

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) on Fundamental Human Rights

Introduction:

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) came as the final saviour and liberator of mankind from those selfish people who had wealth, power and greed. Muslims must always be briefed and become conversant with the life history of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), in appreciating the difficult stages of his life, which he experienced, since his birth. Yet the same man came up with fundamental human rights, not seen or experienced by any other community more than 1,400 years previously to now. It is also importantly essential to get introduced to an infant child, whose father died before he was born, whose mother also died before he was six years old, and who was left to fend for himself since childhood as a herdsman of camels, goats and sheep, and then he finally became a world leader, more than 1,400 years ago.

Family Background:

- 1) When Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was born, as Ahmad ibn Abdullah in 570AD, at Mecca, in Arabia, human life in that part of the world was one of the lowest in the Middle East region. People were experienced in drunkenness. They were gambling money, house property, and livestock, anything which had monetary value, and even gambled off their wife for money. There were all sorts of fights, which eventually became tribal wars. Consequently many young men, who were as fighting soldiers, got killed. Their young wives who became widows, were sold off for cash as slaves in the slave market. We all know from history, Ahmad's father died before Ahmad was born in 570AD.
- 2) Ahmad's father, Abdullah ibn Muttalib, aged 23, was a very honest businessman. He imported spices from India, crossed over from Mecca, then collected them from the Persian Gulf, transported them by camel train¹ and then sold them off in

¹ Camel trains used to be a convoy herd of many camels moving in a single file and held together with a single rope from the leading camel to the last camel in the convoy.

Damascus², Syria. He then used the cash and bought sundry items from Damascus and then sold them at profit in Mecca. Ahmad's mother, who was Amina bint Wahab, aged 17, had a visionary dream in her early pregnancy, whilst her husband was away on business in Syria.

- 3) She saw herself asleep and being visited by her husband Abdullah, who then advised her that she is pregnant with a son and who will become a very great person. He instructed her to name their baby as Ahmad. She then saw hundreds of rays of blue light, originating from her body to all parts of the world and she knew that her son would be a great person.
- 4) Later, Ahmad was born without seeing his father in 570AD. He had a special birthmark³. Amina became a very young widow at age 17. She hired Halima, a wet nurse to bring up Ahmad.
- 5) A few months later, their servants returned from Damascus with their camel train loads of merchandise. The servants then informed Amina that Abdullah had died on the way back to Mecca and they buried him where he died.
- 6) After the age of four, Halima returned Ahmad to his mother in 574AD. Halima, according to Quraysh customs, then had to present her first baby son to the child's paternal grandfather in Medina in 575AD. On the return journey from Medina back to Mecca, Halima died on the way in 576AD. Ahmad, who became an orphan at age of less than six, was taken back to Medina and put into custody of his grandfather Abu Muttalib. After adopting the child Ahmad, Abu Muttalib changed Ahmad's name to Muhammad in 576AD. From the age of six, Muhammad grew up on his grandfather's farm, as a herdsman looking after camels, goats and sheep. Two years later in 578AD, his grandfather also died and Muhammad was now placed under care of his paternal uncle, Abu Talib ibn Abu Muttalib. There were so many children in that household.

² In those days around 1,400 years ago, Damascus was the main trading centre inasmuch as cities like Bangkok, Singapore and Hong Kong are today.

³ The birthmark was on his left back shoulder. It was oval in shape and some moles and hair in a peculiar pattern. Those who were able to interpret the birthmark, acknowledged that it had a special message on the greatness of Ahmad. That birthmark remained till his death.

