

## Humanness of Prophets in the Quran

**Abdur Raheem Kidwai**

Professor of English Literature

& Honorary Director, K A Nizami Centre for Quranic Studies,

Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India

sulaim\_05@yahoo.co.in

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The study draws attention to a pioneering work in Urdu on an interpretation of the Quran, *Bashariyat-i Anbiya* (Humanness of Prophets), published in 1960 by Abdul Majid Daryabadi (1892-1977), a distinguished Quranic scholar of India. The article places the views of Daryabadi in the wider context of the translation of the Quran scholars of the Indian subcontinent on the issue of the humanness of Prophets, especially of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

**Methodology:** The study is based on the analysis of Daryabadi's thesis and compares and contrasts his thesis with the approach of some Quranic scholars from the Indian subcontinent. The critical discussion focuses on the perception of Prophets, particularly in relation to the divine.

**Findings:** The Quran projects Prophets as ordinary human beings notwithstanding their holding the August office of Prophethood and their being the best human being as role models to be emulated by their followers. However, Prophets are essentially human beings and totally distinct from the divine. Some Quranic scholars of the Indian subcontinent appear to blur this distinction.

**Originality:** The humanness of Prophets has not been discussed in the Quranic scholarship. Likewise, their excessive veneration in certain quarters has gone unnoticed. This research unravels these aspects

**Keywords:** Humanness of Prophets; Sonship and Divinity of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him); Barelvi sect; Excessive veneration of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him); and Monotheism

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بُشريَّةُ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْكَرِيمِ

عبد الرحيم قدوائي

أستاذ الأدب الإنجليزي والمدير الفخري لمركز نظامي للدراسات القرآنية،  
جامعة علي كره الإسلامية، علي كره، الهند  
sulaim 05@yahoo.co.in

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ملخص البحث

**أهداف البحث:** في عام ١٩٦٠، نشر الشيخ عبد الماجد دريا أبادي (١٨٩٢-١٩٧٧) - وهو أحد علماء الهند المبرزين في مجال الدراسات القرآنية - كتاباً مهماً و معروفاً باللغة الأرديّة حول (بشرية الأنبياء). ويهدف هذا البحث إلى إبراز محتويات هذا الكتاب الشهير، فلقد بالغ بعض مترجمي القرآن الكريم من شبه القارة الهندية في تصوير الأنبياء، وبالأخص سيدنا محمد ﷺ - عكس موقف الشيخ دريا أبادي - وأنكروا بشر يته.

منهج الدراسة: ينتقد هذا البحث دراسة الشيخ دريا أبادي محاكمة نقدية، من خلال مقارنتها بمترجحى القرآن في شبه القارة الهندية الذين يتبعون إلى طائفة البريلوية والذين لم يرفضوا بشرية محمد صلوات الله عليه وآله وسلامه، بل بالغوا في ذلك وادعوا أنه عالم كل شيء، بما يتعارض مع عقيدة التوحيد تعارضًا واضحًا.

النتائج: إن القرآن ينص على أن جميع الأنبياء بشر، على رغم أنهم يشغلون المرتبة العليا ويستحقون أن يتبعهم أتباعهم كأسوة حسنة، ولكن كما ورد في القرآن أنه لا يوجد أي أثر فيهم للألوهية، وأنهم لا يعرفون كل شيء. ولقد طمس متجمو القرآن البارزين من طائفة البر بلوية هذا الاختلاف الأساس.

أصلية البحث: لم يُبرز جانب بشرية الأنبياء في بحوث القرآن حتى الآن، كما أن طائفه البريلوية لم تعن إلا بالغلو والبالغة في هذا الباب. وقد نوقشت كل المخالب في هذه المقالة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** بشرية الأنبياء، بنوة وألوهية عيسى، طائفية البريلوية، الغلو في تعظيم محمد ﷺ، عقيدة التوحيد

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Allah did a big favor to the Believers as He raised among them a Messenger from among them. He recites to them Allah's revelation, purifies them and instructs them in the Book and wisdom. Before this, they were in open error.\*

(3: 164)

The above Quranic statement categorically spells out the status, role and function of the Prophet/Messenger of Allah.<sup>2</sup> That he is sent down to a community to which he belongs and that Allah chooses a member of that community as His Messenger underscore his unmistakable human origin. He is not some supernatural being who descends all of a sudden in a community and proclaims himself to be Allah's Messenger. As the Makkans rejected Prophet Muhammad's call to Islam and his Messengership, he reminded them that since birth he has been a member of their community, not some stranger who has abruptly appeared in their midst from nowhere:

Before this, I have spent a lifetime among you. Do you not use reason?

(10: 16)

Needless to add, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was appointed Allah's Messenger at the age of forty years. He had spent all his life in Makkah as a member of the local influential Banu Hashim family, and he was widely acclaimed by the Makkans as a truthful (*sadiq*) and trustworthy (*amin*) person engaged in trading, like most of the Makkans.

