



*(In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.)*

# **THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHET TO A WARRING WORLD**

**BY  
SIRDAR IKBAL ALI SHAH,  
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## THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHET TO A WARRING WORLD\*

AT a time like the present, when the world is faced with a desperate and seething struggle against vast forces of evil; when the soulful aspirations of the human race for the equality of mankind are being threatened by tremendous antagonism of brute force; when race-worship, economic nationalism and materialistic policies are mightily arrayed against men who believe in God's mercy and guidance; surely the time has come that on the felicitous occasion of the Prophet's Birthday, we should seek inspiration and direction in these dark days of the war from that which the Prophet exhorted.

What then is the Message of the Prophet to the Warring World to-day? The Message, of course, is no other than that which is contained in the several divinely-inspired Books, like the Torah, the Bible and, as a final word, in the Holy Qur-ân. That Message is: "BE IN PEACE!"

The Prophet Muhammad's last sermon further enjoins upon us matters of human conduct, whereby peace can be maintained and war avoided. It lays down those irrefutable fundamentals upon which alone Universalism can be lastingly built; and the equality of man, completely divorcing all racial ascendancy, can effectively check human aggression; and intolerant nationalism ceases to be the slogan as a fulfilment of a people's destiny.

What exactly are the terms of that celebrated farewell address? I shall quote only a few of them here:

"Your lives and property are sacred and inviolable amongst one another . . . and are sacred to all.

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\* The text of a speech delivered on Wednesday, 9th April, 1941, at 18 Eccleston Square, London, the occasion being the Birthday of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

“Ye shall appear before God, Who shall demand from each of you an account of his actions.

“The aristocracy of old times is trampled under my feet. The Arab has no superiority over him that is not an Arab, and he that is not Arab has no superiority over the Arab. All are children of Adam, and Adam was made of dust.

“All Muslims are brothers, one of another. Ye are one Brotherhood. Nothing which belongs to another can be lawfully possessed by any, unless freely given out of goodwill.

“Guard yourselves against committing injustice . . . .”

From this we conclude that we are expected to:

- (1) Respect another's property, irrespective of the fact that it is an individual's or the state's property.
- (2) Each person is responsible for his actions.
- (3) No racial superiority shall exist.
- (4) We are to be just in our dealings.

Equality, the right of proprietorship and exercise of justice, then, are the key-points of human conduct, which will preserve peace, and whose disregard is certain to precipitate war.

Let us see whether the history of mankind vindicates the truth of these exhortations. If they emerge from the “crucible of stern analysis as radiant gold,” and we find that during various epochs of history their integrity as quellers of discord could have been satisfactorily applied; and further, that this period of war juxtaposes the like periods of evil passions; then, of a truth, the Message of the Prophet can be applied to-day in the full hope of defeating that which is not of the spiritual.

In this study of fact, one might divide the current of human history, so far as it appertains to Universalism, into three great cycles. The first of about 1,300 years takes us down to about 1,200 B.C. In it we begin with Sargon of Agade and his extension of the Babylonian Empire from Iraq to the shores of the Mediterranean. During this period great empires rose and perished. The World Empires of Hammurabi and Hittites can be recalled in this regard.

They conceived Universalism through what? Through irresistible nationalism based upon military conquest. They, too, endeavoured to build a concept of a Single God; but since the whole fabric was installed upon force of arms and racialism, retrogression set in and so effaced that which might have been mighty and glorious in the material sense, that beyond some ancient relics, they bequeathed little of human achievement and progress to the world.

The Dark Age that descended upon them, according to archæological workers, is directly traceable to the passion of grab and thralldom of the rulers; and because of the fact that the idea of equality of races had been subordinated to the all-conquering impulse which comes from being smitten by megalomania.

From 875 B.C. the second cycle may be said to begin when the Assyrian, Persian, Grecian and the Roman stars rose and fell.

And whereas it may not be denied that the second cycle which comes to a close in 476 A.D. did produce a conception of cosmos, during it rich philosophies had been popularised, universality of Ultimate Truth having been realised, was enshrined; so that both Greece and Rome did become the torch-bearers of a less dark age. Empire organisation and administration of those peoples had reached high standards of

excellence, but it can be disputed whether the military conception of race and nationalistic tendencies had been sufficiently curbed, even by a strong religious feeling, that again and again refulged during the Classical period. Narrowness of vision in exalting one people over the other, on purely materialistic grounds, were dictated to ensure permanency of the empires, so that the mundane interests of a particular nation always tended to produce discord, and destroyed tendencies towards Universalism, which the undeniable culture of Greece and Rome might have left to the succeeding generations.