Discussions:

- 7) A very important point to note is that Muhammad never went to school and never received any kind of education. He could not read and write his own name.
- 8) Many years later at the age of 25, Muhammad got married to a camel-renting businesswoman Khadija and moved out in 595AD. When Muhammad was aged 40, after 15 years of marriage, he was ordained by Almighty God as His Prophet to mankind and this message came through Archangel Gabriel in 610AD. He then became Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*). Archangel Gabriel visited Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) regularly for almost 23 years, delivering all the verses of the Holy Qur'an, which Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) later recited from memory and then his scribes wrote them down almost immediately in the Arabic language.
- 9) Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) did not come just for Arabs, but he came for the world in sharp contrast to previous prophets, who came expressly for their own communities only. Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) received by Divine revelations, religious laws and values from Almighty God and not from people on earth. His way of life was directly from Divine Guidance.
- 10) Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) came for the long term for permanency of his messages. He brought permanent guidelines and solutions written in the Holy Qur'an. Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) demonstrated and practised what he preached. His demonstrated practises are recorded in the six top Hadith⁴.
- 11) Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) addressed all people in every society: the rich, the poor, the white-skinned and the coloured-skinned, the educated and the ignorant peoples and community leaders. He addressed all aspects of human life. He made clear in

⁴ 1. The Six Top Hadith are: **Sahih Bukhari**, collected by Imam Bukhari (d. 870), includes 7000+ hadith. 2. **Sahih Muslim**, collected by Muslim b. al-Hajjaj (d. 875), includes 9000+ hadith 3. **Sunan al-Nasa'i**, collected by al-Nasa'i (d. 915) 4. **Sunan Abu Dawood**, collected by Abu Dawood (d. 888) 5. **Jami al-Tirmidhi**, collected by al-Tirmidhi (d. 892) 6. **Sunan ibn Majah**, collected by Ibn Majah (d. 887)

his preaching that he came for the entire world and that all his guidance came from Almighty God, Who is the Best Knower. Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) came and gave humanity the best values of life in fundamental human rights more than 1,400 years ago, which people enjoy and benefit today and will continue to do so for as long as this world exists.

12) Before Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*), girls and women had little value to society and were regarded as part of the household and could be disposed of at any time. He impressed and stressed upon the society of men that by giving girls and women their due respect and value as people, men do not lose their manhood.

13) In a nutshell, Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) delivered the following rights to women:

- a) The right to live.
- b) Having equal social rights.
- c) The right of inheritance.
- d) The right to be maintained by her husband.
- e) The right to own any kind of property.
- f) The right to have education.
- g) The right of equality in law.
- h) The right to initiate divorce against her husband if he continuously breaks his marriage vow.
- i) The right to privacy and chastity.
- j) The right to personal security and personal protection.

14) Again in a nutshell, Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) delivered the following rights to men:

- a) To remember that whilst a man has rights over his wife, his wife also has rights over him.
- b) Man has the right to take a wife but she also has rights to live in the same house as her husband, to be fed the same food as her husband, to be given the same good clothes as he wears and to have same protection as he has for himself and to ask him for kindness.
- c) Not to ill-treat the wife as she is his equal partner.

- d) The man has the right to stop his wife making friends with anybody that he does not approve.
- e) The right to initiate divorce against his wife if she continuously breaks her marriage vow.
- f) The right to take back his wife into marriage after reaching mutual consent between themselves.

15) Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) established during his lifetime in the Holy Qur'an that he Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) is the sealing off of all prophets and that he as Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) is the Last and Final Prophet.⁵

16) No new prophet shall be Divinely revealed to after his death. No past prophet shall reappear as prophet. Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) also established that the religion of Islam has been completed and Islam is the Last and Final revealed religion.

17) Finally Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) also established that the Holy Qur'an is the Last and Final revealed scripture and no new revealed scripture shall appear after the Holy Qur'an.

18) Therefore the specific issues of fundamental human rights to both men and women, established all over the Holy Qur'an, shall remain intact and binding and not superseded by any other scripture in future. Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) died in 632AD.

