

INTERPRETING THE SOCIAL STATUS OF THE MESSENGER MUHAMMAD (P.B.U.H) THROUGH ORIENTALIST LENSES

¹DR. HM AZHAR USAMA, ²DR. SHAMSUL ARIFEEN

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, the University of Lahore, Lahore, Pakistan
muhammad.azhar@ais.uol.edu.pk

²Associate Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, the University of Lahore, Lahore Pakistan
Corresponding Author: shams.arifeen@ais.uol.edu.pk

Abstract

This abstract provides a glimpse into the exploration of the social status of the Messenger Muhammad (P.B.U.H) through the lens of Orientalist perspectives. The study aims to critically analyze how Western scholars, commonly referred to as Orientalists, have interpreted and portrayed the social standing of Prophet Muhammad within the context of Islam. Drawing on a range of Orientalist literature spanning from the 18th to the 20th century, the research delves into the diverse methodologies employed by these scholars and the impact of their interpretations on Western perceptions of Islam and its central figure. The analysis encompasses both historical and contemporary Orientalist perspectives, examining early writings that often reflect colonial-era biases and misconceptions. Additionally, the study explores how more recent Orientalist scholars have revisited their predecessors' works, addressing the evolving nature of Western perceptions of Islam and Prophet Muhammad. Key themes include the portrayal of Prophet Muhammad in relation to political and social structures, gender dynamics, and cultural practices. The research also investigates the influence of Orientalist interpretations on broader societal attitudes toward Islam, Muslims, and the Prophet himself. Furthermore, the abstract highlights the need for a nuanced and critical evaluation of Orientalist scholarship to understand the motivations, biases, and cultural contexts that shape these interpretations. The study contributes to ongoing discussions on the intersection of religious and cultural studies, fostering a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding the portrayal of Prophet Muhammad in Western scholarship.

Keywords: Orientalism, Othering, Stereotypes, Islamophobia, Exoticism, Prophet Muhammad.

INTRODUCTION:

Orientalists have made different kinds of allegations on Sirah of the Messenger. They have tried their best to minimize the tribal grandeur and glory of the Messenger. To achieve this end, they leave no stone unturned to deform the social status of the Messenger. They have made efforts to show and prove humble birth of the Messenger and financial decline of Bani Hashim. They have created doubts about his lineage to Abraham. So, I shall try my best with the grace of Allah to analyze and eliminate doubts and allegations through historical facts.

In this materialistic age, like capitalists, Orientalists have measured the glory and prestige of the Messenger according to their own scales of materialism and wealth. They apply the materialistic values of modern age on the circumstances of the prophetic era. They deny the established fact that the Messenger has no paternal connection with Ishmael and Abraham. They have blamed that it is mere an innovation of Muhammad's mind. On the other hand, some Orientalists have acknowledged his lineage to Ishmael by saying that Ishmael was son of a maid. There is no matter of pride and gratification being the progeny of Ishmael. If it is conceded at some extent the clan of Hashim gathers no mass as compare to Banu Ummayah and Banu Makhzum. These both clans were very powerful politically as well as economically in contrast to Banu Hashim.

Professor Bernard Lewis, a prominent scholar in this modern era has made assumption that little is known of the ancestry and early life of Muhammad (PBUH) and even little has dwindled steadily as progress of modern scholarship has called one after another of data of Muslim tradition into question.¹ According to the Encyclopedia of Islam, "The Bani Hashim family was not rising to the level of the Quraishi families known for their noble descent such as Banu Makhzum and Banu Ummayah. It is stated that the prophet's father was an obscure figure and doubts that not his real name Abdullah is perhaps only later improvement on a polytheist name..... We know little more that is definite about his ancestry, since most of what is related is heavily influenced by legend."² Margoliouth a well known professor of Arabic at Oxford has also followed the same line set by Muir. He writes, "It seems clear that Muhammad (PBUH) came of a humble family. This crops up in many places. The Koraish in the Koran wonder why a prophet should be sent them who was not of noble birth."³