The religions of Torah and the Bible have those essentials which contribute to a conception of World-Unity on the equality of man; and when they have been practised in their essential forms as spoken of in the Qur-ân, periods of peace have been enjoyed by the world; but not till these canons, so spiritually conceived, were practised, unalloyed by racial and materialistic aggression, were they successful in that which these Divine Books ordained.

It is so, therefore, because the spiritual sanction upon which alone world peace can be based and upon no other thing can it survive—least of all on provocative hostility towards other peoples on account of their race or tradition—is lacking. That conception has to be recaptured if madness from the world is to be dispelled.

#### THE BEACON LIGHTS OF THE FUTURE

In the third cycle of world history, did the Prophet find the panorama of life better than it was before? The Roman Empire from age to age had progressed, now struggling against dictatorship, now groping for the clearer vistas of democracy; and ultimately reposing upon the fast-decaying conception of world empireship,

in which the right of the strong was considered to be the only right conception. The Persian Empire in the East was likewise swaying in the false security of its imperial might, only to stagger and fall at the call of a greater and truer conception of the Brotherhood of Man—a brotherhood in which rank or wealth counted for naught, in which justice had to be writ large upon the conception of law, where the right of ownership of land and property was to be fully acknowledged. That was the Message of the Prophet. And what was the condition of Arabia when the Message was delivered?

The Arabs of Iraq, Bahrein and Yemen were under the rulership of the Persians, those of Syria acknowledged the Roman overlordship; and the Beduins, who were more or less independent, were always at war within themselves when they were not fighting against a common foe in the East or the West.

There was no question of cohesion as understood by a spiritual unity of ideals which invited to Universalism and Brotherhood of Man, much less to the equality between one race and another; or of the members of one clan to be no better or worse than the members of another tribe. There was appalling disunity. There was warfare mostly on account of property ownership, or due to some fancied slight inflicted by one clan upon another—in short, just for those reasons which the Prophet's sermon forbids, and which had, from the beginning of time, been the source and origin of all wars.

To this moral depravity, wine-bibbing and licentiousness was added the utmost cruelty in waging wars amongst the Arabs. During tribal wars, even women and children had no immunity. There was no consideration given to the keeping of treaty engagements as, for instance, when a tribal deputation came to the

Prophet so that a number of Muslims could be sent with them in order to preach Islam, and 70 of such Muslims, entitled *As-hab-e-Suffa*, thus deputed in peace, were assassinated by the unbelieving Arabs of the time. A second instance was that in which a reconnoitring party of the Muslims under Hadzrat Asim was surrounded by the tribes and, when three of them came down the hill to parley for peace, two of them were held prisoners and sold as slaves in Makka, whilst the third Muslim was assassinated. The savagery was further exemplified in their conduct when revenge was sought, not only from the enemy but from the relatives and even the neighbours of the enemy. Much of this kind of behaviour could be paralleled by the method of warfare to-day. For instance, throwing a bomb upon a children's home or in a residential area does mean disregard for the life of women and children; as also, in its literal sense, if a bomb is thrown upon those who reside near a military objective, it does connote taking revenge even from the neighbours, since the military objective is the real enemy. Translated in their original conception of sin, certain of the aerial tactics of the present war differ in no way from the crude methods of pre-Islamic days.

As against all those prevailing evils of pre-Islamic Arabs stand the points made out in the Prophet's sermon; *viz.*, equality, no race worship, protecting of life and possessions, and the exercise of justice. The result, of course, has been that when these orders were obeyed, as they were devoutly obeyed both in letter and spirit during the 35 years of Islamic Democracy—that is, during Khilafat Rāshida of the time of Abu Bakr, Omar, Osman and Ali—the world can see the most luminous page in human progress and peacefulness.