19) The following are only some of the many Basic Human Rights in the Holy Qur'an, but not all the quotations are given below, in order to keep this article short and crispy:

⁵ From names of Prophet Adam to Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*), a total of 124,000 Prophets (*Nabi*) were appointed by Divine revelations, but directly delivered to them by Archangel Gabriel, as spiritually contracted. Out of 124,000 Prophets, only 313 are Messengers (*Rasul*). Out of 313 Messengers, only 25 have been mentioned by name in the Holy Qur'an. Note: that every Messenger (*Rasul*) is also a Prophet, but every Prophet (*Nabi*) is not a Messenger. All of these 124,000 prophets were regular human beings who must eat food, drink water, breath air and need atmospheric pressure to stay alive. The figure of 124,000 prophets is quoted in Hadith No 21257 of *Musnad ibn Hanbal*. Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) was the Last and Final Prophet and after his death in 632AD, that sealed off all prophets of any description whatsoever being appointed by Divine revelations, to serve humanity on earth. This is stated in the Holy Qur'an at **HQ33:40** "*Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the prophets. And Allah is ever Knower of all things.*" Seal means total shutting off arrival of any prophet of whatsoever description: No new prophet and no re-entry of any of the past 124,000 prophets will eventuate.

- 20)** The Holy Qur'an supports the fundamental human rights of the right to life. Accordingly, the Holy Qur'an does not support wanton murder, unless the killing was in self-defence. On the contrary, the Holy Qur'an supports people to save lives, when peoples' lives are in danger. This has been stated at **HQ5:32** *"For this reason We prescribed for the Children of Israel that whoever kills a person, unless it is for manslaughter or for mischief in the land, it is as though he had killed all mankind. And whoever saves a life, it is as though he had saved the lives of all mankind. And certainly Our messengers came to them with clear arguments, but even after that many of them commit excesses in the land."*
- 21)** Communities in the past did not practise family planning and when they reached extremes in poverty because of very large families, they had developed killing of their children. The Holy Qur'an encourages sensible family management by both parents and children of their right to live. This is stated at **HQ6:151** *"Say: Come! I will recite what your Lord has forbidden to you: Set up no partner with Him, and do good to parents, nor kill your children for (fear of) poverty — We provide for you and for them, nor go near to indecencies, open or secret, nor kill the soul which Allah has made sacred except in the course of justice. This He enjoins upon you that you may understand."*
- 22)** Loans and repayments are based on honesty and the lender must allow the person borrowing to repay, taking into consideration certain difficulties encountered in repayment. The Holy Qur'an clarifies this point at **HQ3:75** *"And among the People of the Book is he who, if you entrust him with a heap of wealth, would pay it back to you; and among them is he who, if you entrust him with a dinar, would not pay it back to you, unless you kept on demanding it. This is because they say there is no blame on us in the matter of the unlearned people and they forge a lie against Allah while they know."*
- 23)** As already deliberated above, women have equal rights to men. This is stipulated in the Holy Qur'an at **HQ4:124** *"And whoever does good deeds, whether male or female, and is a*

believer — these will enter the Garden, and they will not be dealt with unjustly in the least.”

- 24)** Women and girls must have privacy and the chastity of women. Unless women are taken into marriage, their privacy and chastity must be respected and with no fornication. This is stated in the Holy Qur’an at **HQ4:24** *“And all married women except those whom your right hands possess (are forbidden); (this is) Allah’s ordinance to you. And lawful for you are (all women) besides those, provided that you seek (them) with your property, taking (them) in marriage, not committing fornication. Then as to those whom you profit by (by marrying), give them their dowries as appointed. And there is no blame on you about what you mutually agree after what is appointed (of dowry). Surely Allah is ever Knowing, Wise.”*
- 25)** The standard of life and peaceful living must to the extent be levelled off with welfare schemes, so that all people within the community are able to get the basic necessities. This is stated in the Holy Qur’an at **HQ51:19** *“And in their wealth there was a due share for the beggar and for one who is deprived (of good).”*
- 26)** All members of the communities must have their basic dignity of their right to be respected. Giving people respect and refraining from backbiting are expectations of Muslims. This is stated in the Holy Qur’an at **HQ49:11-12** *“O you who believe, do not let a people laugh at (another) people, perhaps they may be better than they; nor let women (laugh) at women, perhaps they may be better than they. Neither find fault with one another, nor call one another by (offensive) nick-names. Evil is a bad name after faith; and whoever does not repent, these it is that are the wrongdoers. O you who believe, avoid most of suspicion, for surely suspicion in some cases is sin; and do not spy nor let some of you backbite others. Does one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You abhor it! And keep your duty to Allah, surely Allah is returning (to mercy) again and again, Merciful.”*
- 27)** The right to own property applies equally to both men and women and this must be done with honesty and fairness. This is stated in the Holy Qur’an at **HQ4:29** *“O you who believe, do not*

