

THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF THE SEAL OF THE PROPHETS
(Speech by Tommy Kallon at Jamia Ahmadiyya UK, 17th January 2014)

“Cognizance is my true possession, wisdom is the root of my religion, love is my foundation, zeal is my impetus, remembrance of Allah is my companion and comforter, steadfastness is my treasure, sorrow is my companion, knowledge is my tool, patience is my covering, contentment is a blessing, poverty is my honour, piety is my profession, my belief is my strength, truthfulness is my associate, obedience is my lineage, striving in the cause of Allah is my civility and prayer is the comfort of my eyes.” [The Holy Prophet of Islam by Dr Karimullah Zirvi, pp.285-286]

Most Esteemed Principal, Respected Members of Staff, Honoured Students of Jamia Ahmadiyya UK!

Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuhu.

This rare and striking self-description by the Holy Prophet (saw) so aptly and so consummately encapsulates his multifaceted attributes and character. His life is simply *the* most remarkable of chapters in the annals of human history.

The condition of the world at the time of his advent summed up in the Holy Quran as, ‘Corruption has appeared on land and sea’ (Ch.30:V.42), could not have presaged the promotion of spiritual values, the inculcation of the moral principles, the diminution of evil and the expansion of the human intellect that were to occur in the space of a few years.

The close of the sixth and opening of the seventh century was indeed the darkest period of the Dark Ages and over the Arabian Peninsula in particular the darkness was at its deepest. The Arabs were ignorant alike of the arts of peace and the rules of war. The absence of any form of organised government left life and property insecure. Rapine, brutality, indiscipline and the mad pursuit of pleasure were the order of the day.

No one, neither seer nor philosopher could have ordained that healing would come out of Arabia. Yet that is exactly what came to pass. A solitary voice, raised in Mecca, was, under Divine Command, calling men to the worship of One God and proclaiming that through responding to this call would humankind achieve true dignity, honour, prosperity and happiness both here and Hereafter. That voice was the voice Hadhrat Aqdas Muhammad Mustafa, the Seal of the Prophets (saw).

Initially, it was received with laughter, scorn and ridicule. However, within an astonishingly brief period, over vast areas darkness was dispelled, order was established, all manner of beneficent institutions sprang into life, a high moral order was set up and the blessings of knowledge, learning and science began to be widely diffused. The world experienced an astounding revolution. This was no freak spectacle. It was no sudden flare up followed by an even more sudden collapse. This was a phenomenon characterised by strength and endurance, by potency and permanency. It changed the course of human history and flung wide open the gates of progress in all directions. Its impact continues to be felt today.

What is the secret of this unprecedented and unparalleled success? The answer lies in the life and character of the Seal of the Prophets (saw). He was, as is well known, born an orphan, his father having died before his birth. He lost his mother and guardian grandfather in quick succession while still a little boy after which he was taken into the care of his uncle, Abu Talib, who raised him. Abu Talib was very fond of his nephew and always watched over him with great care and affection but it appears that his wife was not affected by these considerations to the same degree. It often happened that she would distribute something among her own children, leaving out their little cousin. If Abu Talib chanced to come home on such occasions, he would find his little nephew sitting apart, a perfect picture of dignity without a trace of sulkiness on his face. Such incidents were not uncommon and all those who witnessed them are unanimous in their testimony that the young orphan never betrayed any sense of jealousy of his cousins nor did he give expression to any grievance. These were remarkable qualities of patience and contentment that would be fully manifested in his latter life.

EARLY LIFE

In his early life, therefore, the grand Divine design is retrospectively perceptible that God Himself was his true Guardian. This is confirmed beyond question by the fact that he emerged from his boyhood and youth spent in the debased and morally bereft society of Mecca without the least stain on his character. He never paid homage to an idol nor partook of any food presented to an idol as offering. He never consumed liquor, nor gambled and in general kept aloof of all the frivolous activities of his fellow youths.

RETREAT TO CAVE HIRA

All the authorities are agreed in ascribing to the youth of the Holy Prophet (saw) a modesty of deportment and purity of manners rare among the people of Mecca. Endowed with a refined mind and serene disposition, thoughtful and meditative by nature, he lived much within himself and the ponderings of his heart supplied occupation for leisure hours as he would repair, for several days on end, to the solitary confines of Cave Hira in quiet contemplation over the universe, peering into the mysteries of creation, of life and death, of good and evil; reflecting over the travails which oppressed his soul, his righteous indignation at the idolatry, immorality and iniquities of his people; and seeking communion with his Maker, the Invisible Power which governs the universe.

