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Home > A Glance at the Life of the Holy Prophet of Islam > Chapter 8: The Prophet's Method Of Propagating Islam > The Invitation To His Relatives And The First Miracle

Chapter 8: The Prophet's Method Of Propagating Islam

When the Holy Prophet began descending Mount Hira to go home, he found that he was in a different mood; in a strange mood; in fact in another world; in a divine atmosphere. He was not a prophet before going to the mountain, but now he was related to the Source of Creation, had communicated with the Divine Origin, with the Divine Authority. He was now witnessing what Bahira, the Christian monk, and others had predicted about him; and he well knew that a momentous task had been laid upon his shoulders. He was deeply absorbed by the task.

If he had any worries, it was not because he was unsure of his prophethood. He had heard the tidings from such learned people as Bahira, and he had witnessed Gabriel bringing the good news, 'You are God's Messenger'. 1 These were enough to assure him of his divine mission and prophethood.

In addition, God has always, through clear proofs and compelling confirmations assured any prophet He has selected for guiding mankind of his prophethood, so he would endeavour to rectify, purify, and educate human beings with the strongest determination.

Therefore, it becomes clear that it is most baseless and wrong to say that Muhammad did not know that he had become a prophet until Khadija talked to him and assured him of his prophecy. 2

Khadija Waiting For The Prophet

What happened on the day of the beginning of the Prophet's prophetic mission caused him to return home later than usual. Khadija, who had never observed her affectionate husband to be late, was worried. Suddenly she saw him enter the house but with quite a new expression and in a new mood. He was now excited and moved. Khadija asked him, 'Why are you so late today?'

He explained the whole event to her. Khadija had long been expecting such a blessed day, for she had heard her servant, Masara, quote from the Christian monk they had met on their journey to Damascus

that he, Muhammad, is the Prophet of God to the people. 3

The Jewish and Christian priests had formerly given her the good tidings that Muhammad was to be a prophet and that he had a supreme status. So she got up and after making the necessary inquiries, contacted Warqa ibn Nawfal, who was a learned Christian person, and told him about the event. Warqa said, 'I swear by God that the same great angel Gabriel who descended to Moses, peace be upon him, has descended unto him, and no doubt he is the prophet of these people, of this Ummah'. 4

Then, to help Khadija realize the extreme significance of the matter, Warqa told her about the signs of the descent of the Angel of Revelation. 5Khadija then returned home and after brief consideration, accepted the prophecy of Muhammad (peace and the mercy of God be upon him and his descendants), thus attaining the honour of taking the lead in adopting the supreme faith of Islam among all the women of the world.

'Ali, The First Male Who Came To Believe In The Prophet's Faith

At a time when a severe famine had broken out in Arabia, Abu Talib's financial condition was difficult; indeed unbearable. To reduce his uncle's financial problems, the Prophet took his son, 'Ali, to his own house and took care of him and raised him like an affectionate father. 6

He had great talent and peerless intelligence. He obeyed the Prophet most sincerely. He soon became quite aware of the Prophet's truthfulness, and, so when he was but ten years old, he accepted the Prophet's faith with perfect awareness, thus becoming the first male to adopt Islam and to believe in the divine faith of the Prophet. 7

The Presentation Of Ritual Prayers As A Religious Duty

After monotheism, worshipping the One God, the first duty that became incumbent upon the Holy Prophet and his followers was the ritual prayer, which in fact demonstrates the significance of ritual prayer as the basis of man's relation to God and as a way of giving thanks for God's endless blessings. So the great leaders of Islam, especially the Holy Prophet of Islam, have laid great emphasis on ritual prayer, saying, `Ritual prayer is the pillar of faith' <u>8</u> and `Anybody who disregards the ritual prayer will not enjoy our, intercession with God on the Day of Judgment'. <u>9</u>

Almighty God described the nature of ritual prayers and the way to perform them through Gabriel to the Prophet, who taught it to 'Ali and Khadija and also ordered congregational ritual prayers. 10

Three Years Of Propagation In Practice

For three whole years after the actualization of the prophetic mission of the Prophet, he propagated his faith in secret because the corrupt environment of Arabia, which had been polluted with idolatry and

paganism for centuries, was by no means ready for the open propagation of Islam, which is perfect monotheism and opposed to any kind of polytheism.

In the beginning, the Prophet was faced with extremely difficult problems and obstacles that seemed to prevent him from achieving his divine goal – the propagation of Islam. Thus the Holy Prophet of Islam praised the One God before the eyes of the idolaters who worshipped numerous gods and whose worshipping assumed the form of whistling and clapping. He performed the ritual prayers, which included spiritual discourse and praise of Almighty God, Who has no partner nor any peer. The Prophet, accompanied by 'Ali and Khadija, went to the crowded places like the Masjid ul–Haram and Mana and performed the congregational ritual prayers before the eyes of the enemies of Islam and thus, through his practice, fought polytheistic faiths. 11

`Atif, a merchant of that time, has said, `I had gone to 'Abbas, the son of Abdul Muttalib, on business, when suddenly I observed that a man entered the Masjid ul-Haram, looked up at the sky and the sun and stood praying in front of the Ka'aba. A little later, a woman and a boy came in and accompanied him in his prayer.

