you step on with your tears. On every grain of sand is recorded the history of *īmān*, *jihād*, love and affection. On every mound is buried a treasure of Islam.

You have now entered Baqī'. The guide will first lead you to the graves of the pure members of Rasūlullāh's *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* family. Here you will find the resting place of Sayyidunā 'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib *radiyallāhu 'anhu*, the uncle of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*; Fātimah bint ar-Rasūl *radiyallāhu 'anhā*, the leader of the women of Paradise; Sayyidunā Hasan ibn 'Alī *radiyallāhu 'anhu*, Sayyidunā 'Alī ibn al-Husayn Zayn al-'Abidīn *radiyallāhu 'anhu*, Sayyidunā Muḥammad al-Bāqir *radiyallāhu 'anhu*; and Sayyidunā Ja'far as-Sādiq *radiyallāhu 'anhu*.

As you proceed from here, you will see the graves of *Hadrat* Umm al-Mu'minīn 'A'ishah *Siddīqah radiyallāhu 'anhā*, and all the other pure wives of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* except for *Hadrat* Khadijah *radiyallāhu 'anhā* and *Hadrat*

Maymūnah *radiyallāhu 'anhā*. Then you will see the graves of the pure daughters of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*. This will be followed by Dār 'Aqīl ibn Abī Tālib where Abū Sufyān ibn al-Hārith ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib, 'Abdullāh ibn Ja'far and others are buried. You will then come across a piece of ground where Imām Dār al-Hijrah Sayyidunā Mālik ibn Anas *rahimahullāh* [the leader of the Mālikī *madh-hab*] and his teacher, Nāfi' are buried.

If you move along, you will come across a luminous spot which was the first burial spot of a Muhājir. Here you will find the grave of 'Uthmān ibn Maz'ūn *radiyallāhu 'anhu*, whose forehead Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* had kissed. Sayyidunā Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad, the son of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* is also buried here. Included in this section are the following: The jurist among the Sahābah, Sayyidunā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd *radiyallāhu 'anhu*; the conqueror of Irāq, Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās *radiyallāhu 'anhu*; Sayyidunā Sa'd ibn Mu'adh *radiyallāhu 'anhu*, on whose death the Throne of Allāh *ta'ālā* shook; Sayyidunā 'Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn 'Auf *radiyallāhu 'anhu* and other senior Sahābah.

If you proceed further on, then on the north western side and along the wall, you will find the graves of the seventy martyrs from among the Sahābah and residents of Madīnah who were martyred in 63 A.H. during the reign of Yazīd in the incident known as Harrah.

Then right in the corner, in the north eastern side is the resting place of the imām of the oppressed,

Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān *radīyallāhu ‘anhu*.¹ Stop here for a while, and shed the remaining tears which had remained after crying at the graves of Haḍrat Abū Bakr *radīyallāhu ‘anhu* and Haḍrat ‘Umar *radīyallāhu ‘anhu* on the soil of their third companion.

Further on are the graves of Sayyidunā Abū Sa‘īd Khudrī *radīyallāhu ‘anhu*, and Fāṭimah bint al-Asad who was the mother of Sayyidunā ‘Alī *radīyallāhu ‘anhu*.

Send peace to all and engage in supplication.

Then stop for a while and cast a contemplative and admonitory eye on the whole of Baqī‘. Allāh is the Greatest! How true these servants of Allāh *ta‘ālā* were! They did whatever they said.

رَجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ

*Men who have been true to the covenant which they made with Allāh.*²

They were the ones who had given their hands in allegiance to Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* when he was in Makkah and were now lying at his feet in Madīnah.

Cast your gaze at the Green Dome, then look at the calm and peaceful city of Madīnah. Where will you ever find a more striking example of truthfulness, devotion, steadfastness and loyalty? Come, while we are in Baqī‘, let us make a promise to serve Islam, let

¹ The majority of visitors to Baqī‘ commence their visit from this area.

² Sūrah al-Aḥzāb, 33: 23.

us pray to Allāh *ta'ālā* to keep us alive solely on the path of Islam, and to give us death as loyal servants of Islam. This is the real message and lesson of Baqī'.

Avail yourself of visiting Qubā as well. It is that luminous area which had the honour of Rasūlullāh's stay even before his arrival in Madīnah. This is where he laid down the foundation of a musjid which received the honourable name of:

لَمَسْجِدٍ أُسِّسَ عَلَى التَّقْوَى مِنْ أَوَّلِ يَوْمٍ

The musjid whose foundation was laid on piety from the very first day...¹

Enter this musjid with love and reverence. Perform *ṣalāh* on this ground, and place your forehead on the soil which had been trampled by the feet of Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* and by:

رَجَالٌ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَتَطَهَّرُوا

People who love to stay purified.²

Inhale deeply the air which is still inhabited by these sanctified souls.

The soil that bears the mark of your foot; for years, the discerning prostrate themselves on it in prayer.

Today is the turn to present ourselves at Mt. Uḥud and its *mash-had* (which is commonly known as Sayyidunā *Ḥamzah*). The distance of two to three miles

¹ Sūrah at-Taubah, 9: 108.

² Sūrah at-Taubah, 9: 108.

felt like nothing because we reached it while engaged in light conversation. This is the spot of land which was irrigated by the most precious blood of Islam. The best and loftiest incidents of love, devotion and loyalty ever to be experienced in the entire history of the world occurred here. It was here that the limbs of Sayyid ash-Shuhadā' Hamzah *radīyallāhu 'anhu* were chopped off and his liver was chewed on because of his love for Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam and loyalty to Islam. This is where 'Amārah ibn Ziyād gave his life while rubbing his eyes at the feet of Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam. Anas ibn an-Nadr *radīyallāhu 'anhu* got the fragrance of Paradise from beyond this very mountain. He suffered over eighty injuries here and then departed from this world. This is where Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam lost his blessed teeth. It was here that the true lovers of Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam shielded him with their hands and backs. Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umayr *radīyallāhu 'anhu*, the youngster who grew up in opulence in Makkah, was martyred here and buried in a single blanket. This is where the lions of Islam sleep. This entire piece of land is covered with the moths from the candle of prophet-hood. It is the home of the true lovers of Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam and the warriors of Islam.

O morning breeze! This is the nightingale's sanctified place of martyrdom. Move carefully here, this is not your garden.

The air and mountains of this city are still calling out:

مُؤْتُوا عَلَى مَا مَاتَ عَلَيْهِ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

*Give your life for the very same purpose for which Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam gave his life and departed from this world.*¹

Come, let us renew our promise to live on Islam and to give our life for it.

Look at every grain and part of Madīnah Munawwarah with love and feeling. You can leave your critical eye and objectionable tongue for the rest of the world. What is there if you have to separate yourself for a few days from the thorns and live among the flowers? If your eye is still hesitant and retracts at any point, then ponder and reflect; it can be nothing but our own fault and failure. We received all the good of *Dīn* and this world from this very city. We learnt to be humans from here. If we did not receive guidance from here, then – Allāh *ta’ālā* forbid – many of us would have been in a temple, fire-worshipper’s house or church.

Just think for yourself, have we really fulfilled our responsibilities to this city? Did we ever bother about the education and moral training of the children who live here? Did we ever try to create a spirit of *Dīn* and a perception of the object of one’s life in the people who inhabit this city? We cannot offer the excuse of living in a distant land from Madīnah. The pious elders of this city had crossed oceans and mountains, and

¹ This statement was made by Hadrat Anas ibn an-Nadr *radiyallāhu ‘anhu*. He saw some Sahābah *radiyallāhu ‘anhum* sitting on the battlefield of Uḥud, so he asked them: “Why are you sitting here?” They replied: “Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* has been martyred. Now what is the benefit in us fighting?” He said to them: “Give your life for the very same purpose for which Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* gave his life and departed from this world.”

conveyed the message of Islam to us. Have we ever perceived our responsibility? Do we think we will pay back this favour with a few coins which our pilgrims – in their short-sightedness – consider to be a great favour and distribute in the alleys of Madīnah!?

Madīnah is the source of the Islamic call. So extract this call from its source, and take it as a gift to your respective countries. The dates, the roses, the mint, and the *khāk-e-shifā*¹ are most certainly valuable gifts in the eye of love. But the actual and fundamental gift of this place is that of *da'wah*, and firm resolution to strive for Islam and to give one's life for it. This is the message which emanates from every nook and corner of Musjid-e-Nabawī, from every grain of sand of Baqī', and from every pebble of Uḥud.

How can a person come to Madīnah and ever forget that the very foundations of this city were laid on *da'wah* and jihād? The Muslims who left Makkah and came to this city had everything in Makkah, but not the opportunity for *da'wah* and jihād. The inhabitants of this city were divided into two groups: (1) Those who carried out their promise and gave their lives for the sake of Islam. Neither any fear nor any enticement could restrain them from fulfilling their goal. (2) Those who endeavoured to the maximum, but Allāh *ta'ālā* willed to take more work and services from them. They spent their time waiting for the moment [to die for Islam]; their time was spent in anticipation of martyrdom.

¹ Literal meaning: “the soil of healing”. Referring to the soil of Madīnah which is considered to be a cure for ailments. Pilgrims normally carry some of it back to their countries as a source of blessing.

مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ، فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ قَضَىٰ نَحْبَهُ
وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَنْتَظِرُ، وَمَا بَدَّلُوا تَبْدِيلًا.

Of the believers are many men who have been true to the covenant which they made with Allāh; some of them have fulfilled their obligation and some of them are still waiting, without having changed [their resolve] in the least.¹

This ought to be the mindset of the Islamic world. Even here and now, we should either have those who carried out their covenant and passed on, or those who are waiting for their turn. The third category is of those who are desirous of life, happy with the world, fearful of death, recoil from serving *Dīn*, completely immersed in their livelihoods, and always occupied in temporary occupations. There was no place for them in Madīnah and there ought to be no place for them now in the Islamic world.

Our stay in Madīnah is now drawing to a close. People are saying that we are to depart tomorrow.

After staying here, we are becoming conscious of our negligence and our shortcomings in fulfilling the rights of this city. All this pricks the heart. But what else can we do except seek forgiveness and express remorse? This is our last night in Madīnah. Come into the Masjid a bit early.

تَمَتَّعَ مِنْ شَمِيمِ عَرَارٍ نَجْدٍ - فَمَا بَعْدَ الْعَشِيَّةِ مِنْ عَرَارٍ

¹ Sūrah al-Aḥzāb, 33: 23.

Enjoy the lovely fragrance of the 'arār¹ of Najd now, because after tonight, you will not have any 'arār to enjoy.

However, the heart is also experiencing a type of inner peace. After all, where am I going to? I am leaving the city of Allāh's Messenger sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam to the city of Allāh *ta'ālā* [Makkah Mukarramah]. I am leaving that House of Allāh *ta'ālā* [Musjid-e-Nabawī] which was built by the blessed hands of Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam and his Companions to the other House of Allāh *ta'ālā* [al-Musjid al-Harām] which was built by the pure hands of the forefather of Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam, Ḥadrat Ibrāhīm 'alayhis salām and his son, Ḥadrat Ismā'il 'alayhis salām. Why are we going there? We are going by the command of Allāh *ta'ālā* and the approval and instruction of Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam. How, then, can this separation really be a separation?

I offered my final salutations, cast a remorseful gaze at Musjid-e-Nabawī, and went out. I had already taken a bath and made preparations for my *ihrām* because I was not sure whether I will have the opportunity of making all these preparations at Dhul Hulayfah. I sat in the car and proceeded while looking at the beloved city with love. I looked at Uḥud with tearful eyes, and we were soon out of the city. With every passing moment, Madīnah was getting further away, while Makkah was coming closer and closer. All

¹ A plant of sweet odour, intensely yellow and wide in blossom. Also known as the oxeye, belonging to the genus *Buphthalmum*.

praise is due to Allāh *ta'ālā*, at least we are between two sacred cities. As a poet says:

A thousand thanks, we are between two benefactors.

THE BIRTH OF A NEW WORLD

If we had to ask our selves, which is the day in history which deserves the greatest respect from mankind, which ought to be remembered without being forgotten, and which ought to be considered to be the eternal day and demarcating line through all eras of history, the separating line between one era and another, and, in fact, between one world and another?

If we had to ask our selves, which is the day that has been unanimously honoured, celebrated and commemorated by all of humanity, irrespective of the various classes of society, multifarious nations and tribes, and differences among their attitudes and philosophies; because the entire humanity enjoyed goodness after a lengthy period of wretchedness, and it awoke after it had been lying languid for centuries?

If we had to ask our selves, which is the day that is considered to be the birth of a new world, the harbinger of a radiant era, the symbol of victory for virtue over vice, the powers of good over the powers of evil; justice and equality, mercy and care for others, over wretchedness, hard-heartedness, savagery and greed; victory for a systematic life and a perfect law over the law of the jungle and the rule of tribalism. In short, which is the day which marked the victory of knowledge and *īmān* over ignorance in its widest sense, and which marked an eternal victory?

If we had to ask our selves, which is the day in which a new powerful force was born to combat evil and stem the tide of corruption, to establish a new society standing on the foundations of faith, good deeds, piety and service to mankind? A society comprising the most virtuous of men. Men “who were

most informal, most clean-hearted, and most knowledgeable”?¹ Men who are prepared to risk their lives, all their capabilities, their affluence, wealth, and happy and blissful conditions for the sake of the well-being of humanity, to remove it from the pitch darkness of the old era to the light of the modern age, from the worship of all mankind to the worship of Allāh *ta’ālā* alone, and from the narrowness of this world to its full expanse? Who are prepared to bear every setback and loss, and every development and change – not allowing any enmity or opposition to divert them from it, nor any friendship and camaraderie to spur them on.