THE HONEST AND TRUTHFUL

This noble and honourable conduct of the unobtrusive youth won the approbation of his fellow citizens and by common consent he received the titles "The Honest" and "The Truthful". This is something worthy of further consideration. Had it been the practice of the people of Mecca to confer such a distinction upon eminent individuals in each generation even then the recipient would have been looked upon as having very high morals. But the history of Mecca and of Arabia furnishes no indication that it was customary for the Arabs to confer these titles upon eminent individuals in each generation. On the contrary, through centuries of Arab history we find that it was only in the case of the Holy Prophet of Islam (saw) that his people conferred the titles "The Honest" and "The Truthful." This is conclusive proof of the fact that the Holy Prophet (saw) possessed the qualities of honesty and truthfulness to a matchless and peerless degree in the estimation of his people.

FEATURES

By now the Holy Prophet (saw) had arrived at full maturity and it is related that in his prime, the Holy Prophet (saw) was distinguished by the beauty of his person: his figure was commanding, his aspect majestic, his features regular and most expressive, his eyes black and piercing and his health robust. His captivating smile, his rich and sonorous voice, the graceful dignity of his gestures and the apparent frankness and heartiness of his manner gained him favourable attention of all whom he spoke to. His perception was quick and active, his memory capacious and retentive, his imagination sublime and lively, his judgement clear and lucid, his courage dauntless, his patience enduring and his tenacity of purpose admirable. His natural eloquence was enhanced by the use of the purest dialect of Arabia and adorned by the charm of a graceful diction.

MARRIAGE

It was around this time that his uncle recommended him for employment to Khadija, a wealthy, highly respected widow among the Quraish. He acquitted himself so honourably and she was so impressed by his integrity, personality, business acumen and nobility of character that, despite being 40 years old and 15 years his senior, she made a proposal of marriage to him, which he readily accepted. Notwithstanding the disparity of years, their marriage by all accounts was a singularly happy one, with the Holy Prophet (saw), to his honour it must be added, living most affectionately with her and her alone, never availing himself of the prevalent custom which allowed him, at discretion, to have a plurality of wives.

The Holy Prophet (saw) continued to take a modest interest in public affairs after marriage. When a dispute arose during the reconstruction of the Holy Ka'aba which threatened to plunge different clans of the Quraish into war, it was his wise and sagacious arbitration which saved the situation and settled the dispute to the satisfaction of all.

However it was in the service of the poor, the weak and the marginalised that he exerted himself the most. He was a founding and very proud member of the *Hilful Fadhul*, a chivalrous league pledged to defend the weak, to champion the oppressed and to vindicate their rights against tyranny and aggression. Many were the slaves who owed their freedom to him and many were the widows and orphans who lived on his generosity. He had received wealth and property from Hadhrat Khadija (ra) after their marriage and he distributed this entirely among the destitute without keeping a penny to himself.

It is a tribute of monumental proportions to Hadhrat Khadija (ra) who, being *the* richest woman of Arabia suddenly became one of its poorest and never raised an eyebrow, living the rest of her life most faithfully with the Holy Prophet (saw). She was in love with a man who had not yet emerged as a Prophet of God. But it was not the outward charm of the man but his inner beauty which she was in love with. This became evident when, 15 years later, he received the Divine Call inviting him to the ministry. He was so completely alarmed and shaken by the force he had seen that he returned home atremble as if a fever was about to overtake him. Hadhrat Khadija (ra) turned to him and said: "God will not suffer you to shame. You have been loving to your kinsfolk, kind to your neighbours, charitable to the poor, faithful to your word and ever the defender of truth. How could God let you go to waste? I believe in what you have seen."

It was the purity of the man within which at once convinced his wife that he was a true prophet. As such she became the first believer in Islam in the realisation that a true man cannot a false prophet make.