A learned European biographer of the Messenger of 20th century Dr. Watt has echoed the same notion of his predecessors. He states, "In the polemics of the Quran against the Jews a prominent place is taken by the conception of the religion of Abraham. This is an idea which is not found in the Meccan revelations and is presumably not based on pre-Islam Arab legends. During the Meccan period more prominence was given to Moses than to Abraham among the prophets as a fore runner of Muhammad. Abraham is simply one of many prophets and the people to whom he is sent are not specified, indeed, it seemed to be implied that he was not sent to the Arabs, since Muhammad (PBUH) is said to be sent to a people who had never had a Warner. Likewise there is no mention of any connect of Abraham and Ishmael with the Kabah. Ishmael is named in the lists of prophet, but no details are given about him. The presumption is that at first the Muslims did not know about the connection of Islam with the Kabah. Ishmael is named in the lists of prophets, but no details are given about him. The presumption is that at first the Muslims did not know about the connection of Ishmael with Abraham and the Arabs. At Medina, however, is closer contact with the Jews they gained knowledge of such matters."⁴

In the abovestatement Professor Watt has tried very deftly to distort the established facts and endeavoured to till the seeds of doubt and suspicion about the Messenger's descent. He argued that in the beginning of Islam, the Muslims have given much importance to Moses than as compare to Abraham, because they have not any knowledge of their lineage to Abraham. The Arabs did not know about the construction of Kabah by Abraham and Ishmael. In fact, Watt wants to say, if the Arabs had been descendants of Abraham, this would have been included in their national traditions and lore.

As we see, the Arabs took proud on themselves for their ancestry in the age of ignorance. They took the greatest enchant to deliver their pedigree on every ceremonial occasion. It is the indispensable necessity of every Arab being able to recall, not only his own genealogy as well as his opponents, so as to annul any boasting assertion preferred by the latter. The Arabs were not acquainted with the art of reading and writing. They did not record the names of their ancestors. By dint of their retentive memory, they learnt their genealogical trees by heart.

All these assumption are baseless. It is very crystal clear that the Arabs had the knowledge of their family tree and perceived Abraham as their Patriarch. They took much pride in their bond with Abraham and Ishmael. The Messenger is superior to all other human beings in respect of his noble descent.

Abu Hurairah has reported in Sahih Bukhari that the

Messenger said, "I have been sent in the best of all generations of Adam's offspring one after another until I came into this generation."⁵

Wathilahb. Asqa narrates, the Messenger said, "Verily, Allah chose Ishmael from the children of Abraham, Kinanah from the children of Ishmael, Quraish from Kinanah, the children of Hashim from Quraish, and me from the children of Hashim"⁶

The genealogical tree of the Messenger is as under: "Muhammad (PBUH) Ibn Abdullah Ibn Abdul Muttalib Ibn Hashim Ibn Abd Manaf Ibn Qussai Ibn Kilab Ibn Murrah Ibn Ka'b Ibn Ghalib Ibn Fihr Ibn

Malik

Ibn Nadr Ibn Kinanah Ibn Khuzaymah Ibn Mudarikah Ibn Ilyas Ibn Mada'ri Ibn Nizar Ibn Ma'd Ibn Adnan."⁷

Ibn Qayyam has testified the Messenger's ancestry until Adnan and then said, "The Messenger's lineage until here is known to be correct and is agreed upon by genealogists. So there is no disagreement what so ever. As for what is beyond, Adnan is from the difference of opinion. Yet they unanimously agreed that

Adnan is from the direct line of Ishmael"⁸

All the Muslim historians and biographers have unanimously agreed upon that the Quraish tribe has its lineage direct to Abraham. There is no doubt in this established fact that Muhammad (PBUH) is the descendent of Abraham and Ishmael.

Many ancestors of the Messenger were men of letters. They were of good repute and pious character. They had earned fame in their names during their times. Among them were Kinanah, Fihr, Qussai, Hashim and Abdul Muttalib. Southern says that the actual descendants of Ishmael were held to be the Saracens.⁹

A competent historian, Gibbon says, "The base and plebian origin of Muhammad (PBUH) is an unskillful calumny of the Christians, who exalt instead of degrading the merit of their adversary. His descent from Ishmael was a national privilege or fable, but in the first steps of the pedigree are dark and doubtful, he could produce many generation of pure and genuine nobility."¹⁰ Syed Ahmad Khan has cited the Foster, "Now it was the immemorial tradition of the Arabs themselves Kedar and his posterity originally settled in Hedjaz. From this patriarch, the tribe of the Koreish in particular, the sovereigns of Mecca, and the guardians of the Kabah, always boasted their descent. Muhammad

(PBUH) himself in the Quran upheld his claims to the princely and priestly honors of his race on the very ground, as an Ishmaelite of the stock of Kedar.”¹¹

TorAndrae attests the dignity of BaniHashim in these words, “If we can accept the statement of the chroniclers” obedience a ruler among his people. AbdulMuttalib had ten sons. Among the Arabs there were no prominent and stately men, none of more noble profile.”¹²

As we see after the truce of Hudabia, the Messenger had written a letter to the Roman emperor Heraclius to accept his faith. Heraclius ordered to present an Arab to enquire about the Messenger. By chance, AbuSufyan, a dead enemy of the Messenger was present in Jerusalem. He was brought before

Heraclius. He asked Abu Sufyan about the prophet’s ancestry. AbuSufyanreplied, “Indeed he does have a good lineage among us.” Heraclius acknowledged, “This is how the Messenger and the Prophet have high lineage.”