أَدَلَّةٌ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَعْرَضَ عَلَى الْكُفْرَيْنَ نَجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لَائِمٍ

*Soft-hearted to the Muslims, stern towards the unbelievers. They fight in the path of Allāh and do not fear being censured by anyone.*²

If we were to ask our selves, which is that day wherein the Arab nation was re-born? In fact, born for the first time, appeared onto the stage of history for the first time, and became eligible to be referred to as an *ummah* for the first time? Because before this day, it lived as broken up tribes, families at each other’s throats, chiefdoms at battle against each other; and as a people living on the fringes of other nations,

¹ The words in inverted comas form part of a description of the Companions of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* given by Sayyidunā ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd *radiyallāhu ‘anhu*.

² Sūrah al-Mā’idah, 5: 54.

separated from the rest of the world, having nothing to do with the flow of matters or the destiny of nations, having no influence whatsoever as regards the leadership of countries and the ways of life, totally divorced from the moral codes of societies, the direction in which humanity was heading and its inclinations. Having no share whatsoever in the literary contribution of the world except for *qasīdahs* (an ancient Arab poem) said during local events and for trivial purposes. The poet's literary skills, individual independence, power of expression, and wide extent of vocabulary were certainly displayed in these poems. After saying it, it would spread and gain recognition in his desert and surrounding areas, and if it reached the peak of appreciation and acknowledgement, it will be suspended on the walls of the Ka'bah without the literati and masters beyond the Arabian Peninsular coming to know of it, or being translated into the languages of the civilized world.

The Arabs were known for their genuine expressions, eloquence, excellent imagination, engrossment with freedom and equality, simplicity, abstinence in life, forcefulness and resilience on the battlefield, and preserving their lineages. These are the most superior characteristics, traits and gifts by which a pastoral people are identified. Now these very same people who were so introverted, and who remained crouched in the bowels of their peninsular suddenly became a nation which was directing the destiny of nations, changing the course of the world, imposing its civilisation onto humanity at large – a civilization which was derived from the new *Dīn*, which was filled with the spirit of piety and trustworthiness. Its language which had been previously confined to its peninsular now became the new sanctified language of the world. The greatest intellectuals in the world were now desirous of

learning this language, mastering it, and exploring its multifarious sciences. Knowledge of it and having a deep understanding of it now became one of the obligations of *Dīn*, and one of the salient features of the religious. No person can reach the peak of honour without it, nor can he aspire for any of the positions in the courts, in the field of issuing verdicts, and in the field of education.

If we had to ask ourselves: Which is the day in which hopes in humanity and its future were renewed? When did good omens take precedence over bad omens which were founded on tragedies and comedies, which man was practising in every part of the world and in every nation? Which were based on the feeble mindedness of man as regards the intellect, belief system and action? And his efforts to destroy civilization and the worship of humanity. So much so that man himself lost hope in his future. He deprived himself the right to a continued existence and the eligibility to live. He became entitled to immediate punishment and the extinction of the human species.

However, with the dawn of this day, man became eligible for expansion in his lifespan and extension in his life so that he could rely on it for the construction of a new society, to revive the virtues and lofty merits which had become obliterated, to return the dignity of man to man, to be able to stop an oppressor and exact revenge for the oppressed, to a new life which is in line with his honour and coincides with the purpose of his creation; while at the same time, fulfilling the objectives of this universe.

This day was an extension for man's life on this planet and a new opportunity for his existence and advancement. Everyone who was born after this day

and everyone who lived in the era after it is indebted to this favour.

The answer, without any dispute and without any hesitation is that it is the day on which Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdillāh ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hāshim *ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* was born.

It is the day on which humanity found the faith which it had lost and which it had become bereft of for a long time. Faith in the Creator of this universe and belief in His oneness. Faith in its destiny and belief in life after death, after it had lost hope in its future, and after it had destroyed its self over this life and in worshipping desires. Belief in the system of Messengers and guides to the straight path, after anti-gods (Dajjāls) and deviates had taken control of it. Who were devouring the wealth of people without justification and diverting people away from the path of Allāh *ta’ālā*. Faith in the value and honour of man, after it had rejected it, revolted against it, and subjugated it before rocks and trees; animals and rivers; and kings, rulers, the wealthy and the powerful. Consequently, it began believing that the world was created for it, while it was created for Allāh *ta’ālā*. That no Arab enjoys superiority over a non-Arab, and vice versa except on the basis of piety. Every human is from Ādām *‘alayhis salām*, and he was created from dust. It now began believing in rights and obligations. Every person has certain rights and obligations. He must be flexible in asking for his rights, equitable in enjoying them. He must be strong and energetic in fulfilling his obligations.

كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ

Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is accountable for his flock.

Women are the likes of men; they have rights similar to the obligations which are on them according to the norm. And various other balanced teachings and wise instructions which Muḥammad *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* came with. By virtue of these teachings, a righteous, happy, virtuous and perfect society came into existence, the likes of which can never be found in history. It is on this very foundation that a society has to rest in every era and every city, for all times and climes.

This day was not the first time when these principles appeared, and it was not a defining moment for these equitable teachings and wise instructions. Rather, it happened on numerous occasions in various periods of time – although it may not have been on this level of perfection. These voices would call out from time to time, then disappear in the gloomy darkness, swallowed by a corrupt society. This is because there was no individual who was prepared to risk his life, his family, and the honour, centrality and power which he enjoyed for it. Furthermore, there was no group which was prepared to immediately mortgage for it whatever it had, or whatever it hoped to obtain in the future. But the commissioning of Muḥammad *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* was accompanied by the commissioning of an entirely new nation; a nation which lived for this sanctified call, which lived for this sanctified jihād.

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ
وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ

*You are the best of all nations which has been sent into the world - you enjoin good and forbid evil, and you believe in Allāh.*¹

This new eternal nation – to which this call is linked - now provides a leading position to the Arabs who genuinely and sincerely believed in the one [Muhammad sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam] who brought this new message. They pledged allegiance to him and gave him the authority to decide on their lives, wealth and possessions. They subdued their own desires and wants for him. They thus became his first companions, the victorious army of Allāh ta‘ālā, the bearers of this call, its trustworthy agents and envoys, and those who had the fullest share in understanding and preserving it; in dying in its cause, and suffering losses and setbacks for it to the extent that the future of this call became attached to their future, and its continued existence to their continued existence. And to the extent that the Messenger sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam could say, and had all right to say on the battlefield of Badr:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّ تُهْلِكَ هَذِهِ الْعِصَابَةَ لَنْ تُعْبَدَ

O Allāh! If you destroy this band [of believers], You will never be worshipped.

Allāh ta‘ālā gave authority to those Arabs in the land, gave them honour after they had been languishing in humiliation, gave them wealth after their poverty, strengthened them after their weakness, united them after their disunity, conferred religious sanctity to their language which had been confined to their peninsular, destined proliferation for it in the rest

¹ Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān, 3: 110.

of the world, planted the seeds of love for it in the hearts of people to the extent that many other languages were obliterated before it. It was the only language of the Middle East. Now all people from the banks of the Tigris to the mountains of the Atlantic began speaking it. It became the language of *Dīn*, knowledge and composition in the new expansive Islamic world. The Arabs were given a central position which will remain with them irrespective of the *shu'ūbīyyah*¹ movements in the Islamic world and the extremist nationalist movements as long as they remain attached to the *Dīn* of Islam, believe in its teachings, practise on its obligations, acknowledge the merits and favours of Muḥammad *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*, believe that it was solely through him that man acquired nobility; and the Arabs enjoyed honour and leadership.

This is the new world in which people are living, which they are proud of, in which they are enjoying freedom and equality, and many of their rights which had been devoured and discarded in the ancient world are restored to them. This is the world in which civilization advanced forward. This is the world in which the Arabs are enjoying a new centrality, a new life, a land with which they have no link except through Islam and Muḥammad *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*, and no covenant with it except after the commissioning of Muḥammad *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*.

Most often, we do not realize that the basis for this revolution and this good fortune which all of us are

¹ A movement within the early Islamic commonwealth of nations which refused to recognize the privileged position of the Arabs.

enjoying is this joyful event which occurred on this day – the birth of Muḥammad *ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, the Seal of the Messengers, the leader of all, the light for the paths.

This is the day on which mankind has the right to proclaim with all pride, fervour, eloquence and comprehensiveness:

ولد الهدى فالكائنات ضياء – وفم الزمان تبسم وثناء

Guidance was born, and the entire universe was illuminated. The mouth of time is smiling, brimming with praise.

IN THE CRADLE OF ISLAM¹

Some people said to me: “You’ve just returned from the Hijāz, tell us something about it and whatever you saw there.” I replied: “Indeed. Speaking about one’s beloved is also beloved to me.”

I do not remember the day when mention of Makkah and Madīnah was new to my ears. I do not remember the first time I heard about the birth of Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam, the cradle of Islam, the city of Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam to which he emigrated.

Like other Muslim children, I grew up in an environment where the Hijāz and its two blessed cities [Makkah and Madīnah] are always mentioned. I remember very well that my fellow countrymen used to drop off the conjunction “and” when speaking about these two cities, and they would say “Makkah Madīnah” in their fast Indian manner of speaking. Very rarely would they mention one city without mentioning the other. And I, being a small child, imagined these two cities to be one. I was only able to distinguish between the two when I grew a bit older and had a little more understanding. Only then did I realize that they were in fact two different cities separated by quite a distance.

In my young days, I heard about Paradise and its bounties. I would listen with much interest and enthusiasm about the Hijāz and its two cities. Consequently, the desire to acquire Paradise and visit the Hijāz lurked in my heart all the time. When I grew a

¹ Transcript of a speech delivered over Delhi Radio in 1951 after the author’s return from Egypt and Syria.

little older, I realized that Paradise cannot be seen in this life. So I resigned myself to patience and consoled my self. As for the Hijāz, I was told that it is possible to go there, and caravans are constantly departing for and returning from the Hijāz. So I got no solace from this, and found no excuse for myself in not going there. Then I advanced a little more in age, and I began reading about the life of Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam and the history of Islam. This rekindled my old desire and my enthusiasm was ignited in my very ribs. Allāh ta'ālā then enabled me to realize my desires, and I was honoured with the ability to perform hajj and visit Madīnah.

I stood in this land which is surrounded by black and barren mountains, totally devoid of plants and greenery, with no rivers flowing between them, having nothing which would grab one's attention or bring delight to the heart. It had no captivating sceneries, beautiful landscape, tender breeze and sweet water which could satisfy the self. As the poet Hafīz said:

Neither does grass grow there, nor do flowers
bloom. Yet, even the heavens bow down
before this land.

I said to my self: Look at how barren this land is of external attractions! Yet, look at its great favour to humanity and the civilized world! Were it not for this city which does not boast of any attractions and sceneries, this world would have been a golden cage in which man would have lived as an imprisoned bird. This is the city which removed man from the constriction of this world to its vast expanse, gave back to humanity its freedom and dignity, removed the burdens which were on it, and broke the shackles and

chains which oppressive kings and immature rulers had placed on it.

The moment I said - “were it not for this city” – a thought occurred to me that I ought to weigh and assess all the capitals of the world and the large cities against this just balance and scale. Let me see what humanity would lose and what civilization would lack in the absence of these cities. So I began presenting one city after the other before my eyes. I realized that these cities were living for their own selves and for a handful of human beings. They did not add anything major to the sum total of humanity. In fact, they had committed crimes against civilization and humanity over different periods of time. One single city reduced thousands of other cities to poverty for its own minor benefit. So many nations had to suffer for the wellness of one nation. So often, hundreds and thousands of people were destroyed for the sake of a handful of individuals. It is a fact: If these cities were not on the map of the world, neither would the world fall short in any way nor would humanity and civilization suffer in the least.

But if Makkah was not here, mankind would have been deprived of its most beautiful assets of truths, realities, beliefs, morals, sciences and merits. This is where the world found its faith which it had lost since many centuries. This is where the world found genuine knowledge which had become concealed behind the veils of ignorance and assertions. This is where it found the dignity which tyrants and oppressors had trampled. In short, this is where humanity rediscovered its self, and history turned a new leaf.

But why am I saying “were it not for Makkah”?! Did this very same Makkah with its mountains and

sand – in fact with its Ka’bah and Zam Zam – not remain asleep for these long centuries before the sixth century of the Christian era? Did it not disregard this wandering humanity totally, without extending a helping hand towards it? Did it not remain confined between its mountains and hills, living secluded from the rest of the world as though it was not a part of this family of humanity, nor a tract of land of this wide world?

So instead of saying “were it not for Makkah”, I ought to say “were it not for the son of Makkah” who changed the course of history, diverted the stream of life, and showed to the world a new path heading towards a new direction; then this would not have been the map of the world.

As I reflected on all this, different scenes emerged before me. I felt as if the leader of the Quraysh [Muḥammad Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*] is circuiting the Ka’bah all alone while he is being made a subject of mockery and ridicule; and a hand is extending towards him to deride and injure him, while he is fully focussed at the task at hand with submission and humility. Then I see that after he has completed his *tawāf* and tries to enter the Ka’bah, ‘Uthmān ibn Talḥah, the key-bearer of the Ka’bah, stops him harshly. He replies with restraint and says: “O ‘Uthmān! There may come a day when you will see this key in my hand, and I will place it wherever I like.”¹

On hearing this, ‘Uthmān replies: “If that day were ever to come, the Quraysh would be destroyed and

¹ *Sīrah Ibn Hishām*, under the chapter on the Conquest of Makkah.

humiliated.” He says: “No, they will enjoy real respect and honour on that day.”