I asked 'Abbas about that religion of which I had not yet heard! 'Abbas said, "This man is Muhammad (peace and the mercy of God be upon him and his descendants), the son of Abdullah. He believes that his God is the Creator of heaven and earth and that God has assigned him to guide people. For the time being his faith has no believers other than these three people. This woman you see is Khadija, the daughter of Khuwalid, and this boy is 'Ali, the son of Abu Talib, who have accepted his faith". 12

In this way the Holy Prophet of Islam went on with his divine task until gradually the number of Muslims increased and, contrary to the ill-wishes of the opponents of Islam, this faith prevailed. When the atmosphere became suitable for the open propagation of Islam, the Prophet was divinely ordered to act accordingly.

The Invitation To His Relatives And The First Miracle

The propagation through practice of Islam by the Holy Prophet and the increase in the number of his followers paved the way for the open invitation of the people to Islam. God commanded the Holy Prophet of Islam to invite his close relatives.

`And warn your nearest relatives' (26:214).

In this way, backbiters could not say, `Why do you not call your own relatives to worship the One God and warn them of God's severe punishment?' Moreover, the support of the relatives of the Prophet would help the promotion of Islam. So the Holy. Prophet told 'Ali to prepare a meal and invite their relatives, who numbered about 40. After preparing the meal, 'Ali invited them.

All the relatives of the Holy Prophet accepted the invitation and ate the meal prepared by the blessed

hands of 'Ali. Although the food was not sufficient for even one person, all 40 people were full after eating that blessed food and, strangely enough, the food had not diminished at all. This amazed all of them but the obstinate Abu Lahab, who said without thinking, 'This is magic and charms'. The foolish man disregarded the fact that magic and charms cannot feed people!

On that day the Prophet said nothing about the matter. Perhaps his silence was due to the fact that he wanted them to realize the difference between a 'miracle' and 'magic' because if magic were the cause the guests would feel hungry after leaving the house of the Holy Prophet.

Since this gathering did not give any favourable result, the Holy Prophet invited them for the next day. Again the same reception was repeated and all were filled. Yet the food was not reduced even after the meal was over.

Then the Prophet said, 'O sons of Abdul Muttalib. God has assigned me to warn you of the painful torments of the wrongdoers and give you the good news of His reward to the pious believers. Become Muslims and follow me to achieve salvation. I swear by Almighty God that among all Arabs I do not know anyone who has brought his people anything better than what I have brought you. I have brought you prosperity and salvation both in this world and in the hereafter. The Gracious God has commanded me to call you all to worship Him. Now which one of you is willing to help me with the task? Anybody who announces his readiness to help me will be my brother, my successor, and the executor of my will'.

Nobody answered but 'Ali, who was the youngest. He stood up and said, `O Prophet of God. I am your assistant. I am your supporter'.

The Prophet asked him to sit down. He repeated the same saying three times but no one except 'Ali replied to him. Then the Prophet pointed to 'Ali and said, `He is my brother, my successor and the executor of my will among you. Listen to him and obey him'. 13

It was on this very day that a number of people came to believe in the faith of the Holy Prophet of Islam, 14 but ignorance and bigotry hindered some of his relatives from believing in his message. However, this gathering was effective in gaining support for the Holy Prophet.

In addition to the fact of the extraordinary event – 40 people being fed with a small amount of food – there is another remarkable point in this event – the remarks the Holy Prophet made about his cousin 'Ali on that day. They clearly prove the fact that 'Ali was the Prophet's righteous successor and Caliph, and thus we must regard 'Ali as the successor of the Holy Prophet of Islam.

Thus the way was paved for the public invitation of the people to Islam and open propagation of this divine faith. The Prophet demonstrated indefatigable perseverance in fulfilling this divine duty and did not stop his invaluable teachings, outreach and struggles for a single hour. It was then that the magnificent banner of Islam was hoisted and truth began to be promoted.

- 1. Sirihi ibn Hisham, Vol. 1, p.237.
- 2. The Life of Muhammad, compiled by Dr. Heykal, p. 134.
- 3. A'lam Alwari, p.47.
- 4. Sirihi ibn Hisham, Vol. 1, p.238.
- 5. Manaqib, Vol. 1, p.42.
- 6. Sirihi ibn Hisham, Vol. 1, p.246; Bihar ul-Ankvar, Vol. 18, p.208.
- 7. Ibid., Sirihi, p.245; Bihar, p. 188; Al-Ghadir, Vol. 3, pp.219-241; Tarikhi Tabari, Vol. 3, p. 1160.
- 8. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a, second edition, 1384 A. H. L., Vol. 3, pp. 16, 17.
- 9. Ibid
- 10. A'lam Alwari, p.37; Jami' ul-Ahadithi Shi'a, Vol. 2, p.31. It is to be noted that at that time each of the prayers was two cycles (rak'at).
- 11. Tarikhi Tabari, Vol. 3, p.1122.
- 12. A'lam Alwari, p.38, printed in 1390; Tarikhi Tabari, Vol. 3, p.1162.
- 13. Tarikhi Tabari, Vol. 3 pp. 1171–1173; Tafsiri Majma` ul-Bayan, Vol. 7, p.206; Bihar ul-Anwar, Vol. 18, p.192. This point is confirmed by all Islamic as well as non-Islamic historians and is among the confirmed facts of history. Al-Ghadir, Vol. 2, p.278.
- 14. Tarikhi Ya'qubi, Vol. 2, p.22.

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