Moreover, it is evident from the above quoted seminal Quranic passage (3: 164) and several others that Prophets taught mankind what people did not know (2:151); delivered glad tidings and warnings (2: 213); imparted guidance and faith in order to make Allah's religion supreme over all other religions (9:33); they led people with Allah's permission out of darkness into light (14: 1); they asked people not to worship and fear anyone other than Allah (16:12); they ate food and walked about in market as other ordinary mortals do, (25: 20) and they presented miracles with Allah's permission, as for example, Prophet Jesus showed many miracles (5: 110 and 19: 29-30).

Significantly enough, the Quran makes it a point to project every Prophet as a human being and a servant of Allah to dispel any notion of their being divine or an incarnation of divinity. Take the following description of Prophet Jesus as an instance in point: "Neither the Messiah nor the angels nearest to Allah dislike to be the servants of Allah." (4: 172). Additionally, Prophet Jesus is found declaring: "I am a servant of Allah. He has granted me the Book and appointed me a Messenger." (19: 30) Invariably, all the Prophets are introduced in the Quran as *Abd Allah* (a servant of Allah): Prophets Noah (17: 3), David (38: 17), Solomon (38: 30), Zechariah (19: 1), Job (38: 41 and 44), Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael (38: 45) and Muhammad (17: 1, 2: 23, 25: 1, 18:1 and 57: 9).

Notwithstanding this emphatic, Quranic account of the Prophets' humanness, which will be elaborated further in the later part of this article, the New Testament contains the following passages that unmistakably

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\* All the Quranic text quotations are from Abdur Raheem Kidwai, *What is in the Quran? Message of the Quran in Simple English*, New Delhi, Viva Books, 2019. 1<sup>st</sup> edition in 2013. Reviewed by Tauseef Ahmad Parray, "Book Review: 'What is in the Qur'an? Message of the Qur'an in Simple English'", by Abdur Raheem Kidwai, *Journal of College of Sharia and Islamic Studies*, Volume 38, Issue 2, 2021, pp. 251-256. <https://doi.org/10.29117/jesis.2021.0278>.

2 1. The Term "Prophet" is used in this article in a generic sense, without any reference to the distinctions between *rasul* (Messenger) and *nabi* (Prophet).

confer Godhead upon Prophet Jesus:

- i) “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emman‘uel” (which means God with us).<sup>1</sup>

(Matthew 1: 23-24)

- ii) They [the wise men from the East] saw the child [Jesus] with Mary, his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him.

(Matthew 2: 11)

- iii) I [Prophet John] baptize you with water for repentance, but he [Prophet Jesus] who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.

(Matthew 3: 11-12)

- iv) And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him, and lo, a voice from heaven, saying: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

(Matthew 3: 16-17)

However, the more immediate and pressing context for Daryabadi was the emergence and wide acceptance of Indian Muslim scholar, Ahmad Raza Khan’s (1856-1921) unconventional views on the reverence for Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and saints, and shrine-based religious practices. Reflective of the ideological presuppositions of this new sect are the following English translations of the Quran, originating from the Indo-Pak subcontinent, which present a baffling tendency of expressing utmost veneration for Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) while resorting to inserting their interpolations into and mistranslation of the Quranic text:

1. Shah Faridul Haque, *The Holy Quran: An English Translation from “Kanz Al-Iman”*. Karachi, Pakistan, Darululum Amjadia, 1988.
2. A. Majeed Auloakh, *The Holy Quran: Based on “Kanz Al-Iman”*. Karachi, Pakistan, Awais Company, 1996.
3. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri, *The Glorious Quran: English Translation “Irfan-ul-Quran.”* London, Minhaj-ul-Quran Publications, 2011.

The first two are the English versions of Ahmad Raza Khan’s Urdu tafsir, *Kanz Al-Iman* published in 1912; the third one is the extension of Ahmad Raza Khan’s peculiar views. *Prima facie* for preserving the Indian Muslim identity, under attack by both the aggressive Christian missionaries and by the overwhelming majority of native Hindus in the then British India, Khan exhorted Muslims to follow certain rituals and practices, including taking out religious processions, holding public meetings, commemorating Prophet

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<sup>1</sup> This and other Biblical quotations are from *The Bible: Revised Standard Version*. Swindon, UK, The British and Foreign Bible Society, 1971.

Muhammad (peace be upon him) and saints, assembling at shrines, and even worshipping saints' graves. His emphasis on the supreme, exalted status of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is another strand of his thought, of which the examples follow. His peculiar views led to his serious differences from the mainstream Indian Muslims and culminated in the emergence of a new sect among the Muslims of the Indo-Pak subcontinent, known as Barelvis, named after Bareilly, a town in north India, which was Ahmad Raza Khan's headquarters. The regrettable sectarian divide between Deobandis and Barelvis has also afflicted Muslims of south Asian origin who have been settled overseas.

The adulation of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has assumed various forms in the abovementioned three translations.