Then I imagined looking at him on the day of the Conquest of Makkah. He is circuiting the Ka’bah with a group of his Companions around him, who were ever ready to sacrifice their lives and souls for him. He calls for the key-bearer of the Ka’bah and says: “O ‘Uthmān! Here, take this key of yours. Today is a day of showing kindness and keeping to one’s word.”¹

History bears testimony: Not only did he own the key with which he could open the Ka’bah alone, rather, he had the key with which he opened the complex keys of humanity which all the thinkers and intellectuals of the world had failed to open. That key was the Qur’ān which was revealed to him and the message which Allāh *ta’ālā* honoured him with. It is a key which is still used for solving new problems and opening new locks.

After performing the hajj, I flew towards Madīnah Munawwarah on the wings of yearning. The magnetism of love and loyalty was drawing me spontaneously towards it. I bore the hardships of the journey, and I was picturing that first rider who filled the air with effulgence and tranquillity.

Once I reached Madīnah Munawwarah, I proceeded to the Musjid of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, performed two *rak’ats* of *ṣalāh*, and thanked Allāh *ta’ālā* for this favour. I then went and stood [before the grave of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*], feeling subdued by the weight of his favours which I cannot pay back, and whose rights I cannot fulfil. I read salutations and peace to him, bore

¹ Ibid.

testimony that he conveyed the message, fulfilled his trust, advised the *ummah*, strove in Allāh's cause to the full, and continued worshipping Allāh *ta'ālā* until his very end.

I then offered my peace to his two loyal and trustworthy companions [Hadrat Abū Bakr *radīyallāhu 'anhu* and Hadrat 'Umar *radīyallāhu 'anhu*]. Human history never came across companions who were more loyal than they were to their companion, nor any caliph more powerful than them in bearing the responsibilities of the caliphate. May Allāh *ta'ālā* be pleased with both of them.

I proceeded towards Baqī¹ - that small tract of land which holds the greatest treasure of honesty, purity, friendship and loyalty. Here you will find men who gave preference to the Hereafter over this world, who gave preference to exile and emigration for the sake of *īmān* and one's beliefs over remaining in one's homeland for the sake of one's desires and comforts. They were the ones who preferred remaining in the neighbourhood of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* to living among their beloveds and relatives. They neither desired to exchange this nor did they seek to replace it.

مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ

¹ This refers to the graveyard of Madīnah Munawwarah where thousands of Sahābah *radīyallāhu 'anhum* and countless other righteous personalities of the *ummah* are buried.

Of the believers are many men who have been true to the covenant which they made with Allāh.¹

From here, I went to Mt. Uhud, a mountain which represents the most captivating and most heart-rending narrative to the history of mankind. It is the narrative of faith and conviction, bravery and loyalty, pure love and unprecedented friendship. I feel as if I can hear Anas ibn an-Nadr *radiyallāhu ‘anhu* saying: “I am getting the fragrance of Paradise from beyond Uhud.” And I imagined I could hear Sa’d ibn Mu’adh *radiyallāhu ‘anhu* who, after hearing the rumour that Rasūlullāh *slallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* has been martyred, saying: “Of what benefit is there in waging jihād after Muhammad *slallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*?” So Anas *radiyallāhu ‘anhu* got up and said: “Then what enjoyment can there be in life after Muhammad *slallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*?”

It was here at Uhud that Abū Dujānah *radiyallāhu ‘anhu* shielded Rasūlullāh *slallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* with his back, while arrows were striking it. It was also here that Talhah *radiyallāhu ‘anhu* shielded Rasūlullāh *slallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* with his hand, causing it to become paralysed. This is where Hamzah *radiyallāhu ‘anhu* was killed and mutilated. It was here that Mus‘ab ibn ‘Umayr *radiyallāhu ‘anhu*, the most affluent and well-dressed youth of the Quraysh, was killed. They could find no shroud for him except for a shawl which was too short to cover his entire body.

O! If only Uhud could lend to the people of the world some of the treasures of love, loyalty, faith and conviction which is buried in it. If this were to happen,

¹ Sūrah al-Ahzāb, 33: 23.

the fortune of the world would change and it would become a paradise.

The people said to me: “You spoke to us about Cairo and life there. And you related to us your stories about Damascus, the important personalities there, and you introduced us to its scholars and men of letters. Now tell us about the Hijāz and its prominent people.”

I replied: “Speaking about the Hijāz is a completely different story which hovers around its one great personality, which is connected to his message and his history. It is the story about the cradle of Islam and the city of Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam. It is because of him that the Hijāz is the Hijāz, and the world of Islam is the world of Islam.

A poet says:

Our honour, indeed, lies in the name of
Mustafa.¹

¹ The chosen one. One of the titles of Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam.

NON-ARAB MUSLIMS ARE DEEPLY ATTACHED TO THE ARAB PROPHET

I read an article written by Maulānā 'Atīq ar-Raḥmān Sambhalī, the editor of *al-Furqān*, which is published monthly from the city of Lucknow in India. He comments on an article written by Professor Aḥmad Ḥassan az-Zayyāt which was published in the periodical *al-Azhar*. The latter's article earned the refutation and wrath of all people possessing sound feelings and strong *īmān* throughout the Islamic world. The article written by Shaykh 'Atīq ar-Raḥmān is pulsating with life and force. It expresses the position of Muslims of India and other non-Arab lands vis-à-vis Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* and the extent of their attachment and bond to the honourable position which he holds. I considered it my duty to quote and translate this passionate article so that our Arab brothers may be able to read it.

A very distinguished Iranian poet¹ who was well-known for his timeless prophecies wrote a couplet whose fame spread far and wide during his time and also after he passed away. He addresses the greatest Rasūl *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*:

On one occasion, I spoke about my high
lineage before a dog which lives in your alley.
I then realized my folly, broke out into a
sweat, and lowered my head in shame
because to vex pride before one of the dogs

¹ He is the Iranian poet who refers to himself in his poetry as al-Faras al-Qudsi (d. 1056). He lived in India during the rule of Shāh Jahān, the Mogul Emperor.

which lives in your city is most disrespectful and smacks of conceit.¹

Another non-Arab poet says:

Everyone in this world and in the Hereafter is honoured to be affiliated to Muḥammad *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*. May the one who refuses to be the dust of his threshold be humiliated and disgraced.

This is the level of infatuation and emotion, humility and submission which non-Arab poets and litterateurs reached before the lofty position of the greatest Messenger *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*. This, despite the fact that they grew up in a non-Arab environment, very far away from the cradle of Islam and the land of divine revelation, and were derided as '*ajamī*'² who spoke gibberish.

Now compare this to what flowed from the pen of a senior Arab writer, hailing from a major Islamic country which was considered to be the quiver and nucleus of Islam. This article appeared in a periodical published by the largest, oldest and most famous

¹ The author is not responsible for the manner in which the poet expresses his emotions because he is merely quoting and translating the couplet. Man, especially a Muslim, is undoubtedly more honourable than a dog on the basis of his humaneness and *imān*. Allāh *ta'ālā* says:

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ

We have honoured the progeny of Ādam and carried them by land and sea. (Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl/al-Isrā', 17: 70)

² The word '*ajamī*' was used by Arabs to refer to non-Arabs who they believed did not possess any eloquence, and lacked the power of expression.

Islamic universities in the Islamic world, viz. al-Azhar University. He writes:

The Mohammadan unity¹ was broad and general, because it was established on a creed. However, a creed, no matter how long it lasts, will always weaken or have a relapse. The Salāhīyyah unity² was a specific and restricted unity because it was founded by the sultan who sultan would certainly become old and depart [and the unity will disintegrate after his departure].

As for the Nāṣirīyyah unity,³ it will be timeless and continue to progress because it is established on collective sustenance [socialism], freedom to voice one's opinions, and democracy in rule. These three principles [socialism, freedom, democracy] are guarantees for a continued and eternal unity.⁴

Can any person who utters the creed of Islam (*kalimah*) and believes in the messenger-ship of Muḥammad sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam ever reach such a pitiful state of insolence, shamelessness and

¹ Referring to the unity which was established by Muḥammad Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam.

² Referring to the unity which was established by Sultan Salāh ad-Dīn Ayyūbī *rahimahullāh*.

³ Referring to Jamāl 'Abd an-Nāṣir, a former prime minister of Egypt.

⁴ Quoted from an article titled, *The Nation*

antagonism against the position of the Prophets *'alayhimus salām* even if it is said in the impetuosity of youth or by the slip of the tongue!? Even the insolent reckless drunkards in our country do not forget their respect to the position of messenger-ship notwithstanding their state of intoxication and inebriation. If any wretched person were to injure or disdain the position of messenger-ship, these drunkards would go into a rage and become furious.

We relate to the reader a story which was related by a famous journalist about a senior poet in the Indian subcontinent. This poet was at the forefront in composing love poetry, and a habitual drunkard. His name is Akhtar Shīrānī, and he passed away some years ago. Shaurash Kashmīrī relates in his newspaper, *Chatan*, which is published from Lahore in Pakistan:

A group of youngsters and poets gathered in a restaurant called *al-'Arab* in Lahore. The group included a few communist youth who were extremely sharp-witted and had the gift of the gab. They were in deep conversation with Akhtar Shīrānī and began debating with him on different issues. Shīrānī had just drunk two glasses of alcohol. He lost his senses, the intoxication of the wine overpowered him, and his body began quivering. His speech was a mere mumble which did not make any sense. He was well known for his self-conceit and vanity, and never acknowledged other poets. I do not remember too well the topic under discussion on that day, but I remember him saying: "There are three masters among the

Muslims: (1) Abul Fadl,¹ (2) Asadullāh Khān Ghālib,² and (3) Abul Kalām Āzād.³”

As for contemporary poets, Shīrānī did not consider anyone to be equal to him or anywhere near him. The communist youngsters asked him about the great poet Fayḍ Ahmad Fayḍ, but he disregarded their question. They asked him about Shabbīr Ḥasan Jaush, a popular poet, and he said: “He is not a poet, he is a composer.” This was his response to their questions about all the other contemporary poets. He either ridiculed them, disregarded them, merely smiled, or made a mockery of them.

When the youngsters realized that he disregarded the value of the movement of progressive literature, they resorted to another subject which may elicit a response from him, or silence him. So they said: “O Sir! What do you say about such and such Prophet?” His eyes were already bloodshot, and the wine had fully penetrated his

¹ He was one of the ministers of Emperor Akbar, and author of *Akbar Nāmah*, an academic treasure which is considered to be a timeless book of history, the constitution and mapping of the country.

² He was an Urdu poet who was considered to be one of the leaders in Urdu poetry, who established a school of his own on the subject in the 13th century of the *hijrah*.

³ He was a well known scholar and man of letters, the first president of the Indian League, and the Minister of Cultural Affairs in the Indian government.

system. He was unable to speak properly, but when he heard this question, he immediately came to his senses and asked: "What are you prattling? If you want to talk to me, you must only talk about literature, compositions, poetry and poets." He gave vent to his speech and also added the name of Plato, and asked: "What do you say about his discussions?" They then asked him about Aristotle and Socrates. He was now quite energized to speak, so he said: "They were just a few people who passed on. Speak to me about our times and our great men. Had these philosophers been alive today, they would have seated themselves as students before us. Why should we waste our time giving our opinions about them!?"

A sly youngster from this group of communists seized the opportunity when he saw that Shirānī was now energetic and in a jovial mood, and he asked: "What do you have to say about Muḥammad?"

It was as if a bolt of thunder had struck and a hurricane had just passed by. Before the youngster could even complete what he wanted to say, the drunk poet grabbed the glass tumbler and struck the youngster's head with it, saying: "O you insolent and audacious fellow! How dare you pose such a shameless question to a sinner who admits his wretchedness? What reply do you want to hear from a flagrant sinner like me?"

The poet's body was trembling, he burst out crying, broke into sobs, turned towards the audacious youngster, and asked him in an

angry and stern tone: “O you wretched fellow! How did you get the courage to even mention this pure and sanctified name? How did you have the audacity to do that, you impudent and shameless boy? There are so many other things you could have spoken about, why did you have to enter into this sanctified sanctuary? Repent to Allāh *ta’ālā* for this insolent question. I know your internal wickedness very well.”

The poet recognized the wickedness on the boy’s face, and was on the verge of attacking and striking him. As for the youth, he stood aghast and remained bewildered. He never thought he would receive such a disastrous response. He never imagined he would awaken this roaring lion in the poet, and ignite the subdued spark which was in him – the spark of *īmān* and love, the spark of ardent zeal and self-respect. He only knew him as a poet who wrote poetry about desires, love and about the youth. He tried to divert the poet from this provoking topic and to calm his rage. But he did not succeed, and could not calm him down. In fact, the poet ordered for the youth to be removed from the gathering.

The poet himself then left the restaurant and spent the entire night crying, saying: “Look at the level of insolence and audacity these ungodly youngsters have reached. They want to take away from us the last straw of love, friendship, devotion and loyalty which we are holding on to with such pride, and for which we are living!? I am most certainly a sinner and I admit my sins, but these youngsters

are trying to remove the yoke of Islam from us, they want us to leave the sanctuary of *īmān*! By Allāh, we will never agree to it.

