 **SALMAAN AL-FAARISIY**The Seeker after Truth

From Persia comes our hero this time, and from Persia many came to embrace Islam in the long run,and it made some of them extraordinary, unsurpassable in faith and knowledge in religion and worldly affairs.

It is one of the wonders of Islam and its greatness that it never enters a country on Allah's earth but that it exerts invaluable influence on all its potentialities and forces, bringing forth the latent genius of its people and followers. From there came forth Muslim philosophers, physicians, jurists, astronomers,inventors, and mathematicians.

Behold, they reached all heights, broke all frontiers, until the first era of Islam flourished with great geniuses in all fields of intellectual activity such as administration and science. Verily, they came from various nations, but their religion remained one.

The Prophet (PBUH) had prophesied this blessed spread of his religion.Indeed, he had been so promised by his Almighty Lord. He had pointed to the time, place, and day, and he had seen in his mind's eye the banner of Islam fluttering in all comers of the earth and over the palaces of its earthly rulers.

Salmaan Al-Faarisiy (The Persian) bore witness to this and was firmly connected with what happened. That was on the Day of Al Khandaq (The Trench) in the year A.H. 5, when the leaders of the Jews approached Makkah to stir up the polytheists and form an alliance against the Prophet (PBUH) and the Muslims, asking the polytheists to enter upon a treaty for decisive battle to eradicate this new religion.

The ungodly war was planned: the Quraish army and allies would attack Al-Madiinah from outside,while the Bani Ouraidhah would attack from within, behind the ranks of the Muslims, who would then fall prey and be crushed. One day the Prophet (PBUH) and the Muslims were taken unaware by a huge well-armed army marching on Al-Madiinah. The Qur'aan depicts the scene thus: "When they came against you from above you and from below you and your eyes turned away and your hearts reached to your throats, and you imagined vain thoughts about GOD; in that place the believers were tried and shaken most severely" (33:10-11).

Twenty-four thousand fighters under the command of Abu Sufyaan and `Uyainah lbn Hisn were advancing on Al-Madiinah to storm it and to lay siege to it in order to get rid of Muhammad, his religion,and his Companions. This army did not represent the Quraish alone, for they were in alliance with all the tribes, and all had vested interests that were threatened by Islam. It was a last and decisive attempt embarked on by all the enemies of the Prophet (PBUH), based upon individual, collective, and tribal interests.

The Muslims found themselves in a precarious situation. The Prophet (PBUH) assembled his Companions for consultation. Certainly they were gathered to reach a decision on defense and battle, but how could they put up a defense? And then a long - legged man with flowing hair for whom the Prophet(PBUH) bore great love, Salmaan Al-Faarisiy, held up his head and took a look at Al Madiinah, which was surrounded by hills, mountains, and exposed open country which could be easily broken through by the enemy.

Salmaan had much experience, in warfare and its tactics in his native Persia. So he proposed to the Prophet (PBUH) something which the Arabs had never seen before in warfare. It was the digging of a trench in the exposed places around Al- Madiinah.

And Allah knows what could have been the position of the Muslims in that battle had they not dug the trench, which was no sooner seen by the Quraish than they were stunned by despair. The forces of the enemy still remained in their tents for a month, unable to take Al-Madiinah, until Allah sent them one night a storm which devastated their tents and tore them a sunder.

Then Abu Sufyaan announced to his forces that they should return to where they had come from. They were despondent and frustrated.

During the excavation of the trench, Salmaan took his place among the Muslims while they dug and removed the sand. The Prophet (PBUH) was also taking part in digging where Salmaan was working in a group. Their pickaxes could not smash a stubborn rock, in spite of the fact that Salmaan was of strong build and hard working. A single stroke of his would break a rock to pieces, but he stood in front of this stubborn one. He let all those around him try to break it, but in vain. Salmaan went to the Prophet(PBUH) to ask him to divert the trench around that stubborn and challenging rock. The Prophet (PBUH) returned with Salmaan to see the rock himself. When he saw it, he called for a pickax and asked the Companions to keep back from the splinters. He said, "In the name of Allah," and then raised his blessed,firm hands gripping the pickax and let it fall.

