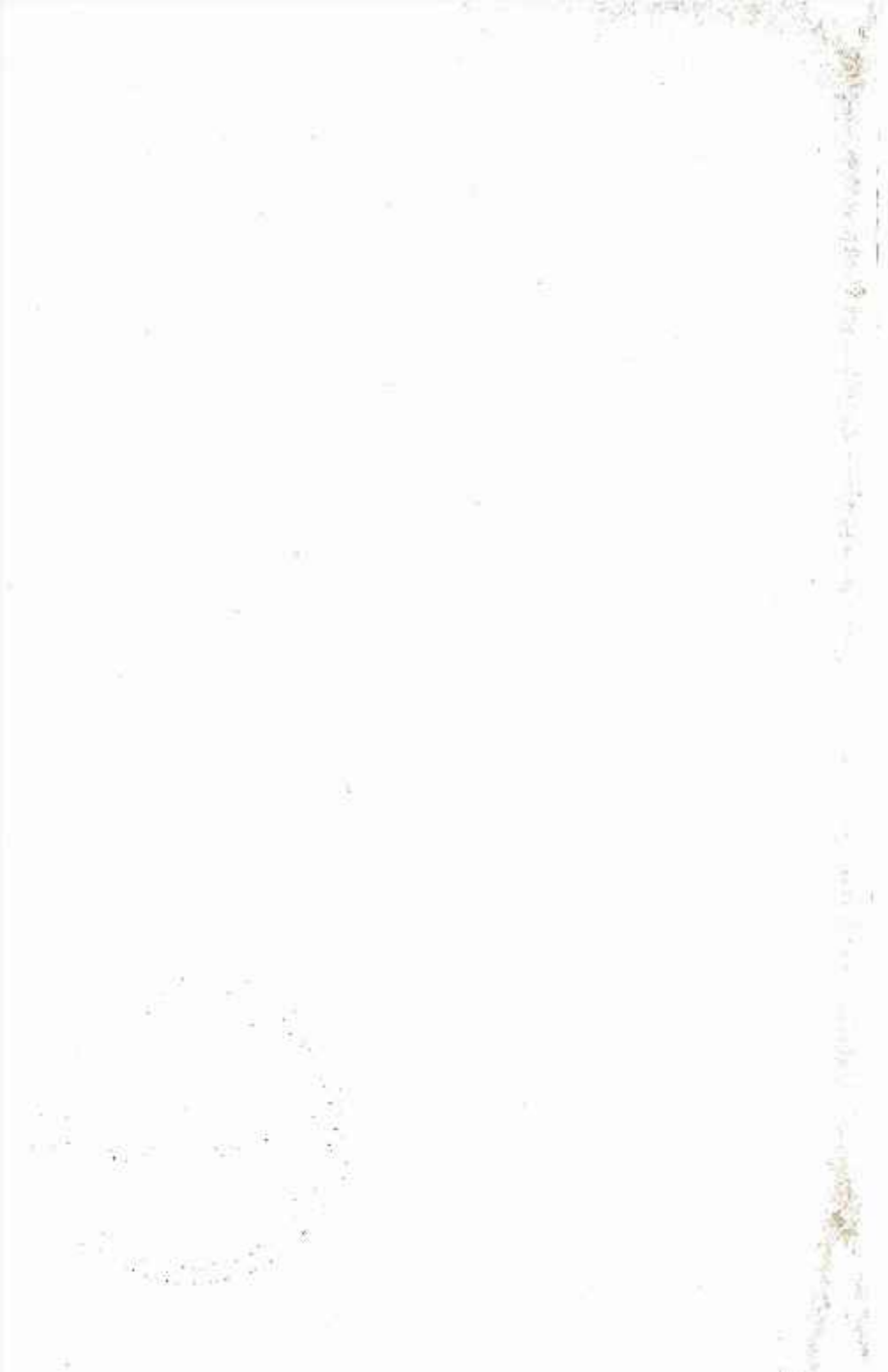


# THE UMMI PROPHET

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In the name of Allah  
the Beneficent, the Merciful

لَا اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ

There is no god but Allah

مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ

Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah





FOUNDATION OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT  
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# THE UMMĪ PROPHET

By:  
The Martyred Professor  
Āyatullāh Murtaḍā Muṭahhari

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

*In the name of the Most High*

Our dear sister and brother!

Āyatullāh Muṭahharī is a martyr of the Islamic Revolution, a great Islamic thinker and a philosopher. He, in his short life, started to expound the Islamic knowledge and answer to those who are atheists, stubborn, wrong in their pondering and path. This he did in a compassion and with a care.

Due to the odd conditions of campaign before the victory of the Islamic Revolution, most of the annals of his thoughts are in lectures in Persian language recorded over tapes which later were written down on paper. Our teacher, the Professor himself was of mind to revise and correct the contents that were written down from the tapes. The burning torch of his teachings and thoughts was not tolerated by the tarnished hearted heretics. They martyred him and deprived the Islamic *Ummah* from the blessing of his existence.

We are on way to translate and publish in various tongues what the Professor has left behind so that all Muslims may get the benefit from this great fountain of Islamic knowledge.

This book, now in your hands, consists of the research notes of the Professor in connection with the 'ummī-ness' of the Prophet. Hence, it has great many references to the earlier Islamic sources and names. All these are exactly translated. Therefore, this book can be recommended to those who might have a particular interest in the subject. God willingly, we shall be bringing out another book of the Professor under title *AIM OF LIFE* which is translated by the same translator. The subject of the book is such as to attract a wide range of the readers.

#### FOUNDATION OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT

### TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Indeed, there remains nothing for me to write about the Martyr Prof. Muṭahharī because of the much that is written about him besides his own renown. Further, the translations of his books too have already served the introduction.

So, I would like to give a brief information about Dr. Sayyid 'Abdu 'l-Laṭīf by way of acquaintance to the readers.

Dr. 'Abdu 'l-Laṭīf was personally known to me. He was one of those rares to obtain the degree of doctorate (Ph. D.) in English literature from Oxford while he was only a graduate (B.A.) without a degree of Master (M.A.). Upon his return from Oxford he was made Head of English Department in the Nizam's College, Hyderabad (India).

He was a literary figure in India. Upon his retirement from the Nizam's College he was offered deaneries and chancelleries in several universities. The Doctor did not accept. As he was born in Karnool, now a city in Andhra State South India, and at that time there was no college in the town; he was one of those who collected contribution mostly from H. E. H. the Nizam of Hyderabad and founded Osmania College. He became the principal. Thus he served his home town in a way that remains ever alive to his memory.

He was a staunch Muslim. He stood against those who wanted Arabic to be substituted by English for Muslims. This goes to the credit of Dr. 'Abdu 'l-Laṭīf that he campaigned in the favour of Arabic language.

Dr. 'Abdu 'l-Laṭīf is not the principle aim of this book as a whole. It partly serves as a reply as far as the Doctor's opinion about the Prophet's *ummi*-ness is concerned.

## H. NAJAFI

\* \* \* \* \*

### NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

The transliterated Arabic/Persian names and terms with diacritical marks on them have been used in the first appearance and have been repeated in some cases where found to be necessary. Sometimes we have transliterated the words as they are pronounced, e.g., 'Abdullāh ('Abdu 'l-Lāh), ath-Thaqafī, *Ahlu 'l-Kitāb*, *as-Sīratu 'l-Ḥalabiyyah*, etc., instead of 'Abd Allāh, al-Thaqafī, *Ahl al-Kitāb*, and *al-Sīrah al-Ḥalabiyyah*, respectively.

\* \* \* \* \*

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Professor Murtaḍā Muṭahharī was a man who made a covenant with Allah and kept his covenant. He strove to elevate everything connected with Islam. He was faithful to his beliefs. He gave everything he had both physically and mentally towards this sacred way. Finally, he was martyred while upon the straight way to Allah.

Āyātullāh Murtaḍā Muṭahharī was born on February 2, 1919 in Farīmān, a city in Khurassan Province. His father Ḥujjatulislām Muḥammad Ḥusayn Muṭahharī was one of the pious 'ulama of his time. At the age of 12 he set off for the Theological Centre in Mashhad to receive academic instruction from Mirzā Mahdī Shahīdī Raḍawī. Professor Muṭahharī left for the Theological Centre in Qum to study under the supervision of great instructors such as Āyātullāh Burūjerdī and Imam Khomeini. His beneficial acquaintance with Haj Mirzā 'Alī Aghā Shīrāzī had great effect on his thoughts at this period of his life.

In the course of his studies, Murtaḍā Muṭahharī developed a deep interest in philosophy and contemporary sciences. He became acquainted with concepts of all schools of philosophy at this phase of his intellectual development. He began his association with the devoted group of Fidā'i-yān-e Islām. This endeavor testifies to his overwhelming

socio-political commitment.

In 1952, he established the Islamic Council of University Students in Tehran and in 1955, began teaching as a faculty member at the College of Theology at the doctorate level continuing until 1978. Professor Muṭahharī remained faithful to his socio-political commitments. In 1963, he was arrested along with Imam Khomeini. After the exile of Imam Khomeini to Turkey, he took active part in the leadership of the Islamic liberation movement, making decisive contribution to the mobilization of the combatant 'ulamā'.

In 1969, Āyatūllāh Muṭahharī along with other 'ulama issued a statement severely condemning the violent aggression of the Imperialist U. S. Government in Palestine. He was discreetly engaged in collecting charity that was urgently needed by the Palestinian refugees.

In 1971, Professor Muṭahharī assumed the crucial responsibility of the politico-ideological programmes of Masjid (Mosque) al-Jawād. He always consulted Imam Khomeini on major socio-political issues. In his aspiration towards ultimate emancipation, Professor Muṭahharī was always inspired by the concepts and the beneficial guidelines of the Imam of Umma.

In 1972, the intellectual activities of the Islamic cultural centres especially Husayniyyah Irshad and al-Jawād Masjid were politically prohibited by the former regime and Āyatūllāh Muṭahharī was arrested once again. After a short while he was released from prison and resumed his political activities.

In 1978, Muṭahharī received news about the exile of Āyatūllāh Muntazari. He consequently delivered a denouncing speech. From that time on, the former regime prohibited his lectures and sermons.

Afterwards he was authorized by the Imam of Umma to organize the Society of Combatant 'Ulama and accepted membership in the Revolutionary Council. After the culmi-

nation of the Islamic Revolution, Professor Muṭahharī helped Imam Khomeini.

Genuineness and sincerity were among his most important characteristics. These two qualities were so strongly embedded within him that they resulted in his martyrdom (*shahādah*). Among his important works was his struggle against imported materialism. He tried to make Divine philosophy available for all.