O how sorrowful! What a tragedy! How disgraceful! What a vast difference between this non-Arab loyalty and Indian zeal, and between this faithful self-respect and blazing response which is represented by this poet who was never from the children of Arabs, who never spoke the Arabic language, and who grew up far from all this. He lived far from a religious and academic environment; from the environment of Azhar University. He lived in taverns and places of amusement, and among poets and men of letters. He was known for his recklessness and wantonness. He composed morally depraved poetry like that of 'Umar ibn Abī Rabī'ah, Abū Nuwās and Bashshār ibn Burd.

What a major difference between him and a distinguished litterateur who was suckled by the Arabic language and its Islamic sciences. Who distinguished himself by his papers and articles on the life of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* and other Islamic themes. Who is the chief editor of a periodical which is the voice of Azhar, the refuge of knowledge and '*ulamā*', and the fortress of the pure *Dīn*. How can he even mention the most honourable and most respectful name [Muḥammad] in the eyes of Muslims with the name of the present ruler of Egypt? How can he even bring them together? And to add insult to injury, his insolence and audacity prompts him to announce that Nāṣir surpasses him in this scale! And the unity which he assumes to be a unity is timeless and progressive! While the unity to which Muḥammad *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* invited is prone to weakness and a reversal!? How I wish his mother did not give birth to him! How I wish we were not living to hear this statement!

Furthermore, if only we heard Jamāl ‘Abd an-Nāsir trembling profusely at hearing this disgraceful statement, losing his sleep, and his life getting upset. If only we heard the parliament building shaking, the Muslims of Egypt being thunderstruck, people bursting out in tears, the entire Egypt standing as one person, and the sentiments of the Egyptian population revolting. These very same Egyptians who are known for their self-respect and zeal for Islam, and their deep undying love for Muḥammad *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*. It would have been a vehement revolt which would have served as a lesson for anyone who tramples on the sanctified territory of prophet-hood. O, but how our hopes were dashed! There was no such response. All we saw was a comment made by a magazine which is published from Cairo two months after az-Zayyāt made his statement. It stated:

People like az-Zayyāt with this foolish and hypocritical bragging are calling for a revolution. In this way, they are giving support to the enemy and those who are waiting to pounce on us.

Subsequent to the publishing of this prattle, the ‘*ulamā*’ of Azhar University had many meetings, assemblies, took many resolutions, and sent out telegrams. But some of them adopted a positive stand, causing the Shaykh of Azhar University and az-Zayyāt to issue separate statements.

Although we did not see these statements, the editor [of the Cairo magazine] commented on them by saying: “They were of no avail to them before Allāh *ta‘ālā*.” He goes on to examine and analyze the statement of az-Zayyāt, and says:

“On one hand, az-Zayyāt refers to the Islamic unity as a Mohammadan unity as is the

practice of the Orientalists. Then he mentions the names of Muḥammad, Salāḥ and Nāṣir in one and the same vein. This is most certainly an act of insolence before Allāh *ta'ālā* which cannot be disregarded.”

He then criticizes the statement as follows:

Az-Zayyāt has forgotten that the respected prime minister is more honourable than to claim prophet-hood, to rely on it, or to accept the conferring of any superiority to himself over Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*. He is far too noble to claim that he has come with teachings which were not brought by Muḥammad *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*.

We are most astonished and grieved by the above statement. How can this Islamic periodical want to accord so much of respect to Nāṣir on this occasion which would cause any person to have misgivings about these titles which the editor accords to the prime minister? He does not forget to refer to him as “the respected prime minister” despite the fact that all deviated and temporary leaderships pale before the leadership of the chief of mankind, the chief of Arabs and non-Arabs [*sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*]. He is the chief towards whom the kings of the world and leaders of nations run. They leave behind all their marks of nobility and displays of authority and pride, and they proceed before the noble rank of prophet-hood with their heads bowed down, with unblinking eyes, and their hearts lost. How can this Muslim writer, while defending this sanctified freedom, mention the man who has been equated to Chief of the Messengers *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*, refer to him as “respected prime minister”, to shower on him these dignities and titles, and to glorify his praises!?

The situation demanded on the writer to forget everything apart from what this noble position demanded, viz. awe, respect, and anger over the violation of the sanctity of the eternal position of prophet-hood, and the position of universal leadership. He ought to have cast aside the empty and hollow official titles which are used by bootlicking slaves, and meek and servile journalists. It smacks of bad taste and we castigate the learned writer and religious scholar who is the chief editor of this magazine. It is a very weak defence, and we consider the position of prophet-hood to be far above such a defence. We await a stronger and more honourable response from Islamic Egypt. We were expecting a very much stronger language displaying full zeal and self-respect. We were waiting for someone in Egypt to say: “Just acknowledging the leadership of Muḥammad *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* would be sufficient for Nāṣir’s honour. For him to merely find himself in the last row of the countless rows of followers and slaves of Muḥammad *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* would be enough for him to be proud about. It would suffice for Nāṣir to achieve just one of the many successes of Salāḥ ad-Dīn Ayyūbī *rahimahullāh*.

O how sorrowful! This same Egypt which has a Muslim population of no less than 90%, whose official religion is Islam, and whose national sentiment and government is as a result of nothing but one of the countless gifts of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* – yet a hypocrite in this country is able to give preference to the scale of an Egyptian ruler over the scale of the Chief of Mankind [*sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*]! And that too, while he is in the very midst of the ‘*ulamā*’ of Azhar University – enjoying their confidence and having their full support! Not a single person in the entire length and breadth of this country

is able to raise his voice and say: “What has the ground to do with the Pleiades¹?! What has a grave to do with the Bayt al-Ma'mūr²?! What have bubbles of water to do with an eternal prophet-hood whose sun never sets, and whose stars never go down?!”

Is there no one in Egypt who can give vent to his anger for this honourable position [of prophet-hood], stand up furiously and say to this insolent person who is comparing a leadership whose destiny no one knows, to a leadership which permeates the East and West; the past, present and future?! Who has the audacity to compare a unity which brought the Arab and non-Arabs together, united nations and peoples who were at war against each other for centuries, and then brought about a brotherhood which was much stronger than blood brothers!?

وَأذْكُرُوا لِلَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ
فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا

¹ A cluster of several hundred stars, only six or seven of which are visible to the naked eye.

² The House of Allāh in the fourth heaven, directly in line with the Ka'bah.

Both are used proverbially for things of disproportionate value. We are quoting the Arabic proverbs for the benefit of those conversant with Arabic:

أين الثرى من الثريا، وأين الضريح من الصَّراح

Remember the favour of Allāh on you when you were enemies of one another, then He cast love in your hearts, now you became brothers by His grace.¹

With a unity which could not even unite two Arab countries lying right next to each other, and between two Arab peoples who are related by blood!? Yet he wants to attribute that eternal precious prophetic unity with weakness and a relapse!? Yet he wants to weaken that strongest of bonds which will never break, with a cosmetic unity which was born prematurely and defective!? Which lived a sickly life, is afflicted by pulmonary tuberculosis, is in the throes of death, and fears a collapse in every hour of the day and night!?

كَنَاطِجِ صَخْرَةٍ يَوْمًا لِيُوهِنَهَا - فَلَمْ يَضِرْهَا وَأَوْهَى قَرْنَهُ الْوَعْلُ

Like a mountain goat which thrusts its horn against a rock in order to weaken it. But it caused no harm to it, and weakened its own horns in the process.

¹ Sūrah Al 'Imrān, 3: 103.

PERSIAN POETS PAY TRIBUTE TO RASŪLULLĀH

May Allāh *ta'ālā* reward a dear friend of mine who, instead of providing the joys of love and opulence to his friends, and entertaining them on the dinner table, he provides them with the means to create an enthusiasm within them, to awaken their dormant emotions, and to re-energize their inactive thoughts. Quite often, he arranges literary sittings where men of letters and poets either render their own compositions, or relate the energizing and burning poetry of the poets of the past. The benefit of such assemblies is that a burning current of heat is created in the heart, which then passes throughout the body. This results in a special feeling of softness, and a burning and melting of the hearts. Sometimes, the eyes also shed tears, and their dust and grime is thoroughly washed. The dense clouds of materialism disperse. The people are transferred from a world which is overwhelmed by pains, worries, and the hardships and burdens of life. They are prevailed by the heavy weights of the demands of life. Every step is taken with shackles and chains around the feet. It seems as though they are climbing, with much difficulty, towards the heavens, but they are burdened by the shackles and chains. They then reach a world which is governed by yearning and desire, and where the breezes of the sanctified world blow. This causes them to experience a lightness in their souls, a delight in their hearts, sensitivity in their perception, purity of the self, and the joy and lightness of life. The furnace of the world turns into a fragrant garden, and its every density and heaviness becomes light and tender.

Just yesterday, this friend arranged an assembly whose theme was: "In the presence of the Chief of the

Arabs and non-Arabs, Muḥammad Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*”. It was about the praises which non-Arab poets showered on Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, their yearning to go to his city [Madinah], and the examples of *īmān*, conviction, enthusiasm and love which they expressed in this regard.

Those who are conversant with the global Islamic literature, have studied the literatures of the various languages which the Muslim populations speak in their respective countries, and have had access to their poetry know fully well that the Persian language has the richest treasure and the major portion of poems in praise of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*. This is followed by the Urdu language which is really a product and off-shoot of the Persian language. This is why the most powerful, vibrant, emotional, soft, sweet, and burning language on this subject is found in these two languages. This is not to be found in any other language. These poets were able to create unique and innovative messages and thoughts, and compose expressions which were unprecedented. The secret behind this is not known as yet, and is still a subject of study and research by the men of letters and litterateurs.

Some of the authorities on the subject say that it has something to do with the Iranian and Indian temperament, that their temperament is one of love and infatuation, and their language is an expression of love and affection. When all these capabilities were directed to a personality whom Allāh *ta‘ālā* reserved for the greatest meanings of beauty and kindness, and the largest manifestations of splendour and perfection; it obviously resulted in the most astounding examples. The power of expression and proficiency in using one’s imagination, the sentiments of love and appreciation,

and the intense love of the heart – all of these – interlocked with a praiseworthy and beloved in whom Allāh *ta‘ālā* cast love from Himself, and clothed with the most beautiful external and internal attributes. And so, the effect was simply astonishing.

Other scholars consider distance and separation to be the primary reasons. Both these have a unique effect in causing the fountains of the heart and love to gush forth, in formulating unparalleled meanings, and igniting dormant capabilities. The majority of these poets lived in countries far away from the Arabian Peninsular and from Madīnah Munawwarah, and in an era which was overwhelmed with turmoil. Travelling to the Holy Land was no easy journey. The caravans going for hajj were targets of attacks and highway robbers. These long and dangerous journeys, numerous obstacles, and deprivation from visiting Madīnah Munawwarah were factors which prompted them to make up for all this by composing poems describing their yearning and enthusiasm. Poetry has always been considered to be the courier of the heart and yearning. It is the carrier pigeon which is not deterred by obstacles, and which never stops flying until it reaches its destination.

Yet others are of the opinion that it is largely due to *taṣawwuf* or Sufism which lived and flourished in Iran and India. And Sufism, no matter how much people may criticize it – whether justly or unjustly – is known to kindle the sentiments of love, to nourish them, and to prompt them to grow. It will be right for us to say: “Its foundation is based on love and feelings of the heart, and that very rarely will a person who does not possess such feelings succeed in this field [of Sufism].” Nevertheless, this Sufism which accompanied Iranian poetry and Iranian literature throughout their journey, which played a full role in their development,

and then their expansion and progress was a major source and fountain of this soft *ghazalī* (amatory) poetry, and deep emotional literature. When a cup gets filled, it overflows; and when it overflows, it is bound to flow on. When a person has a full share of wine, he is bound to become intoxicated, and intoxication is almost always followed by singing. An Arab poet expresses this reality very eloquently and beautifully, and in so doing, he conveys the sentiments of the people of the heart. He says:

سَقَوْنِي وَقَالُوا: لَا تُعَنَّ وَلَوْ سَقَوْا - جِبَالُ سُلَيْمَى مَا سُقِيَتْ لَعَنَّتْ

They made me drink [wine] to my full, and then issued this warning to me: "Don't you dare sing", whereas, if they were to make the Sulaymā mountains drink what I was given to drink, it would have also responded by singing.

No matter what the reasons, Iranian poetry – whether composed in Iran or India (which learnt it from Iran and progressed until it became a school of its own next to the original Iranian school) – is filled with captivating and splendid praises of Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam.

My dear friend who organized this assembly certainly displayed his good taste by choosing this theme [In the presence of the Chief of the Arabs and non-Arabs, Muḥammad Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam]. The majority of those who attended this assembly were litterateurs and poets who not only knew the Persian language, but had the ability to appreciate Persian poetry. They did not need any translation or explanation. However, a few Arab men of letters were also in attendance. Although they did not understand Persian, they enjoyed the “music” of

Persian poetry, the captivating tunes and the beautiful renderings.

The host gave me the responsibility to translate some of the poems. I knew that the task of translating something, especially poetry; and more importantly, translating Persian or Urdu poetry is one of the most difficult and intricate literary skills. This is because each language has a certain aura and mood in which it lives, and with which it expresses its self. One cannot adequately convey auras, moods, environments, areas, temperaments, psychologies and mind-sets of the speakers, and a history of the literature of a language.