swallow up your property among yourselves by false means except that it be trading by your mutual consent. And do not kill your people. Surely Allah is ever Merciful to you.”

- 28)** Education is both a fundamental need and a fundamental right to all communities. Accordingly education became the very first and the opening verses to the very first revelation delivered to Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) by Archangel Gabriel. This is in the Holy Qur’an at **HQ96:1-5** *“Read in the name of your Lord Who creates — creates man from a clot (of blood) — read and your Lord is most Generous, Who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know.”*
- 29)** Justice is expected to be the fundamental thinking standard for all Muslims, and this is stated in the Holy Qur’an at **HQ4:135** *“O you who believe, be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness for Allah, even if it is against your own selves or (your) parents or near relatives — whether he is rich or poor, Allah has a better right over them both. So do not follow (your) low desires, that you deviate. And if you distort (the truth) or turn away (from it), surely Allah is ever Aware of what you do.”*
- 30)** Equality amongst people must be exercised at all times, regardless of gender. This is stated in the Holy Qur’an at **HQ49:13** *“O mankind, surely We have created you from a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other. Surely the noblest of you with Allah is the most dutiful of you. Surely Allah is Knowing, Aware.”*
- 31)** The right to divorce may be initiated by either the husband or the wife, depending who is the more seriously aggrieved party⁶. The fundamental right to divorce is stated in the Holy at

⁶ Once the first declaration for divorce is made to the other party, there has to be a waiting time of three months, to establish whether or not the wife may be pregnant. Opportunity still exists for reconciliation in the meantime, in the event the couple want to compromise and continue with marriage, within this first three months of waiting time. Thereafter, there has to be another waiting period of another three months, to finally establish whether or not the wife may be pregnant. Again, opportunity still exists for reconciliation in the meantime, in the event the couple want to compromise and continue with marriage. If the wife is not pregnant and there is no mutual reconciliation to continue with marriage, then divorce has to be pronounced the second time as final and that is the end of that marriage (*nikka*). If however, the wife is pregnant, then the divorce proceedings must be deferred until the child is born.

HQ2:229 *“Divorce may be (pronounced) twice; then keep (them) in good fellowship or let (them) go with kindness. And it is not lawful for you to take any part of what you have given them, unless both fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allah. Then if you fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allah, there is no blame on them for what she gives up to become free thereby. These are the limits of Allah, so do not exceed them; and whoever exceeds the limits of Allah, these are the wrongdoers.”*

32) Whilst people may have the freedom to lead their life, they must not develop machinations against Almighty God. This is stated in the Holy Qur’an at **HQ3:79-80** *“It is not for a mortal that Allah should give him the Book and the judgment and the prophethood, then he should tell people: Be my servants besides Allah’s; but (he would say): Be worshippers of the Lord because you teach the Book and because you study (it); nor would he command you to take the angels and the prophets for lords. Would he command you to disbelieve after you submit?”*

33) Freedom of religion also means that there is no compulsion in religion and this is stated in the Holy Qur’an at **HQ2:256** *“There is no compulsion in religion — the right way is indeed clearly distinct from error. So whoever disbelieves in the devil and believes in Allah, he indeed lays hold on the firmest handle which shall never break. And Allah is Hearing, Knowing.”*