Are these witnesses of Abu Sufyan and Heraclius not sufficient for the Orientalists to confess the dignity and status of the Messenger’s family?

Watt has also made an assumption, “Likewise there is no mention of any connection of Kabah with Abraham and Ishmael.” Watt has denied the facts in this regard. Indeed Watt has followed the line set by his predecessors, who had called in question the authenticity of Islamic Ideology that Kabah was erected by Abraham and Ishmael. Sprenger and SnouckHurgoinje both had presented a strange theory regarding Kabah. They write, “Muhammad (PBUH) had appealed to the Jews in Mecca, in Medina it was soon shown that theyseceded from him. Muhammad (PBUH)was therefore forced to find other support, he therefore ingeniously created the new role of the Patriarch; he could now be independent of contemporary Judaism by appealing to the Judaism of Ibrahim, which was also the precursor of Islam. When Mecca again became prominent in his ideas, Ibrahim at the same time became the founder of the Sanctuary there.”

Sprenger had not only denied his lineage to Abraham but also had vehemently attacked on his morality. Abraham was the pivot in their religious life. Abraham was their Patriarch. They took much pride in this connection and bond. They venerated the Kabah because they perceived, it was constructed by Abraham and Ishmael. The Quran verifies,

And [mention] when Abraham was raising the foundations of the House and [with him] Ishmael.

Abraham also prayed to God to make this city peaceful as the Quran states: 13

And [mention] when Abraham said, “My Lord, make this a secure city and provide its people with fruits. 14

Our Lord, and send among them a Messenger from themselves who will recite to them Your verses and teach them the Book and wisdom and purify them. 15

These verses of the holy Quran show very clearly that Abraham and Ishmael were the founders of Kabah as well as ofMakkah. When idolatry was at its prime in Arabia, we found some people, who denounced idolatry and other wrong deeds of the Arabs. They called themselves Hanif after the name of Abraham. The Quran declares him Hanif. Zaid b. Umarmar.b.Nafeel,Ummayia b. AbiSalat, Waraqa b. Naufal belonged to this class.

Indeed, Abraham was a [comprehensive] leader, devoutly obedient to Allah, inclining toward truth This shows that the Arabs were aware of their connection with Abraham. And this was included in their traditions. Peer

Muhammad Karam Shah states, “Their religious rites were introduced by Abraham, circumambulation of Kabah, Sa’ae between Safa and Marwa, rituals of Mina and Arfa, they followed these in the light of Abraham’s traditions.”¹⁷

To sacrifice goats, sheep, cows, buffalos and camels is also the Sunnah of Abraham on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha.

Sacredness of the four months i.e, Rajab, Zee-Qa’d, Zil-Haj and Moharram, honor and veneration of Haram were also Abraham’s traditional lore.

The Quraish were the descendents of Abraham. Abraham migrated from Iraq to Palestine. From there he came to Egypt, where he married to Hagar. Hagar was the daughter of Pharaoh. When Pharaoh had seen the miracles that took place in Sarah’s favour, he said, “Its better for my daughter to be a servant in this house (of Abraham) then mistress in another”.¹⁸Abraham went back to Palestine along with Sara and Hagar, where Hagar bore a son Ishmael to him. He sent both to Paran. The Bible also testifies that Hagar and Ishmael settled in Paran. “He lived in the wilderness of Paran.”¹⁸

Abraham and Ishmael both constructed Kabah. Kabah isolder even than the temple of Jerusalem. And the Quran does not aggrandize when it declares the Kabah, „The First House” of God on the earth.

¹⁹

Lo! the first Sanctuary appointed for mankind was that at Mecca, a blessed place, a guidance to the peoples.

