

THE PROPHET AND THE QURAN

Reference to be provided by Prof. Khurshid

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It is the law of nature that when darkness crosses certain limits, the light pierces through, obscurity ends and the cosmos is filled with bliss. The day when Qur'an was first revealed was one such unique day when humanity witnessed the supreme epoch-making revolution ushering in under the leadership of Prophet Muhammad (blessing of Allah and peace be upon him).

The very first Revelation was the death knell for the age of ignorance, darkness and obscurity. The series of revelations to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) continued for 23 years after which the Guidance was completed and humanity received the treasure trove of al-Noor that was to guide it for all times to come. More than 1400 years have passed since the first revelation and the advent of the Prophet (pbuh). The believers and followers of Islam the world over celebrate and remember it as an event that differentiates between the eras of darkness and knowledge.

The basic human needs in this world are of two kinds; one that relates to man's corporal and material life and the other that concerns his spiritual, moral and social life. Allah warranted fulfillment of both these needs so that while being complacent in life on the one hand, man may also exploit these judiciously to accomplish the desired goals in life.

Allah Almighty arranged for the two needs with absolute perfection and splendor. To satiate man's material needs, myriad of material resource has been stored in earth and heavens that man needs only to discover and put to use. In the same way, Allah arranged for spiritual, moral and social needs of man by unveiling the Hidayah (Guidance) through revelations.

While being the vehicles to communicate Guidance to humankind, the prophets' had all along been the embodiment and personification of the message itself. Thus, humanity came into being from light since Allah's clear message for salvation was always there for guidance in the form of prophets that came and went all through the human history. Adam (AS) - the father of human kind - was himself the first prophet of Allah. In its eternal and perfect form, the Divine Guidance revealed to Muhammad (pbuh) has been preserved in the form of Qur'an that has been destined to remain the Guiding source for humanity till the Day of Judgment.

To enable man perform responsibilities of vicegerency properly, the Master bestowed him with His Guidance and showed him the True Path. Man has been told that while the Universe is subservient to him, he is to serve only Allah and follow His Guidance all through his life. That the life here (on Earth) is probation and that the precise course of action is that man subjects his ambitions and actions to the will of God.

Man was taught all this while still in Eternity. The knowledge and comprehension of the Divine message was imparted to the very conception of human nature. The advent of prophets of Allah -

from Adam to Muhammad (pbuh) - was a reminder, construction and reinterpretation of that engraved message. While man was conferred the faculty of wisdom and understanding to identify truth and act accordingly, the holy prophets of God set their lives on stake and made remarkable sacrifices to keep humanity on the right path. Every land and nation received prophets and Muhammad (pbuh) makes the last ring of this golden chain. His prophet hood is universal and for all times to come. Muhammad (pbuh) offered the same religion (ad-Deen) of God that all prophets before him had preached. Those who accept and follow Islam as a way of life, transform into one Ummah. This Ummah is now responsible for integrating dictates of Allah in Qur'an, and the teachings and model of life presented by Prophet (pbuh) while shaping the system of its life.

The objective of Qur'an is to present Guidance and call man to that proper behavior, as Shah Waliullah says that the real purpose of the revelation of Qur'an is to civilize and discipline, to reform and amend false beliefs and conduct of human beings.

Qur'an presents a revolutionary concept of life. Life in this concept is not divided into sections or spheres of activity. Qur'an commands submission of the entire human life in service of the Lord; be it his perceptions, his thought, faith, inclinations or the collective human behavior.

Entering into Islam implies one cannot claim dissociation of any of his acts from Divine injunctions after accepting Islam. Both, the individual and collective human life, have to strictly follow God's rule, and to seek His good approval. Once this is done, Allah's Supreme authority can thus extend not only over the socio-politico-economic concerns of human society but also over the legal, judicial, administrative and governance affairs of the state as well.

The Qur'anic teachings do not support the disposition that an individual should focus merely his personal reform or acquire affinity to Allah for personal spiritual satisfaction. Undoubtedly, Qur'an seeks rectification of an individual's inner and outer selves and motivates strengthening his bonds with Allah, but not by disregarding his practical social responsibilities. Instead, man is advised to mold his societal obligations and human relations in such a way that everything falls in the purview of Divine Guidance and subject to the Will of Allah.