PERSECUTION AND STEADFASTNESS

With the reassurance of his beloved wife and with subsequent revelations he received, conviction in the divinity of his mission now replaced the doubts he had struggled with in his mind. Standing alone, he proclaimed the glory of Allah, publicly denounced the idolatry and the evils ways of his people, and invited them to the worship of the One True God and to a better life.

The Quraish were the guardians of the Holy Ka'aba, the holy precinct to which all Arabia made pilgrimage. It was a great source of prestige and profit to them and ranked first and foremost among their vested interests. They were therefore seriously alarmed by the public preaching against the idols in the Ka'aba and at once assumed active hostility towards the Holy Prophet (saw). The respected citizen of rank and high descent, the *Al Ameen* of his people would now be subjected to insults, to personal violence and to the bitterest persecution. The early converts who were mostly humble were also subjected to great and relentless oppression.

Despite suffering untold miseries, their numbers still continued to increase which caused concern among the Meccans. They attempted to broker a compromise; they offered the Holy Prophet (saw) riches and power as an inducement to stop preaching and they threatened to disown Abu Talib if he would himself not persuade his nephew to give up preaching on the pain of being disowned by his uncle. 'The One and Only God is my Witness when I say that if they were to place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left hand, I would not desist from preaching the truth that God commands', was the Holy Prophet's firm and noble response.

When all attempts to dissuade the Holy Prophet (saw) from propagating his faith failed, the fury of the Meccans knew no bounds. Social ostracism of the Muslims would be their next move. Encamped and imprisoned in a valley under close watch, blockaded and denied access to provisions, a boycott was thus imposed upon the small community of Muslims which lasted for several years inflicting terrible hardships and privations on them.

Steadfastness is the hallmark of true Prophets and the Holy Prophet (saw)'s incomparable demonstration of resoluteness in the face of extreme persecution is indeed testament to his truth and belief in the Divine origin of his claim. "For a long period", writes the Promised Messiah (as), "he had to bear hardships, to be steadfast under which was not possible for a cunning impostor". (Essence of Islam, p.305)

MIGRATION

If, however, faith in God was to be preserved and fostered, escape from Mecca was the only way left. The death of his faithful and beloved wife, Hadhrat Khadija (as), had left the Holy Prophet (saw) bereft of his principal source of earthly comfort and consolation, and the death of his dear uncle, Abu Talib, in the same month left him, without the latter's

protection, exposed to more brutal and savage persecution. There was no more room left for any meaningful dialogue in Mecca.

Thirteen years after the commencement of his ministry, therefore, the Holy Prophet (saw) received the Divine command to leave Mecca. His miraculous escape from Mecca, against all odds, on the same very night his enemies had avowed his assassination and his subsequent safe passage to Medina despite the Meccan's reward of one hundred camels proclaimed for his person, dead or alive, is truly a sign of consummate Divine support for the Holy Prophet (saw). Commentators are also agreed that it is an event which marks the dawn of a new era in the history of Islam and of the world. Lieutenant-General Sir John Bagot Glubb, for example, writes:

“When the fugitives had whispered goodbye to Abu Bakr’s son and daughter outside the cave on Mount Thaur and the camels had padded silently away into the darkness beneath the sharp Arabian stars, the curtain rose on one of the greatest dramas of human history. How little did Caesar or Chosroes, surrounded by their great armies and engaged in a long and bitter war for world supremacy, realise that four ragged Arabs riding silently through the bare mountains of the Hejaz were about to inaugurate a movement which would put an end to both their great imperial dominions.”

LIFE IN MEDINA

In Medina the Holy Prophet (saw) was not only enthusiastically and joyfully received by the Muslims but was also, by mutual agreement of all sections of society, invited to assume the role of Chief Executive of Medina, uniting in his person the offices of Sovereign, Judge, General and Prophet.

The Holy Prophet (saw) was now free to preach his faith and his followers increased rapidly. With his own blessed hands and with the aid of his holy companions, he built a mosque of a simple and unassuming character, and from a rough and unadorned pulpit within this he expounded the absolute Oneness of Allah and inveighed against the idolatry of his nation; transformed their vice and wickedness into virtue and righteousness; bridled the vindictive passions of his fellow countrymen and drilled into them the magnificent ideal of the common brotherhood of man; he received and dialogued with emissaries and religious delegations from within and outside Arabia; addressed letters of invitation to Islam to rulers of countries in close proximity to Arabia; he enacted the compendium of laws and inaugurated the institutions of a movement that was destined to extend itself over the then known world; he awakened in his followers intense spiritual hunger and breathed into them such a spirit of zeal, enthusiasm and devotedness that observers were compelled to confess that he received far greater reverence and commanded more implicit obedience than the Chosroes of Persia and the Caesars of Constantinople.