The analogy between Abraham and Kabah was disclosed by many Orientalists, such as John Davenport. He confessed an account of a tradition that it had been erected by Abraham and Ishmael and because it was reputed to be the first structure ever raised by the hand of man to glory of the Most High. The Kabah like the temple of Delphi in Greece was regarded as the sanctuary of the entire nation.²⁰

According to Encyclopedia of Religions and Ethics, "He was an Ishmaelite, who thought his countrymen to return to the religion of Abraham and claim the promises made to the descendants of Ishmael."²¹

P.K. Hitti, an erudite historian acknowledges this fact. He

writes, "The reason which makes the Arabian Arabs, particularly the nomads, the best representatives of the Semitic family biologically, psychologically, socially and linguistically should be sought in their geographical isolation and in the monotonous uniformity of desert life"²²

The term Semite comes from Shem. The Semites are descended from the eldest son of Naoh. Hitti further describes the last migration, which took place with the full light of history, is cited as an historical argument by the supporters of the theory of Arabia as the Semitic home. They further reinforce their case by the observation that the Arabians have preserved the Semitic traits more purely and have manifested them more distinctly than any other members of that racial group and their language is most nearly akin to what scholars believe the primitive form of Semite

Speech to have been.²³

Gibbon, a famous historian, writes in the footnotes of his book, "Theophanes, the most ancient of the Greeks confesses that

Muhammad (PBUH) was of the race of Ishmael."²⁴

According to Martin Lings, "As guardians of the Holy house, the great center of pilgrimage for all Arabia, Quraish ranked higher in dignity to any other Arab tribe."²⁵

The Orientalists who recognize the Prophet lineage to Ishmael, they tried to decrease his status by saying that Ishmael was the son of a concubine. The Jews and the Christians bent upon proving Hagar as concubine "And Sarah kept noticing the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, poking fun. She began to say to Abraham, "Drive out this slave girl and her son, for the son of this slave girl, is not going to be an heir with my son, Isaac."²⁶

The Orientalists highlighted these verses of the Bible. But there are many verses in the Bible, which confirm the greatness and the status of Ishmael equal to Isaac. Torah has demonstrated the materialistic and spiritual characteristics of Isaac as well as of Ishmael.

God said, "No, but your wife Sarah shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac."²⁷ And the angel of the Lord said to her, "Now you have conceived and shall bear a son, you shall call him Ishmael."²⁸

Allah had showered his blessings and favours upon Isaac as well as upon Ishmael at the same level and standard. "I will bless her (Sarah) and moreover I will give you a son by her. I shall bless her and she shall give rise to nations kings of people shall come from her."²⁹

"As for Ishmael, I have heard you, I will bless him and make him fruitful and exceedingly numerous. He shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation."³⁰ There is also a verse in chapter 25 of this book in this regard.³¹

In the light of these verses, Torah recognizes the glory and veneration of Ishmael as it concedes the greatness and nobility of Isaac. Torah does not differentiate between Ishmael and Isaac. "His mother Hagar, a princess of royal blood, a daughter of the reigning Pharaoh of Egypt, was an embodiment of piety and virtue".³²

There is no any logic in this statement that Hagar was concubine or maid. Historically, we find three categories of slaves. Firstly, the slaves and the maids are those people, who are captured in battles and wars. Secondly, the maid and slave are those people who are purchased by money. Thirdly, we may say any person a slave who born from a slave. Can we see any characteristic of this kind in Hagar's life? The answer is an emphatic No.

The Orientalists have tried their best to prove that Muhammad (PBUH) has no lineage to Abraham. But they have badly failed in their fruitless efforts. In this panorama, we may classify the orientalists into four types:

Many orientalists have denied his lineage to Abraham and Ishmael.

Some Orientalists have conceded his descent at some extent. But they remained no stone unturned to minimize the glory of the Prophet's ancestry by saying that Ishmael was son of a maid. In fact, Hagar was not a maid but she was the daughter of a ruling Pharaoh.

Some neutral Orientalists have acknowledged his lineage to Abraham and also accepted the high status of BaniHashim.

Many Orientalists studied the family status of the Prophet in the perspective of modern industrial era, especially in financial background.