On Wednesday, May 2, 1979, the radio announced the martyrdom of Āyātullāh Muṭahharī while in the background the announcer was reading excerpts from Muṭahharī's book, *Dāstān-e Rāstān (Stories of the Truthful People)*.

Martyr Muṭahharī was an intimate counsellor and a confidant of Imam Khomeini. Amidst overwhelming sorrow, Imam Khomeini confirmed: "He was the fruition of my life." The Imam shed no tears in commemoration of his own martyred son but he publicly mourned the occasion of the martyrdom of Muṭahharī and declared with his firm and decisive voice: "Kill us! Our nation will become more aware!"

Martyr Muṭahharī's ideas reflect his being active, aware and conscious of the world around him. We are very fortunate that he developed his thoughts and wrote them for us. He left over twenty books and numerous speeches.

May his soul rest in peace.

\* \* \* \* \*

Some of the titles of his works:

- Divine Justice*  
*The Cosmview of Tawhīd*  
*Women's Rights in Islam*  
*The Reason Behind the Pull Towards Materialism*  
*Stories of Truthful People*  
*Islamic Movements in the Last Century*  
*Sexual Morality in the East and West*  
*Revelation and Prophethood*  
*The Human Being and Faith*  
*Humanity and its Fate*  
*The Question of Modest Dress*  
*The Sun of Religion will Never Set*  
*The Martyr*  
*Leadership*  
*Humanity from the Point of View of Marxism and Islam*  
*History of Philosophy*  
*Islamic Economics*  
*Interpretations of Some Qur'anic Surahs*  
*The Human Being in the Qur'an*  
*Ten Sayings*

\* \* \* \* \*



## THE UMMĪ PROPHET

He was not a schooled man, neither sat in a classroom, nor folded his knees before a teacher, nor had an acquaintance with any written piece or book. This is the flash coruscating in the life of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad SAW\*.

None of the historians, either among the Muslims or non-Muslims, has ever claimed that the Prophet during his infancy or youth — let alone in his old age, the period of his Prophethood — had learned from any how to read and write. Likewise, there exists no indication whatsoever, that prior to his Prophethood might have had read a line or written a word.

The Arabs, particularly those of Ḥijāz, were in a total illiteracy. Those among them who were able to read and write were numbered on finger-tips. Hence, they were always at finger-point. It was remote from the consuetude of that environment to be unknown while one knew this craft.

As we know and we shall dwell on it later, the adversaries accused the Prophet of learning materials (he talked about) from other people's sayings. But they did not accuse him of

---

\* SAW: is the abbreviation of the Arabic phrase, *salla'llāhu 'alayhi wa ālih* (may Allah's peace and blessing be upon him and his progeny).

taking advantage of some books for his theme since the very reading and writing was outlandish to him. Had he known the reading and writing, it would have in every certitude never escaped the accusation.

### Confessions of Others

Orientalists, with their critical eyes on Islamic history, could not spot out a clue that could indicate that the Prophet possessed the ability to read and write. They admit that the Prophet was not a schooled man and was from a nation which was as well equally unschooled.

Thomas Carlyle in his well-known book, *Les Héros*, says:

"The thing which we should not forget is this, that Mohammed had not learned any lesson from any teacher. The craft of writing was newly introduced among the Arabs. I am of the belief that Mohammed was not acquainted with letters nor the reading. He had not been taught anything except the ways of a desert life."<sup>1</sup>

William Durant in his book, *The Story of Civilization*, says:

"... no one seems to have bothered to teach him how to read and write. This feeble accomplishment was held in low repute by the Arabs of the time, only seventeen men of the Quraish tribe condescended to it. Mohammed was never known to write anything himself, he used an amanuensis. His apparent illiteracy did not prevent him from composing the most famous and eloquent book in the Arabic tongue, and from acquiring such understanding of the management of men as seldom comes to highly educated persons."<sup>2</sup>

John Davenport in his book, *An Apology for Mohammed and the Koran*, says:

"As to acquired learning in the common acceptation of the word, it is confessed that Mohammed had none at all, having had no other education than what was customary in his tribe."<sup>3</sup>

Constantin Virgil Gheorghiu in his book, *Vie de Mahomet*, says:

"Although he was *ummi*, but the prime verses descended upon him spoke of pen and knowledge that purports writing and its teaching. None of the cardinal religions has stressed so much on knowledge. Of course, there is no religion that could have given so much importance to knowledge in its beginning. The verses that came down in the Cave of Hara would have not astonished the people that Mohammed been a scholar because a scholar knows the value of knowledge. But he was unlettered and had never learned from any a single lesson. I congratulate the Muslims for their religion, giving such an importance to learning from its very beginning."<sup>4</sup>

Gustav le Bon in his famous book, *La Civilization de les Arabes*, says:

"It is so known that Mohammed was *ummi*. This is creditable because had he been a man of letters, the connections of the Qur'anic sense and the terms would had been better. Besides this, had not the Prophet been *ummi*, he could have never succeeded in spreading a new religion because it is an unlettered one who can better probe into the needs of ignorant people and lead them better to a right path. At any rate, whether the Prophet was unlettered or not, this remains an irrefutable fact that he was a man of wisdom, intelligence, and sagacity of the highest degree."<sup>5</sup>

Gustav le Bon was ignorant of the Qur'anic contents in addition to his being a materialist. Hence, he has spoken trash with regards the Qur'anic verses and the inability of a learned one to know the needs of ignorant ones. He has vilified the Qur'an and the Prophet. But, at the same time, he admits of there being no proof that could indicate any acquaintance of the Prophet with reading and writing.

In quoting them we do not purport to take them as witnesses. In Islamic history and the orient, the opinion of the Muslims and orientalists themselves is more authentic.

We have quoted their statements in order to prove that had there been a slightest spot in this field it would have never escaped the curiosity of the critics — non-Muslim historians.

The Prophet while travelling to Syria in the company of Abū Tālib had made a stop on the way. This provided him an opportunity to have a brief meeting with a monk by name Baḥīrā.<sup>6</sup> This short meeting has attracted the attention of the historians as to ascertain whether did it provide him any learning. This shows that the adversaries, both ancient and modern, have not missed this small incident; they would have certainly detected and even magnified it had there been any evidence demonstrating any aptitude in regards to literacy of the Prophet might have obtained.

To clarify the subject, we should necessarily discuss into two divisions:

1. The period prior to Prophethood.
2. The period of Prophethood.

In the period of Prophethood the subject should be studied from two different angles:

1. Writing.
2. Reading.

We shall dwell later on what is decidedly a final conclusion of the scholars, Muslims and non-Muslims, that before his Prophethood, he had not had a slightest acquaintance with writing and reading. But, it is not so certain as far as the period of Prophethood is concerned. The thing that is incontrovertible in that period, is that he did not write while the reading is disputable. Some of the narrations establish that the Prophet used to read (during the period of his Prophethood) but he did not write, although there is no congruity and unity of opinion in these narrations. Anyway, on the whole, the thing that is cogent through the evidences is this: he neither wrote nor read during the period of Prophethood as well.

In order to cover the duration preceding the Prophethood

we should necessarily look into the general position that constituted the environment of Arabia in that era with regards to reading and writing.

The historical facts show that in the days close to the dawn of Islam there were very few persons who knew reading and writing.

### The Birth of Letters in Hijaz

Aḥmad bin Yaḥyā Balādhurī in the conclusion of his book, *Futūḥ al-Buldān*, describes the birth of letters among Arabs in Hijaz thus:

“Three persons from the Ṭayyī' (Tai) tribe (in the vicinity of Syria) for the first time composed the Arabic letters basing the spelling upon that of Assyrian. Then a few from Anbār learned this script from those three individuals. The people of Ḥirah got it from the people of Anbar. Bashr bin 'Abdu 'l-Malik, brother of Akīdar bin 'Abdu 'l-Malik bin 'Abdu 'l-Jinn al-Kindī, chief of Dūmah al-Jandal, a Christian, learned it from the people of Hirah as he was too frequent there. Some business took Bashr to Makka where Sufyān bin Umayyah bin 'Abd Shams [uncle of Abū Sufyān] and Abū Qays bin 'Abd Manāf bin Zuhrah bin Kilāb saw him writing. They asked him to teach them which he did. Then Bashr, with these two men, went to Ṭaif on a business trip. Ghilān bin Salmah ath-Thaqafī in Taif learned the writing from them. Afterwards, Bashr separated from these two companions and went to Egypt where 'Amr bin Zarārah bin 'Ads, later known as 'Amr al-Kātib (the writer), learned writing from Bashr. Later, Bashr went to Syria where he taught several others.”<sup>7</sup>

Ibn Nadīm in his book, *al-Fihrist*,<sup>8</sup> in the chapter, *The First Art from the First Essay*, does narrate, in part, the sayings of Baladhuri. He narrates on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās that the first three persons who wrote the Arabic letters were from the tribe of Būtān, a tribe in Anbar, and that the people of Hirah learned it from the people of Anbar.

Ibn Khaldūn too in his book, *al-Muqaddimah*, in the chapter, *The Letter and the Writing is a Human Craft*, certifies this, partly narrating the saying of Baladhuri.

Baladhuri narrates, on an authority, that at the dawn of Islam there were a few literate individuals in the whole of Makka (Mecca). He further says:

"Islam dawned and in Makka there were only seventeen persons knowing the craft of writing: 'Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb, 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib, 'Uthmān bin 'Affān, Abū 'Ubaydah al-Jarrāh, Ṭalḥah, Yazīd bin Abī Sufyān, Abū Ḥudhayfah bin 'Utbah bin Rabī'ah, Ḥaṭīb bin 'Amr (the brother of Suhayl bin 'Amr al-Āmirī), Abū Salmah bin al-Asad al-Makhzūmī, Abān bin Sa'īd al-Āss Umayyah, his brother Khālid bin Sa'īd Amawī, 'Abdu 'l-Lāh bin Sa'd bin Abī Sarḥ al-Āmirī, Ḥuwayṭib 'Abd al-Uzzā al-Āmirī, Abū Sufyān bin Ḥarb Umayyah, Mu'āwiyah bin Abī Sufyān, Juhaym bin aṣ-Ṣalt bin Makhlah bin al-Muṭṭalib bin 'Abd Manāf and al-'Alā' bin al-Ḥaḍramī. (The last one was not from Quraysh but was one of the confederates)." <sup>9</sup>

↳ According to Baladhuri, only one Qurayshi woman by the name Shifā', daughter of 'Abdallāh al-Adwī, was known to read and write in the days close to Islam. This lady later embraced Islam and is regarded among the first migrants. Baladhuri further says that it was this lady who taught writing to Ḥafṣah, one of the Prophet's wife. The Prophet told her, "As you have taught writing to Hafsa, it is good to teach her *ruqyah al-namlah* <sup>10</sup> too."

