

Some Writings of Maulvi Abdul Karim of Sylhet

Abdul Karim was born into a prominent Muslim family in 1863 in Pathantola in Sylhet town. He studied locally and subsequently obtained his BA (Honours) Degree in English from Presidency College in Calcutta, being only the second Muslim to do so from Sylhet. He then became an Inspector of Schools during the British rule and soon established his reputation as a prominent and influential educationalist, Islamic scholar, author, philanthropist, reformer and leader of his people. He died in 1943 after a lifetime devoted to the service of the Muslim community of Bengal. For more information about the life, works and contribution of this great son of Muslim Bengal, please see Muhammad Mojlum Khan's long-awaited book, *Muslim Heritage of Bengal* (forthcoming, summer 2012).

Islam's Contribution to Science and Civilisation

by Maulvi Abdul Karim of Sylhet

This was the first book of its kind. Renowned Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore was pleased to contribute a Foreword as follows:

"One of the most potent sources of Hindu-Moslem conflict in India is that we know so little of each other. We live side by side and yet very often our worlds are entirely different. Such mental aloofness has done immense mischief in the past and forebodes an evil future. It is only through a sympathetic understanding of each other's culture and social customs and conventions that we can create an atmosphere of peace and goodwill. With this end in view I started a few years ago a department of Islamic Culture in Visva Bharati with the generous financial support of His Exalted Highness the Nizam. I am glad to say the experiment has been successful. But work of this sort must be elaborated a hundred fold. Individual educationists and scholars must also take it up and as such I heartily welcome the series of articles from my distinguished country man, Maulvi Abdul Karim, on Islam's contribution to Science and Civilisation. The

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writer has clothed his erudition in as simple a garb as possible and the book should have great popular appeal. It is with pleasure that I commend the book to my countrymen."

The following are some of the opinions of other eminent reviewers:

"Articles from your pen have a worth of their own and I confess they have always a peculiar "fascination for me. The two sister communities which are destined to live side by side in India and can never think of severing from each other however much their differences may be, do in fact know very little of each other. A mutual understanding is really all that is necessary to cement them together, and for that end this booklet of yours will be of priceless value."

(Sir) MANMATHANATH MUKERJEE, (Judge, Calcutta High Court.)

"I have read it with great interest. As the modern educated man knows so little of the past services rendered by Islam, your brochure should prove to be of considerable utility."

(Sir) S. M. SULAIMAN, (Chief Justice, Allahabad High Court.)

"Many thanks for your interesting booklet "Islam's Contribution to Science and Civilisation." It is a thought-provoking publication and will, I am sure, prove useful not only to Muslims, but also to non-Muslims.

I greatly appreciate your Islamic sentiments and the solid work you have been doing. I have been greatly impressed by your open letter to Signor Mussolini which is a faithful and true expression of the nobility of your heart. I hope and pray you will live long to do the constructive work you have taken in hand and to be one of the very few Muslims, who feel for their community and country."

(NAWAB Sir) ABDUL QAYYUM, (Minister of Education, Frontier Province.)

This brochure has been translated into Malayalam and permission has been given for its translation into Burmese.

Prophet of Islam and His Teachings

by Maulvi Abdul Karim of Sylhet

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This is a short life of the holy Prophet of Islam. His work as a religious reformer, as a social reformer and as an educational reformer has been described. Besides, how Islam was propagated peacefully, without the use of force, and what undreamt of progress it has already made, spreading over the whole continent of Africa and a large part of Asia, and a movement being on foot to Islamize Europe and America, has been described in some detail. Moreover, one chapter has been devoted to non-Muslim opinions about Islam and its Prophet the opinions of Gibbon, Carlyle, Goethe, Isaac Taylor, Bernard Shaw, Guru Nanak, Raja Rammohan, Mahatma Gandhi and others. The appreciative reviews published by a large number of magazines and newspapers, such as the Light, the Mussalman, the Amrit Bazar Patrika, the Advance, the Tribune, the Hindu, the Hindustan Review, the Kashmir Times, the Federated India, the Islamic Culture, the Bombay Chronicle, the United India and Indian States, the Young Builder, the Comet of Nigeria, show that the book has met with public approval. Besides the opinions quoted below a number of other eminent personages such as the Maharajadhiraj of Bardwan, Sir Manmatha Nath Mukherjee, Maharaja Sir Mattmatha Nath Roy Chaudhury, Rai Bahadur P. C. Dutt, Sir Abdul Qadir have expressed appreciative opinions.

5, Outram Street,
10th February, 1936.

"I was on ray sick-bed when your kind present "Prophet of Islam" came. It was refreshing as the breeze of heaven and I read the book through without a stop. I could not wish for a better tonic. I congratulate you on your beautiful presentation of Islam simple, sincere and devout. It was a joy to me to refresh my mind with the story of the Prophet's life and his teachings, My wife is now reading the book."

(Sir) B. It. MITTBR (K.C.S.I), (Ex-Law Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council and Advocate-General of Federal Court).

Lahore, 27th March, 1936.