By Islamic preaching, the entire destiny of the

human race was altered, vice was eliminated, evil was dispelled; a unity and brotherhood was an established fact when the Prophet died in 632 A.D. His message continued to guide men's actions till the next 35 years, when the four Great Caliphs served the cause of humanity on the lines of human equality, and what did we see? Iraq-i-Arab had joined the Muslim fraternity; Syria had also come in; the bowing of the Sasanid dynasty to the superior spiritual force had also brought proud Persia within the Islamic fold; the torch of real democracy was being borne in 661 to Afghanistan and onward to the banks of the Indus. Only eleven years after this, the star shone in Bokhara and two years later in Samarkand. Westwards, too, after the Khilafat Rashida, the spirit of the Prophet's teaching, awakening the people to the birthright of man, was spreading, for in 641 it reached Egypt and, six years later, the gates of Roman Carthage were reached on the Barbary Coast. In the North, in 700 A.D., the wave surged up to Erzerum; thus the Commander of the Faithful—the real Servant of God and only an elected head of the Great Confederacy of Islam—served the people from the Caspian to the Nile, from Sind to the shores of the Atlantic.

These men of Islam—the four major Caliphs, the fourteen Omayyad Caliphs and 37 of the Abbasid dynasty—tended the Faithful with unswerving belief in the democracy which the Prophet enjoined upon us; they were imbued with the fundamental idea that peace can only be preserved if nationalism is subordinated to greater issues of human universalism, and that race worship and disregard for man's elemental rights is always the cause of war and disruption.

And, indeed, it is to be noted that when, even amongst the Muslims, extreme vagaries of personal



ambition have not been restrained, and zest for victory and exaltation of racial factors have been laid over the guiding spirit of Islam, their rule has been upset, and the Truth and Reality of the Prophet's Message, receiving a challenge, has compelled the people to destroy the untruth and establish once again that "you are brothers unto one another, that your property is sacred, that you do justice in the world."

No war in history has ever been fought or shall ever be fought to victory by any other mandate than these four tested canons. The progress of man's activities both in Asia and Europe gives some startling proof of the fact that universalism, equality, justice and protection of what one has—to paraphrase the Prophet's Address—must be the beacon-lights for the prosperity of mankind and of peace in the world.

#### DOOM OF RACE WORSHIP

The development of European history in relation to the conception of universalism shows a curious blending of sentiments—that is to say: nowhere could it be said that democracy, as understood by the words of the Prophet, was obtainable, more especially during the Middle Ages, in Central Europe.

In the first instance, one finds a struggle between the old and the new order of things; because with the progress of economic prosperity the Barons clashed against the Church, the King taking a neutral position. Soon we find the birth of a merchant class, who rightly thinking order and peace of the realm to be conducive to the flourishing of trade and industry, began to help the Crown. Of this, the Crown took due advantage, for both the Barons and the Church had been challenging his position. The King triumphed, but he did so at the expense of the liberty of the people, for as often as not he ended up by becoming an autocratic power.

We have this phenomenon rather well illustrated in French history, for how true it is that "the development of absolute monarchy," as Lord Acton observes in his book entitled "History of Freedom and other Essays," by the help of democracy is one constant characteristic of French history.

It was not till the Revolution of 1688 that a proof was forthcoming that the power of the people became greater in England; and in France it was manifested almost a hundred years after that date. Then Napoleon came to complete the test of national unification, but ended by making himself a dictator; and finally by becoming an absolute monarch.

To go back a little into the earlier periods of European history, it is to be observed that in France, the home of European Democracy, in the tenth and eleventh centuries, the word "Patria" was used of each individual province, and not of a whole country; indeed, whenever men of different origins came into contact, strife was likely to result. But the most remarkable of all the proofs of exaggerated nationalism which was sweeping across the face of Europe was furnished in 1272 A.D. when a commissary of a French abbey, who was sent to visit "daughter foundations" in England, reported about one of them: "the Prior is a good, wise, humble and discreet man, albeit an Englishman!"

Citations of these facts show that the idea of nationalism, which is opposed to Universalism, and so contrary to the Islamic spirit and the Last Sermon of the Prophet as a message of peace to the warring world, could be found even in the cradle of European democracy in the earlier period of this epoch. When Western Europe showed this aspect, it is surely begging the question to add that the aggressive mind of Germany

could not even conceive the ideals of the unity of mankind, even if the people there could have spared a thought from battling against the Popes of Rome.

“Partisan loyalty, love of the familiar and the hatred of the stranger,” says the author of *Nationalism*, “were at work throughout the Middle Ages to produce sentiments towards the various units which were remarkably like those now felt towards a nation.”