At 13 places, the Quran addresses the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as *ya ayyuha al-nabi* (O Prophet) and at another 2 places as *ya ayyuha al-rasul* (O Messenger). In such instances, these three Barelvi translations have employed a range of honorific appellations for Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him):

- O (Esteemed) Messenger! (Qadri, p. 180)
- O (Venerable) Messenger! (Qadri, p. 292)
- O (Beloved) Messenger! (Qadri, p. 294)
- O (Communicator of the hidden news (Haque, 276)
- O (Communicator of unseen) (Haque, 625)
- O Glorious Messenger (Qadri, p. 314)
- O Esteemed Beloved (Qadri, p. 235)
- O Glorious Beloved (Qadri, p. 343)
- O the Most Beloved, Intimate and Perfect servant, p. 456).

Another strategy employed by these translators is to tone down or even twist the import of the Quranic text under the spell of their supposition about such an exalted position of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), which is not borne out by the Quranic text. The instances in point are as follows:

- a) While recounting His bounties bestowed upon the Prophet (peace be upon him), Allah tells him:

Did He not find you an orphan and then gave you shelter? Did He not find you unaware of the straight way and then guided you? Did He not find you needy and then made you rich?

(93: 6-8)

Qadri, however, renders these verses with bewildering twists and turns:

(O Beloved!) Did He not find you an orphan, and then provided you (a dignifying and graceful) abode? Or Did He not find you (compassionate) and provided (in your person) a shelter for orphans?

And He found you engrossed and lost in His love and then made you achieve the coveted objective. Or: And He found in you (a leader) for a straying people so He provided them guidance (through you).

And He found you seeking (closeness with your Lord), and (then blessed you with the pleasure of His sight and) freed you of every need (forever). Or: And He found you compassionate and benevolent, then (through you) made the destitute nonliable.

(Qadri, p. 1026)

Apart from the insertion of the epithet “O Beloved” for the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), which is not borne out by the Quranic text, Qadri supplants an entirely different meaning by stating that the Prophet’s person “is a shelter for orphans”. Equally convoluted is his translation of the next verse in presenting stray, out-of-place ideas about the Prophet’s love for Allah and his providing guidance to people, whereas the Quran specifically speaks of Allah’s guidance to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). That Allah enriched Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is misconstrued by him to refer to the Prophet as someone who is “compassionate and benevolent” and who “made the destitute nonliable.” The alternative translation of these three verses also strikes a jarring note, defying the norms of the art and craft of translation.

Haque’s and Auolakh’s translations of the same verses are not so convoluted. However, they also project the import of Verse 7 of Surah Al-Duha in such terms, which are not borne out by the original Quranic text:

And He found you drawn in His love, therefore gave way unto Him.

(93: 7, Haque, p. 901)

He found you deeply moved in His search so He Guided you.

(93: 7, Auolakh, p. 788)

Qadri interpolates reference to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in his translation of the *ayat al-nur* (24: 35), which is essentially about Allah:

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The likeness of His Light (which is glowing in the world in the form of Muhammad’s Light [blessings and peace be upon him]) is as a niche-like (sacred breast) wherein is glowing the lamp (of Prophethood), the lamp contained in a crystal globe (the radiant heart of the Prophet Muhammad [blessings and peace be upon him]). This globe is (as dazzlingly bright owing to reflection of Allah’s Light) a glittering star. (This lamp of Prophethood) is lit with the sacred olive tree... (So it) is Light upon Light (i.e., the Light of Prophethood upon the Light of the Holy Essence, denoting a Self-Embodying double Light).

(Qadri, pp. 585 - 586)

It is bewildering to note Qadri interpreting *ayat al-nur* with a pointed reference to “Muhammad’s Light, the lamp of Prophethood, the radiant heart of the Prophet Muhammad and the Light of Prophethood.” This intermixing of the “Light of Prophethood and the Holy Essence” brings to mind the Christian theological doctrines of Consubstantiation or Transubstantiation, which do not have any place in Islam.

The Quran directs Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him):

Have patience. Allah’s promise is true. Ask forgiveness for your faults.

(40: 55)

However, the three translators under discussion have lent an altogether different drift to the above Quranic directive:

So maintain patience. Assuredly, the promise of Allah is true. In addition, ask forgiveness for the sins of your *Umma* (Community).

(Qadri, p. 787)

Therefore, O beloved, be patient, no doubt, the promise of Allah is true and beg forgiveness for the sins of your own,

(Haque, p. 707)

Therefore, (O dear) be steadfast. Surely, the promise of Allah is true. In addition, ask forgiveness for your (followers') faults.

(Auolakh, p. 614)

The Quranic reference to the forgiveness for the Prophet's faults appears in its unrecognizable form in all the above three Barelvi versions as they relate it to the faults of the Muslim community or the Prophet's followers. In doing so, they appear to have no regard for the wording of the original Quranic text.

In another place, the Quran refers to Allah's forgiveness of the Prophet's inadvertent lapses, and the completion of His favors him:

Allah may forgive your faults, of past and future, and complete His blessings to you. He will guide you to the straight way.