The view taken by Thomas Carlyle is too original, just and striking to be omitted here. He writes:

“They record with just pride that he would mend his own shoes, patch his own cloak. A poor, hard-toiling, ill-provided man, careless of what vulgar men toil for. Not a bad man, I should say, something better in him than hunger of any sort or these wild Arab men fighting and jostling three and twenty years at his hand, in close contact with him always,

would not have revered him so! They were wild men bursting ever and anon into quarrel, into all kinds of fierce sincerity; without right worth, and manhood, no man could have commanded them. They called him prophet you say? Why, he stood there face to face with them, bare not enshrined in any mystery, visibly clouting his cloak, cobbling his shoes, fighting, counselling, ordering in the midst of them, they must have seen what kind of man he was. Let him be called what you like, no emperor with his dignity was ever obeyed as this man in a cloak of his own clouting. During three and twenty years of rough actual trial, I find something of a veritable hero necessary for that of itself.”
(Hero and Hero-Worship)

SIMPLICITY

The Holy Prophet (saw) was indeed a personification of simplicity. Even where he possessed more than imperial power nothing could exceed his simple ways and austere habits. He lived in a small adobe hut and slept on the ground. His household was the most basic and his home was bare of decorations. He would do his own household work, sweep out his own chambers, mend his own shoes and patch his own cloak.

He was granted abundant wealth of the world but he did not soil his holy hands with it, preferring poverty to wealth and meekness to power. Apart from his awe-inspiring and majestic countenance, he was undistinguished amongst his companions in his manner of dress so much so that unacquainted visitors would often mistake Hadhrat Abu Bakr (ra) for the Prophet.

At home he divided his morsel with his servant and when he journeyed he shared his ride with him. His staple food consisted of dried dates, barley bread and water; his luxuries were milk and honey. It is related by his Holy Consort that they would often pass a whole month without once lighting a fire to cook and that on the day of his demise, there was no food in his house except for a few dates. Yet, by then he was the acknowledged ruler of the whole of Arabia.

JIHAD

Returning to his life in Medina, while he was engaged in matters religious, his attention was not the less directed at secular ones. Following his escape to Medina, the Meccans began to organise the Arab tribes in a series of alliances designed to bring about his destruction and that of his companions and of anyone who might dare to lend him aid and support. A state of war was thus ushered in, in pursuit of their relentless purpose.

To the Holy Prophet's many and various responsibilities and anxieties were now added the responsibility of the defence of Medina and the protection of the increasing number of Muslims scattered around the peninsula against an enemy who far outnumbered them. He proved himself to be a wise leader, a farsighted statesman and an adept commander. During the following years of his life, he and his followers had to contend against heavy odds and had to endure severe privations and sufferings but it is here that his towering qualities of absolute trust in Allah, fidelity, high resolve, bravery, forgiveness, generosity, beneficence, compassion and magnanimity came to the fore.

He condemned and forbade all brutal and savage practices of war and instituted a set of rules designed to render even war humane. Molest not the harmless votaries of domestic

seclusion, he instructed; spare the weakness of the softer sex, children, the elderly and the infirm; abstain from demolishing public buildings, destroy not means of sustenance, respect fruit trees and injure not the palm tree useful both for its shade and for its verdure.

VICTORY

In what can be seen as a categorical manifestation of Divine support and succour, all expeditions undertaken by Meccan forces against the Muslims were successfully beaten back by the Holy Prophet (saw) and his Companions despite their vastly inferior numbers, the paucity of their weaponry and in possession of hardly any horses or camels to mount.