The result of this nationalism was that it gave a chance to the arising of dictatorships. If one may retrace one's steps further back into history, one does find instances that, even in the time of the Classical days of the Roman Republic, dictators had made their appearance. The names of Sula and Caesar might be mentioned. As an excuse of national aggrandisement, it is often said that, because the establishment of strong central government produced better economic conditions, therefore a unit tended to look after its own affairs and to recede from the common polity. The advancement of material prosperity exaggerated national feelings, and dictatorships are nothing but the natural concomitants of such nationalism, the more particularly when any weakening of central government threatened the safety of the prosperous conditions of a people.

If that were true, then how is it that the same sort of phenomenon operated in different manner amongst those who acted upon the fundamental order of the **Prophet**? Taking the period of Harun-ul-Rashid and even the time of the Omayyad Caliphs, we notice that the prosperity—material prosperity, if you like—of the Faithful could be envied by the greatest of all Western nations; no aggressive nationalism as such arose amongst them. The fact is that the index of life's values was differently oriented in the countries where the equality of man was not understood in the same spiritual sense as in the World of Islam.

The true conception of Equality of Mankind, which is the Message of the Prophet to the Warring World, is contained in the Qur-ân saying: "The most honourable is one most pious"—Qur-ân, 49: 13—which has killed for all times ideas of race superiority and national aggrandisement, and thus banished once and for all one of the greatest causes of war; indeed, which is the reason of the origin of this war, and shall be instigator of all future wars.

In the traditions of the Prophet, too, we find an echo of the same command, for Abu Hurairah reported that the Messenger of God was asked: "Who amongst men is the most honourable?" He replied: "The most honourable of them to Allâh is one who is the most pious of them . . . ." (The Holy Qur-ân, 49: 13.) Another *Hadis* from *Muslim* has it that Iyaq bin Himar reported that the Messenger of Allâh said: "Verily Allâh revealed to me that you shall be modest towards one another till nobody can boast over another, and nobody can make oppression upon another."

Does it not conclusively prove that nationalism, which Central Europeans proclaim as almost a biological phenomenon, and from which human mind has no escape, is a false conception; and that nationalism, which again and again has sapped the vitality of the West, to which the vain conception of racial ascendancy has added not a little in destroying the peace of the world, finds no place in the spiritual consciousness of the people of the Qur-ân; and, therefore, the pride is justifiably held that we are the real pioneers of world brotherhood, where race and nation means nothing; where democracy is the *summum bonum* of life; and that the Message of the Prophet to the Warring World may

again be repeated in terms: "You shall be modest towards one another till nobody can boast over another, and nobody can make oppression upon another?"

What is the world fighting for to-day, if it is not to see that no one government, no one set of people, no one race shall have ascendance over the other, and no one shall oppress the other? Is it, therefore, not exactly for those values which the Prophet, holding so dear, had pronounced to us now more than thirteen hundred years ago? And true indeed it is that a thousand or even more years from now, the peoples of the world will be faced with the same evil as they face to-day, if racialism, particularisation and race-worship is to continue to hold them in thrall.

### THE HOPE OF THE WORLD

In our own half-lived age, "the civilised world" has been sorely disappointed that the hopes engendered in the bosoms of soulful men and women by the establishment of a League of Nations at Geneva have been shattered. It was a hope which had emerged from the working of no less than 33 international peace organisations in Europe since 1815. It was a hope which had been nurtured by the blood of millions of men who laid down their lives during the Great War. It was a hope the fulfilment of which would have made the pronouncement of President Roosevelt unnecessary when he asked for the Four Essential Freedoms—freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want and freedom from fear. But what a look of disappointment has crossed the face of Europe like an evil shadow, till the cold truth has doused their ardent dreams!

And the truth?

Let me give it in the words of Dr. Garnett, one of the greatest workers for the League of Nations in England:

“It is not, however, to these minor difficulties that the League’s failure was due,” he says in his book called *World Unity*. It was due to the governments of the League Powers lacking any adequate collective sentiment, to the feebleness of their world-loyalty, to their narrow conception of national interests as something different from (and more vital than) the interests of the world at large . . . . While the representatives of the governments were talking internationalism at Geneva, they were mostly thinking undiluted nationalism.”

And the result?

Aggressive racialism was soon to make its appearance, for Hitler said in *Mein Kampf*:

“Education in the racial state attains its crowning perfection . . . in firing young hearts and minds with racial feelings. Systematically, the curriculum must be built up along these lines and education so handled that the youth, on leaving school, is neither a semi-pacifist, a democrat and the like, but a whole-hearted German.”