It is refreshing in the midst of the sectarian wrangles with which the Muslims are generally occupied, to come across a noble attempt, such as the one made by Maulavi Abdul Karim Sahib, in writing a beautiful booklet entitled "Prophet of Islam and his Teachings". It presents to the common reader a bird's eye view of the life of the Holy Prophet and the various reforms brought about by him. Books of this type are the greatest need of the day, as by clearing misunderstandings about Islam they do a useful service to the cause of humanity.

(Maulana) MUHAMMAD ALI Lahori, (Renowned translator of the Quran).

Many thanks for your "Prophet of Islam and His Teachings."
This is a very opportune publication. The teachings of the Prophet are often misconstrued and misapplied. A correct interpretation of them will go a good way towards removal of misunderstandings and communalism. I commend your little book both to the Moslems and the Hindus.

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May your noble efforts bear fruit!

(Sir) P. C. ROY, Hyderabad, Deccan, 6th March, 1936.

Please accept my hearty thanks for sending me your book "The Prophet of Islam and His Teachings." Your clear and straight forward presentation of the essentials of Islam, freed from the non-essentials which really provoke unnecessary and harmful controversy, is admirably suited to give Muslims a correct idea of Islam and of its universal nature while creating a sympathetic understanding of our faith among non-Muslims. Such publications are bound to advance the cause of unity in India. Your book should be in the hands of every young man in the country irrespective of the community to which he belongs.

AHMAD HUSSAIN, (Nawab Aminjung).

This is an excellent epitome of the life of the Prophet and an erudite exposition of the spirit of Islam within a small compass. Permit me to congratulate you warmly on the achievement. I hope the book will have a very wide circulation, especially among non-Muslims in India whose profound ignorance of the life of the Prophet and the true spirit of Islam, is largely responsible for communal troubles. It would be an excellent thing if the book could be prescribed as a text-book in all high English schools in India. I hope it will be translated into all the important vernaculars in India before long.

GHAZANFER ALI KHAN, (C.I.K., O.B.E., I.C.S.), (Retired Divisional Commissioner, Central Province).

Islam, a Universal Religion of Peace and Progress

by Maulvi Abdul Karim of Sylhet

The following quotation from it will indicate the nature of its contents:

"Belief in the existence of a Supreme Being with supernatural powers and performance of duties of love and obedience to Him is what is generally understood by Religion. Of all the handiworks of God man is the masterpiece. He is an amalgam of divinity and brutality. By

developing the divine element in his nature man can elevate himself to the loftiest plane of morality and spirituality; and by allowing unrestricted scope to the development of the germs of evil in him he may lead himself to the lowest depth of degradation. Thus while by developing his unlimited moral and spiritual, potentialities man may excel the angels and approach the borders of Divinity, by giving free rein to his carnal passions he may drag himself down to a much lower level than that of brutes."

The brochure has been translated into Urdu and Bengali and permission has been given for its translation into Chinese and Malayalam. On requisition from China, Japan, Burma, England and America copies have been sent to those places. Orders are being received for its supply from various parts of India. Excellent reviews are coming from different persons of which only a few are given below.

". . . . This little work of yours has taught me many things which I never knew before. How much do people misunderstand things out of ignorance and what lamentable consequences follow. May you have many more years of health and happiness to expound the true principles of Islam and further the cause of peace and progress."

(Sir) MANMATHANATH MUKERJEE, (Acting Law Member, Viceregal Council).

". . . . Allow me also to tender you my hearty congratulations on the way you have chosen for the utilisation of your energies and resources at this advanced stage of life. It falls to the lot of few to devote themselves to noble objects. May God grant you long life and vigor and health to carry on this work.

MOHAMMAD YAQUB KHAN, (Editor of the Light).

"The present pamphlet sustains the high level of thought and composition that characterises all your writings. Besides, these writings of yours are presented to the public in a very opportune moment, when the need for Hindu-Muslim unity is felt by all well wishers of the country. This intercommunal unity and harmony can be best attained by mutual appreciation of culture and a better understanding of -the lives and teachings of our Prophets and Scriptures. To this end your clear thinking of the high ideals and noble achievements of Islam, as presented in these writings, will make a very valuable contribution."

S. C. ROY, (Principal, Cotton College, Gauhati)

"Islam, a Universal Religion of Peace and Progress, will clear many a misunderstanding about Islam and contribute in no small measure towards peace and harmony. I shall preserve it as a valuable possession.

(Sir) ABDUL, HALIM GHUZNAVI, (Member, Legislative Assembly, Central).

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"I have read your 'Islam A Universal Religion of Peace and Progress with very great interest indeed. You have brought out the various aspects of Islam in an admirable manner."

(Sir) S. M. SULAIMAN, (Judge, Federal Court of India).

First published in *LIFE OF MAULAVI ABDUL KARIM* by MD. ALI AZAM, CALCUTTA, 1939, and reproduced and edited by Muhammad Mojlum Khan, author of Muslim Heritage of Bengal (forthcoming, summer 2012) and editor of BMRI website.