(48: 2)

Swayed by his presuppositions, Qadri foists a totally different idea upon the tenor of this verse, asserting:

So that Allah forgives, for your sake, all the earlier and later sins (of all those people) of your *Umma* ([Community] who struggled, fought and sacrificed by your command), and (this way) may complete His blessing on you (outwardly and inwardly) in the form of Islam's victory and forgiveness for your *Umma* (Community), and may keep (your *Umma*) firm-footed on the straight path (through your mediation).

(Qadri, pp. 853-4)

As in the abovementioned instance, Qadri overstretches the import of the Quranic text. The direct Quranic address to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is unwarrantedly taken to mean "all the earlier and later sins, and forgiveness of the Muslim Umma. This intrusion defies logic and syntax.

Haque and Auolakh, too, exclude any reference to the Prophet (peace be upon him), whereas the Quran addresses him specifically:

That Allah may forgive the sins of your formers and of your latters on account of you and may complete His favors upon you and may show you straight path.

(Haque, p. 764)

That Allah may forgive the sins of your formers and of your laters [sic] on account of you and may complete His favors upon you and may guide you to the straight path.

(Auolakh, p. 663)

Haque and Auolakh also haphazardly talk about "the sins of your former and latters", rather than about Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), which is the intent of the Quranic text.

Surah Al-Rahman opens thus:

The Most Compassionate One, He taught the Quran. He created man. He taught him speech.

(Al-Rahman 55: 1-4).

This straightforward, lucid Quranic message, however, appears in its Prophet Muhammad-centric version and thus in Qadri's work:

The Most Compassionate (is He), Who (Himself) taught the Qur'an (to the Arab Messenger [blessings and peace be upon him] or the humans through him). He is the One Who created humankind. He alone taught him the art of expression and communication.

(Qadri, p. 894)

Once again, Qadri makes the general Quranic statement specific to the Prophet (peace be upon him), which tends to blur the distinction between the divine and the prophetic office.

Haque also translates these verses with a pointed reference to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him):

The Most Affectionate taught the Quran to His beloved. He created Mohammad, the soul of humanity. He taught him speech regarding whatever had happened and whatever would happen.

(Haque, p. 796)

Haque goes a step forward in inserting into the Quranic text, without any context, the statement that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is "the soul of humanity" and that Allah taught him "whatever had happened and whatever will happen." It sounds as a crude attempt to exalt the office of the Prophet.

That the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) saw the archangel Jibrail as recorded in Al-Takwir 81: 23 is overstretched by Qadri to claim:

And he [Prophet Muhammad] has indeed seen (the absolute beauty of the Lord of the Throne) on the effulgent horizon (of the realm of Divinity).

(Qadri, p. 1003)

Qadri's reference to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), having "indeed seen the absolute beauty of the Lord of the Throne" in the context of the above verse, is out of place, to say the least.

The Quran comforts the Prophet (peace be upon him) by asking him not to grieve over the unbelievers' stubborn rejection of Allah's call, telling him:

Had Allah willed, He could gather all on guidance. So be not among the ignorant.

(6: 35)

In his rendering, however, Qadri betrays his peculiar understanding of the Quranic assertion: *fa la takununna min al-jahilin*:

He would indeed assemble them together on guidance. So (owing to the overwhelming enthusiasm generated from your compassion, kindness and concern) do not be unaware (of their ill fortune).

(Qadri, pp. 202-3)

In this instance, Qadri interpolates the ideas about Prophet Muhammad's "Compassion, kindness and concern" and concludes with this somewhat meaningless assertion: "do not be unaware (of their ill fortune).

Haque toes the same line and renders the above verse in largely incomprehensible terms:

And if Allah has willed, then He would have gathered them on the guidance, so O  
listener! Be never you an innocent.

(Haque, p. 196)

Haque confers the appellations of a “listener” and “innocent” upon the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), which do not align with the meaning and message of the Quranic text.

Haque extols his mentor, Ahmad Raza Khan, for having selected “such meaning [of the Quran] that may not injur [sic] the status and dignity of Allah Almighty, and His Prophets.” (p. XII) Haque, Auolakh and Qadri have religiously followed Khan’s above directive, even at the expense of deviating wildly from the intent of the Quranic text at places.<sup>1</sup>

Against this backdrop of the excessive veneration of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), a distinguished Quranic scholar of the subcontinent, Abdul Majid Daryabadi (1892-1977) took the courageous step of pressing home the humanness of Prophets, including that of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), on the basis of the Quran itself in his Urdu book, *Bashariyat-i Anbiya* (1960).<sup>2</sup> It is worth adding that Daryabadi holds the unique distinction of having authored two independent and extensive *tafasirs*, one in English and the other in Urdu. The former seeks to dispel the doubts agitating the minds of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Western educated Muslims on matters such as *al-ghayb*, miracles, gender issue, Jihad, etc., while the latter elucidates Allah’s guidance for the ordinary Muslims in his chaste, charming Urdu. Needless to add, in his exegesis, he adheres strictly to the mainstream *Ahl Al-Sunnah wal Al-Jama’ah* stance and cites scores of primary Islamic sources and *mufassirun*, both classical and recent, for substantiating his viewpoint.<sup>3</sup> His abridged English translation and commentary, *The Glorious Quran* has been reprinted several times in the UK since 2000.<sup>4</sup>