To which Rosenberg added: “The racial idea must dominate completely every kind of internationalism,” and gives the final touches to a challenge to all conception of international brotherhood with: “Freedom means to be bound by the ties of race; a people of brothers is a Utopian idea and not even a pleasant one.”

Both he and his master had chosen to ignore the lessons of history; and had certainly disregarded the brightest days of Islamic history when Persians, Yemenites, Hedjazis and the Egyptians and Turks, pulling their weight together and acting upon the

Message of the Prophet, had filled the world with boundless hope and poured its glory like a flood of light into the life-stream of nations.

Acting upon the injunctions of the Farewell Address of the Prophet, the soul force of the Muslim, reposing its trust upon God, had humbled the evil of race predominance. Then we note that the Omayyads have contributed in no small measure to the wealth of world culture and refinement; for who first started the departmental organisation of the state if they did not? The four *Diwans* are a monument of their administrative skill—the *Diwan Kharaj*, the *Diwan Khatum*, the *Diwan Rasail* and the *Diwan Mustaghillat*. Who built the beautiful city of Damascus with its rich public palaces and kiosks, the Green Palace, the Kasr Ghazara which was erected in green colouring and ornamentation and was considered a jewel of architecture? What also might be said of the theological college, the Pride of the East, which Hurr built at Mosul as the Governor of Caliph Hisham, or the Mashuka, the painted Palace? There were, too, gifted women and women of learning during the period of that dynasty, for who can challenge the scholarship of As-Syedda Sukaina, or the Saint Rabia, or that astonishingly learned Caliph Khalid, a great master of medicine and chemistry?

The same progress we note under the Abbasids, for the rule established by the Message of the Prophet for popular representation in the administration was exemplified by the conduct of the Caliph Mamun. During the time of these Caliphs, the policy was that which characterised the political outlook of Caliph Omar in not engaging in any wars of territorial expansion; for had not the Prophet said: "Nothing which belonged to another can be lawfully possessed by any, unless freely given out of goodwill . . . ."?

Also, in deference to the Prophet's Message to do justice, was not scrupulous care exercised in appointing governors? For, if a prince of royal blood was deputed to a high position, another—a man of the people—was always attached to his staff as the adviser.

To take the matter of justice to its final conclusion: Was not each province raised to the state of a self-governing unit of the Muslim Confederacy? And were not all matters relating to the civil rights of non-Muslims decided by the courts of non-Muslims? In what better way could the idea of the Prophet's Last Message be applied in regard to justice than the above-mentioned examples show?

And, finally, the system of clientage, called *Wala*, did actually destroy the last vestige of racial feeling, for anyone coming within the pale of Islam could be adopted as one of the members of the families of the Muslims, and forthwith become almost their blood brother.

So strict indeed is the conception of Islam against the racial prominence, that even such a fundamental point of religion as *Jihad*—or the Holy War—cannot be waged in the name of nationality alone: it must have a spiritual sanction; it must be *Fi-sabil-Allah* (for the service of God), in which the right of free worship is the cardinal stipulation.

All these factors, therefore, go to emphasise that the Message of the Prophet to a Warring World is to desist from exaggerating the nationalistic tendencies, to respect our engagements, to covet nobody's property, and to do justice. Whenever these injunctions have been disobeyed, war has occurred; and history bears witness to the fact that a country can only reign supreme if spiritual vision is the only guide of mankind, when the conviction of the oneness of Adam's family is



translated into reality, when black, white and bronze complexioned men and women are considered members of one great unity, when obstinate disbelief, which arises in brute force, is eliminated; it is then and then alone that the world can save itself from the ravages of the frequent challenge and attack of evil forces. Otherwise, like Noah, we might cry to God for help against the deluge of sin and iniquity which surrounds us to-day; and Allah's help will come to us and to everybody, if our minds are once again focussed on things of the spirit and not on those which pass and fade away; for our spiritual vision must revert to the teaching and the Message of the Prophet, because we believe in the purest form of democracy, in the right of proprietorship and in an uncompromising sense of justice—canons whose triumph is promised to us by the Qur-àn in “ He it is Who sent His Apostle with guidance and the truth . . . . ” (The Holy Qur-àn 9: 33.)