Baladhuri introduces some of the Muslim ladies who during the period of Islam were able to read and write as well, or read only.

"Hafsa (wife of the Prophet) used to write, Umm Kulthūm – daughter of 'Aqabah bin Abī Mu'īt – among the prime migrant ladies, used to write. 'Ā'ishah, daughter of Sa'd, was taught writing by her father. Karīmah, daughter of Miqdād, also used to write. 'Ā'ishah (wife of the Prophet),

used to read without writing, so also Umm Salamah."<sup>11</sup>

Baladhuri has mentioned the names of those who were so as to say the secretaries of the Prophet in Madina. According to him, at the dawn of Islam, there were altogether eleven from the tribes of Aws and Khazraj (two famous tribes of Madina) who knew the craft of writing. It would appear that the art of writing had so recently been introduced to the environs of Hijaz that one who knew reading or writing quickly became known by all. Therefore, those who were the men of reading and writing in the days recent to Islam were very few in Makka and so also in Madina. Hence, history has recorded their names. On this criterion, the name of the Prophet too would have been recorded had he known the craft. Therefore, it is definite that his excellency had no acquaintance with reading and writing.

#### **The Period of the Prophethood in Particular that in Madina**

As the evidences stand, this is tangible that the Prophet during his Prophethood had neither read nor written. But Islamic scholars are not at uniformity in this respect. One argument runs thus: Revelation did teach everything to Muḥammad SAW. Then why he was not taught reading and writing?<sup>12</sup> Some of the Shia narrations indicate that the Prophet used to read during his Prophethood but he did not write.<sup>13</sup> For instance, aṣ-Ṣadūq in his, *ʿIlal al-Sharāʿi*, says:

"The Prophet used to read but not write. This was one of the bounties of Allah upon him. 'Abbās, the Prophet's uncle, wrote a letter to the Prophet. The Prophet was in one of the gardens in the outskirts of Madina when the letter was received. The Prophet read the letter but did not disclose the contents to his companions. He enjoined all to go to the town. All went to the town and there he informed them of the contents."<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, Daḥlān in his *as-Sīrah an-Nabawīyyah*, narrates the incident of the letter quite differently:

"As soon as the letter of 'Abbās was received, the Prophet opened its seal and gave it to Ubayy bin Ka'b to read. Ka'b read it. The Prophet ordered to keep it a secret. Then the Prophet called on Sa'd bin ar-Rabī', one of the companions, and revealed to him the subject matter of the letter. The Prophet asked him to keep it a secret for the time being."<sup>15</sup>

Some believe that the Prophet during the period of Prophethood used to read and write as well. *Biḥār al-Anwār* quotes Sayyid Murtaḍā, saying:

"Some among the scholars believe that the Prophet did read and did write; and with this achievement he departed the world."<sup>16</sup>

Sayyid Murtaḍā himself has put forward this argument leaning on the well-known ḥadīth (tradition), i.e., the conversation of the Prophet about the pen and the ink-pot:

"It is a well-established incident in history that the Prophet, close to his death, enjoined to bring a pen and ink-pot that he would write instructions which would guard them from going astray."<sup>17</sup>

Since this ḥadīth does not reveal the exact desire as to whether the Prophet wanted to write down himself we cannot take it into account for argument's sake. Supposingly, he wanted to order in that gathering what he wanted to say to be committed to writing and he wanted them to stand witness to that by obtaining their signatures. Still the expression, "I want to write something for you that you should not go astray," is correct and rather literally. This is a metaphoric expression and quite common in all the languages, Arabic or others.

\* \* \* \* \*



## SECRETARIES OF THE PROPHET

According to authentic ancient Islamic histories, there was a group of secretaries to the Prophet in Madina. They were writing down the Divine Revelations, discourses of the Prophet, contracts and dealings with the people, covenants of the Prophet with the polytheists and the People of the Book (*Ahlu 'l-Kitāb*), records of taxes, charities, a fifth part of the income (*khums*) and booty, and also the letters of the Prophet himself which were not a few.

History has preserved to this day of ours all the discourses of the Prophet and the agreements, and the letters besides the Revelations of God. For instance, Muḥammad bin Sa'd has narrated in his, *aṭ-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrah*, vol. 2, pp. 30-38, the contents of about one hundred letters of the Prophet.

Some of these letters are addressed to the sultans, sovereigns around the world, the chiefs of the tribes, the governors — puppets either to Greeks or Iranians of the Persian Gulf, and the personalities inviting them to Islam, while others are circulars which can be treated as documents of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*); and the rest is for some other errands. The majority of the handwriting of these letters, has been established as to whom it belongs because the writer has mentioned his name at the end. It is said that the first one

who introduced the tradition of writing his name at the end was Ubayy bin Ka'b, a companion of the Prophet.

The Prophet himself has written nothing by his own hand in any of these written material. No one has ever claimed the occurrence of a single letter written by him. Above all, there is not a single Qur'anic verse that the Prophet should have written down by his own hand. While the Revelation writers, each of whom has written their own Qur'an, is it possible that the Prophet, while capable of writing, does not write his own Qur'an, or a chapter of it, or at least a verse?

The names of the Prophet's secretaries (*kuttāb*), are recorded in history books. For example, Ya'qūbī in his history book writes:

"The secretaries of the Prophet who wrote letters and agreements were: 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib, 'Uthmān bin 'Affān, 'Amr bin al-'Āṣṣ bin Umayyah, Mu'āwiyah bin Abī Sufyān, Sharāḥ-bil bin Ḥasanah, 'Abdallāh bin Sa'd Abī Sarḥ, Mughīrah bin Shu'bah, Ma'ādh bin Jabal, Zayd bin Thābit, Ḥanzalah bin Abī ar-Rabī', Ubayy bin Ka'b, Juhaym bin aṣ-Ṣalt and al-Ḥaṣīn an-Numayrī." 18

Mas'ūdī in his book, *al-Tanbīh wa al-Ishrāf*, gives us a little more information as to the responsibilities of each of them. According to him these secretaries were having a division of work among themselves in a discipline of some kind or the other. For instance, he says:

"Khālid bin Sa'id bin al-'Āṣṣ Sa'ad was always at hand to the Prophet and used to write for him the miscellaneous as the need rose. And such were Mughīrah bin Shu'bah ath-Thaqaḥī and Ḥaṣīn bin an-Numayrī. 'Abdallāh bin al-Arqam bin 'Abd Yaghūth az-Zahrī, and 'Alā' bin 'Aqabah were in charge of documents and contracts of the people. Zubayr bin al-'Awām and Juhaym bin aṣ-Ṣalt were responsible to keep the account of taxes and donations while Ḥudhayfah bin al-Yamāni was in charge of keeping the record of treasury of Hijaz. Mu'ayqib bin Abī Fāṭimah ad-Dūsī was in charge of booty.

Zayd bin Thābit al-Anṣārī was handling the correspondence with the kings and the governors besides being the Prophet's translator. He used to translate the Persian, Greek, Coptic and Abyssinian languages which he had learned in Madina from the respective people of their tongues.<sup>19</sup> Ḥaṅṅalah bin Rabī' was without a portfolio doing the job of any absentee among the mentioned ones. He had gained a good reputation in his field. In the time of 'Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb, the period of Islamic victories, he went to Ruhā and died there. 'Abdallāh bin Sa'd bin Abī Sarḥ was a writer for sometime and then rejected the belief and joined the unbelievers. Sharaḥbīl bin Ḥasanah al-Ṭābakhī, Abān bin Sa'īd and 'Alā' bin al-Ḥaḍramī also undertook the task of writing. Mu'āwiyah too worked for a few months that preceded the death of the Prophet. Besides these names there were also those who occasionally did the writing and we do not mention them."<sup>20</sup>

It seems that Mas'ūdī wanted to mention only those who had other responsibilities besides writing the Revelations. Hence, he has not mentioned the names of 'Alī, 'Abdallāh bin Mas'ūd and Ubayy bin Ka'b.

There are also incidents recorded in history and Islamic traditions (*aḥādīth*) that the Prophet used to have visitors from far and near seeking his advice or his teachings. The words of the Prophet to them that were full of wisdom and were committed to writing then and there or later on. In this respect too there is no occasion that could bring to light that the Prophet himself should have written a single line. Had there been a shred written by the Prophet's hand, Muslims would have preserved it as a sacred relic, and as the greatest honour for themselves and their generations, as they have done to the letters of 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib, and the manuscripts of the Qur'an which are said to be of the hand of the Imams. The *Ṣaḥīfah Sajjādīyyah* is a standing proof as to how it was preserved by Zayd bin 'Alī bin Ḥusayn and Yaḥyā bin Zayd.

Ibn al-Nadīm in his book, *al-Fihrist*, in the chapter, *The First Art from the First Essay*, says:

"I got acquainted with one of the Shī'ahs of Kūfah by the name of Muḥammad bin al-Ḥusayn known as Ibn Abī Ba'rah. He had a library which he had obtained from a Shī'ah of Kufah, the like of which I had never seen. The thing that marvelled me was that each sheet and each book was marked with the name by whose hand it was written. In that library I came across the letters of Imām Ḥasan and Imām Ḥusayn, sons of 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib. Also there were the agreements written by hand of 'Alī bin Abi Talīb, and other secretaries of the Prophet."<sup>21</sup>

This shows that had there been any shred of the Prophet's writing, the Muslims should have preserved it with utmost care. During the period of the Prophet it is assuredly rejected that the Prophet had left any writing by his own hand. But so far as for his reading is concerned it cannot be rejected although there is no any such proof.

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE STORY OF H̤UDAYBIYYAH

Several incidents occurred during the life of the Prophet while residing in Madina which also establish that he neither wrote nor read. Of all those events, that of H̤udaybiyyah is well known because of its particular historical angle. In spite of its disparity among the narrators, it still assists in bringing the forte to a focus.