Let us now revert to Daryabadi’s thesis in his *Bashariyat-i Anbiya*: the Quran specifically points out the humanness of every Prophet, projecting them as ordinary human beings, and more importantly, as servants of Allah, notwithstanding their holding the highest office imaginable, of being the Messengers of Allah and their being the best human beings, to be emulated as role models by their followers. Daryabadi’s main

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1 Far from delving into the any theory of translation, this article deals only with the issue of the divinity/humanness of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), appearing in the select English translations of the Quran by some Muslim scholars of the Indo-Pak subcontinent.

2 Abdul Majid Daryabadi, *Bashariyat-i Anbiya* (Urdu). Lucknow, Maktaba Islam, 1960.

3 Abdul Majid Daryabadi, *Tafsir-i Majdi*. Lucknow, Majlis Taqhiyat wa Nashriyat-i Islami, 2013. 7 volumes.

4 Abdul Majid Daryabadi, *The Glorious Quran* Leicester, UK, Islamic Foundation, 2001. (Abridged edition). The title of the original English *tafsir* is: *The Holy Quran: Translated from the Original Arabic with Lexical, Grammatical, Historical, Geographical and Eschatological Comments and Explanation and Sidelights on Comparative Religion*, Lahore, Pakistan, Taj Company, 1957. 2 Vols. Its revised, expanded edition is entitled *Tafsir-ul-Quran*. Lucknow, Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, 1981-1985. 4 Vols.

For Daryabadi’s life and contribution to *tafsir* see:

a) *Abdur Raheem Kidwai, From Darkness into Faith: Life and Works of Mawlana Abdul Majid Daryabadi*, Springs, South Africa, Ahsan Publication, 2013.

b) *Abdul Majid Daryabadi’s Tafsir-ul-Quran: A Critical Study*. Edited by Gowhar Quadir Wani and Abdul Kader Choughley. Aligarh, India, K. A. Nizami Centre for Quranic Studies, 2021.

points are enumerated below:

- i) Essentially, the Prophets are Allah's servants and human beings:

They [Prophets] replied: "We are no doubt human beings like you. However, Allah may bless any of His servants whom He wills. It is not within our power to bring any clear authority without Allah permission."

(14: 11)

Tell them (O Prophet): "Glory be to my Lord! I am only a human being, who is also a Messenger."

(17: 93)

Say (O Prophet): "I am only a human being like you. However, this message has come to me: "Your Allah is the One True Allah."

(18: 110)

- ii) They have limited powers: it is beyond them to force anyone into the fold of faith. It is Allah alone Who grants guidance to man:

(The unbelievers hope) you (Prophet Muhammad) may omit part of what is revealed to you. Let your heart not be hurt because they say: "Why is not some treasure sent down to him? Why does not an angel accompany him?" You are only a warner. Allah has control over everything.

(11: 12)

(O Prophet), you cannot guide whom you want. It is Allah Who guides whom He wills. He knows best those who receive guidance.

(28: 56)

Allah sent Messengers before you. He gave them wives and children. No Messenger can bring even a single verse without Allah's permission.

(13: 38)

- iii) They cannot produce any miracle on their own. By Allah's leave they have, nonetheless, presented many miracles:

The unbelievers swore by Allah that if a sign came to them, they will believe in it. (O Prophet), say: "All the signs are with Allah".

(6:109)

Say [O Prophet]: "I stand upon a clear sign from my Lord. However, you reject it. It is not within my power to advance (the Last Hour) for which you ask. The command rests totally with Allah. He declares the truth. In addition, He is the best to judge."

(6:57)

- iv) They are seen acknowledging their lack of power and their inability to take on their enemy without Allah's help and support:

Lot said, “Would that I had strength to set you [the unbelievers] right. Or I could get some powerful support.”

(11: 79)

Noah prayed to his Lord, “I am under pressure (by them). Help me.”

(54: 10)

v) Only with Allah’s help could they avoid falling into error:

Had Joseph not seen the sign of His Lord, he too, would have advanced toward her. This is how Allah saved him from evil and a shameful action. He was one of the chosen servants of Allah.

(12: 24)

vi) Their intercession is contingent upon Allah’s explicit permission:

It is all the same whether the Prophet prays for their forgiveness. Allah will never forgive them. Allah does not guide evil people.

(63: 6)

(O Prophet), whether you ask for forgiveness for them or not, and even if you ask for forgiveness for them seventy times, Allah will not pardon them. For they have rejected Allah and His Messenger. Allah does not guide the wicked.

(9: 80)

vii) They do not have any special power to benefit themselves or harm anyone:

Say (O Prophet): “I do not have any power to harm you or to bring you to the right way.”