The ultimate victory came in the eighth year after Hijra when the Holy Prophet (saw), at the head of ten thousand men, marched on Mecca and gained a bloodless conquest of the city, its inhabitants having surrendered at discretion. The humility of the Holy Prophet (saw) shone the most on this grand day. His entry into his native city was not marked by any triumphalism, pomp or circumstance nor was there any display of valour and vanity. Rather, in a token of gratitude and thanksgiving to his Lord, he entered the city with his head bowed down so low upon Qaswa, his camel, that his head almost touched upon the camel's hump. He did not permit any word of taunt or humiliation of his erstwhile persecutors and after gaining complete control of the prestigious city, he neither indulged in lavish celebrations nor held any victory parades. Instead he retired to the house of his cousin, the daughter of Abu Talib, who could but offer him a meal of very stale bread garnished with the dregs of leftover vinegar. It is reported that bread was so hard it had to be soaked in water to soften it before the Holy Prophet (saw) could eat it. Compare this with the extravagant feasts and revelries held by victorious emperors and generals throughout history and we shall then better appreciate the nobility and humility of the Seal of the Prophets (saw).

This glorious day will, however, always be remembered for the generosity and magnanimity which the Holy Prophet (saw) displayed towards his enemies. All the scorn and ridicule; all the hatred and enmity; the long years of bitter, cruel and sustained persecution; all the fighting, the hardship and suffering; the loss of dear and devoted family and friends were all, in the moment of triumph, pardoned and forgiven in an instant. History furnishes no parallel instance of such complete forgiveness, such utter beneficence, on so large a scale.

Stanley Lane Poole has described this event in these words:

“The day of Mohammed’s greatest triumph over his enemies was also the day of his grandest victory over himself. He freely forgave the Kureysh all the years of sorrow and cruel scorn they had inflicted on him; he gave an amnesty to the whole population of Mekka... The army followed his example, and entered quietly and peacefully; no house was robbed, no women insulted... It was thus Mohammad entered again his native city. Through the annals of conquest there is no triumphant entry comparable to this one.”
(Quoted in Introduction to Higgins’ *Apology for Mohammad*)

LOYALTY

On this occasion, the Holy Prophet (saw) also displayed a remarkable expression of loyalty. While he was addressing the Meccans announcing his decision to forgive and

forget, misgivings arose in the minds of the Ansar, the Medinite Muslims. The scenes of home-coming and reconciliation which they witnessed led them to believe that the Holy Prophet (saw) was parting company with them to settle down once more in Mecca. Realising this the Holy Prophet (saw) addressed them saying, 'Do you know who I am? I am a Servant of God and His Messenger. How can I give you up? You stood by me, and sacrificed your lives when the Faith of God had no earthly help. How can I give you up and settle elsewhere? No, Ansar, this is impossible. I left Mecca for the sake of God and I cannot return to it. I will live and die with you.' The Ansar were moved to tears by this singular expression of love and loyalty.

THE REVOLUTION OF ISLAM

It was indeed such noble and sterling qualities which continued to win the hearts of his contemporaries so much so that within the space of the next two years leading up to his departure from this world, Arabia in its entirety, previously immersed in paganism, misguidance and creature worship, abandoned the darkness of idolatry and embraced the light of Islam. Thus was idolatry abolished throughout Arabia and replaced with the true concept of the Unity of Allah. No materialistic philosophy can ever explain this transformation.

Indeed no materialistic philosophy can ever explain how the erstwhile enemies of the Holy Prophet (saw) came to cherish the purest love and deepest reverence for him. Men who used to loathe him and send their children against him were now willing to lay down their lives in the cause of his religion. Women who had earlier opened up the chests of the Companions of the Holy Prophets (saw) and chewed upon their livers in hatred would now pray for their children to be martyred in his defence. No one inspired by worldly motives could have effected such a change; no one inspired by worldly motives could have commanded such love and veneration.

The Holy Prophet (saw) wrought such a transformation in the lives of his countrymen which seemed impossible at the time of his birth and in doing so conferred an inestimable favour upon humanity at large. At a time when the night with all its horrors and evils had encompassed the entire surface of the earth, with unbound sanctifying power he brought about a marvellous change in the lives of his contemporaries raising them and hence humankind to the highest points of intellectual, moral and spiritual progress.