The Prophet left Madina for Makka in the month of Dhi 'l-qa'd in the 6th year of Hijrah to perform the greater (*hajj*) and lesser (*'umrah*) pilgrimages. He had ordered to bring the camels duly marked for the sake of sacrifice. They reached H̤udaybiyyah, a place four miles from Makka. The Quraysh confronted them and hindered the arrival of the Muslims. The Quraysh had no right to do that because of the sanctity of the month even in those pre-Islamic days. The Prophet explained his end was that only of pilgrimage. The Quraysh remained recalcitrant. The Muslims wanted to enter Makka by force but the Prophet held them doing so. Finally, an agreement was reached between the Muslims and the Quraysh. 'Ali wrote while the Prophet dictated

"In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful."  
Suhayl bin 'Amr, the representative of the Quraysh, objected; "It is only your slogan; unknown to us. So, better write: In Your name, O God." The Prophet agreed and asked 'Ali to

write accordingly. After that he dictated 'Ali to write: "This is the agreement between Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, and the Quraysh." Here again the representative of the Quraysh objected, saying that they did not acknowledge him as the Messenger of Allah, and only his followers believed as such, otherwise they would have not fought him nor prevented him to enter Makka; only the name should be mentioned — his and his father's. The Prophet said: "Observe it or not, I am the Messenger of Allah", and then asked 'Ali to write:

"This agreement is concluded between Muhammad, son of 'Abdallah and the people of Quraysh."

This of course provoked the Muslims. From here onwards the historical narrations display disparity in some aspects.

From the sources, *Sīrah Ibn Hishām*, and *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* in the chapter, *The Conditions in the Holy War and the Peace with the War-farers*, we come to know that the objection took place prior to the writing of the phrase "Messenger of Allah". The Prophet agreed on the spot to be written Muhammad bin 'Abdallah instead of Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah. On the other hand, several other narrations indicate that the dispute occurred when 'Ali had already penned the word. The Prophet asked 'Ali to erase the word, 'Ali sought to be excused from doing so because he did not want to erase what he believed in. From this point onwards, the narrations vary. The Shia sources almost all say that when 'Ali sought to be spared, the Prophet erased the word himself and then 'Ali wrote: "Muhammad, son of 'Abdallah." In some of the narrations including the Sunni ones, it is said that Prophet asked 'Ali to show him the phrase by placing his hand (the Prophet's) on it so that he could erase it himself. 'Ali did so accordingly. The Prophet then erased the "Messenger of Allah" and 'Ali wrote instead "son of 'Abdallah". The thing that comes to light is this: the writer was 'Ali and not the Prophet. Consequently, this much could be ascertained that

the Prophet neither used to read nor write.

Abū Bakr 'Atiq an-Nishāpūrī al-Sa'dābādī (Sūrābādī), in his book, *Qiṣaṣ al-Qur'ān*, quoting a commentary (*tafsīr*) of the Qur'an composed in Persian in the fifth century, has mentioned the Hudaibiyyah incident until Suhayl bin 'Amr, the Quraysh's representative objected the phrase "Messenger of Allah", and then he writes:

"Said (Suhayl bin 'Amr) write like this: 'This is what was concurred upon by Muhammad son of 'Abdallah and Suhayl son of 'Amr.' The Prophet told 'Ali to erase 'Messenger of Allah.' 'Ali's heart did not give way to erase 'Messenger of Allāh.' Then the Prophet, since he was *ummi*, said: 'Put my finger over it so as to erase it myself.' 'Ali did. The Prophet erased the phrase. Thus the desire of Suhayl was carried out."

Ya'qūbī too in his book, *Tārīkh*, has mentioned:

"The Prophet ordered 'Ali to write 'son of 'Abdallah' instead of 'Messenger of Allah.' "22

Muslim in his book, *Ṣaḥīh*, while mentioning that 'Ali did not undergo to erase the phrase, adds:

"The Prophet said: 'So then show me its location.' 'Ali showed him and thereupon the Prophet erased the phrase and wrote: 'Muhammad, son of 'Abdallah.' "23

There are two antipodes in this narration. One: the Prophet sought the help of 'Ali in erasing the word. The other: The Prophet erased the word and wrote. In the first instance, it seems that the Prophet wrote when the phrase was erased. But actually the narrator means to say 'Ali wrote. The contents of the conversation too support that the Prophet sought the help of 'Ali for erasing the words.

In history books written by Ṭabarī and Kāmil Ibn Athīr, and also in the narrations (*riwāyāt*) of Bukhārī in the chapter, *The Conditions in the Holy War and the Peace with the War-farers*, we come across to a lurid conclusion that the second phrase was written by the Prophet himself because

of the wording that suggests: "So the Prophet took it and wrote." Tabari and Ibn Athir have gone a little beyond as they say: "So the Prophet took it and was not knowing how to write but he wrote."

Tabari and Ibn Athir support the idea that the Prophet was not used to write, but in Ḥudaybiyyah, he wrote, as an exceptional case. This incident might support those who hold the view that the Prophet, if wished, was able to write by the inspiration of God, but he did not do that as he did not do the versification. He did not even recite the others' versifications. If at all he recited a line, he broke its poetic form by disturbing its order. Hence, Allah did not consider poetry worthy of his elevated station.

وَمَا عَلَّمْنَاهُ الشِّعْرَ وَمَا يَنْبَغِي لَهُ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ وَقُرْآنٌ مُبِينٌ «سورة  
ياسين—٦٩»

*"And We did not teach him the poetry, and nor it should be to him. This is but a remembrance and a plain Qur'an." (Yāsīn, 36:69)*

The narrations that cover the incident of Ḥudaybiyyah is not at uniformity. Although, according to some, the words "son of 'Abdallah" more or less were considered something like the signature of the Prophet was written by himself but it was an exceptional case in view of the same sources.

In *Asad al-Ghābah*, a story is mentioned on the authority of Tamīm bin Jarāshah ath-Thaqāfī while giving his details. From this story it comes out that the Prophet, even in his Prophethood, neither read nor wrote. We quote the extract:

"Myself and a group from Thaqīf called on the Prophet and we embraced Islam. We asked him to accept our terms and sign an agreement with us. The Prophet replied: 'Write whatever you want and bring it to me to see.' We wanted to make a term with him to allow us the fornication and the usury. Since we could not write, we approached 'Ali who, seeing the nature of our condition refrained from writing it.



So we asked Khālid bin Sa'īd bin al-Āṣṣ to do the job. 'Alī told him: 'Do you know what is demanded to be ritten?' Khālid replied: 'It does not concern me. I shall write what they dictate. When they go to the Prophet it will be upto him what to do.' Khālid wrote it. We went to the Prophet. The Prophet enjoined one to read it for him. When the reader arrived at 'the usury', the Prophet asked him: 'Put my hand on the word 'usury'.' He did. Then the Prophet erased the word himself and recited this verse of the Qur'an:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَذَرُوا مَا بَقِيَ مِنَ الرِّبَا «سورة بقره—٢٧٨»

*"O those who have believed, fear Allah and leave aside what remains (due) from usury. . ." (al-Baqarah, 2:278)*

When we heard this Qur'anic verse, it exerted a gratification in the depth of our soul and we agreed to refrain from the usury. The reader proceeded in his reading and reached to the word 'fornication'. Then again the Prophet did the same and recited this Qur'anic verse:

وَلَا تَقْرُبُوا الزِّنَا إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً «سورة اسراء—٣٢»

*"And do not near the fornication; it is wrong." (Banī Isrā'īl, 17:32) "24*





## A STRANGE CLAIM

An Indian scholar, Dr. Sayyid 'Abdu'l-Laṭīf (from Hyderabad, India), head of the Institute of the Indian Culture and the Near East and also the chairman of the Academy of Islamic Studies in Hyderabad, has lectured in one of the Islamic conferences in India. Around four years ago,<sup>25</sup> his lecture was reflected in our Iranian publications and magazines. In his detailed lecture on this subject, which has been published in English, he has claimed that the Prophet, even prior to his Prophethood was used to read and write.

The findings of Dr. Sayyid 'Abdu'l-Laṭīf thrilled the Iranian readers resulting into interrogations and queries with the authorities concerned. At that time I delivered a brief lecture in this respect among the students.

In view of the interest shown generally at that time, besides the things that lied in the rumples of the speech of the Doctor which are rather unusual for any unique researcher, we relate here what he said:

1. The reason into the saying that the Prophet neither read nor wrote is a mistake committed by the commentators in the interpretation of the word *ummī*. This word is used in verses 157 and 158 in the chapter *al-A'raf*:

الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ «سورة اعراف—١٥٧»

"Those who follow the Messenger, the Ummī."  
(*al-A'rāf*, 7:157)

فَأَمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ النَّبِيِّ الْأُمِّيِّ «سورة اعراف - ١٥٨»

"So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the Ummī."  
(*al-A'rāf*, 7:158)

The Doctor says that the commentators took for granted the word *ummī* in the sense of not having learnt a lesson while the word does not give that sense.

2. There are several other verses in the Qur'an which give one to understand clearly that the Prophet of Allah used to read and as well as to write.

3. There is a good enough portion among the authentic sayings (*aḥādīth*) of the Prophet and the reliable historical narrations that have evidently established the reading and the writing ability of the Prophet.

This is the epitome of what the Doctor has lectured. We shall dwell thereon respectively.

\* \* \* \* \*

**(1) WAS THE INTERPRETATION OF THE WORD  
UMMĪ – THE SOURCE OF THE BELIEF FOR  
THE PROPHET BEING UNLETTERED?**

The claim of the Doctor is groundless as far as the unletteredness of the Prophet is concerned with the interpretation of the word *ummī*.

Firstly, the history of Arabs and that of Makka close to the dawn of Islam clearly establishes the illiteracy of the Prophet. As we have explained the status of reading and writing was so confined in the milieu of Hijaz during the period close to the birth of Islam that those who were acquainted with this craft gained such a renown that their names individually are recorded by history. The name of the Prophet is not among them. If at all, supposingly, had there not been any mention in the Qur'an in this respect; still the Muslims were obliged by the verdict of history to accept the unletteredness of their Prophet.

Secondly, there is another verse in the Qur'an which is not less explicit than the verses in the chapter of *al-A'raf* wherein the word *ummī* is used. The Islamic commentators are more or less at variance with regards to the sense of the word in the verses of this chapter but quite at harmony in respect of the interpretation of this verse, as an indication that the Prophet had never learned how to read and write.

وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْلُونَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَلَا تَخُطُّهُ بِيَمِينِكُمْ إِذَا لَأْتَابَ  
 الْمُجِبُّونَ «سورة عنكبوت—٤٨»

*"And you were not reading (tatlū) before it any book nor you were writing by your right hand; else would have doubted the error mongers." (al-'Ankabūt, 29:48)*

According to this verse the Prophet neither used to read nor write prior to his Prophethood. The Islamic commentators have generally interpreted this verse just the same.

The Doctor claims the misinterpretation of this verse because the word *kitāb* refers to the holy books such as the Bible. According to him (the Doctor) the verse means to say: "You were not acquainted with any holy book before the Qur'an descended because those books were not in Arabic language. Had you read those books that were other than Arabic you would have become the butt of surmise and censure of the error mongers."