The Qur'an shaped both the individual and collective life. That was what guided the 6th century, oppressed and obscure society under the Prophet's leadership to a new era of the history where it transformed the Arab cattle farmers into the custodians of humanity; the desert Bedouins into architects of civilization. It was the new system that raised the ill-fed and poverty-struck people in such a way that they were to be recognized as leaders.

A question that may be asked is; If Qur'an has succeeded in creating a new world out of the barren and bitter land in the past, why is it not performing the same deed today? If it was a source of blessing and Divine approval in the past, why is it not invoking the same spirit now? If Muslims were dominant because of Qur'an yesterday, why are they subdued today whereas the Qur'an is still with them?

If we examine the situation, only two reasons shall crop up: One, that we [Muslims] may have practically abandoned the Book as a true guide and Seerah of the Prophet as a true model of Qur'anic teachings, our concern for the two might have been one of oblivion, disservice, neglect and indifference. Second, though we maybe respecting and sanctifying the Qur'an apparently, in actual practice we may be disregarding the way Qur'an prescribes and the Prophet practiced and might have been acting contrarily. Unfortunately, both of these reasons are correct in our case.

The first thing to do is to activate our dormant faith, which though accepts Qur'an, yet lacks in the will and volition needed to fulfill its commands. The Prophet (pbuh) and his Companions taught that Faith in fact implies that the Qur'an is the Revealed Book of God, that it is perfectly secure and safe, that each and every word in it is simply true, that following it is just, fair and prolific and, that its prescription is the only sure remedy to all ailments. It is also necessary that a man's heart is full of the feeling that the Qur'an is sublime, majestic and a noble word; if it had been revealed to the mountains, they would have shattered to pieces. The grand Holy verses of Allah deserve to be approached with utmost humility and unmitigated affection.

Muslims must stick to Qur'anic teachings firmly and seek its guidance in every matter. That is the way the Book will reveal its real meaning and intent. Imam Shatabi correctly states: One who wants to know the Religion should, of necessity, take Qur'an his companion and consoler. Has to have relationship with it around the clock. This contact and relation should be scholastic as well as practical, and duly balanced. One who follows this approach will hit his target.

The Qur'an has to be acted upon. Thoughts and perceptions need to be changed as it directs. Nothing is more unjust to Qur'an than to alter its meaning or intent to create false arguments for one's misdeeds, whereas one is required to change himself according to the Qur'anic injunctions. Similarly, reading it but disregarding in practice what it has commanded also amounts to negating the rights of Qur'an. Qur'an was revealed to mold human lives, individually and collectively. There is need to struggle for that to be achieved. Ibn Mas'ood (RA) is reported to have said: When a person (among the companions) would learn ten verses, he would not proceed further unless he understood them, and acted upon them.

The living model and criterion to understand and act upon the holy Qur'an is to believe in and accept the Prophet (pbuh), on whom the Book was revealed: "He who obeys the prophet, obeys Allah." Deviating from the holy Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh) will only take one further away from the Qur'an.

Finally, practical struggle to propagate and to make into a working system is required. Even having employed all these means to understand the Qur'an, one will never get to its essence unless he works physically for what the Qur'an is sent down. This Book does not make simple theories and concepts that you can sit in easy chair read, and then grasp all what it says, it is a Book of Dawah (call) and movement (Tehrik). The moment it was revealed, it took out that quiet, pious, kind-

hearted man, and made him stand against the whole rebellious world. ...How could one expect to get to the heart of the Qur'anic truths merely by reciting its verses, without stepping upon the field of battle between faith and disbelief, and between Islam and Ignorance (Jahiliyyah)? To appreciate the Qur'an fully one must take it up and launch into the task of calling people to God, making it one's guide at every stage. One of the characteristics of this "Qur'anic experience" is that at each stage one almost automatically finds certain Qur'anic verses to guide one according to the situation. A person engaged in this struggle may not grasp all the linguistic and grammatical subtleties, and may also miss some finer points in its semantics, yet it is impossible for the Qur'an to fail to reveal its true spirit to him. (Maulana Maududi, Tafhim-ul-Qur'an, Foreword, vol. 1)

These are the foundations on which to build one's relationship with the Qur'an and the Prophet on whom it was revealed. The problems and troubles currently faced by the Muslim are due to deviation from the path that Qur'an gives; path that leads to progress and honor.

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