Michael Cook approved the social status of BanuHashim. He writes, "Hashim, grandson of Qusayy and great grandfather of the Prophet, took steps to establish Quraysh as merchants of international standing. He initiated the two caravan journeys of the year, one in the summer and one in the winter. He made a friend of the Roman emperor and obtained protection for merchants of Quraysh in Roman territory; he himself died in the Palestine town of Gaza"³³

Martin Lings says, "Hashim was held in much honor, both at home and abroad. It was he who established the two great caravan journeys from Mecca..... Despite of his youth, Shaybah (AbdulMuttalib) already showed distinct promise of gifts for leadership..... It was even said that he surpassed both his father and his uncle in his fulfillment of this task. "³⁴

Gibbon admits the greatness and grandeur of the Messenger's ancestry. "The grandfather of Muhammad, and his lineal ancestors, appears in foreign and domestic transactions as the princess of their country..... And the family of Hashimites from whom he sprung was the most respectable and sacred in the eyes of their country".³⁵

Abdullah Ibn Abdul Muttalib, the Messenger's father had passed away before Amina delivered Muhammad (PBUH). He was a merchant by occupation. Like the rest of his family he was engaged in trade with Syria. He died at a comparatively early age at Medina on his way back from trading expedition to Gaza.³⁶

The Orientalists have two scalestoassess the status of anyperson:

Prestige and glory of his tribe to which he belongs.

The wealth and fortune along with political power he possesses.

To achieve their ends, they venture to mitigate the tribal prestige and veneration of the Messenger. They also endeavour to prove that the Messenger's clanBanuHashim was financially as well as politically weak as compare to BanuUmmayah and BanuMakhzum, whom they called the great merchants.

Dr.M.Watt states about the Messenger, "Muhammad (PBUH) was a posthumous child, may of course, have been part of the reason for sending him to a wetnurse."³⁷He further makes an assumption that Muhammad (PBUH) felt the sense of deprivation. He claims, "Psychology teaches us the importance of painful experience in the first two or three years of life. The absence of a father must have produced a sense of deprivation in Muhammad (PBUH) and the real experience of poverty as a young man may

well have nourished the sense of deprivation."³⁸

He also states,"The lot of an orphan in sixth century Mecca was not a happy one. Muhammad's guardians saw that he did not starve to death, but it was difficult for them to do more for him, especially as the fortunes of the clan of Hashim seem to have been declining at this time. An orphan, with no able-bodied man to give special attention to his interests, had a poor start in a commercial career; and that was really the only career open to him".³⁹

In above mentioned statements of Dr.Watt, we find three main points.

Muhammad (PBUH) was born as posthumous child.

So, the absence of father must have produced a sense of deprivation. iii. His clan did not do anymore for him expect to save him from starvation.

Now, I want to analyze these points in the light of history. On the seventh day of his noble birth, his grandfather Abdul Muttalib, chief of the Quraish invited the people to a grand feast. On that occasion he named the child Muhammad. During that age, it was the noble practice among the upper class of the Arabs to handover their babes to wet nurses in the desert to make them physically tough and hard, teach them self reliance and to teach them language of the Bedouins in its pristine chastity.

Any family that had enough fortune to bear the expenses of wet nurse handed over her kids to wet nurses in country side. So Muhammad (PBUH) was consigned to Haleema of BanuSaad. "She may receive her wages and gifts for nursing the child according to the custom the Arabs."⁴⁰ His affectionate mother and grandfather loved him by heart and soul. Similarly, his foster parents took much care of him. He was very dear to them than their real progeny. At the arrival of Muhammad (PBUH) in their home, miraculously blessingswere showered upon them. They recognized that this prosperity and blessings were due to this gifted orphan, Muhammad. Muhammad (PBUH) was an apple of their eyes. Then for what reason, he developed the sense of deprivation as Watt claims.

He was kindly treated by his surviving relatives. First he lived with his grandfather Abdul Muttalib, who had been a highly successful merchant in his prime. The old man made quite a favourite of Muhammad. He liked to have his bed carried outside, where he could lie in the shade of the Kabah, surrounded by his sons. Muhammad (PBUH) used to sit beside him, while his grandfather affectionately stroked his back.⁴¹

After the death of Abdul Muttalib, Abu Talib became the custodian of Muhammad (PBUH). He was very fond of him. He loved and took great care of him than his own sons Ali and Jafar. Muhammad (PBUH) was also greatly attached to his uncle and lived quite happily with him.⁴² In this pleasant and lovable atmosphere, how can he develop a sense of deprivation?