This claim is wrong. The word *kitāb* in the Arabic language absolutely means something written whether be it holy or a letter or a book. This is not at congruity with the widespread sense of today in our Persian tongue. This word is repeatedly used in the Qur'an. Even it is used for a letter exchanged between the two as in the case of Queen of Sabā:

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُوْا إِنِّي أَلْقِي إِلَيْكُمْ كِتَابًا كَرِيمًا إِنَّهُ مِنْ سُلَيْمَانَ «سورة  
 نمل—٢٩»

*"O you, the Group! I have received a generous letter (kitāb); it is from Sulaymān." (an-Naml, 27:29,30)*

This word *kitāb* is also used to mean a document of some agreement between two persons:

وَالَّذِينَ يَبْتَغُونَ الْكِتَابَ مِمَّا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ فَكَاتِبُوهُمْ «سورة نور—٣٣»

*"Slaves who desire emancipation according to an*

agreement (*kitāb*), you entertain their desire and conclude the agreement with them." (*an-Nūr*, 24:33)

It is also used with regards to the unseen slates containing the Divine facts relating to the knowledge of the universal events:

وَلَا رَطْبٌ وَلَا يَابِسٌ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ «سورة انعام—٥٩»

"Nor any thing green nor dry but (it is all) in a clear book (*kitāb*)." (*al-An'ām*, 6:59)

In the Qur'an when the word *ahl* is mated with this word *kitāb*, that is, *Ahlu 'l-Kitāb* (People of the Book) the sense is purported differently.

People of the Book — means the followers of any of the Heavenly Books.

يَسْأَلُكَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ أَنْ تُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِمْ كِتَابًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ «سورة نساء—١٥٣»

"The followers of the Heavenly Book will ask you to bring down a letter (*kitāb*) from Heaven for them." (*an-Nisā'*, 4:153)

In this verse the word is used twice: once in association with *ahl* and the other without any association. The former means Heavenly Book while the latter does only a letter.

Besides, the sentence: "You were not writing by your right hand" (29:48), makes the sense quite obvious that he was not used to reading and nor to writing, else had he known the reading and writing, he would have been accused of having borrowed from somewhere else. Since the Prophet knew not the reading and writing, there is no room for such an accusation.

If it means that you have not read the Holy Books because of their being in other tongues, then the verse would purport to mean: "You did not use to read in other tongues before and nor used to write in those tongues." Such a meaning is not cogent because had there been a shred of reading or writing in those languages, it would have provided material for accusation. It was not necessary that he should be able to write in those languages, had he

been able to read them and write in his own language, it could have been sufficient to give occasion to censure him.

Here, there stands a point which possibly could support the viewpoint of the Doctor although he has not mentioned it and nor it is mentioned by any commentators:

In this verse (29:48), the word *tatlū* is used which is derived from *tilāwah* which, according to the famous Qur'anic lexicon *Mufradātu 'l-Qur'ān* of Rāghib al-Isfahānī, specifies only the reading (or reciting) of the holy verses contrary to the word *qirā'ah* that is common for reading as is the case with the word *kitāb*.

The word *tatlū* is used presumably for the subject, being the Qur'an and, according to *Mushākalah*<sup>26</sup> has been used to indicate the reading of other texts too. It is so as to say: "Now you recite Qur'an and before you were not used to reciting any written thing."

There is another verse in the chapter of *ash-Shūrā* that throws light on the unletteredness of the Prophet:

وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِّنْ أَمْرِنَا مَا كُنْتَ تَدْرِي مَا الْكِتَابُ وَلَا  
إِلْمَامٌ «سورة شورى—٥٢»

"We revealed the Qur'an which is the spirit and the life, by Our command. Before you were not knowing what is the writing and what is the faith." (*ash-Shūrā*, 42:52)

Dr. Sayyid 'Abdu'l-Laṭīf has made no mention of this verse. He might say the meaning of the word *kitāb* in this verse too is the sacred texts that were in languages other than Arabic. The reply to this could be the same that preceded.

The Islamic commentators have said, of course, on grounds not known to us, that the word *kitāb* purports particularly to the Qur'an. Therefore, this verse is out of the criterion.

Thirdly, we do not see uniformity of opinion among the Islamic commentators with regards to the word *ummī*



while such is not the case with regards to the unletteredness of the Prophet. Not only commentators, but all the Islamic scholars are in unison at this angle. As such, it serves as proof that the unletteredness of the Prophet has no bearing on the interpretation of the word *ummī* so, as to be a source for the belief of Muslims.

#### The Meaning of the Word *Ummī*:

The Islamic commentators have interpreted this word into three categories:

- a) Not schooled and not acquainted with letter and written materials,
- b) Native of *Ummu 'l-Qurā*,
- c) Arab polytheists who were not the followers of the Heavenly Book.

\* \* \*

#### (A) Not Schooled and not Acquainted with Letters and Written Materials:

A majority supports this view or they hold it in preference. The viewpoint goes to indicate:

The word *ummī* comes from the root word *umm* meaning mother. As such, *ummī*, means one who has remained at the status as he was at the time of his birth, that is, with regards to the information about the letters or the written matters which purports to be at the halt over the primitive human information alone. Or, this word is related to the word *ummah* meaning a nation. In this case the word *ummī* means one adhibited to the consuetude of the majority of the people. Most of them were not knowing the reading and writing except a very few. So also the word *'ūmī* (common man) means a man like others who form a common multitude and, therefore, ignorant.<sup>27</sup> According to some, the word *ummah* means creation. So, *ummī* here means one who

has retained the condition wherein he was born and that is the illiteracy. However, whether it is driven from *ummah* or *umm*, it means illiterate.

(B) Native of *Ummu 'l-Qurā*:

Those who support this school of thought consider the word *ummī* related to *Ummu 'l-Qurā*, that is, Makka. The verse 93 in the chapter of *an-An'ām* refers to Makka as *Umm 'l-Qurā*:

وَلْتُنذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُرَىٰ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا «سورة انعام—٩٣»

“So that you may admonish *Ummu 'l-Qurā* (Makka) and those around it.” (*an-An'ām*, 6:93)

There is a probability, since the ancient times *Ummu 'l-Qurā* is attributed to Makka;<sup>28</sup> and there are several narrations among the Shia that support this, although they are not credited, in as much so the origin is regarded, to have a bearing upon Israelites. Hence, this probability is repudiated:<sup>29</sup>

First, the word *ummu 'l-qurā* is not a proper noun and nor it is used exclusively for Makka. The very word itself means the centre of villages. Any spot which is considered as a centre for surrounding villages is called *ummu 'l-qurā*. There is another verse in the Qur'an where this word is used as an adjective and not as a noun:

وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ الْقُرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ يَبْعَثَ فِي أُمِّهَا رَسُولًا «سورة

قصص—٥٩»

“And your Lord was not the destroyer of the villages unless He sends a messenger in its centre.” (*al-Qaṣaṣ*, 28:59)

So the word appears to have a common attribution. Furthermore, in the Qur'anic language, it seems every spot that is the centre of a region, is named *ummu 'l-qurā*.<sup>30</sup>

Secondly, this term is also used in the Qur'an for those who were not Makkans.

The Qur'an says openly :

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا تَدَانَيْتُمْ بِدِينٍ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى فَاكْتُبُوهُ وَتُبَّ كِتَابَ  
بَيْتِكُمْ كَاتِبًا بِالْعَدْلِ «سورة بقره آیه ۲۸۲»

*"Those who have believed! If you are committed to another for a prescribed period; write it down and the writer should write it correctly and justly."*  
(*al-Baqarah*, 2:282)

So, in line with Allah and the Prophet's instruction, the Muslims have followed the holy tradition of the writing so as to preserve their relics and fulfil their obligations towards their children and their society. From here commences the 'campaign of the pen' which soon turned the people – among whom the learned ones were counted on fingers – into the multitudes knowing different tongues who, in Madina, succeeded in propagating the Message all over the world.

In history we come across this fact that the captives of Badr were liberated against a ransom while the poors without any and those learned ones were under a contract that each of them should teach ten boys in Madina to gain their liberty.<sup>35</sup>

Such was the insistence of the Prophet towards learning. Yet, it does not constitute an incumbency on the Prophet that he himself should necessarily be bound to writing or reading so as to teach or preach to the people.

The Doctor says:

"God has mentioned pen and writing in the first chapter. These verses stand a testimony proving the ability of the Prophet to read and write and the familiarity with the pen. It strikes improbable to remain himself inadvertent and on the other hand persuade the people to read and write. He was always ahead the all in every thing."

This argument too is astonishing.

There is no dispute in the related sense represented in these verses. The Prophet did know the worth of reading and writing. But these verses do not figure a need wherein

either God should be bound or the Prophet for the necessity of pen and paper.

The Doctor says: "The Prophet was ahead in all his instructions. So why did he not practise himself in this respect?"

It is tantamount to say that a doctor should administer the medicine first to himself prior to his patient. A doctor will have to use the medicine which he prescribes to a patient in the event of his getting ill with the same sickness. If a doctor did not get ill, then what? There is a point solicitous to judge: Reading and writing consummates the worth of a man, otherwise the worth is lost. The Prophet, did he too sail in the same boat? Did he lose the worth by his ignorance of this craft and yet remained inadvertent to gain it? Or, does the Prophet belong to a particular status which widely differs? The Prophet was ahead of the people in worship, moral, character, democracy, humbleness and all other good qualities. So what was lacking? He would have lacked a great deal had he missed any of them.

To be a man of learning is not in the sense as it is being termed. Its worth for a human being is because of its benefit exchanged to and from others. The letters are invented so as to decipher the representations of each other. They are only a means to transfer information from one person to another or from a nation to a nation or keep a truck with posterity. It is not less than to learn a tongue. If one learns different tongues, he would be more qualified to learn the thoughts of different people. At the same time, learning, in itself is not knowledge. It only avails the access. Knowledge is something else. To know the facts hidden in nature or to discover answers to the enigmas of arithmetic, natural science, logic, etc., is knowledge. Man in these sciences discovers a real connecting factor, either that of creative one or that of caused one, or one that is because of the effect amidst the things existing physically or those of noetic nature.

Knowing a language is only a ground whereon to be alert to follow the developments of thoughts or tongues. In the field of covenantal affairs, a catena of realities do occur such as the advancement of languages and the compositions etc., representing the perfection of thoughts that take place in accordance with the laws of nature. Of course, to know those natural laws is a part of philosophy and science. To have knowledge is worthwhile because it avails the key to open the stores of others. This also should be examined, whether is it the only way to arrive at knowledge? Does the Prophet too need the same way? If this be so, then what the invention or being extraordinary should mean to? Immediate knowledge from nature — how to describe it? It is the most minimum or unworthy way to gain knowledge through the writings of others wherein a student has no opinion nor say in it. In the writings of human beings, there is no more than a mixture of fiction and facts.

