

PRESS RELEASE - THE FORGOTTEN MESSAGE OF THE LAST PROPHET

14 March 2013

This month sees the birth anniversary of the illustrious Islamic Prophet whose birth in the 6th century coincided with the Christian Europe, immersed into the dark ages and being devoid of intellectual curiosity. In 570 CE, far beyond the clutches of the Roman Empire and on the periphery of the known worlds, in the boot strapped Arabian Peninsula Prophet Mohammed, son of Abdullah, was born. Orphaned at an early age, he had a profound insight to those dispossessed and disadvantaged in a harsh oligarchic social structure.

The Prophet, steeped in the Prophetic tradition, was a deeply spiritual man from the very outset and, at the age of 40, experienced a soul shaking encounter with the arch angel Gabriel. This was the start of the frequent overpowering encounters with the world of spirituality, gaining instructions from the cosmos and establishing a code of ethics, laws and good governance desperately needed in the harsh realities of the predominantly Pagan Arabian society. The message bestowed upon him to convey was simple and yet radical. The centralised message of the belief was the pure and unadulterated monotheism conveyed through beautiful and yet simple instructions, along with addressing the chronic social imbalances, economic and social injustices. Such a fresh outlook in worship and in making amends in a skewed society was deemed revolutionary and a threat by the Makkan headship which inevitably led to confrontation with the rich and powerful sheikhs and chieftains who openly used Pagan rituals and deities as a means of commerce.

After facing oppression, boycott and persecution, the Prophet with a small tight knit band of believers were forced to migrate 250 miles north to the new cultural environment of the oasis city of Yathrib, where they could practice their beliefs freely and openly.

The Islamic calendar, like the Jewish calendar, is lunar but curiously the date of the migration, and not the first revelation, is the start and the reference point of the Islamic calendar. Once in Yathrib, after skirmishes and major battles, the religion of Islam spread

with staggering speed as chieftains and sheikhs from surrounding tribes and kingdoms relinquished their faith and grip on power and surrendered to Islam with its capital later renamed as the city of the Prophet, Medina. The city of the Prophet became the first Islamic state, upholding God's laws as previously taught to other Abrahamic religions, and having the first Islamic charter for the diverse population of Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians and Pagans. The model of Medina, 1400 years ago, with the central theme of piety and an equalising, inclusive and just society, with rights for women and minorities, can be compared favourably with the present pillars of western civilisation which have been practiced for only a century at best.

The life of the Prophet is truly remarkable as from the very outset he had great spiritual purity that was imbued with respect for learning and whose tolerance for other faiths was to be exemplary. How one man turned the wandering Bedouins into the most powerful and civilised nation in less than 2 decades is a staggering and unparalleled achievement, recognised even by the scholars of the west such as Bernard Shaw and Michael Hart. Only when the western world can offer a degree of well deserved respect to the Prophet Mohammed, that is so freely bestowed upon Moses and Jesus within the Islamic world, will the world become a more enlightened, just and safer place.

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