Watt says that experience of poverty nourished a sense of deprivation. Muhammad (PBUH) was born and brought up by a leading clan of the Quraish, Banu Hashim. His great grandfather Hashim, his grandfather Abdul Muttalib were very successful and eminent merchants of their times. His uncles Zubair, Abu Talib, Abbas and Abu Lahab were also well known merchants of their days. Gibbon refutes this allegation of Dr. Watt. He states, "Yet the son of Abdullah was ever dear to the aged chief and he protected the fame and person of his nephew against the assaults of the kureshites, who had long been jealous of the pre-enemies of the family of Hashim".⁴³

Dr. Henry Stubbe says, "The Arabians acknowledge the poverty of their prophet, and for his being retained in her service, they plead that it has often been the fortune of such as God hath designed for his prophets, and the greatest dignities, that they should arise from servitude to empire, and by the whole tenor of his acts, and his sacrifices for his nephew stamp his character as singularly unselfish and noble."⁴⁴

Here, we state the stand point of two erudite Orientalists, who had admitted and highlighted the privilege and grandeur of Banu Hashim. Muhammad (PBUH) was born into the clan of Hashim, one of the most distinguish family groups in Mecca. His great grandfather had been the first merchant to engage in independent trade with Syria and Yemen and the clan had the privilege of providing the pilgrims with water during Hajj, one of the most important offices in the city.⁴⁵

De Lacy John Stone says, "Hashim exercised his office with princely liberality, and his example was followed by the other wealthy Quraish; the splendour of the annual pilgrimage was enhanced, and the glory of Mecca exalted. He also like an Arab Joseph, saved his people from starvation in years of sore famine, and earned their lasting gratitude. He established a regular system of caravans two each year, one in winter to Yemen and Abyssinia, and the other in summer to Syria."⁴⁶

"He (Muhammad) sprung from the tribe of Qureish and the family of Hashim, the most illustrious of the Arabs, the princess of Mecca, and the hereditary guardians of the Kabah. The grandfather of the Muhammad (PBUH) was Abdul Muttalib, the son of Hashim, a wealthy and generous citizen, who relieved the distress of famine with the supplies of commerce. Mecca which had been fed by the liberality of the father was saved by the courage of the son".⁴⁷

God forbid, a question arises here in the contrast of the Messenger to the other Prophets like Moses and Jesus, how much wealth and fortune they inherited; and when both declared their prophethood, how much capital and treasures they had? What was the social, political and financial background of their families? We, the Muslims concede both were pious and respectable Prophets of Allah. The question dire needs to answer seriously, then for what reason the orientalists measure

the social status of Muhammad (PBUH) on materialistic scales while they do not use the same scale for the evaluation of Moses and Jesus.

Here I want to state the viewpoint of Stubbe, "A long practice of obedience learns to command. That Joseph was a servant in Egypt, and Moses in Madain. That nobility has not distinguished by poverty. That Noah was a carpenter; and Jesus was of the same trade. That since the nobility of his extraction is not questionable. His malice and envy to upbraid him with his employment as if it had been servile and mean, which if it had been really so, this objection would not have become the followers of Isa."⁴⁸

The learned Orientalists repeatedly assume the insinuations levelled against the Messenger by the Makkans disbelievers. Their academic calibre and research till stands with the ignorance and illiteracy of the Makkans pagans. According to them, the benchmark of prophethood is worldly wealth and fortune. As the Quran Says:

And they say: If only this Qur'an had been revealed to some great man of the two towns?

The same allegation was levelled against Talut by the 49

Israelites, the Quran says:

They said: How can he have kingdom over us when we are more deserving of the kingdom than he is, since he hath not been given wealth enough? He said: Lo! Allah hath chosen him above you, and hath increased him abundantly in wisdom and stature. Allah bestoweth His Sovereignty on whom He will.

Wealth and riches are not the standards of nobility. It is not a compulsory criterion that a millionaire should be the prophet of Allah. Maximum of the Prophets had no wealth and fortune but they had the power of their noble character and the knowledge of Revelation.

As per Pir Karam Shah says, "The criteria of human dignity is that which has been prescribed by Allah, where Abraham has superiority over Nimrud. And this standard of superiority proves the greatness of Moses over Pharaoh. According to this yardstick Jesus is stated to be superior to the Roman rulers.

This criterion of dignity grants the Messenger's greatness over Meccan chieftains, yet also over the Byzantines and Persians emperors and above all over the greatest personalities of the world."⁵¹

Michael Hart has this scale in mind while making selection of "The Hundred: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History" for his illustrious book,⁵² and the Messenger of Islam tops this ranking. The Orientalists evaluate the Messenger status and prestige according to their own standards. The researcher of Encyclopaedia Britannica states, "By Arab custom, minor did not inherit, and therefore Muhammad (PBUH) had no share in the property of his father or grandfather. The poverty and misfortune of his early life doubtless made him aware of tensions in Meccan society. Mecca was a mercantile centre. The great merchants of Mecca had obtained monopoly control over Meccan trade".⁵³