Rene Descartes [1596—1650], a French scholar, gained worldwide reputation by his articles. One of his fans considered him to have had obtained a treasury of books, scriptures, manuscripts, etc. wherefrom he gets his ideas and writes. He went to see him and requested to show him his library. Descartes took him to a compound and there was a carcase of a buffalo upon which he had done a post-mortem. "This is my library. I get the information from here," said he.

The Late Sayyid Jamāluddīn Assadabādī used to say: "It is strange that some persons spend their life by the side of lamp studying the books or writings of the others. But they do not study the lamp itself. If they do one night, they will accumulate considerable funds of information."

No one has come to this world and he was already a scholar. All are ignorants at their advent to this world. They become learned little by little. In other words, no one is learned by self. This is only to God to be so. There are

causes; there are reasons; there are motivations which make one learned Above all, there is a need for a teacher!

Allah regarding the Prophet, says:

أَلَمْ يَجِدْكَ يَتِيمًا فَآوَىٰ وَوَجَدَكَ ضَالًّا فَهَدَىٰ وَوَجَدَكَ عَائِلًا فَأَغْنَىٰ

«سورة والضحى — ٦ و ٥»

*“Did He not find you an orphan and give you refuge?  
And found you unable to see and showed the way?  
And found you in need and enriched (you)?” (ad-Duḥā, 93:6 - 8)*

The teacher — who should he be and how? This is in itself a topic! Is it so directly necessary for a man that he should learn from a teacher? Then, he should certainly have the keys, so as to say the learning, in order to obtain the knowledge. If so, a man is not at that level to initiate himself, or to read the literature scattered in nature and clandestine in creation, or to have a link with the unseen and pursue the Divine so as to be a teacher to him.

The Qur'an says:

وَمَا يَتَّبِعُكَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ إِلَّا مَوَاقِبُ الْمَقْبُورِ، إِنَّهُ لَكَاوِيٌّ وَخَيُّ يُوْحَىٰ، عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَىٰ «سورة

والنجم — ٤ و ٣ و ٥»

*“He speaks not out of desire but it is the revelation revealed. The Mighty Power has taught him.” (an-Najm, 53:3 - 5)*

'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib, says:

“Ever since he was weaned from milk, Allah delegated the highest angel to be his guardian. The angel used to goad him to the character and the best conduct of the world.”<sup>36</sup>

A renown poet, says:

عارف از پیرتومی راز معانی دانست

گوهر هر کس از این لعل توانی دانست

شرح مجموعه گل مرغ سحر داند و بس

که نه هر کوی ورقی خواند معانی دانست

ای که از دفتر عقل آیت عشق آموزی

ترسم این نکته بتحقیق نتانی دانست

*In the shade of peg conceived a knower's secrets of meaning;*

*Pearl of each turned petrous in strength from this ruby.*

*Description of flowers' collection knows lark only;*

*Nay, whoever persuade a page could proclaim the meaning!*

*A verse of love in the book of reason; do you read?*

*You wouldn't know in certain the point; fear it is!*

*In privacy he who finds to wisdom a way;*

*Through learnings; nay, destination shall be away.<sup>37</sup>*

◀Ibn Khaldūn in his well-known *al-Muqaddimah*, in the chapter, *The Letter and the Writing is a Human Craft*, argues that the lettering gives perfection due to the reason that human life is social and, therefore, men are in need of information from one another. He has described the complete course of the progress of the lettering in the civilizations and then dwelt on its birth in Hijaz, and says:

"In the early days of Islam, the lettering was proceeding ahead through its primary artistic stages. The letters of the companions were concomitant with shortcomings with regards to its art. Later on, the followers and the successors then adopted the same lettering in writing the Qur'an as it appeared to them sacred to protect the relic, although some of the letters-shaping were contrary to the rule. Hence, some of the Qur'anic words gained survival in the same particular shape."

He further proceeds:

"The consummation of art and practice such as letter-shaping that has a bearing on the reasons and the means of life should not be confused with the absolute perfection, which if missed, could be a loophole in the manners of a man."

Ibn Khaldūn has dwelt on the Prophet's being an *ummī* which could be summoned as:

"The Prophet was *ummī* (i.e. unschooled). His status of being *ummī* was quiescence for him because his knowledge was a heavenly one, while it is a shortcoming to us since it is tantamount to be ignorant." 38

The Doctor referring to the verses 3 and 4 in the chapter of *Lam Yakun* says:

"It is very astonishing that the interpreters and the commentators of the Qur'an have not paid attention to this verse while it is a description of Muḥammad. The verse 6 declares:

رَسُولٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ يَتْلُو صُحُفًا مُّطَهَّرَةً «سورة بينه—٢»

"'A Messenger from Allāh recites hallowed scriptures.' (*al-Bayyinah*, 98:2)

"Attention should be paid to the point that the verses do not specify that the Prophet used to recite the hallowed pages by heart or from memory, but they clearly establish that the Prophet recites these pages from the very material."

The answer to their argument becomes plain upon the comprehension of two words in this verse. The word *ṣaḥīfah* and the word *yaṭlū*. The word 'page' which in Arabic originally stands *ṣaḥīfah* means leaf; *ṣuḥaf* is its plural, i.e., leaves. The meaning is elaborated by the subsequent wordings that follow the verse: "Therein are the worthy writings." (98:3). It goes on to say: "The Prophet used to recite the hallowed pages wherein are the worthy writings."

The meaning of the 'leaves' is those leaves whereon the Qur'anic verses were written. So, it is the Qur'an itself. The word 'recites' stands for the Arabic one *yaṭlū* which is from *tilāwah*. We have never come across any such authority for this word *tilāwah* so as to give the sense of 'reading from the material itself'. The findings of the linguistics and the occasions for the use of the word *qirā'ah* and the word *tilāwah* bring home the sense that every spoken word is not *qirā'ah*



and nor *tilāwah*. It can be *qirā'ah* and *tilāwah* only in case of the contents that are read being one and same — no matter whether they are read by heart or from the very material itself. For instance, reciting the Qur'an is *tilāwah* or *qarā'ah* whether it may be recited from the very pages or by heart. There is again a difference between these two words. *Tilāwah* refers to the reading of contents which are holy. But *qirā'ah* has a common phase. It can be used for the reading of the holy verses of the Qur'an as well as other texts. For example, if it is said: "I made the *qirā'ah* of *Golestān* of Sa'dī". There is nothing wrong in it. But it would be a blunder if it is said: "I made the *tilāwah* of *Golestān* of Sa'dī!".

To read from the material or by heart, has no bearing in the sense of the words *tilāwah* and *qirā'ah*. The verses do not say other than this: That the Prophet used to recite the Qur'an for the people that was written on the pages.

Basically, there does not seem any need that the Prophet should recite the Qur'anic verses from the pages viewing the fact that hundreds of Muslims had committed them to memory. So then has the Prophet not memorized the Qur'an? On the other hand, Allah had guaranteed his memory:

سَتَقْرَأُكَ فَلَا تَنسَىٰ  
 «سورة اعلیٰ—۶»

"We read to you so that you forget not." (*al-A'lā*, 87: 6)

On the whole this becomes evident that the Qur'anic verses never establish the reading and the writing of the Prophet. But, it is to the contrary. If at all, supposingly such an evidence is drawn, then it pertains to the period of his Prophethood. But, the Doctor's claim is that the Prophet used to read and write before the period of his Prophethood.



The Qur'an says openly :

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا تَدَايَيْتُمْ بِدِينٍ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى فَاكْتُبُوهُ وَلْيَكْتُب بَيْنَكُمْ كَاتِبٌ بِالْعَدْلِ «سورة بقره آیه ۲۸۲»

*"Those who have believed! If you are committed to another for a prescribed period; write it down and the writer should write it correctly and justly."*  
(*al-Baqarah, 2:282*)

So, in line with Allah and the Prophet's instruction, the Muslims have followed the holy tradition of the writing so as to preserve their relics and fulfil their obligations towards their children and their society. From here commences the 'campaign of the pen' which soon turned the people – among whom the learned ones were counted on fingers – into the multitudes knowing different tongues who, in Madina, succeeded in propagating the Message all over the world.

In history we come across this fact that the captives of Badr were liberated against a ransom while the poors without any and those learned ones were under a contract that each of them should teach ten boys in Madina to gain their liberty.<sup>35</sup>

Such was the insistence of the Prophet towards learning. Yet, it does not constitute an incumbency on the Prophet that he himself should necessarily be bound to writing or reading so as to teach or preach to the people.

The Doctor says:

"God has mentioned pen and writing in the first chapter. These verses stand a testimony proving the ability of the Prophet to read and write and the familiarity with the pen. It strikes improbable to remain himself inadvertent and on the other hand persuade the people to read and write. He was always ahead the all in every thing."

This argument too is astonishing.

There is no dispute in the related sense represented in these verses. The Prophet did know the worth of reading and writing. But these verses do not figure a need wherein

either God should be bound or the Prophet for the necessity of pen and paper.

The Doctor says: "The Prophet was ahead in all his instructions. So why did he not practise himself in this respect?"

It is tantamount to say that a doctor should administer the medicine first to himself prior to his patient. A doctor will have to use the medicine which he prescribes to a patient in the event of his getting ill with the same sickness. If a doctor did not get ill, then what? There is a point solicitous to judge: Reading and writing consummates the worth of a man, otherwise the worth is lost. The Prophet, did he too sail in the same boat? Did he lose the worth by his ignorance of this craft and yet remained inadvertent to gain it? Or, does the Prophet belong to a particular status which widely differs? The Prophet was ahead of the people in worship, moral, character, democracy, humbleness and all other good qualities. So what was lacking? He would have lacked a great deal had he missed any of them.

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«سورة والضحى — ٦٠ و ٦١»

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وَمَا يَنطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ، إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ، عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَىٰ «سورة

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Basically, there does not seem any need that the Prophet should recite the Qur'anic verses from the pages viewing the fact that hundreds of Muslims had committed them to memory. So then has the Prophet not memorized the Qur'an? On the other hand, Allah had guaranteed his memory:

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"We read to you so that you forget not." (*al-A'lā*, 87: 6)

On the whole this becomes evident that the Qur'anic verses never establish the reading and the writing of the Prophet. But, it is to the contrary. If at all, supposingly such an evidence is drawn, then it pertains to the period of his Prophethood. But, the Doctor's claim is that the Prophet used to read and write before the period of his Prophethood.