The Promised Messiah (as) comments on this transformation in these words:

"The acceptance of Islam illuminated their hearts and changed their lives into virtue and their wickedness into genius. Their nightly carousals were abandoned for the sake of vigils and prayers, and their morning bouts were changed to paeans of praise and thanksgiving. Anyone who would carefully ponder over this remarkable change, how those wild Arabs abandoned their former postures and hewed through the forest of their passions and desires to make their way to their Lord, cannot fail to conclude that it was all due to the sanctifying power of Muhammad (saw), the supreme Prophet elected by God for His everlasting grace. And one may well wonder at the uniqueness of his power which picked up the Holy Companions from the depths of the earth and led them to the stage of the elect. He found them like beasts, devoid of the notions of Divine unity and piety, who knew not the difference between virtue and vice. He taught them the rules of human propriety

and explained to them the principles of communal and social life, instructed them in the laws of hygiene, in the rules of marriage relations and domestic economy, in the principles of diet and dress, of sanitation, treatment and prevention of disease and, in general, inculcated lessons of moderation in all matters. And when they had mastered the rules of physical life, he led them on from physical to moral and spiritual qualities and to lessons in principled conduct so as to enable them to develop a spiritual life. And, after they had been confirmed in morals and versed in the practice of good conduct, he invited them to the heights of the nearness of God and union with Him and initiated them in the Divine mysteries, and directed them to the Supreme Lord of Majesty and Power, so that they might freely crop the green verdure of love in the holy precincts of God and enjoy the privilege of His approval and acceptance.” (Najmul Hooda)

SINCERITY

Towards the close of his life an incident occurred which, in the opinion of every candid and impartial mind, exonerates the Holy Prophet (saw) from all the imputations of imposture with which he has been assailed. His only surviving son, Ibrahim, passed away in his infancy. It was indeed an agonising loss for him at an old age to see the demise of his only son. An eclipse of the sun occurred at that same precise hour and some common people spoke of this prodigy as a mark of Divine condolence. Now would have been the moment to cement his false claim; to confirm the delusion and affirm that it was indeed a heavenly tribute to his son. However, far from listening to the voice of flattery like an imposter would have done and far from encouraging such a superstitious notion on the part of the ignorant among his followers, the Holy Prophet (saw) expressed great displeasure and severely condemned it explaining that heavenly bodies and their phenomena are governed by Divine laws and had no relation whatsoever to the life or death of any person. If this does not affirm the Holy Prophet’s sincerity, we know not what will. An imposter would never have declined such an inviting opportunity to lay false claim to heavenly endorsement of his prophethood!

DEVOTION TO ALLAH

Indeed only a true prophet would have so readily and so completely resigned himself to the Will of Allah under all circumstances as did the Seal of the Prophet (saw). In rejection and in persecution, in trial and in adversity, in the loss of his parents, children, wives, family members and countless companions, his life presents manifold and diverse instances where the Holy Prophet (saw) went through a succession of bitter experiences. He bore all these losses and calamities cheerfully, submitting to the Will of Allah at all times and remaining resolutely steadfast in his task.

Once while on a pilgrimage, he visited the grave of his mother and the tender recollection of her so overcame him that his eyes welled up with tears. His companions asked what the matter was and he replied saying that it was the tomb of his dear mother. God had given him permission to visit it but had not granted him permission to pray upon it. This incident again shows the level of obedience which the Holy Prophet (saw) had for Divine ordinances. However much he was overcome by emotion, however much he yearned to submit his humble entreaties and solicitations in her behalf, he could not go against the Divine command not to pray for anyone who dies in a state of idolatry, instead to entrust their affair to God.

Every action of the Holy Prophet (saw) was governed by his love of Allah. Everything he did was an act of worship. He supplicated Allah when arising in the morning and when retiring to sleep at night; when starting a meal and upon its completion; when leaving his home and when returning home, when entering and when exiting the mosque; he supplicated when donning on his attire, when putting on new shoes, when mounting his ride; he supplicated upon the sighting of the moon, upon the falling of rain, upon an eclipse. In short, he constantly supplicated his Lord in everything thing, great or small, that he did for such was his reliance on Divine grace and mercy.

FAREWELL

During his final pilgrimage to Mecca, the Holy Prophet (saw) delivered an address in the Valley of Arafat in front of a concourse of one hundred thousand devout pilgrims, the largest assembly of mankind he ever addressed.