The same assumption is repeated by another profound scholar. He relates, "The Hashim family in any case could not compare with the most prominent families such as Makhzum and Umayya. What is recorded of the needy circumstances of Muhammad (PBUH) and some of his relative suggests that the Bani Hashim were not prosperous during his early life time".⁵⁴

Dr. M. Watt⁵⁵ and Margoliouth,⁵⁶ both have made the same innovations. The researcher of Encyclopaedia of Religions,⁵⁷ Gibbon,⁵⁸ and Karen Armstrong,⁵⁹ had also the same views. Dr. Watt has exaggerated the financial status of Banu Umayya and Banu Makhzum. In this regard he degraded the clan of Banu Hashim. The only goal of this panorama is to discredit and manipulate the social and financial status of the Messenger.

Margoliouth quotes Azraki that Abu Talib probably employed him in looking after the sheep and camels which he kept at "Uranah", near Mt. Arafat, just as his son Jafar was employed in looking after sheep at Badr.

By stating this quotation, Margoliouth wants to deplete the financial and economical stature of the Messenger. In the days of his childhood, the most important occupations were shepherding and trade in Meccan society. They used to tend sheep and goats in their teenage.

Sir William Muir did not agree with these scholars. He writes, "His father left behind five camels, a flock of goats and Ume Aimen. This little property and a house, in which he dwelt, were all the inheritance he received. He further explained the possession of a female slave was rather an indication of prosperity and comfort".⁶⁰

Here a question arises in this sequence that how much property and fortune Moses and Jesus inherited from their parents. According to Bible Jesus father was a carpenter. In spite of this, he was the prophet of Allah. It is the matter of our belief.

Abu Hurayrah narrates a tradition of the Messenger. "There has not been a prophet but he shepherded sheep". They asked him, "Did you shepherd also?" He replied, "Yes, I used to do it".⁶¹

It is not the matter of inferiority that the Messenger used to shepherd sheep. As in above tradition, we see, there was no prophet who had not tended sheep. For instance, Moses was also used to shepherd sheep for many years in Madain. "He used when at Madina to refer this employment and to say that it comported with his prophetic office, even as it did with that of Moses and David".⁶²

A shepherd is employed in looking after his flocks of sheep and goats from dawn to dusk. This job cultivates the sense of patience and humbleness in him. Every day labour passes pride and arrogance are driven away from his heart. To God the attacks of the wild beasts upon his flocks, a shepherd became very brave and valiant.

Ibn Hajar states the wisdom of shepherding of the prophet is to give them a firsthand experience in looking after and managing the people.⁶³

We conclude from above mentioned details that shepherding is not a matter of notoriety and stigma. It is a noble profession, as adopted by Moses and David who were the pious and holy prophets of Allah. Besides the inheritance and shepherding, the Messenger was also involved in business and trade. He became a successful merchant of his time. Hardworking and honesty were two main features of his trade. By dint of his honesty and trustworthiness, he earned the name, Al-Sadiq and Al-Ameen. His business acumen was acknowledged by all and sundry.

At the request of Khadija, he took her merchandise to Syria and earned a lot of profit. Khadija recompensed his constancy with the shift of her hand and fortune. A dowry of twelve ounce of gold and twenty camels was stipulated.⁶⁴

Muhammad, rich by his alliance with Khadija and Abbas, the brother of Abu Talib, was the most opulent citizen of Mecca.⁶⁵ By this alliance the son of Abdullah was restored to the station of his ancestors.⁶⁶ The Quran refers his competency in the financial and commercial matters:

67


Did He not find thee an orphan and protect (thee)? Did He not find thee wandering and direct (thee)? Did He not find thee destitute and enrich (thee)?

At the end, I want to quote the Bible regarding the social status of Jesus. Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, I am the bread that came down from heaven.” They were saying, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, I have come down from heaven?”⁶⁸

He came to his hometown and began to teach the people in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, where did this man get this wisdom and these deeds of power? Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judes? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all this? And they took offence at him.”⁶⁹ Here we conclude, if Moses and Jesus were the true and noble prophets then Muhammad(PBUH) is also a true and genuine prophet of Allah. He had the best social status as compare to Moses or Jesus. The orientalist (Christians and Jews) do not believe in the prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH) although the Bible has many prophecies about him. The single reason behind this denial is the advent of Muhammad (PBUH) in the progeny of Ishmael instead of Issac. It was their expectation that the last prophet will appear in the family of Issac. In this panorama, the tribal jealousy developed in Christians and Jews and they averterly did not believe in the Messenger (PBUH) and the Message. O Allah shows them the straight path.