The rock broke, making a great light. Salmaan said that he himself saw that light shining upon Al-Madiinah. The Prophet (PBUH) raised the pickax and gave a second blow and the rock broke more. At that moment the Prophet(PBUH) said loudly, "Allahu akbar - Allah is the Greatest - I have been given the keys to Rome; its red palaces have been lit for me and my nation has vanquished it."

The Prophet (PBUH) struck his third blow. Then the rock shattered and its glittering light was seen!The Prophet (PBUH) told them that he was now looking at the palaces of Syria, San'aa' and others like them, and the cities of the world over which the banner of Islam would flutter one day. The Muslims shouted in deep faith, "This is what Allah and His Prophet have promised us!"

Salmaan was the originator of the project to dig the trench, and he was associated with the rock out of which poured some secrets of the unseen and of destiny. When he called the Prophet (PBUH) to break it, he stood by the side of the Prophet (PBUH), saw the light, and heard the glad omen, and he lived to see the prophecy fulfilled and abided in its living reality. He saw the great capitals of Persia and Rome(Byzantium), the palaces of San'aa', Syria, Egypt, and Iraq. He saw every place trembling with the blessed ecstasy which was issuing forth from the high minarets in all parts of the world, spreading the light of guidance and goodness.

And here he is sitting there in the shade of a tree before his house in Al-Madiinah telling his guests about his great adventures in the quest for truth, explaining to them how he abandoned the religion of his Persian people for Christianity and then for Islam. How he abandoned his father's wealth and estate and threw himself into the arms of the wilderness in the quest for the release of his tension and soul. How he was sold in a slave market on his way to search for truth. How he met with the Prophet (PBUH) and how he came to believe in him. Now let us approach his great court and listen to his grand tale which he is recounting.

I come from Isfahan, from a place called Jai, and I was the most beloved son of my father, who was a figure of high esteem among his people. We used to worship fire. I devoted myself to fire worship until I became custodian of the fire which we lit and never allowed to be extinguished.

My father had an estate. One day, he sent me there. I passed by a Christian church and heard them praying. I went in and saw what they were doing. I was impressed by what I saw in their prayers. I said,"This is better than our religion." I did not leave them until sunset, nor did I go to my father's estate, nor did I return to my father until he sent people to search for me.

I asked the Christians about their affair and prayers which impressed me, and about the origin of their religion. They answered, "In Syria." I said to my father when I returned to him, "I passed by people praying in a church of theirs, and I was impressed by their prayer, and I could see that their religion is better than ours." He questioned me and I questioned him, and then he put fetters on my feet and locked me up.

Then I sent to the Christians saying I had entered their religion, andI requested that whenever a caravan came from Syria, they should tell me before its return in order for me to travel with them, and so they did.

I broke loose from the iron fetters and went away. I set out with them for Syria. While I was there, I asked about their learned man, and I was told that he was the bishop, leader of the church. I went to him and told him my story. I lived with him, serving, praying, and learning.

But this bishop was not faithful in his religion, because he used to gather money from the people to distribute it, but he would keep it for himself. Then he died.

They appointed a new leader in his place. I have never seen a man more godly than he in his religion, nor more active in his bid for the Hereafter,nor more pious in the world, nor more punctual at worship. I loved him more than I had ever loved any other person before.

When his fate came, I asked him, "To whom would you recommend me? And to whom would you leave me?" He said, "O my son, I do not know anyone who is on the path I am and who leads the kind of life I lead, except a certain manin Mosul."