Poetry is more delicate than glass which breaks very quickly, but takes very long to reset. The delicacy and effect of poetry lies in the choice of words, expressions, styles, parables and ways of speech of those who speak that language. Based on these factors, translating poetry is most difficult, if not, next to impossible. So I decided to convey the new meanings and subtle thoughts of these couplets, and I asked my host to allow me to permit certain couplets which are more in line with the Arab temperament so that these could be easily understood and digested. My host permitted me to do this, and I am grateful to him for it.

My friend had taught a group of litterateurs and educated youngsters some of the poetry of the Iranian and Indian poets. They excelled in memorizing and rendering these poems. They represented the past poets with much dignity and decorum, displaying beauty in their taste, excellent character, and knowledge of the era and environment in which those poets lived.

The first person to come forward in this assembly was Shaykh Sa'di (d. 691 A.H.), the author of two timeless collections which take the prime spot in

world literature. They are the *Gulistān* and *Bustān* – two blossoming and blooming gardens to this day. The poems which he selected for the occasion were simple, flowing and comprehensive – like an ocean poured into a tumbler, or an entire library enfolded in a single line. He says: An orphan who grew up and lived as an unlettered person, who never read the Qur’ān from a book was able to cancel all the libraries of the nations, causing them to lose their value and life. He then founded an entirely new library which was a source of knowledge and cognizance, and an oasis for every thirsty person.

The orphan who did not even learn to read,
wound up the libraries of seven continents.

In the above couplet, the poet captures an entire picture of that grand revolution which surpasses every ancient and modern revolution in the field of creeds and religions, morals and societies, sciences and literatures, cultures and civilizations, and values and standards. How was such a miracle realized at the hands of an orphan who did not sit in a school for a single day, who never put pen to paper!? How did he initiate this new era of knowledge which could never be abrogated or cancelled by anyone? How did he initiate this astounding academic outburst before which all eras – in fact, the entire history – submitted? After all, how did so much of knowledge come into existence from a completely unlettered man who did not have the slightest taint of any education or skill?

These are questions which cannot be answered except by believing in the presence of the hand of Allāh *ta’ālā*. Were it not for a continued unbroken chain of transmission, glaring facts, clearly witnessed events, and absolutely genuine and authentic historical

testimony, none could have believed that such a thing could happen.

It was now the turn of Farīd ad-Dīn 'Attār to come onto the stage. He is the author of *Mantiq at-Tayr* and many other well known compositions and widely accepted books. He quoted a few couplets which highlighted softness, sweetness, turning to Allāh *ta'ālā*, humility and submission before Him, and acknowledgement of one's shortcomings and failings. He begs for the intercession of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*, and that he must not be disgraced before the entire world. The couplet which really shook me was when he said that he has a right because he has been given the honourable name [of Muḥammad].¹

And it is the norm with noblemen to give special consideration to children who have been named after them, and to show concern for their wellbeing until the very end.

Although my entire life has been spent in sin, I have repented. So beg forgiveness for me from Allāh.

O the one whose intercession I seek, show kindness, and light the lamp of intercession on the dark day [of Resurrection].

Although I have blackened my face with sin, remember my claim of having the same name as you.

Amīr Khusro (d. 725 A.H.), the poet of India, then made his appearance. His mastery and command

¹ His father had named him Muḥammad, but he was popularly known as Farīd ad-Dīn 'Attār. He passed away in 627 A.H.

over the Persian language is acknowledged even by the Iranian poets. The Iranian masters testify to his excellence and innovation in Persian poetry, and consider him to be its most prominent sons and poets. His mere appearance caught the attention of the audience, and he captured their hearts with his special excellent rendition, pleasant voice and sweet tone.

While speaking about the mind-boggling revolution brought about by Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*, he said: His life and character blew life into the Arabs who were in the throes of death. And in one breath, he extinguished the burning ember of Abū Lahab¹ which was threatening to burn down everything. Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* joined the two lines connecting this world to the next, and, in a single trip,² connected the material world to the spiritual world.

The breath of his spirit revived the Arabs and extinguished the lamp of Abū Lahab.

In two steps, he went from this world to the other, and in two strides, from earth to the ninth heaven.

Amīr Khusro was followed by Maulānā 'Abd ar-Rahmān Jāmī (d. 898 A.H.) who was considered to be from among the greatest poets in Islamic history who wrote in praise of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*. His poetry is sung by the Sufis, the 'ulamā',

¹ Referring to the leader of unbelief and ignorance in Makkah. The poet uses Abū Lahab as a reference and an example.

² Referring to the Isrā' and Mi'rāj (night journey and ascension) of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*.

and litterateurs in all countries which understand the Persian language. He rendered a few couplets from his composition which is quoted by all and sundry, and which touched the hearts both by its words and manner of expression. He addresses Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* saying: “What is there if you did not write on any plain paper or did not add to any blackness [i.e. you did not add anything to the written word]?! After all, you provided light to the entire world. Volumes upon volumes were written because of you. Many people with black book of deeds [full of sins] had their book of deeds washed and enlightened through you. The writers and authors of your *ummah* filled the libraries of the world. The Arabs and non-Arabs, both equally, submitted to your leadership. Your eloquence touched the hearts of the Arabs, and your elegance captured the hearts of the non-Arabs.”

O Arab by descent, having the title of “the unlettered one”! We Arabs and non-Arabs are all your slaves.

With the sword of your eloquence, the Arab was slain. By your magical charm, the non-Arab was bewitched.

Since it was from you we learnt to read, so what if you were unlettered?

By black, the white was inspired. It is good that you did not put pen to paper.

These eloquent words shook the audience, the flame of their yearning was further ignited. They asked him for more, and they quoted an ancient Arabic poem because the Maulānā was himself an erudite scholar of Arabic, and from among the notable scholars of grammar and rhetoric.

وحدَّثتنا يا سعدُ عنهم فزدتنا - شجونًا فزدنا من حديثك يا سعدُ

O Sa'd! When you spoke about them, you increased our anxiety. So we request you to relate more to us.

The audience requested him to speak about the benevolence and contribution of the prophet-hood of Muḥammad sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam to humanity. So he said: "The Ka'bah was filled with idols, and the Haram (the Sacred Sanctuary) was overcrowded, leaving no place for those who were seeking Allāh *ta'ālā*. Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam came and destroyed the idols so completely, that no sign or vestige of them remained. He completely uprooted them and cast them into oblivion. Through the blessed feet of Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam, the Maqām-e-Ibrāhīm returned to its original position, and the reason for which Ibrāhīm *'alayhis salām* had built the Ka'bah was realized once again."

Images of rock filled the Ka'bah. In it, devotees of Allāh *ta'ālā* had no place.

By his endeavour, the idols were demolished and cast into the wilderness of non-existence.

Thanks to him, Ibrāhīm's foothold got back its honour. By the blessedness of his feet, high is its place.

The audience thoroughly enjoyed these couplets and requested him for more. They knew with what enthusiasm and yearning Maulānā Jāmī had undertaken the journey to Madīnah Munawwarah, and with what passionate and loyal demeanour he entered Musjid-e-Nabawī, presented himself before Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam, and rendered his famous and world-renown *qaṣīdah* which is on the tip of the

tongue of every Persian-speaking person, and an expression that is in their hearts. Some of these couplets have been memorized by people, and have taken on the position of idioms. The audience requested him not to deprive them of this eulogy. The moment it was mentioned before him, the Maulānā was overcome by emotion and it seemed as if it was his own request, and the call of his own heart.

He says: “Having the opportunity to reach you is one of my greatest good fortunes. As part of my thanks and acknowledgement of this favour, I swept the path leading to you with my eyelashes. I prostrated to Allāh *ta’ālā* in the Musjid as a way of showing appreciation, and I made my soul into a moth which flies restlessly at your brilliant lamp. The clouds of my eyes which had been deprived of sleep for so long [because they were waiting anxiously to get a glimpse of you] now began pouring down their tears. So I sprinkled their water [tears] at the threshold of your abode and resting place. I hastened towards your pulpit and rubbed my face against its pillars. I stood in your *mīhrāb* and prostrated before Allāh *ta’ālā*. I washed the spots wherever your feet touched with the blood of my eyes, not with their tears. I stood before every column and asked Allāh *ta’ālā* to bless me with the rank of the truthful servants who had performed *ṣalāh* before these columns with sincerity and devotion.”

How fortunate! The dust of your path showed me the way. With my eyes I swept your street.

I performed a prostration of gratitude in your Musjid, and made my life the moth of your candle.

With sleepless eyes, I shed tears to wash the threshold of your resting place.

Towards your pulpit I went, and placed my forehead at its foot.

I dashed to your *mīhrāb*, prostrating all the way, and offered the blood of my heart where you stood.

I prostrated myself at the foot of each pillar, and beseeched Allāh to confer me with the rank of the truthful.

There were a few '*ulamā*' in the audience who raised their heads at hearing some of the couplets. They looked at the poet with a frown, and towards the translator with a warning gaze. They feared that the poet was getting entangled in certain things which were impermissible. So we said: "The poet is from among those who have been bestowed with firm knowledge, and a man of correct beliefs. This is the language of love and poetry, it is not the language of jurisprudence and scholastic theology. These are figures of speech and metaphors; not facts and truths."

The famous Iranian poet and founder of an independent school of Persian poetry by the name of 'Urfī (d. 999 A.H.) came onto the stage after the departure of Maulānā Jāmī. I knew that he was a poet of the royal court who used to sing the praises of the sultans and rulers, and that he was the tutor of poets in his time. Not too long ago, he had sung the praises of his master. But he paid his respects to the rank of prophet-hood, apologized for his past indiscretions, and said: "How can the praises of kings and sultans be sung together with singing the praises of ar-Rasūl al-

Amīn and Sayyid al-Awwalīn wa al-Ākharīn¹ at one and the same time!? It is most disrespectful and distasteful for a person to combine both praises – to sing the praises of Cyrus² and Jamshid³ with one breath, and the Chief of Arabs and non-Arabs [*sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*] in the next breath. He said:

Nobility of his being is no relative attribute.
It was the feat of courage of the brave.

What right has time to adorn the seat of the
praiser of the King of Arabs and non-Arabs?

Beware! Do not sing in the same breath,
praises of the Chief of both worlds, and
Cyrus and Jamshid.

It was now the turn of the renowned praiser of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, writer and poet, Qudsī (d. 1056 A.H.). The echo of Qudsī’s poetry are heard in Sufi circles even to this day. His couplets are quoted to revive and re-energize *īmān* and yearning. His poetry distinguishes itself by its beautiful tone and sweet rhythm. He adds Arabic words in several places, and this has served to increase their beauty. This is why the lovers of *ghazal* are fond of his poems, and the

¹ Titles of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* meaning, the Trustworthy Messenger, and Chief of past and future generations.

² King of Persia and founder of the Persian empire.

³ In Persian mythology, a ruler of the peris who was punished for bragging that he was immortal by being changed into human form. He then became a great king of Persia.

poets and 'ulamā' quote them profusely in their own compositions. He rendered his famous eulogy:

Welcome, O chief of Makkah, Madīnah and Arabs. May my life be sacrificed for you, how beautiful is your name!

I am bewitched by your charm, I am lost in amazement. O Allāh! How beautiful and how wonderful!

Open your eye of mercy, take a look at me. O you Qurayshī, Hāshimī and Muttalibī!

We are thirsty, and you are the elixir of life. Have mercy on us, our thirst has crossed the limit.

Since we are sinners, do not ask us about good deeds. Turn to us the face of intercession because of our misery.

You are my chief, my beloved, and the physician of my heart. Qudsī has come to you in quest of a cure.

The one couplet which I could convey with all its beauty and perfection is when he said:

On one occasion, I spoke about my high lineage before a dog which lives in your alley. I then realized my folly, broke out into a sweat, and lowered my head in shame because to vex pride before one of the dogs which lives in your city is most disrespectful and smacks of conceit.

While I was conveying the meaning of the above lines, I felt that he had become entangled in exaggeration and exceeded the limit, because man whom Allāh *ta'ālā* honoured with humaneness and then conferred with *īmān* is more honourable than a

dog under any condition. But then I said to myself: His love and humility have caused him to become entangled in this expression. A lover is permitted one excuse, while a poet is permitted two excuses.

The time allotted to the Iranian poets came to an end, and it was now the turn of the celebrated Indian poets who were masters in Persian poetry. Amīr Khusro who was the leader of Persian poetry among the Indians was second to none among the Iranian poets, and was no less than them on any basis. Even the nightingale of Shīrāz, Shaykh Sa'dī, acknowledged his sweet compositions and flowing tongue. Amīr Khusro had already presented his renditions.

Mirzā Ghālib¹ now stood up from the row of Indian poets and sought permission to be a part of this assembly, and to render his Persian compositions over which he was quite proud. A few renowned contemporaries doubted his claims, while others expressed their astonishment and wondered what affinity did he have with this subject? But he commenced rendering his compositions without bothering about them and, contrary to his norm, recited flowing, easily understood and extremely simple eulogies. Instead of resorting to imaginary ideas, subtle thoughts and hyperbolic expressions; he related facts and incidents. The entire audience was enraptured by this rendition, and the masters who were present also acknowledged it without any hesitation. He said:

¹ He is Asadullāh Khān Ghālib ad-Dehlawī, the most famous of Urdu poets and the most accepted. He passed away in 1258 A.H. The Indian government and the Indian population paid tribute to him while commemorating 100 years since his demise. He was also from among the celebrated poets of the Persian language.

His fingers never held a pen, but all the pens of history could not write what he “wrote”.

The moment he placed his foot in the desert, it turned into a green and lush paradise. His sweet speech turns an unbeliever into a Muslim, and an agnostic into a gnostic.