### (3) HISTORY AND AḤĀDĪTH

Dr. Sayyid 'Abdul-Laṭīf claims that the histories and the *aḥādīth* contain certain texts which give us to believe that the Prophet used to read and write. The Doctor refers to the following two incidents:

1. "Bukhārī has recorded in the chapter of *al-'Ilm*, of his book *Ṣaḥīḥ*, that once the Prophet gave a confidential letter to his son-in-law, 'Alī, and told him not to open it and remember the name of the person who would receive it and then hand the letter to him. When the Prophet used to despatch such a secret letter that 'Alī, his confederate and his son-in-law, was not allowed to read it, then who could have possibly written it except the Prophet himself."

The incident stated in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 1, p. 25, unfortunately does not mention 'Alī to be the bearer of the letter. It only mirrors the intention of the Doctor to utilize the episode in the benefit of his conjecture that the writer of the letter could not be other than the Prophet himself.

The narration of Bukhārī in the chapter of *al-'Ilm* runs like this:

"The Prophet delegated a group and gave a letter to the leader of the delegation. The Prophet told him not to open the letter before reaching to such and such a spot."

There is no mention of 'Alī to be the *amīr* (leader) of that delegation. It could be judged from the narration that the person to open the letter was supposed to be the bearer himself and not a third one as conjectured by Dr. Sayyid 'Abdu 'l-Laṭīf.

The narration of Bukhārī refers to the story of Batni 'n-Nakhlah<sup>39</sup>, which is recorded in the history books, such as *Sīrah Ibn Hishām*<sup>40</sup> under the heading *Sīrah 'Abdu 'l-Lāh bin Jahsh* and so also *Biḥāru 'l-Anwār*<sup>41</sup>. The incident is this:

"The Bearer of the letter was 'Abdu 'l-Lāh bin Jahsh. The Prophet told him to open the letter only upon covering a distance to the length of a two days journey, and then to act according to the contents therein. So did 'Abdu 'l-Lāh bin Jahsh."

al-Wāqidi describes that the writer of the letter was Ubayy bin Ka'b and not the Prophet. He further says:

"Abdu 'l-Lāh bin Jahsh said that once upon a night after the prayers, the Prophet told me to come armed to him early in the next morning as there would be a job for me. After the morning prayers, which the Prophet had conducted in the mosque amidst a throng of people, I was already armed and standing at the Prophet's house. Several others too like me had come over there. The Prophet called for Ubayy bin Ka'b and enjoined him to write a letter. The Prophet gave that closed letter to me and said: 'I appoint you as chief of this group. After covering a distance in a journey of two nights taking such and such route, you open the letter and act as per what is written therein.' I, after a journey of two days, opened the letter and read the instructions which were to this effect — that I should go to Batni 'n-Nakhlah (a spot between Makka and Ṭā'if) to obtain the necessary intelligence through the caravan of the Quraysh and

that I should not compel any of my companions to come with me as it should be left to their option. Of course, the task was dangerous. I told my companions accordingly. All of them said unanimously: 'We are the hearers and obedient to Allāh and His Messenger and to you.'"<sup>42</sup>

As such, it is totally groundless what the Doctor has based on.

2. The second incident which the Doctor has referred to is that of Ḥudaybiyyah. The Doctor says: "As per the narrations of Bukhārī and Ibn Hishām, the Prophet took the agreement and wrote it by his own hand."

Yes, Bukhārī has narrated like that in one place while in another he has narrated quite opposite of it. The scholars of Sunni sect almost all have a consensus on this point that the narration of Bukhārī in its texture appears to bear the sense that the Prophet wrote himself. But actually this was not the intention of the narrator, *as-Sīratu 'l-Ḥalabiyyah*, in the course of his narration, says:

"The Prophet sought 'Alī's help in erasing the word: *Rasūlu 'l-Lāh* (Messenger of Allah). He refers to Bukhārī's narration and says that, according to some, it was a miracle of the Prophet."

He further says:

"Some have said that the men of knowledge do not give credit to the way in which the incident is narrated. The gist is this: The Prophet ordered to write. He did not write."

He says: "Abu 'l-Walīd al-Bāḥī al-Mālikī al-Andalūsī wanted to give credit to the outer phrase of the Bukhārī's narration. But he was confronted strongly by the scholars of Andalus."<sup>43</sup>

As far as *Sīrah Ibn Hishām* is concerned, there is not such a thing at all. It is not clear as to why Dr. Sayyid 'Abdu 'l-Laṭīf attributes such a thing to Hishām.

We have said before that from the historical angle, all the narrations resort to this fact — that whatever was written, it

was by the media of Alī. Only according to at-Ṭabarī and Ibn Athīr it comes out that the Prophet wrote, although he was not knowing the writing.

Above all, it can be this much that during the Prophethood, the Prophet wrote once or more. But the dispute is of the period prior to Prophethood.

\* \* \* \* \*

## ACCUSATION OF THE OPPONENTS

At the beginning of this article we have said that the adversaries of the Prophet and Islam of that time had accused him of having had gained the matter from the general sayings of others. This accusation is reflected in some Qur'anic verses. But they did not attribute to him any accusation of gaining the matter from the books because his unletteredness was an acknowledged fact.

One could possibly say that the Prophet was accused of being a lettered one and this can be judged in the fifth verse of the chapter of *al-Furqān*:

وَقَالُوا أَأَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ اكْتَتَبَهَا فَهِيَ تُمْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا «سورة  
فرقان»

*"And they said these are the fictions of the past ones which are written – so they are read out to him every morning and evening." (al-Furqān, 25:5)*

The answer to this is that the accusations of the enemies of the Prophet were so caustic, cavil, and carp that the Qur'an itself refers to them as "tyranny and stubbornness."

The verse does not indicate that such was the accusation. Although the word *iktitāb* means 'writing', but it also means *istiktāb*, i.e., 'a person writes for another'.

The subsequence of this verse resembles to this sense: They said the fictions of the past ones he has written (or others have written for him) and every morning and evening it is read for him. The word *iktitāb* is used in the past tense while the word *imlā'* in the present tense. Others who are literates come to him every morning and evening to read it for him and he learns from them and memorizes them. If the Prophet himself was a lettered one, it would have not become necessary to say that others came to him in the morning and the evening to read to him.

The critical, the stubborn pagans who accused the Prophet of even being mad and a magician and a liar, did not accuse him of being at literacy and thereby having had gained the information from the books.

\* \* \* \* \*



## CONCLUSION

From the whole that preceded, it comes out supported by historical verdicts, the Qur'anic evidences, and several symptoms emanating from Islamic history, is that the state of the heart of the Prophet was never chalked by any human teacher. He was that man who never set his foot into a school except the Divine school which he was affiliated to. What he learned, he learned it from the Absolute Truth. A rose that a gardener himself kept as his cynosure and toiled in its growth without any other association; such was the Prophet.

He was not acquainted with pen, ink, paper and thereby writing and reading<sup>44</sup>; yet in the Holy Book, these tools are sworn upon as a holy command, and in the very first Heavenly Message, mankind is enjoined towards knowledge. The craft of pen and the canopy of learning stood second to the immediate bounty of creation.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, he did not hold a pen between his fingers, but he, upon his arrival at Madina, created the possibilities, although simple ones, and thereby caused the 'movement of the pen' to gush forth. Having had seen no teacher, having had not gone to a school

and yet to become a teacher of human beings and to bring into being universities — no one can be so except himself, Muḥammad, the Prophet of Allah.

ستاره ای بدرخشید و ما مجلس شد  
دل رمیده ما را انیس و مونس شد  
نگار من که به مکتب نرفت و خط ننوشت

بغمزه مسئله آموز صد مدرس شد  
کرشمة توشرابی بعاشقان پیمود  
که علم بیخبر افتاد و عقل بیحس شد

*Brightened a star, became lamp in our night;  
Pulsed our wild heart for the friend in delight.  
A sign of you made the lovers tipsy,  
'Knowledge' lost acquaintance and turned 'Reason'  
hazy.*

Imām Riḍā, in his argument with the holders of other religions, said in addressing to Ra's al-Jālūt:

"One of the evidences that proves the truth of this Prophet is: he was an orphan, poor, a shepherd, a wager, not read a book nor saw a teacher; but brought a book that speaks of the past and the prophets who passed, and the future." 46

Above all the testimonies this well suffices to prove the greatness, the exaltation, and its being a Heavenly Book that contains such a flood of knowledge — to classify we should say — in origin, resurrection, man, moral, law, stories, lessons, advices; all in a texture of beautitude and literary eloquence, and this flowed from a mouth of an *ummī* — who had not seen any school neither had met a scholar nor had read a simple book of his time.

The sign and the miracle which Allah sent down upon His Last Prophet is from a category that has a bearing upon

writing and it is a book that constitutes speech, thought, and a feeling that again carries a bearing upon mind, thinking, heart and conscience. It is centuries that this Book has displayed its extraordinary characteristic power as the case is today too. Time has no province over it. Its magnet has attracted millions of hearts. There is life in its waves that solicits the thinking minds towards reason and enchants the hearts with faith, enthusiasm, passion — all immaterial. It serves as viand to those who lurk far in the night in a spiritual pursuit and it is a procurer of that tear which only the love of Allah could shed in the heart of a night. It is that power which has put the oppressed nations at liberty and has crashed the heavy iron of the tyrants — and crushed the tyrants!

To end let us resort to Allah's words:

ذَلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ «سورة جمعه — ٤»

*"That is the favour of Allah, He gives it to whom-ever He wishes. Indeed, Allah is the Possessor of great favour." (al-Jumu'ah, 62:4)*

Indeed, such was an everlasting favour of the Eternal to send down His revelations upon one of His slaves — an orphan, a poor, a shepherd, and an unschooled one.