(72: 21)

Say (O Prophet): “I have no power to harm or benefit even myself, except what Allah wills. There is an appointed term for every community. When their term ends, they cannot delay or advance it even by an hour.”

(10: 49)

Say (O Prophet): “No one can save me from Allah. Nor can I find any refuge except with Him.”

(72: 22)

viii) They did undergo physical suffering and expressed sorrow and grief:

When Moses returned to his people, he was angry and sad (over their misconduct). He told them, “You did a great evil act in my absence. Why did not you wait patiently for your Lord’s command?” He put down the tablets (on which the laws were inscribed). He caught his brother (Aaron) by his head and pulled him in his direction.

(7: 150)

Jacob replied: “I will be sad as you [Jacob’s sons] take him [Joseph] along with you. Moreover, I fear that a wolf might eat him while you are negligent.”

(12: 13)

When Allah's angels reached Lot, he became sad and was worried about their visit. They, however, told him, "Do not fear or grieve. We will save you and your family, except your wife. She is among those who will stay behind (to face Allah's punishment)."

(29: 33)

Allah accepted Job's prayer. He removed his suffering. This is how He saves the believers.

(21: 88)

(O Prophet), Allah knows well that their words hurt you. They do not reject you. Rather, these wrongdoers reject the signs of Allah.

(6: 33)

ix) At times, anger, a basic human emotion, overtook them:

Moses returned to his people, full of anger and sorrow. He said, "O my people, had your Lord not made an excellent promise to you? Did the promise seem to you too long (in coming true)? Did you want your Lord's wrath upon you? Why did you break your promise to me?"

(20: 86)

Mention Dhu al-Nun. He left in anger, thinking that Allah had no power over him. However, he cried to Allah later in darkness: "There is no god besides You. Glory be to You! I was indeed a wrongdoer."

(21: 87)

x) Like other human beings, they were subject to natural fear:

When Abraham noticed that their hands did not take food, he had some doubts about them (angels disguised as guests) and feared them. They, however, told him, "Do not fear. We have been sent to the people of Lot."

(11: 70)

Therefore, Moses departed in fear. He prayed, "O my Lord, deliver me from the wrongdoing people."

(28: 21)

Both of them [Prophets Moses and Aaron] said: "O our Lord, we fear he [Pharaoh] will wrong us. He will cross the limits." Allah said, "Do not fear. I am with you. I hear and see everything."

(20: 45-46)

Moses felt fear in his heart. Allah, however, told him, "Do not fear. You will have the upper hand."

(20: 67-68)

xi) Momentary forgetfulness overtook some of them:

Allah had earlier given a command to Adam. However, he forgot. Allah did not find him firm.

(20: 115)

Moses said, "Do not take me to task for forgetting. Do not be hard on me."

(18: 73)

xii) Like all other human beings, they were mortal. Some of them were even killed, without justice:

Shame and sufferings were prescribed for them [the Israelites]. They brought upon themselves the wrath of Allah. This was because they used to reject the signs of Allah. They killed even the Prophets without any just cause.

(2: 61)

Those who reject the signs of Allah, who kill the Prophets unjustly and kill those who teach dealing justly with people, give them the good news of terrible punishment.

(3: 21)

(O children of Israel), is it not true that when a Messenger came to you with what was not to your liking, you acted with pride? You rejected some of them and even killed some of them.

(2: 87)

(O Prophet), Allah did not grant eternal life to any human being before you. So if you die, will they (the unbelievers) live for ever? Every living being has to taste death.

(21: 34-35)

Muhammad is only a Messenger. Before him, many Messengers passed. Will you turn back on your heels if he dies or is killed?

(3: 144)

xiii) They possessed limited knowledge, especially of *al-ghayb* (the matters lying outside the ken of man's sense perception). Allah apprised them of *al-ghayb* as much as He willed:

The unbelievers ask: "Why is not a sign sent down to the Prophet from his Lord?" Tell them: "The Unseen belongs to Allah alone. Wait, I too, wait with you."

(10: 20)

The Messenger's duty is to convey the message. However, Allah knows what you declare and what you hide.

(5: 99)

Moses asked him [a servant of Allah]: "May I follow you so that you teach me something of what is given to you?"

(18: 66)

When Moses completed the term and traveled with his family, he spotted fire in the direction of Mount Sinai. He told his family members, "Stay here. I have spotted fire. I may bring from there some information or some fire for you, which will warm you."

(28: 29)

Think when Allah will say (on the Day of Judgment): "O Jesus the son of Mary, did you

ask people to take you and your mother as gods besides Me?" He will say: "Glory be to You. I could never say something which I had no right to say. Had I said so, You would have certainly known it. You know what is in my heart. However, I do not know what is in Yours. You alone know in full the Unseen."

(5: 116)

"I [Noah] do not tell you that I have with me the treasures of Allah. Nor do I know the Unseen. Nor do I claim to be an angel."