He illuminated the world with the light of *Dīn*, and rescued the believers from the punishment of the day of Recompense.

He freed the servants from the worship of idols, and inhabited the world with a single House [the Ka’bah] – the house of *īmān*.

He melted the hearts of the enemies, and the souls of those who were hard-hearted fanatics.

There is no reason to be surprised by this, after all, the pebbles at his threshold are able to melt steel, and soften the hardest of all.

He is standing at the *mīhrāb*, but his heart is attached to Allāh *ta’ālā*.

After Mirzā Ghālib, the gaze of the Persian masters fell on Khwājah ‘Azīz ad-Dīn Lucknowī who was the representative of the old masters, and the last trustee of the treasure of Persian literature. The audience requested him to render some of his eulogies, and Mirzā Ghālib himself interceded in their favour. He rendered a few poems from his collection to which the audience listened attentively.

From the wilderness and habitation comes the sound of the bell. I press on instinctively for no horse is faster than saddle.

By Allāh! The road by which I travel is absolutely safe. I have no fear of highwaymen, nor of guards.

Deserts and mountains dance in ecstasy like the camel. The pen on the road to the Hijāz beats time with the caravan-bell.

Sweet-tasting joy is the provision of the pilgrim, and it is coupled by unflagging enthusiasm of the light-footed companion.

I present myself before the blessed grave of the sultan of *Dīn*, and like the morning breeze, I complete the journey in one breath.

Horsemen who rode with him on the “Night Journey” – Jibra’īl in the front, and Isrāfīl in the rear.

His mount was fully loaded with all provisions and equipment, his journey was long. His mount was an ambling horse, and the road was free from thorn and straw.

He rose higher than all the heights, and went farther than every forerunner. Like a foot print, both worlds looked in amazement.

He left the body behind and proceeded alone. His mind was free from every thought, and his heart free of every desire.

His yearning for Allāh led him by the sleeve, and took him to the place where no “before” or “after” exists.

With this hospitality and entertainment. As his hand reached for the celestial wine, he was fulfilled.

No sooner the name of Khwājah 'Azīz Lucknowī was mentioned, the people's eyes fell on Munshī Wilāyat 'Alī Khān Safīpūrī.¹ Despite his seniority in age, being a Persian poet of high rank, and the head of a Sufi order, he was sitting away from the limelight with absolute humility and an unassuming manner. It was difficult for anyone to really see him. Khwājah 'Azīz Lucknowī and his tutor himself, Mirzā Ghālib, joined the others in requesting him to render his compositions which always ignite such assemblies.

When the beautiful-voiced singer began rendering his ode which, together with intricate and lofty thoughts, was filled with tune and melody, an ocean of subtlety, and striking and balanced words; then the entire audience went into an ecstasy and a harmonious feeling. Even the Iranian poets responded spontaneously, and openly acknowledged his mastery over the Persian language and eloquence. Many of the Sufis who were present felt that this rendering pervaded the entire audience, and settled into the deepest recesses of their hearts.

The delicate beloved killed me with coquetry,
not with a sword.

Sweet of speech, merciful, heart of hearts,
captivating.

O jasmine! The envy of jasmine. O life of the
garden, or of my life. Charming, precious,
awesome, determined.

Destroyer of unbelief, animator of hearts,
lovely, polite, amiable. Pure of faith, clean of

¹ He passed away on 13 Muḥarram 1347 A.H./1928.

heart, more beautiful than those who are beautiful.

Delicate, elegant, beautiful as the moon, drawer of the heart, or its capturer.

Alluring, heart-melting, are you a pearl or a star? Pure, natural, intoxicating, entrancing.

Restless eyes, even temper, how marvellous the spectacle!

Sad and distressed, I am in extreme agony O 'Azīz! Each moment he takes away the heart and imparts life in a new manner.

After Hadrat 'Azīz, the audience requested Hadrat Mas'ūd 'Alī Mahwī Fatahpūri¹ to render some of his Persian eulogies. He too had established himself on account of his expertise in the Persian language, the honesty and clarity of his tongue, and his total emulation of Iranian poets. He hesitated a bit, but eventually came onto the stage. He rendered his ode and eulogy which were received with approval from all sections of the audience.

Nature lifted the veil from its face and did what spring does. It turned the earth into a garden from East to West.

The nightingale awoke the sleepy green vegetation, as it called out the morning *adhān* from a branch.

¹ He was born in Fatahpūr, district Bārā Bankī, which is near Lucknow. He studied and mastered the Persian language and was employed by Dār at-Tarjumah in Hyderabad, where he passed away.

The dove said *subhānallāh*, and the branch shook. The partridge said *Allāhu akbar*, and the mountain wailed.

Out of the sanctified curtain, the beloved appeared. For whom the world had been waiting for quite some time.

He was born a pauper, lived as a pauper, and departed from this temporary world as a pauper.

He is the perfect one who, by the alchemy of his glance, transformed black dust into flawless gold.

He is the leader who, without corps and battalions, turned the nomads in the desert into kings ruling over the world.

He unveiled his face, and the darkness dispersed. He untied his hair, and the world became fragrant.

When he showed devotion to friends, they were ready to sacrifice their lives. He bestowed kindness to the enemies, and they felt ashamed of their selves.

When he made a covenant with anyone, he stood by it forever. When he made a pledge, he fulfilled it and bound himself to it to the last.

Why should I not say openly: Within the bounds of water and clay, the mercy of Allāh *ta'ālā* had revealed itself to mankind?

My eagerness wanted me to prolong this eulogy of mine. But deference caused me to make it brief.

Maḥwī is forlorn and dejected in this land.
Relieve him of his distress with a glance.

After Maḥwī, the people requested the famous poet of Persian and tutor of the Nizām of Deccan, Shaykh Ghulām Qādir Girāmī, to render something. He recited the following couplets:

What impudence and what audacity! Me
singing the praises of Muḥammad!?

Matchless pearl of the casket of Muttalib. My
lord and master, Muḥammad.

Me and this intoxication!? Have I lost my
head? Me and this wine!? Where is the cup?

Pride of the workshop of the heavens and
earth. From the sun to the smallest dust
particle, all are his slaves.

Mūsā *'alayhis salām* received a flash of light
at Mt. Sinai. While Aḥmad [Rasūlullāh
ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam] was a
personification of light from head to toe.

Yūnus *'alayhis salām* stepped into the belly
of the fish, Muḥammad *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa
sallam* unfurled his flag among the stars.

Zakarīyyā's *'alayhis salām* body was sawed
into two, while our master's [*ṣallallāhu
'alayhi wa sallam*] heart was safe from even
any reference to sawing it.

Sulaymān's *'alayhis salām* throne was in the
air, the wing of Jibra'īl was the seat of
Muḥammad *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*.

Although the son of Maryam could not live
himself, he revived the dead with his breath.

Our master [sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam] who was the beloved of Allāh ta'ālā, showed the path of the Sharī'ah to the erring.

The unlettered [sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam] gave the call to the *ummah*: " Traverse the path of *tauḥīd* on your head."

He brought back the dead to life with a sign, and gave eternal life to the living.

Nūḥ 'alayhis salām became the master of his ark, and put the balm on a few broken hearts. Muḥammad sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam raised his flag higher than the sky, and seated himself on the throne of *Lau lāka*.¹

After all the recognized poets and masters of Iran and India presented their compositions, the eyes of the audience fell on Iqbāl whose poems of eulogy and love for Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam not only filled Iran, Afghanistan, and the Indian Subcontinent; but the entire Islamic world with the heat of love, ecstasy and intoxication. He shed new light in his eulogy, and used it as a means for revival and revolution. He first recited a few selected couplets from his *Mathnawī* titled *Asrār-e-Khudī* (Mysteries of The Self) in which he presents the quintessence of the life of Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam, and pours an ocean into a cup. The audience went into a rapture when he recited these couplets in his emotional but confident tone. He said:

¹ Literal meaning: "Were it not for you". This is a reference to a Hadīth in which Allāh ta'ālā addresses Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam saying: "Had I not intended to create you, I would not have created the world."

In the Muslim's heart is the name of Muḥammad. All our glory is from the name of Muḥammad.

He slept on a straw mat, yet the crown of Kisrā was under his followers' feet.

He chose the nightly solitude of the cave of Hīrā' and founded a nation, a law, and a government.

He passed many nights deprived of sleep so that his followers could sleep on the throne of Chosroes.

In the hour of battle, iron melted at the flash of his sword. In the hour of prayer, tears poured down from his eyes.

His sword uttered āmīn when he supplicated for divine help, and wiped out the progeny of kings.

He laid down a new law in the world, and rolled up the carpets of ancient empires.

With the key of *Dīn*, he opened the world's lock. The womb of creation never bore anyone like him.

The above rendering received a wave of approval from all sides. The appreciative crowd requested him to render the lines which he presented before Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam in his famous *Mathnawī* titled, *Che Bāyid Kard* (what to do now, O people of the East?). In this poem, he makes a fervent appeal to Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam, expresses his devotion and commitment to him, his allegiance to him, and also draws a true picture of the Islamic world of his time.

He reminds us of the unforgettable favours of Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* for which all of humanity is indebted to him, and for those who found the treasure of *īmān* and *tauḥīd* and the path of guidance and salvation through him. Due to his teachings and efforts, humanity got salvation from prostrating before weak and feeble creations, abstained from kneeling before every other mortal like themselves, and obtained freedom from every type of slavery and bondage. Since Iqbāl was of Indian origin¹ and his forefathers had embraced Islam not too long ago, his gratefulness to Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* takes on a more profound and effective meaning. It was by virtue of Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* that he gained salvation from worshipping the cow, and being a slave to priests, religious leaders and self-proclaimed gods.

O you, the refuge of powerless people like us.
Cure this community of fear of death.

You destroyed Lāt and Manāt of old, and
gave new life to a timeworn world.

In the world of *dhikr* and *fikr*² of men and
jinn, you are the morning *ṣalāh*, the call of
adhān.

¹ Iqbāl addresses a *sayyid* who was overawed by philosophy:

I am a pure Somnātī (devotee of a temple) by descent. My forefathers were worshippers of Lāt and Manāt (names of idols of pre-Islamic Arabia). You are a *sayyid* of Hāshimī descent, my hand of clay is of Brahmin origin.

² Remembrance of Allāh *ta‘ālā* and reflecting over Him.

The delight of burning and ecstasy is from
Lā ilāha, in the night of doubt, there is light
from *Lā ilāha*.

We did not make gods of cows, nor did we
bow down before monks and hermits.

Neither did we prostrate before ancient
deities nor did we circuit the palaces of
kings.

All this is from among your countless
favours. Your favour is the nourisher of our
intellects.

Your remembrance is a source of yearning
and joy which keeps the *ummah* proud in
poverty.

You are the station and destination of every
traveller, your desire is in the heart of each
wayfarer.

How sorrowful! Our harp has become mute,
and the plectrum has become a burden on
the strings.

I wandered among the Arabs and non-Arabs.
I found Abū Lahabs in plenty, but Mustafā
very scarce.

In the following couplets Iqbāl states that the
sum total and capital of his life is the love of Rasūlullāh
sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam and his recognition. After
saying this, he says that he [Iqbāl] is the worthless
commodity which no one is prepared to buy, and the
rotten prey which no hunter cared to look at. He says: I
have lost hope in everyone and presented myself at
your feet. On hearing these lines, the audience
trembled and burst out crying.

O horseman! Pull the reins for a moment.
Speech is not coming easily to me.

Should I express my feelings or not? Love is
never governed by etiquette.

Love is saying: "Speak up O you afflicted
soul!" Etiquette commands: "Open your eyes
and seal your lips."

The whole world rotates around you, and
from you I beg for a glance of kindness.

You are my knowledge, thought and
meditation; my boat, my ocean and my
storm.

The starved and wretched deer that I am, no
one cared to tie me to his saddle-strap.

Your street is my sole refuge. I have run to
you in hope.

Iqbāl goes on to say that despite his
wretchedness, there is no need to lose hope in him.
Although he may be ignorant, he is not of bad origin
and of evil nature. Although he may be a sinner and
lacking in good deeds, he is not ignorant of the
situation and not an ungrateful soul. He may be empty
handed and a failure, he possesses something which is
known as the heart. He now has the honour of his
heart being crushed under the feet of Rasūlullāh
sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam. The imprint of the hoof of
Rasūlullāh's steed is still on the surface of his heart,
and this is his most valuable and dear possession.

I am certainly a believer, not an unbeliever.
Place me on a whetstone, I am not of bad
origin.

Although my life has been a barren tract, I
possess a thing called a heart.

I have kept it hidden from the eyes of the world, because it bears the imprint of your horse's hoof.

Iqbāl concludes his unique private conversation with the following lines of supplication. All those who were present said *āmīn* to it.

O you who endured the Kurd with Arab's burning, summon your own slave to your presence.

Your slave has a scarred heart like the tulip. Even his friends do not know about his grief.

Like the flute, he wails in the world. Melody stabs his heart in quick succession.

Like half-burnt wood in the arid desert, the caravan has departed, and I am still smouldering.

The session of the Persian poets ended with Iqbāl. After this, no one had the courage to render anything in Persian, nor did anyone make such a request.