THE END

## NOTES

1. *Les Heros* (Persian translation), Thomas Carlyle, vol. xi, p. 14.
2. *The Story of Civilization (The Age of Faith)*, Will Durant, New York, 1950, vol. iv, p. 162.
3. *An Apology for Mohammed and the Koran*, John Davenport, London, 1869, p. 12.
4. *Vie de Mohamet* (Persian transl.), Constantin Virgil Gheorghiu, 1st ed., p. 45.
5. *La Civilization de les Arabes* (Persian transl.), Gustav le Bon, 4th ed., p. 20.
6. Prof. Massignon, the famous Islamist and orientalist, in his book, *Salmān Pāk* (Persian transl.), is sceptical in the real existence of such person, let alone of the meeting of the Holy Prophet with him. He regards the monk as a mythical character, and says: "Bahira Sergions, Tamimdari and others that the narrators have gathered around the Prophet are sceptical and mythical figures."
7. *Futūḥ al-Buldān*, Aḥmad bin Yaḥyā Balādhurī (Cairo: Maṭba'ah an-Niḥḍah), p. 580.
8. *al-Fihrist*, Ibn Nadīm (Cairo: Maṭba'ah al-Istiḳāmah), p. 13.
9. *al-Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldūn (Ibrāhīm Ḥilmī Publ.), p. 492.
10. In *Futūḥ al-Buldān* (Cairo: Maṭba'ah al-Sa'ādah, 1959), this phrase, *ruqnatu 'n-namlah* is a recorded which is a typographical mistake, and the correct one is *ruqyatu 'n-namlah* as recorded by Ibn Athīr in his *an-Nihāyah* under the root-word *naml*. *Ruqyah* were prayer-like phrases (rosary) used to be recited and believed to be effective in averting calamity and illness. Under the root-word *raqī*, Ibn Athīr says that some *aḥādīth* quote the Prophet prohibiting *raqī* and other ones

permitting it. He himself claims that the prohibiting *aḥādīth* concern those talismans (*ta'wīdh*) in which the name of God is not mentioned and thus prevent a person in putting trust in God and make him depend much on them. But the recommended *aḥādīth* enjoin a person to resort to the Divine Names and ask for their effects.

Under the root-word *naml*, Ibn Athīr says: "That which is well-known as *ruqyatu 'n-namlah* was not in fact of the kind of *raqf*. They were famous sentences known by all to be ineffective whether beneficially or harmfully. The Messenger of Allah SAW told that to Shifā' as a kind of joke and sarcasm to his wife, Ḥafṣah. The sentences were: 'The bride sits among the people, is dyed and made up, and does every thing except that she does not disobey her husband.' These sentences were known as *ruqyatu 'n-namlah*."

Ibn Athīr adds: "The Holy Prophet told Shifā' as a joke that: 'As you taught writing to Ḥafṣah, it would be nice to teach her *ruqyatu 'n-namlah*, as well.' The Holy Prophet was pointing to fact that that lady had disobeyed his order and had revealed the secret which he had told her." (It is well-known in history and the first verse of the chapter of *Taḥrīm* refers to it.)

11. *ibid.*, fn. 7 (footnote 7).

12. *Bihār al-Anwār*, Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, Tehran, new ed., vol. xvi, p. 134.

13. *ibid.*, vol. xvi, p. 132.

14. *ibid.*, vol. xvi, p. 133 (The *sanad* [chain of transmission] of this *ḥadīth* is weak — translator).

15. *as-Sīrah an-Nabawīyyah*, Aḥmad bin Zaynī Daḥlān (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah Publ.), vol. i, p. 229.

16. *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. xvi, p. 135; *Majma' al-Bayān*, Abū 'Alī Amīnu 'd-dīn Ṭabarsī, under chapter of al-'Ankabūt, 29:48.

17. *ibid.*

18. *Tārīkh al-Ya'qūbī*, Ibn Wāḍiḥ Ya'qūbī; vol. ii, p. 80.

19. It is recorded in *Jāmi' at-Tarmadhī* that Zayd bin Thābit said: "The Holy Prophet ordered me to learn Assyrian language." It is also recorded: "The Messenger of Allah ordered me to learn Jewish (Hebrew) language, and swore to God that he could not trust the Jews in his letters. I learned it in about half a month. After that whenever he wanted to write a letter to the Jews, I would write for him; and I used to read for him the letters he was receiving from the Jews."

It is recorded in *Futūḥ al-Buldān* (p. 460) by Balādhurī, that Zayd bin Thābit said: "The Messenger of Allah SAW ordered me to learn the Jewish book in Assyrian language as he was worried of them about his book. It took me not more than half a month (or a year) to learn it. From then on, I was writing his letters to the Jews and was reading for him the Jews' letters to the Prophet."

20. *al-Tanbīh wa al-Ishrāf*, 'Alī bin al-Ḥasan al-Mas'ūdī, pp. 245 – 246.

21. *al-Fihrist*, p. 67.

22. *Tārīkh al-Ya'qūbī*, vol. i, p. 54.

23. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Muslim bin al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī an-Nisābūrī, vol. v, p. 174.

24. *Asad al-Ghābah*, 'Izzu 'd-Dīn Abu 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī bin al-Athīr Jazarī, vol. i, p. 216.

25. *Rowshanfikr* magazine, Nos. 8 and 15 of Mehr, 1344 (1965); and Abān, 1344's issue of *Kānun-e Sardafstarān* publication as quoting from a Ministry of Education's publication of Shahrivar, 1344.

26. *Mushākalah*: a kind of simile in poetry.

27. *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur'ān*, Ḥusayn bin Muḥammad ar-Rāghīb al-Isfahānī, under the root-word *umm*. *Majma' al-Bayān*, under al-Baqarah, 2:78.

28. *ibid.*, Āli 'Imrān 3:75 and al-A'rāf, 7:156; *at-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, Imām Fakhrū 'd-Dīn ar-Rāzī, under al-A'rāf 7:75.

29. *Āstāne Quds* – Journal No. 2.

30. In one of the narrations it is mentioned that the word *ummī* is attributed to *Ummu 'l-Qurā*, i.e. Makka. This is a common word and not a proper name, as it is stated: "The Prophet is called *Ummī* because he is a native of Makka which is one of the *ummu 'l-qurā*."

31. *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. ii, p. 151.

32. *al-Kāfī*, Muḥammad bin Ya'qūb Kulaynī, vol. i, p. 403.

33. *ibid.*, fn. 31, p. 144.

34. *Wasā'il ash-Shi'ah*, Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-Āmulī, vol. iii, p. 134.

35. *Tārīkh al-Khamīs*, Ḥusayn bin Muḥammad ad-Diyārbakrī, vol. i, p. 395; *as-Sīrah al-Ḥalabiyyah*, Nūru 'd-Dīn al-Ḥalabī, vol. ii, p. 204.

36. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, Sermon No. 190.

37. *Mathnawī*, III, Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī.

38. *al-Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldūn, (Dār al-Fikr Publ.), p. 332.

39. A spot between Makka and Taif.  
 40. *Sīrah Ibn Hishām*, Abū Muḥammad 'Abdu 'l-Malik bin Hishām, vol. i, p. 601.  
 41. *Biḥar al-Anwār*, (old ed.), vol. xxxviii, bk. 16, p. 575.  
 42. *al-Maghāzī*, Muḥammad bin 'Umar al-Wāqidī, vol. i, pp. 13–14.  
 43. *as-Sīrah al-Ḥalabiyyah*, vol. iii, p. 22.

44.

ن وَالْقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسْطُرُونَ «سورة قلم—ا»

"Nun. I swear by the pen and what the angels write." (al-Qalam, 68:1)

45.

إِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ، خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ، إِقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ،  
 الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ، عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ «سورة علق»

"Read in the name of your Lord Who created. He created man from a clot. Read and your Lord is Most Honourable, Who taught (to write) with the pen, Taught man what he knew not." (al-'Alaq, 96:1–5)

46. *'Uyūn Akhbār ar-Riḍā*, Abū Ja'far Muḥammad Shaykh Ṣadūq ibn Bābūyah, p. 136.



## ISLAMIC TERMINOLOGY

- ahlu 'l-kitāb* : People of the Book — the followers of the “re-vealed” religions of Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism who possess Divine Scriptures.
- ḥadīth*  
(pl. *aḥādīth*) : traditions — the speech, acts or *taqrīr* of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad SAW [and also Fāṭimah and the Twelve Imams, in the Shi'ite usage].
- hajj* : pilgrimage to Ka'bah in Makka during the month of Dhu 'l-Hijjah.
- khabar*  
(pl. *akhbār*) : narration — sometimes applied to something narrated from a *ṣaḥābī*, *tābī'ī* and the like and at other times used as a synonym of *ḥadīth*.
- khalīfah* : caliph — the ruler and the administrator of the Islamic laws.
- khums* : a one-fifth — a levy consisting of one-fifth of agricultural and commercial profits and all natural resources whether above or below the ground. In short, it is levied on all forms of wealth and income.
- muhājir*  
(pl. *muhājirūn*) : the Immigrants — refers to the early converts to Islam who immigrated with the Prophet to Madina from Makka.
- ṣaḥābī*  
(pl. *ṣaḥābah*) : Companions of the Prophet — in earlier times the term was restricted to those who enjoyed intercourse with the Prophet. Later the circle of *ṣaḥābah* was extended to the faithful who had seen him even if only for a short time, or at an early age.



- tābi'ī** : is a term for those who came after the *ṣaḥābah*.  
 (pl. *tābi'ūn*) The *tā'bi'ūn* are those of the next generation or contemporaries of the Prophet, who did not know him personally but who knew one of his Companions. The *tābi'u 't-tābi'ūn* are those who knew one of the *tābi'ūn*.
- taqrīr** : confirmation — refers to unspoken approval of some act by the Prophet or the Imams which they saw without expressing any disapproval.
- ummah** : the entire Islamic community, without territorial or ethnic distinction.

(Sources: *Al-Tawḥīd*, vol. ii, No. 2, Rabī'al-Thānī, 1405 (January, 1985; *Shi'ite Islam*, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī; *Islam and Revolution*, Hamid Algar).

\* \* \* \* \*

## GLOSSARY

<i>adhibit</i>	: admit
<i>adversary</i>	: opponent; enemy
<i>amalgamation</i>	: mixture
<i>amanuensis</i>	: secretary
<i>antipode</i>	: exact opposite
<i>cardinal</i>	: principal; chief
<i>carp</i>	: find fault in a petty or nagging way
<i>caustic</i>	: cutting or sarcastic in utterance
<i>cavil</i>	: trivial objection
<i>concomitant</i>	: accompanying
<i>condescend</i>	: submit with a good grace
<i>confederate</i>	: ally
<i>congruity</i>	: agreement
<i>consuetude</i>	: established custom or usage
<i>cynosure</i>	: any person or thing that is a centre of attention or interest
<i>enigma</i>	: riddle
<i>forte</i>	: strong point
<i>goad</i>	: urge on
<i>illiteracy</i>	: an inability to read or write
<i>incontrovertible</i>	: undeniable
<i>lurid</i>	: sensational
<i>milieu</i>	: environment
<i>noetic</i>	: intellectual
<i>obfuscate</i>	: obscure; confuse
<i>orientalist</i>	: person who studies the languages, arts, etc., of the East
<i>petrous</i>	: hard; stony
<i>ratiocinate</i>	: to reason
<i>recalcitrant</i>	: stubbornly defiant
<i>repudiate</i>	: deny the validity
<i>tipsy</i>	: shaky
<i>trash</i>	: nonsense
<i>versification</i>	: the act of composing verses
<i>vilify</i>	: to use abusive or slanderous language

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