REFERENCES

- [1] Lewis, Bernard, The Arabs in History, P.34
- [2] Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol.7, P.362
- [3] Margoliouth, Muhammad and the Rise of Islam, P.47
- [4] Watt, Montgomery, Muhammad at Medina, Pp.204-205
- [5] SahihBukhari, H.3557
- [6] 6Sahih Muslim, H.2276 IbnSa’d, Vol.1, P.21
- [7] 7Bukhari, H.3851, IbnSa’d, Vol.1, P.58, IbnHisham, P.
- [8] IbnQayyam, Za’d al Ma’d, Vol. P.
- [9] Sourthern,
- [10] Gibbon, Edward, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. P.
- [11] Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, The Life of Muhammad, P.172
- [12] Andrae, Tor, Muhammad: The Man and His Faith, P.34
- [13] Al-Baqarah, 2:127
- [14] Ibid , 2:126
- [15] Ibid, 2:129
- [16] An-Nahl, 16:120
- [17] Peer Muhammad Karam Shah, Zia un Nabi, Vol.7, P.169
- [18] Genesis, 21:21
- [19] Aal-Imran, 3:96
- [20] Daven Porte, John, An Apology to Muhammad and Quran, P.5
- [21] Encyclopaedia of Religions and Ethics, Vol.8, P.872
- [22] Hitti, History of the Arabs, P.8
- [23] Ibid, P.12
- [24] Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire Vol.5, P.228
- [25] Lings, Martin, Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources, P.8
- [26] Genesis, 21:9-10
- [27] Ibid, 17:19
- [28] Ibid, 16:11
- [29] Ibid, 17:16
- [30] Ibid, 17:20
- [31] Ibid, 25:16
- [32] Daryabadi, Abdul Majid, The Holy Quran, English Translation and
- [33] Commentary, Vol.1, P.21
- [34] Cook, Michael, Muhammad, P.32
- [35] Lings, Martin, Op. Cit., Pp.7-9
- [36] Gibbon, Op. Cit., Pp. 217-224
- [37] Watt, Montgomery, Muhammad (PBUH) at Mecca, P.32
- [38] Ibid, P.47
- [39] Ibid, P.1-50
- [40] Watt, Muhammad (PBUH) Prophet and Statesman, P.8 ⁴⁰ Urdu DieraMuarifIslamia, Vol. P.
- [41] Armstrong, Karen, Muhammad (PBUH) Prophet for our Time, P.36
- [42]

- 
- [43] Encyclopaedia of Seerah, Vol. 1, P.18
 - [44] Gibbon, Edward, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. 5,
 - [45] P.95
 - [46] Stubbe, Henry, An Account of the Rise and Progress of
 - [47] Mahometanism, Pp.76-77
 - [48] Armstrong, Karen, Muhammad (PBUH) Prophet for our Time, P.35
 - [49] John Stone, De Lacy, Muhammad and his Power, P.38
 - [50] Gibbon, Op. Cit.,
 - [51] Stubbe, Henry, Op. Cit., P.76-77
 - [52] Az-Zukhruf, 43:31
 - [53] Al-Baqarah, 2:247
 - [54] PirKaram Shah, Zia Un Nabi, Vol. 7, P.225
 - [55] Hart, Michael, The Hundred: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History, P.
 - [56] Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 22, P.1
 - [57] Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol.7, P.362
 - [58] The Cambridge History of Islam, P.34, Muhammad Prophet and
 - [59] Statesman, P.38
 - [60] Muhammad (PBUH) and The Rise of Islam, Pp.51-52
 - [61] Encyclopaedia of Religion, Vol.10, P.138
 - [62] Gibbon, Op. cit., Vol.3, P.6
 - [63] Armstrong, Karen, ⁶⁰ Muir, Op. Cit., P.4
 - [64] Bukhari, H.2262, 5453, Muslim, H.2050
 - [65] Muir, Op. Cit., P.18
 - [66] IbnHajr, Al-Fath, Vol. 10, Pp. 5-6, Explanation of H. 5453
 - [67] Gibbon, Op. Cit., Vol. , P.231
 - [68] Amir Ali, Syed, The Life and Teachings of Muhammad, P.32
 - [69] Gibbon, Op. Cit., Vol. P. 231
 - [70] Ad-Duha, 93:6-8
 - [71] John, 6: 41--42
 - [72] Mathew, 13:54--57