URDU POETS PAY TRIBUTE TO RASŪLULLĀH

It was now the turn of the Urdu poets. The gazes of the people raised instinctively, and they sat expectantly. Speaking in praise of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*, love for him, and expressing one's yearning to go to Madīnah have been the beloved themes of Indian poets. After Persian, the best and most impressive eulogies are found in the Urdu language. Deep love for Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* and a strong attachment to the land of Hijāz have become an essential component in the Indian Muslim temperament. Indian Muslims were able to preserve their *īmān* by virtue of these qualities. This is why, the extremist nationalist and racial movements, and the flood of atheism could not cause them to flow like straw and grass. They expressed their bond and affiliation to Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* and the Hijāz so strongly that the fanatics of nationalism accused them of being in India in body, while they were in the Hijāz with their hearts. Although they were born here and will die here [in India], they constantly dream of the alleys of Madīnah Munawwarah. They always seem to be saying, either with their heart or soul:

The soil of Madīnah is more pleasant than both the worlds. Cool is the city where the beloved lives.

The Indian Muslims are so deeply attached to the soil of the Hijāz in general, and of Madīnah Munawwarah in particular, and they have such a spiritual love for it, that they always express the desire of dying there and the wish of being buried in its soil. Karamat 'Alī Shahīdī (d. 1256 A.H.), a famous Urdu poet of the 19th century C.E. goes to the extent of

hoping that if his body is not worthy of being buried in that pure ground, it should rather be cast into the desert to be eaten by animals. The following are two famous couplets from his poem:

Should my body not be worthy of the soil of
Madīnah, let it be devoured by the beasts of
any desert.

How I wish when my soul's cage is broken, it
flies and sits like a bird on the trees of your
Raudah.¹

When the assembly commenced its session, Hadrat Amīr Mīnā'ī was the first to come onto the stage. Together with clear facts, eloquence of the masters, and subtlety of colloquial expressions; his eulogy had a special melody and oceanic rhyme. When it was rendered before the audience, all who were present went into an ecstasy.

The chief of the creation, intercessor on the plain of Resurrection. Salutations and peace of Allāh be on him.

The Messenger of Allāh and His special envoy. Salutations and peace of Allāh be on him.

¹ This supplication of Shahīdī was accepted. The author of *Gul Ra'nah* says that he left home in 1255 A.H. with the intention of performing hajj and visiting Madīnah Munawwarah. After completing the hajj, he proceeded for Madīnah Munawwarah and fell ill on the way. He continued passing through all the different stations and, on 4 Safar 1256 A.H., reached a point from where he could see the blessed grave. He cast a remorseful gaze on it and his soul departed from its "cage".

The manifestation of light, the great sun, the universal leader, the friend of Adam.

The companion of Nūḥ, the guide of Khiḍar. Salutations and peace of Allāh be on him.

The treasures of this world, as worthless as dust. Empty of hand, rich at heart.

Monarch of the country, with neither a throne nor any guards. Salutations and peace of Allāh be on him.

A running fountain, a sign of Allāh, the dust of his horse, the breeze of spring.

Holder of the mirror, pride of Alexander. Salutations and peace of Allāh be on him.

Each and every fibre is soaked in love. O Amīr! Writing eulogies is my life's occupation.

It is always my devotional prayer – throughout the day and night – to send salutations and peace of Allāh on him.

After Amīr Bīnā'ī, it was the turn of his contemporary and renown eulogizer, Haḍrat Muḥsin Kākaurwī who had devoted his entire life, intelligence, academic acumen and literary skills to composing eulogies in praise of Rasūlullāh ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam. It is said that when he used to compose *na't* with his right hand, he did not like to write anything else. Those who were present in this assembly said to him with absolute respect: "Haḍrat's compositions are so filled with unique constructions and subtleties that they can only be understood by erudite '*ulamā*' and sharp-sighted litterateurs. So please render something which, while the language is enjoyable and expressions sweet, must be fully understood by us."

Consequently, Hadrat Muhsin quoted a poem wherein he depicts a picturesque scene of the Ascension of Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam when Jibra'īl 'alayhis salām came to him, woke him up, seated him on the Burāq, and ascended the heavens with him. The audience thoroughly enjoyed his language and power of expression.

He woke him up respectfully, or awakened his own destiny.

No sooner the truth-beholding eye opened, sweet slumber melted away.

What a strange spectacle met his eye! The whole house was shining like the moon.

The book of the mysteries of the unseen informs him saying: Such a day will never dawn again.

There will never be a time to sleep nor to awaken. Time will rotate for eternity.

This night is not in anyone's destiny even if his good fortune may awaken and sleep a hundred times.

The earth will never be honoured like this again, even if the soil turns a thousand times into an elixir.

Light is descending in endless streams. The dew of stars is falling like rain.

Jibra'īl is here, and so is the Burāq. The Messenger is present, and so is yearning.

It was now the turn of Khwājah Altāf Husayn Hālī to come forward. He is the one whose *Musaddas* is on the tongue of every child. The audience said to him: "Although we have heard the eulogies of the *Musaddas*

thousands of times, we would like to hear them once more because their simplicity has a phenomenal effect, and they are a true portrayal of the facts.” The request was accepted and the audience went into a rapture at hearing the following famous couplets of the *Musaddas*:

The recipient of the title of “mercy” from among the Prophets. Fulfiller of the wishes of the poor.

Helper of strangers at the time of calamities. Comforter of friend and foe.

Shelter of the destitute, refuge of the weak. Guardian of orphans, protector of slaves.

Forgiver of the guilty, winner of the hearts of the evil-minded.

Exterminator of vice, binder of tribes in close friendship.

From Hirā he came down to his people, and brought with him a prescription of alchemy.

He transformed copper into glittering gold, separated the genuine from the counterfeit.

The Arabs who were steeped in ignorance for centuries, he changed their destiny in the blink of an eye.

Ships no longer feared the stormy waves because the direction of the wind was changed completely.

The metal which lay useless in the mine, having no value and worth, which had lost its special qualities and turned to dust because it had become mixed up with the dust – but it was inscribed on the tablet of

destiny that it will change to gold at one glance.

After Maulānā Hālī a youngster whose dress and appearance gave the impression that he was from Punjab went forward towards the stage. But as he went forward, Maulānā Hālī welcomed him as if he was a much more senior person, and seated him with love and respect.¹ Some sections of the audience said that he is the greatest poet in composing eulogies, and you will not find a greater poet as far as majesty of words and dexterity of composition are concerned. His name was Zafar 'Alī Khān. The audience first requested him to render his poem which, although was composed in his early days, was still sung at inauguration ceremonies of Islamic *madāris* and other assemblies.

The candle which illuminated caves for forty years, was to shine one day in the palaces of the world.

If the heavens and earth did not resound with *Lau lāka lamā*,² neither would these colours and hues be in the gardens, nor the radiance in the stars.

¹ Maulānā Hālī wrote a poem in praise of Zafar 'Alī Khān, the last two lines of it read as follows:

If the Punjab is proud of you, it has every right and will be justified in it. Living is the land and nation which can boast a live-hearted man like you.

² Literal meaning: "Were it not for you". This is a reference to a Hadīth in which Allāh *ta'ālā* addresses Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* saying: "Had I not intended to create you, I would not have created the world."

The mysteries which philosophers could not unravel and thinkers could not solve were explained with a few signs by him whose garment was a single shawl.

Īmān is not a commodity which can be bought from a philosopher's shop, the intelligent will find it in the thirty *pārās*¹ of the Qur'ān.

Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Alī [*radiyallāhu 'anhum*] are all rays of the same flaming light. They are friends of Nabī *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* of equal rank; there is no distinction among them.

When he completed this rendering, the audience requested for another eulogy. He sang the following couplets:

Your beauty is the adornment of the whole creation. The splendours of both worlds are a “zakāh” of your beauty.

From your forehead is manifest the Supreme Being's reflection. The dust of your street is the antimony (*surmah, kuh̄l*) for the eye of the universe.

From the court of Allāh you were conferred with all angelic powers and celestial splendours.

¹ The Holy Qur'ān is divided into thirty parts, each part is called a *pārā*.

Your beneficence is evident from the
Caucasus to Qayrawān.¹ From the Ka'bah to
Somnāt is the lustre of your grace.

The birds of the heavenly garden are hopping
from branch to branch, and dancing from
tree to tree to convey salutations to you.

By merely looking at your might, the ranks
of unbelief were dispersed, the neck of Hubal
was bent, and the spell of Lāt² was broken.

By a mere indication of the eye, you
completely changed all conception of the
mind, all emotions of the heart.

How? Why? Wherefore? To what extent? In
one word you resolved all these eternal
questions.

You turned the stranger into a kinsman,
filled the sting with honey, and restored all
broken relations in no time.

What a revolution it was that in its mould all
were cast: Lisbon, Paris, Damascus, Peking,
Delhi and Herat?!

The family of Ādam *'alayhis salām* regained
its honour; you did away with all disparities
of race and blood, and distinctions of caste
and colour.

¹ A Tunisian town, famous as a seat of learning.

² Hubal and Lāt are names of two well known idols of pre-Islamic Arabia.

The simplicity of the residents of Madīnah reflected the glory of Allāh, before which the pomp and formalities of non-Arabs were subdued.

Like myself, anyone who wetted his tongue with your praise, he received the flow of the Euphrates River in his pen.

Your mercies pervade all – the high and the low. From the earth to the Throne, peace and salutations be to you.

O you whose every hair is dyed in compassion, to whom can I relate my problems except you!?

The night is dark, and the boat is caught in the storm. The tide of calamity is lying in wait, and the shore of salvation is far away.

Holding the leg of the Throne, I beseech Allāh *ta'ālā* with utmost respect. For You alone are the fountain-head of kindness.

Whether Your servants are good or bad, You are, after all, the Gracious one. Why, then, should the favours of the Beneficent be cut off!?

What is the reason for this reprimand against the one who was regarded with benevolence? Why is this eye of kindness turned away from us?

The spontaneity of Zafar 'Alī Khān's composition, and his vibrancy and command over Persian idioms caused the audience to automatically think of Iqbāl Ahmad Khān Suhayl. The two were products of the

same centre of learning,¹ studied under the same teacher,² and inherited a sound taste for Persian from him. The audience requested him to render his famous eulogy, the opening lines of which were:

No matter how much the rays of the sun try,
the torn collar of the morning cannot be
mended.

The poet obliged by rendering the following couplets which sent the appreciative audience into an ecstasy.

Muḥammad, the very first word from
nature's pen. Muḥammad, the bearer of
divine signatures.

The conqueror whose green satin flag is
revolving. The unlettered one before whom
the wisest is like a school boy.

The binder who made intellect and religion
one, like milk and sugar. The separator who
removed the stain of monasticism from
asceticism.

The speaker before whom the nightingale of
the lote tree is dumb. The truthful to whose
truthfulness Allāh *ta'ālā* Himself testifies.

The just in whose scales of justice the dust
of destitution and the awe of the royal crown
are the same.

¹ Aligarh College.

² Maulānā Shiblī Nu'mānī *rahimahullāh*.

The joiner who brought together the scattered beads. Who came and wiped out all distinctions between man and man.

The treasure house of truths in whose every word the principles of philosophy, secrets of psychology and mysteries of sociology are hidden.

The divulger of secrets who, in a few hints, laid bare the dense and concealed sciences of the early and latter generations.

The audience also requested him to render a few couplets from his famous composition, *Mauj-e-Kauthar*. Amīr Mīnā'ī and Maulānā Zafar 'Alī Khān, who had also composed verses in the same rhyme and meter, joined in the request. He rendered the following couplets, and the *Durūd* of "sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam" echoed in the entire audience.

Aḥmad, the Messenger, pride of both worlds.
Sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam.

The first manifestation [of Allāh's power], the Seal of all Messengers. Sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam.¹

Body purified, soul embellished, heart illuminated, light distilled. Personification of beauty, embodiment of good. Sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam.

The one who wiped out the darkness of unbelief, the one who distributed the wealth

¹ Translation: Salutations and peace of Allāh be on him. The original Arabic is maintained throughout to draw the blessings of Allāh *ta'ālā*.

of *Dīn* freely. The one who caused the flag of *tauhīd* to flutter. *Sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam.*

Cultivator of the garden of the world, who obliterated the practice of slavery and re-adorned the garden of Ādam *‘alayhis salām.* *Sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam.*

The assembly of nations was in disorder, the pearls of the Truth were scattered. He united and arranged them all. *Sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam.*

He broke all the chains of superstition, and forged man’s bond with one Allāh. He turned the world of polytheism upside down. *Sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam.*

Whether it was with regard to the individual or society, authority and obedience, earning and contentment, or pardoning and bravery – he solved all their vague mysteries. *Sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam.*

Whether it was agreement and conflict, submission and command, poverty and affluence, or justice and compassion – he showed all their mutual limits and boundaries. *Sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam.*

Upholding ranks, regard for equality, effort and reliance, and friendship and enmity were all embraced within the boundaries and limits set by Allāh *ta’ālā.* *Sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam.*

He is a mirror of mercy in the heavens and earth, he will be a shade of mercy on the day of Recompense. The flag of praise [of Allāh

ta'ālā] will be in his hand. *Sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam.*

To those who put thorns in his path, showered abuse at him, and pelted stones at him; he sprinkled the dew of love on them. *Sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam.*

He was the king of poverty and wealth, healer of body and soul, and the confluence of the spiritual and material worlds. *Sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam.*

The audience now requested Hadrat Amjad Hyderābādī to render something. Those who had already heard his compositions requested him to render the poem in which he captures the scene of the *hijrah*. Amjad had presented an example of simplicity in it. He rendered the following couplets:

The spring breeze left from the courtyard of the Ka'bah. The carriage of flowers is going to Madinah.

The mercy of Allāh has departed; each one is beseeching and crying out of sorrow.