This address, which became known as the Farewell Sermon, contains a beautiful embodiment of the entire spirit and teaching of Islam. It shows how deep was the Holy Prophet's concern for the welfare of man and the peace of the world. The Holy Prophet (saw) knew his end was near. He had had hints from God. Among the cares and anxieties to which he gave expression were his care and anxiety about the status of women. He took care that he should not pass away from this world to the next without assuring to women the status which was their right in the sight of God. Next he expressed solicitude for the welfare of the prisoners of war who were treated as slaves and subjected to all kinds of cruelties. He admonished his followers to order their lives in accordance with the commandments of God; to take particular care that no trespass was committed against any person in respect of his life, property or honour. He taught that all men, whatever their social status or ethnicity, were equal in the sight of God, the only distinction being the degree of one's God-consciousness.

No man ever showed such concern and care for the good of man, the welfare of women, the rights of the weak, the promotion of equality among mankind and the peace of the world as did the Holy Prophet of Islam (saw).

When the time of his departure from this life came, he was given a choice by God either to return to Him or spend some more years in this earthly existence. His response was: 'To the Companionship of my Exalted Lord; to the Companionship of my Exalted Lord.' These were the last words he uttered before passing on to life eternal. Thus ended a life which, in every shape and form, was consecrated to the service of Allah and His creation; thus ended a life which, in every shape or form, was 'a mercy for the universe.'

CONCLUSION

Distinguished audience! This was the life and character of the Seal of the Prophets (saw). He was a model of virtue, uprightness, sobriety, purity and piety. His was a life of grand success. He started as an orphaned child and ended as the arbiter of the destinies of a whole nation. He was raised at a time when the whole world was steeped in ignorance and darkness and he departed the world having restored its lost truth and converted its darkness into light. Prophethood ended with him not only because he was the Seal of the Prophets but because all the excellences of Prophethood reached their climax in him.

In the role Divine wisdom imposed upon him, he acquitted himself with distinction and with acclamation, with honour and with credit. In his high moral qualities, his spiritual power, his perfect example, his exemplary teachings, his high resolve, his intellectual prowess, his inexhaustible genius, his boundless virtues, his graceful disposition, his devotion to duty, his steadfastness in the face of extreme adversity, his refusal to abdicate his ministry on the pain of death, his conviction in his ultimate success, in short, in his every aspect of life, he exhibited such bright signs that every unbiased soul is compelled to admit that he was indeed the perfect man – matchless, peerless, inimitable, incomparable. In the words of William Shakespeare, we ‘shall not look upon his like again.’

With humility he assumed the mantle of prophethood. With dignity he discharged his office. With serenity he departed this life. We recognise in him such superlative qualities which are beyond the pale of expression. Where most leaders become compromised by power, his excellences shone more in power. “His politeness to the great, his affability to the humble and his dignified bearing to the presumptuous,” writes Thomas Patrick Hughes, “procured him respect, admiration and applause... His simple eloquence, rendered impressive by the countenance wherein awfulness of majesty was tempered by an amiable sweetness, excited emotions of veneration and love, and he was gifted with that authoritative air of genius which alike influences the learned and commands the illiterate.” (A Dictionary of Islam)

When Hadhrat Aisha (ra) was asked to describe his character, she replied without hesitation, without reservation and without equivocation, that ‘his character was the Qur’an.’ It is patently obvious what she meant. He practised what he preached, he preached what he practised. To know him is to know the Qur’an and to know the Qur’an is to know him.

His greatest follower, the Promised Messiah (as), has summed up the proof of his truth in a Persian poem which may be rendered as follows:

*Unlettered, yet unmatched in respect of his inner learning and wisdom.
What brighter proof can there be of his truth?*

*Every excellence found its culmination in his holy person;
No wonder the reign of all Prophets ended with him.*

*My eye has roamed far afield but has found not
Any spring purer than the faith he inculcated.*

*O Lord! Convey to him our humble salutations,
And to all Prophets, his brethren.*

May Allah, in His Infinite Grace and Mercy, send down His peace and choicest blessings on His Noble Prophet and enable us all to emulate his excellent example. Ameen.

Mr Principal, Members of Staff, Dear Students! Thank you for the inestimable honour of addressing this august theological seminary that is Jamia Ahmadiyya UK. Wassalamu Alaikum.