(11: 31)

xiv) They ate, drank and walked about in market, as other human beings do:

Allah did not give the Messengers such bodies that did not need food. They were subject to death.

(21: 8)

All the Messengers sent by Us before you [O Prophet Muhammad] used to eat food and walk about in markets.

(25: 20)

Moses watered their flock and then retired to the shade, praying: "O my Lord, I am truly in need of any good that You send me."

(28: 24)

xv) Occasionally, physical ailments afflicted them:

[Abraham said:] "And Allah cures me when I fall ill."

(26: 80)

Allah then threw him [Prophet Jonah] on the shore while he was sick.

(37: 145)

Mention Job. He called his Lord: "A disease has touched me. You are the Most Merciful One."

(21: 83)

xvi) Some of the Prophets, who did not have a child, invoked Allah fervently for blessing them with a child, and He graciously accepted their supplications:

Mention Zechariah. He called his Lord, "O my Lord, do not leave me childless. You are the best to inherit."

(21: 89)

Zechariah exclaimed, "O my Lord, how will I have a son while I have grown very old and my wife is barren?" He said, "Thus, shall it be." Allah does what He wills.

(3: 40)

He [Prophet Abraham] became afraid of them [angels disguised as guests]. They, however, told him, "Do not fear." They gave him the good news of the birth of a son, gifted with knowledge. His wife came out, shouting. She slapped her own face and

exclaimed, “I am an old, barren woman. (How can I have a son?)” The angels said, “Your Lord has commanded so.” He is the Wisest, All Knowing.

(51: 28-30)

xvii) They occasionally committed some lapses but sincerely repented as soon as they realized their error.

Allah forgave them in view of their genuine repentance and remorse:

However, Satan tempted both of them [Adam and Eve] and got them out of the Garden. Allah ordered: “Get down all of you, as each other’s enemy. Until an appointed time, the earth will be your dwelling place and your source of livelihood.”

(2: 36)

Moses arrived in the city at a time when people were not watching. He saw there two persons fighting. One of them was from his own community, and the other was from the enemy camp. The one from his own community asked for his help against the enemy. As Moses punched the latter, it killed him. Moses exclaimed, “This is an act of Satan. Satan is no doubt an open enemy that always misguides.”

(28: 15)

David told [the disputing parties]: “He wronged you in demanding your single sheep to be added to his. Many persons, although living together, wrong one another. However, those who believe and do good do not behave thus. However, such people are few.” (While saying so) David realized that Allah had tested him. So he asked for the forgiveness of his Lord. He fell down in prostration and turned in repentance to Him.

(38: 24)

He [Prophet Solomon] said, “Out of my love for this, I neglected the mention of my Lord.”

(38: 32)

He [Prophet Muhammad] frowned and turned away.

(80: 1)

xviii) Throughout, the Quran depicts them as devout servants of Allah, ever engaged in worshipping Him and entreating humbly to Him for His guidance and succour. They were not, however, some superhuman, self-sufficient persons with special privileges:

Allah accepted Zechariah’s prayer. He granted him John. He made his wife fit (to bear a son). They all raced toward doing good. They called on Allah with hope and fear. They were humble before Him.

(21: 90)

And recall when Abraham and Ishmael raised the foundation of the house (with this prayer): “O our Lord, accept this from us. Surely You are All Hearing, All Knowing. O our Lord, make us and our children obedient to You. Show us the ways of worshipping You, and turn to us in mercy. Surely You are Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

(2: 127-128)

Moses chose seventy of his people for the period of his appointment with Allah. When the earthquake overtook them, Moses submitted: "O my Lord, if this had been Your will, You could destroy them and me long before. Will you destroy us for the action of some fools among us? It was indeed a test from You. You mislead whom You will and guide whom You will. You alone are our Protector. So forgive us and have mercy on us. You are the best to grant forgiveness."

(7: 155)

They [Abraham's people], however, said, "Burn him. If you have to do something, protect your gods." Allah commanded: "O fire, be cool and safe for Abraham." They planned to harm Abraham, but Allah made them unsuccessful.

(21: 68-70)

They [Prophet Salih's people] replied, "We take you and those who are with you as a bad omen." Salih said, "Allah is aware of your bad omen. You are under a trial."

(27: 47)

They [Prophet Shuayb's people] said: "O Shuayb, we do not understand much of what you say. We see you as a weak person among us. Were it not for the consideration of your family, we have stoned you. You do not have any great position among us."

(11: 91)

xix) They were rejected by most of the members of their own community as an impostor, mad, soothsayer, magician and poet. Allah's help, nonetheless, enabled them to accomplish their mission:

Do they say, "He (the Prophet) has invented it [the Quran]?" Ask them: "Bring just one Surah like it. In addition, call (to your help) anyone you can besides Allah, if you are true (in your claim)."

(10: 38)

They [the Unbelievers] also say: "[The Quran] is a tale of the past which he [the Prophet] has got written. In addition, then the same is recited before him morning and evening."