Someone is saying, while trying to restrain his emotions: "O you who are going to that side, cast just one glance on this side."

A river of blood is flowing from the eye of Zam Zam,¹ for it is also a mourner within the precincts of the Haram.²

¹ Referring to the well of Zam Zam in Makkah.

² The Sacred Sanctuary.

Every heart is restless like the lightning, the call of each one is: "Listen to me."

"O you who are departing, do not turn your face away from us. Who is here to take care of us helpless people?"

The hearts of Safā and Marwah¹ are torn to bits. What a thunderbolt it was which split these rocks!

The entire Ka'bah is dressed in mourning, and the cave of Hirā is calling out in distress:

"Where are you going, O you who was carefully brought up by me? O you departing one, come back into my lap."

The people's eyes now fell on Hafiz Jālandharī, and they requested him to render the *salām* of his composition titled, *Shāhnāmā-e-Islam*, which was popular among all sections of society. Hafiz rendered the following verses in his charming and emotional tone, causing the audience to be left enraptured.

Peace to you, O son of Āminah, O beloved of Allāh! Peace to you, O pride of all the creation, the pride of the human race.

Peace to you, O shadow of the Merciful. Peace to you, O light of Allāh. Your footprint is the tablet of life's forehead.

Peace to you, O the secret of Oneness [of Allāh *ta'ālā*], O sun of the light of *īmān*. How boundless this honour! What a boon, your arrival!

¹ Names of two small mountains in Makkah.

With your arrival, splendour came into the garden of life. The grace of Allāh once again accompanied destiny.

Peace to you, O the one on the highest pedestal of morality! You taught man these pure deeds, and these spiritual practices.

Your face, your character, your appearance, your lustre, your smile, your speech, your concern for your fellow servants, and your cheerful countenance.

Although “poverty is my pride”¹ is the mark of your contentment, the pomp of Cyrus² and Khāqān³ is under your feet.

The world is waiting for a new order because elements of the world have suffered for too long.

May every nook and corner of the world be illuminated, and each dust particle be radiant with your reflection.

This poor Hafiz is also a beggar at your door, my forehead of devotion is luminous by your grace.

Let my head be at your door, and my heart in your house. My yearning is brief, although my prelude was lengthy.

¹ Reference is made to a Hadīth.

² King of Persia and founder of the Persian Empire.

³ Titles of Chinese and Turkish kings.

Peace to you, O the one who broke the burning chains of falsehood. Peace to you, O the one who mended the broken hearts of clay.

After Hafiz, the people turned towards Māhir al-Qādrī and requested him to render his famous and well-received eulogy in which he captures the universal favours of the benefactor to the world [sallallāhu *'alayhi wa sallam*] and the astounding revolution brought about by the prophet-hood of Muḥammad [sallallāhu *'alayhi wa sallam*]. Poetic force and eloquent expression were accompanied by accuracy and truthfulness. Māhir Sāhib accepted their request and rendered the following couplets:

Unbelief spread some mischief, tyranny fanned the fire. Enmity woke up in the hearts, and man fought against man.

The strong crushed and destroyed the weak, and when oppression and tyranny crossed the limits, Muḥammad [sallallāhu *'alayhi wa sallam*] appeared on the scene.

The clouds of mercy gathered in the sky, and the hopes of the world were fulfilled. They [the clouds] poured down goodness and beneficence, and showered pearls of virtue.

The herders of camels now lit the lamps of civilization, gave the value of flowers to the thorns, and brightened the fate of dust particles.

He forged a bond with Allāh *ta'ālā*, and broke the spell of falsehood. He turned the tide of time itself, and enabled ships to sail through the storms.

He gave the sword and the Qur'ān, bestowed the world and the Hereafter. He referred to death as martyrdom, and taught the ways of living.

Where the land of Makkah, and where the Throne! In one moment he is here, and the next moment there.¹ He gave a rock the power to speak, and split the moon in two.

He heard the cries of the oppressed, shared the sorrow of the helpless. He applied a balm to the wounds, and came to the assistance of the restless hearts.

He conferred the sheet of modesty to women, and the blush of self-respect too. He created delicacy in glassware,² and caused the essence of character to glitter [in them].

The tide of *tauḥīd* could not be stopped, the flag of Islam could not be lowered. The unbelievers went into a rage, and Satan fumed and fretted.

O name of Muḥammad! Salutations of Allāh be on you. You are everything for Māhir. A smile came on my lips, and tears also welled in my eyes.

On hearing these selected praises which were rendered by these erudite poets, the people naturally began thinking of Madīnah together with the “master” of Madīnah. Those who had already visited Madīnah

¹ Referring to the Mi'rāj (the ascension to the seven heavens).

² Referring to women.

had their old wounds reopened. Those who were not blessed with this good fortune as yet were seized with a desire to present themselves. The gaze of the people fell on Hamīd Siddīqī Sāhib who had become well-known by the title of *Zā'ir-e-Haram* (the visitor to the Sanctuary of Madīnah) because of his several visits to the blessed city, and the description of his visits in his poems. The people asked him to render a poem in which he describes the feelings which he had at presenting himself [before Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*], and the emotions which he felt at the time of departure from Madīnah. He came forward at the insistence of the people and rendered his composition in a charming and emotional tone.

What a unique time it was when I departed from the city of perfume and light. What a scene it was when I took leave from the threshold of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*.

I recited the *durūd* in a restless tone, in agony and ecstasy – sometimes directly in front of the lattice,¹ sometimes, away from it, but in line with it.

That glance which gave off light, that tranquil heart, and that peaceful soul. Who can dare to gaze at the curtain of light?

That soft gentle breeze, that morning hour, and the low and high tunes of the *adhān*. Everyone is enthusiastically immersed in the

¹ Referring to the latticed frame behind which lies the blessed grave of Rasūlullāh *sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*.

remembrance of Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*.

Those heavy downpours of beneficence, those mercies and bestowals. If anyone could only behold brilliance of the expositions from the alcove of light.

Never could the tunes of the violin and harp enrapture me. After all, my heart is intoxicated with the singing of the birds of the garden of Madīnah.

Even today, I can visualize the beauty of that full moon light, the radiance that is diffused from the dome of light.

How I long for Bīr Gharas.¹ My thirst itself is testimony to my longing. It is not the thirst which will be quenched by a pure drink.

What my eager eye really wishes to see is Mt. Uhud. It is not bothered about the garden of delights, nor enthusiastic about beholding Mt. Sinai.

O visitors to Madīnah, if you ever pass by the desert of Badr, convey my *salām* to those who are buried there.

To whom should I relate my hidden grief? Why are my eyes shedding tears? My heart, here, does not enjoy the tranquillity and peace which it did when I was there in close proximity to Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*.

¹ This is the name of a well which lies about half a mile to the east of Musjid-e-Qubā.

O Hamīd! May death come to me in this state of restlessness. The same poem will be on my lips when I awaken from the noise of the day of Resurrection.

The word *nishūr* (Resurrection), mentioned in the last couplet, caused the people to think of Nishūr Wāḥidī. Those who had heard his composition, *Kuhna galīme, tāzā payāme*, (the blanket may be old, but the message is new) requested him to come onto the stage and to revive the spirits of all. Nishūr Sāḥib had been sitting quietly and respectfully all this time. He came forward and rendered the following lines in his own unique tune.

We are speaking about him, with tearful eyes, of whom the history of mankind is proud.

Absolute in *īmān*, firm in command, an embodiment of light, life of both the worlds.

An essence of guidance, Aḥmad is his name. Yathrib is his residence, Baṭ-ḥā is his garden.

Ever since the beginning of the creation, the entire world has been caught up in a storm.

The ship is useless, the shore is false, the Last Messenger is the only hope.

He is the friend of all – the high and the low. The blanket may be old, but the message is new.

Were it not for the grace of *Alastu*,¹ the world would not have been built anew.

Through the shadow of the Nabī did this world get its light which wiped out worship of falsehood.

With the moon in his hand, and the sun at his feet, what a morning, his morning! And what an evening, his evening!

The frenzy of love did not sing the song, nor discovered the secret of prophet-hood.

No one had come in privacy as yet; there was the light, but no shadow.

Hadrat Abū Bakr was his worthy deputy, the first caliph in the *Dīn* of Aḥmad.

Announcing his *īmān* in the midst of the silence, the lighthouse in the path of searching.

His sword is unsheathed, his planning is brilliant. He straightened the world, he is immortal in time.

He is Fārūq A'zam, the people's man. The word may be new, but the writing is eternal.

The way of 'Uthmān is to strive in sorrow, and to remain constant in patience and acceptance [of Allāh's will].

He taught us to remain vigilant, and to be silent under the dagger.

¹ Meaning: "Am I not?" The reference is to the Qur'ānic verse wherein Allāh *ta'ālā* asks: "Am I not your Rabb?" (Sūrah al-A'rāf, 7: 172)

There is blood at his throat, but the Qur'an is on his tongue. He is in communion with Allāh *ta'ālā*, although he himself is speechless.

In the body of 'Alī was the perfect soul. He was an excellent embodiment of knowledge and practice.

Perfect in *īmān*, perfect in recognition [of Allāh *ta'ālā*]. Although he had a simple and coarse diet, he was a perfect human.

A man of lofty aspirations, profound in thought. Tūbā¹ in his pocket, Kauthar² in his cup.

The lamp of *īmān* is burning bright once again, the world of politics is trembling.

History is repeating itself, the creation is going towards the Ka'bah.

Stage by stage, step by step; the world is travelling, with Ka'bah the goal.

In the end, the minds of the people thought of the Persian *na't* of Hadrat 'Azīz Safīpūrī once again. The opening line of which was:

The delicate beloved killed me without a sword. He is sweet in speech, merciful, the heart of hearts, and captivating.

¹ Name of a tree in Paradise.

² Name of a pond in Paradise, also known as Haud-e-Kauthar.

A learned person in the audience remembered that Maulānā Muḥammad Thānī Ḥasanī Sāhib¹ [*rahimahullāh*] compiled an addendum to it in the Urdu language, and that the assembly should conclude with his rendition. A candle was placed before Maulānā Muḥammad Thānī, and he rendered the following couplets:

How can this dust particle speak about the
one who is more splendid than the moon!?

How can he reveal the hidden secret of love?

How can this unknown beggar praise the
master?

He should first wash his mouth with musk,
and then say as follows:

The delicate beloved killed me without a
sword. He is sweet in speech, merciful, the
heart of hearts, and captivating.

I am singing in praise of you O my master,
king of the world.

How lovely is your name, how pure your
mind, and how clean your body!

You have a cheerful countenance, a
luminous forehead, a mouth like a rosebud
which is sweet in speech.

¹ A nephew of Ḥadrat Maulānā Abul Ḥasan 'Alī Nadwī *rahimahullāh*, and the one who translated many of the speeches in this collection from Arabic to Urdu.

The musk of Khatan¹ is a slave to the amber-like fragrance of your hair.

O jasmine! The envy of jasmine. O life of the garden, or of my life.

Charming, precious, awesome, determined.

You are a boundless ocean, I am a small stream.

You are an embodiment of life, the honour of both the worlds.

Welcome to you [*sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*]! You are the life for the world of colour and smell.

With your advent, Caesar and his likes were put to shame.

Destroyer of unbelief; animator of hearts, polite and amiable.

Pure in faith, pure of heart, more beautiful than those who are beautiful.

Should I call you the shining star or the full moon?

Should I refer to you as the life of the heavens and earth, or of the heart?

I consider you to be a beacon on the road and to the destination.

Hearts are drawn spontaneously towards you. Such is the charm which you possess.

¹ A district of Tartary which is famous for musk.

You have soft eyes, a glittering forehead, you either draw the hearts, or you overwhelm them.

Alluring, heart-melting, are you a pearl or a star?

Like a mad man, I hastened to the beloved's street.

I drank the wine of intense and ardent love, and went into a state of ecstasy.

When I was not satisfied by this [single visit], I went there everyday.

I went spontaneously while reciting this *na't*.

[I went] cheerfully, without restraint, and in a state of intoxication [of love].

Drunken eyes, a dignified temperament, what a marvellous spectacle.

O the embodiment of the creation! You are most beloved to all.

It was by your virtue that Allāh *ta'ālā* bestowed us with intellect and the power to distinguish.

The dust at your threshold is really what should be used to make antimony (*surmah*, *kuhl*).

To die at your threshold is more beloved to me than my own life and heart.

O 'Azīz! I am restless, tears are flowing, and I am in extreme distress.

Each time he takes away my heart, he imparts life in a new manner.

The night was long gone, and my learned host concluded the assembly with this final rendering which was most suitable as a conclusion because of its comprehensiveness and decisiveness. Together with its eloquence, it contains such honesty and factualness that even the most cautious and most learned litterateur cannot fault it. The assembly concluded with the following couplet of Āsī Ghāzīpūrī, and the people returned to their homes while singing this couplet:

O gentle morning breeze! After conveying my *salām* to him, tell him: “Your name is repeated next to Allāh’s name.”

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Al-hamdulillāh, the translation of this book was completed on 18 Muḥarram 1434 A.H./2nd December 2012.

May Allāh *ta'ālā* accept this humble effort and may He make it a means for our salvation in this world and the Hereafter. Āmīn.

رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ، وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ
الرَّحِيمُ

I request the reader to inform me of any mistakes, typographical errors, etc. in this translation. Constructive criticism and suggestions on how to improve this work are most welcome. I can be contacted via e-mail: maulanamahomedy@gmail.com

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