Once again, opportunity still exists for reconciliation in the meantime, in the event the couple want to compromise and continue with that marriage. Sometimes the birth of the child may mellow feelings and the couple may cancel the divorce proceedings. On the contrary, if the child is born and the divorce proceeds, and regardless the wife remarries another man, the divorced husband and father of the child is compelled to meet the costs of weaning his child for next two years: **HQ2:233** *“And mothers shall suckle their children for two whole years, for him who desires to complete the time of suckling. And their maintenance and their clothing must be borne by the father according to usage. No soul shall be burdened beyond its capacity. Neither shall a mother be made to suffer harm on account of her child, nor a father on account of his child; and a similar duty (devolves) on the (father’s) heir. But if both desire weaning by mutual consent and counsel, there is no blame on them. And if you wish to engage a wet-nurse for your children, there is no blame on you so long as you pay what you promised according to usage. And keep your duty to Allah and know that Allah is Seer of what you do.”*

34) Slavery in Islam is not encouraged but Muslims may keep servants⁷ and pay them fair wages. Freeing of slaves already held is however encouraged. In addition Islam encourages normal life to slaves as fundamental human right. Further Islam also encourages marriage amongst the slaves but they must be released from slavery first. Moreover, Islam requires the employer not only to free the slaves but also help out in their marriage costs. Islam forbids any practises of prostitution amongst the slaves. All of these are stated in the Holy Qur'an at **HQ24:32-33** *“And marry off those among you who are single (to spouses), and those who are fit among your male slaves and your female slaves. If they are needy, Allah will make them free from want out of His grace. And Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing. And those who cannot find a match must keep chaste, until Allah makes them free from want out of His grace. And those of your slaves who ask for a contract (to buy their freedom), give them the contract, if you know any good in them, and give them something out of the wealth of Allah which He has given you. And do not compel your slave-girls to prostitution when they desire to keep chaste, in order to seek the frail goods of this world's life. And whoever compels them, then surely after their compulsion Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.”*

35) Islam forbids aggression and incitement of war but specifically states practising of self-defence. In self-defence, Islam compels Muslims to strike (at the neck) or shoot first fatally to kill the aggressor. However, once the aggressor has been overcome, then Muslims must reach truce and enter into Peace Treaty. This has been stated in the Holy Qur'an at **HQ47:4** *“So when you meet in battle those who disbelieve, strike the necks; then, when you have overcome them, make (them) prisoners, and afterwards (set them free) as a favour or for ransom till the war lay down its burdens. That (shall be so). And if Allah please, He would certainly exact retribution from them, but that He may try*

⁷ Servants may be either live-in or live-out. If servants are live-in they must be given same food as the master.

some of you by means of others. And those who are killed in the way of Allah, He will never allow their deeds to perish.”

- 36)** Animals are also creations of Almighty God and they also have rights to live. This is stated in the Holy Qur’an at **HQ24:45** *“And Allah has created every animal of water. So of them is that which crawls upon its belly, and of them is that which walks upon two feet, and of them is that which walks upon four. Allah creates what He pleases. Surely Allah is Possessor of power over all things.”*
- 37)** Women also have the right to work and earn a living for their own benefits. Whether or not the women share their earnings as part of the household budget are matters for mutual agreement before the commencement of work. The Holy Qur’an states this at **HQ4:32** *“And do not hanker after what Allah has given some of you above others. For men is the benefit of what they earn. And for women is the benefit of what they earn. And ask Allah of His grace. Surely Allah is ever Knower of all things.”*

Conclusions:

- A. The religion of Islam, through the preaching and demonstrated experiences of Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) and the stipulations in the Holy Qur’an, have given humanity, regardless whether or not they are Muslims, with a wealth of fundamental human rights, which were not known to the rest of the world previously.
- B. These fundamental human rights cover and include: Rights to women; right to life; right to respect; right to justice; right to freedom; right to acquire knowledge; right to sustenance of all types of life; right to work and earn a living; right to privacy; right of freedom from blame and insult; and right to good and happy life.
- C. Fundamental Human Rights, already stipulated in the Holy Qur’an more than 1,400 years ago, are subsequently and mainly reflected in the 30 Articles of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly on 10th December 1948.

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