(25: 5)

He [the Unbeliever] said: "This [the Quran] is nothing but magic of old times. This is the word of only a human being".

(74: 24-25)

They [the Unbelievers] used to say: "What! Shall we give up our gods because of a mad poet?"

(37: 36)

[O Prophet], keep advising them. By your Lord's grace, you are neither a soothsayer nor mad [as they say]

(52: 29)

The Unbelievers say, "O you to whom this message is sent, you are mad."

(15: 6)

When the unbelievers see you [O Prophet] they mock you, saying: "Is he the one who talks about your gods?" They reject the name of the Most Compassionate One.

(21: 36)

### **Conclusion:**

Daryabadi's above description of Prophets is anchored in the basic Islamic article of faith---monotheism, with Allah alone having all power and knowledge. Against the backdrop of Christology<sup>1</sup> and saint worship among some astray Muslim groups,<sup>2</sup> this truth needs to be underscored constantly that prophets are essentially human beings, of the noblest and purest variety and that they must not be taken in any degree as partners or incarnation of divinity.

Notwithstanding the pivotal belief in Islam about All Powerful Allah and all beings in the world as His creatures, the erroneous notion of the divinity of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has regrettably crept into a section of Muslims, particularly of the Indo-Pak subcontinent. They attribute to him the traits (absolute knowledge and power and supernatural qualities) that are special only to Allah. They appear to make short shrift of the Quranic assertion, as spelled out in this article, that all the Messengers/Prophets of Allah, notwithstanding their exalted rank, are first and foremost human beings and obedient servants of Allah.

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<sup>1</sup> On Christology and Sonship and Divinity of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) see:

Andrew Ter Ern Loke, *The Origin of Divine Christology*, Cambridge University Press, 2017; Ashok K. Behuria, "Sects Within Sect: The Case of Deobandi-Barelvi Encounter in Pakistan" *Strategic Analysis* 32: 1 (2008) pp. 57-80 | Published online: 27 Feb 2008 <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700160801886330>; Bart D. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee*, HarperOne, 2014; Christopher W. Morgan, *The Deity of Christ*, Crossway Books, 2011; Darrell L. Bock and Benjamin I. Simpson, *Jesus the God-Man: The Unity and Diversity of the Gospel Portrayals*, Baker Academic, 2016; David B. Capes, *The Divine Christ: Paul, the Lord Jesus, and the Scriptures of Israel*, Baker Academic, 2018; Garrick V. Allen (et al.) *Son of God: Divine Sonship in Jewish and Christian Antiquity*, Penn State University Press, Eisenbrauns, 2019; Gerald O'Collins, *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*, Oxford University Press, 1995; Graham Cole, *The God Who Became Human: A Biblical Theology of Incarnation*, IVP Academic, 2013; Grawe Goldsworthy, *The Son of God and the New Creation*, Crossway Books, 2016; Jackson, William Kesler, "A Subcontinent's Sunni Schism: The Deobandi-Barelvi Rivalry and the Creation of Modern South Asia" (2013) *History-Dissertations.102* "[A Subcontinent's Sunni Schism: The Deobandi-Barelvi Rivalry and the Cr](#)" by William Kesler Jackson ([syr.edu](http://syr.edu)); Lanier Greg, *Is Jesus Truly God?: How the Bible Teaches the Divinity of Christ*, Crossway, 2020; M. James Jordan, *Sonship: AJ into Father's*, 2014; Matthew Vellanickal, *The Divine Sonship of Christians in the Johannine Writings*, Rome, Biblical Institute Press, 1977; Max Lucado, *He Chose the Nails Study Guide: What God Did to Win Your Heart*, Thomas Nelson; Study Guide, 2016; Max Lucado, *Jesus: The God Who Knows Your Name*, Thomas Nelson, 2020; Michael F. Bird (et al.), *How God Became Jesus: The Real Origins of Belief in Jesus' Divine Nature—A Response to Bart Ehrman*, Zondervan, 2014; Michael F. Bird, *Jesus the Eternal Son: Answering Adoptionist Christology*, Eerdmans, 2017; N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Fortress Press; Later prt. Edition, 2003; Oliver D. Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity: The Incarnation Reconsidered*, Cambridge University Press, 2007; Oliver D. Crisp, *God Incarnate: Explorations in Christology*, Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2009; Rabbi Jason Sobel, *Mysteries of the Messiah: Unveiling Divine Connections ...* Thomas Nelson, 2021; Robert M. Bowman Jr. *Putting Jesus in His Place: The Case for the Deity of Christ*, Kregel Publications, 2007; Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ*, Crossway Books, 2016; Trevor J. Burke, *The Message of Sonship*, IVP Academic, 2011; Ty Gibson, *The Sonship of Christ: Exploring the Covenant Identity of God and Man*, Ty Gibson; 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Brannon D. Ingram, *Revival from Below the Deoband Movement and Global Islam*, University of California Press, 2018; Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India: Ahmad Riza Khan Barelwi and His Movement, 1870-1920*, Delhi, Oxford University, Press, 1996.

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