
Preface

Muhammad (ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam) is not a myth but an all-time great. As a prophet, communicator, and interpreter of divine will, he has deeply impacted the course of civilization.

His uniqueness lies in proving to the world that humans can achieve their full potentials if they bond themselves to Allāh’s guidance. As revelation’s prime recipient who had to act as role-model to humanity, he inspired a large mass of humanity toward a balanced life of matter and spirit. He put man-God relationship on an even keel by showing that human success could be sought not in becoming godlike or angelic but in realizing one’s moral potential. In him, religiosity discovered its true dimensions by affirming faith in one true God, the source of all guidance, on the one hand, and by restructuring society and state on the firm foundations of morality and justice, on the

other. Thus, by fusing the secular with the religious, he inaugurated a new process of history, enabling humans to establish life on piety, respect for law, equality, moral responsibility, and social justice.

On the sociopolitical level, he molded a motley crowd of warring tribes into an ummah that changed the world forever by establishing one of the greatest living civilizations. Its current existence is for sure turbulent, but once the ummah succeeds in freeing itself from self-doubt, it can play again a positive role in saving humanity from the ravages of materialism, hedonism, rank exploitation, and rancorous hegemony of the nations of the world.

As the centerpiece of this historic process, who lived in the eye of history for sixty-three years, Prophet Muhammad's life is known in all its fullness. There is no mythology built around him: his apostolic work is spread over a span of twenty-three years, covering all aspects of individual and community living. Whether as human in the fullness of his relationship with others or as a reformer, a military commander, a sovereign, or a statesman, his model is superb, luminous as well as edifying. For sure, there is no other human in history who has played such a diverse role with such grace and dignity. The wholeness of the Islamic paradigm owes itself to his unique person, which has furthered the ethos of the Islamic ummah — both horizontally in the essential uniformity among his followers all over the Islamic realm, and vertically as prophet until now and beyond.

This relationship between the Muslims and their Prophet is not formal or legal: it is a commitment to live in his shadow, which makes it highly personal imparting it a spiritual glow. He has an uncanny ability to reach out and touch one's life, changing it from within. That is why in influencing human behavior and the life stream of history, he remains matchless. But Muslims are not alone in this testimony. For instance, when Thomas Carlyle began his search for "the hero as prophet," he could not help proclaim that Muhammad the truthful was such a person "to kindle the world." When Bernard Shaw looked for a role-model to steer the human race from present-day crisis to redemption, he could find no person but him. So is the case with Michael Hart. When he catalogued the list of the most influential men the world had, he could not restrain himself say that Muhammad "was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels. ... Today, thirteen centuries after his death, his influence is still powerful and persuasive" and that, it is "this unparalleled combination of real and religious influence which I feel entitles Muhammad to be considered the most influential single figure in human history."

If Muhammad is so unique a person in human history, would it not be fair that every human, whether he or she believes in him or not, at least make a serious effort to understand him and his mission, particularly in the context of the crisis of our own age? The West's materialis-

tic civilization has so disrupted the morals that humanity might lose whatever it has built over the centuries. It is my firm conviction that a deeper understanding of Muhammad's life and mission is a must for humanity.

Although hundreds of books on the Prophet's life have been written in the past in all the major languages of the world, and scores of such studies are appearing in our own time, the need for fresh efforts has never been obviated. Tārik Jān has rendered a unique service by his work on the life and times of Muhammad Rasūl Allāh. Based on the Qur'ān, the authentic sources of the hadith and history, and written with a clear perception of the Prophet's mission, the first volume covers his life from birth to *hijrah* (emigration) to Madinah.

What stands it apart in this genre

What stands it apart in this genre is the author's profound understanding of the methods of our own times, its myths and mysteries, its agonies and strifes. In this context, it is not merely a study of the Prophet's life but also a rendition of the changing times in whose making and unmaking his relevance can be understood. Tarik sees in his person the culmination of the Abrahamic tradition, and post-Muhammad era as its eternalization.

is the author's profound understanding of the methods of our own times, its myths and mysteries, its agonies and strifes. In this context, it is not merely a study of Muhammad's life but also a rendition of the changing times in whose making and unmaking his relevance can be understood. Tarik sees in his person the culmination of the Abrahamic tradition, and post-Muhammad era as its eternalization.

He also views things as a struggle between *haqq* (truth) and *bātil* (falsehood) — a conflict between the prophetic tradition and paganish deviations, with sharp focus on the crisis of civilization in our own times.

For him, past is not something to be eulogized or create idols but to identify defining moments of history that can help set humanity's house in order. And that gives this study an aroma of freshness, power, and relevance.

I have enjoyed reading it; there are moments when the reader is overpowered by the text and flushed by the richness and the relevance of the prophetic example. The timeless aspect of the prophetic model is very important, for the era that the revelation inaugurated in 609 C.E. still persists and will continue until history takes its final dip in time. So lasting is this aspect of his message that it ended the institution of prophethood for ever.

Most important, the reader will not find the narrative weighed down by unnecessary historiography and dates. It recreates the prophetic era in such a way that we feel ourselves

drawn into it, becoming part of that unique testimony to destiny.

May Allah give Tarik the best of the rewards and open up the hearts and souls of all his readers to the Prophet's message of truth and the life of struggle that constitute the sum and substance of this pioneering work.

Khurshid Ahmad
Islamabad

Safar 23, 1419