When he died, I went to that man in Mosul, and told him the story, and I stayed with him as long as Allah wished me to stay. Then death approached him. So I asked him, "To whom would you advise me to go to?" He directed me to a pious man in Nisiibiin." So I went to him and told him my story. I stayed with him as long as Allah wished me to stay. When death overtook him, I asked him as before. He told me to meet a person at `Amuriah in Byzantium. So,to Byzantium I went and stayed with that man,earning my living there by rearing cattle and sheep.

Then death approached him, and I asked him, "To whom should I go?" He said, "O my son, I know no one anywhere who is on the path we have been on so that I can tell you to go to him. But you have been overtaken by an epoch in which there will appear a prophet in the pure creed of lbraahiim(Abraham). He will migrate to the place of palm trees. If you can be sincere to him, then do so. He has signs which will be manifested: he does not eat of charity, yet he accepts gifts, and between his shoulders is the seal of prophethood. When you see him, you will know him."

A caravan passed by me on that day. I asked them where they had come from and learned that they were from the Arabian Peninsula. So I told them, "I give you these cattle and sheep of mine in return for your taking me to your land." They agreed. So they took me in their company until they brought me to Wadi Al-Quraa and there they wronged to me. They sold me to a Jew. I saw many palm trees and cherished the hope that it was the land that had been described to me and which would be the future place of the advent of the prophet,but it was not.
I stayed with this Jew who bought me until another from Bani Quraidhah came to him one day and bought me from him. I stayed with him until we came to Al -Madiinah. By Allah, I had hardly seen it when I knew that it was the land described to me.

I stayed with the Jew, working for him on his plantation in Bani Quraidhah until Allah sent His Prophet, who later emigrated to Al-Madiinah and dismounted at Qubaa' among the Bani `Amr lbn `Awf.
Indeed, one day, I was at the top of a palm tree with my master sitting below it when a Jewish man came.
He was a cousin of his and said to him, "May Allah destroy Bani Qubaa'. They are spreading a rumor about a man at Qubaa' who came from Makkah claiming that he is a prophet." By Allah, he had hardly said it, when I was seized by a tremor, and the palm tree shook until I almost fell on my master.

I climbed down quickly saying, "What are you saying? What news?" My master gave me a nasty slap and said, "What have you got to do with this? Return to your work!"

So, I returned to work. At nightfall I gathered what I had and went out until I came to the Prophet(PBUH) at Qubaa'. I entered and found him sitting with some of his Companions. Then I said, "You are in need and a stranger. I have some food which I intend to give out as charity. When they showed me your lodgings, I thought you most deserve it, so I have come to you with it."I put the food down. The Prophet (PBUH) said to his Companions, "Eat in the name of Allah." He abstained and never took of it. I said to myself, "This,by Allah, is one sign. He does not eat of charity!"

I returned to meet the Prophet (PBUH) again the next day, carrying some food, and said to him(PBUH), "I can see that you do not partake of charity. I have something which I want to give to you as a present." I placed it before him. He said to his Companions "Eat in the name of Allah" and he ate with them. So I said to myself, "This indeed is the second sign. He eats of presents." I returned and stayed away for a while. Then I came to him, and I saw him sitting, having returned from a burial, and surrounded by his Companions. He had two garments, carrying one on his shoulder and wearing the other. I greeted him, then bent to see the upper part of his back. He knew what I was looking for, so he threw aside his garment off his shoulder and, behold, the sign between his shoulders, the seal of Prophethood, was clear just as the Christian monk had described."

At once, I staggered towards him, kissing him and weeping. He called to me to come forward and I sat before him. I told him my story as you have already heard me describe the events.

When I became a Muslim, slavery prevented me from taking part in the battles of Badr and Uhud.
Therefore the Prophet (PBUH) advised me, "Go into terms with your master for him to free you," and so I did. The Prophet (PBUH) told the Companions to assist me, and Allah freed me from bondage. I became a free Muslim, taking part with the Prophet (PBUH) in the Battle of Al-khandaq and others. With these simple clear words, Salmaan spoke of his great, noble, and sacrificial adventure for the sake of Allah, seeking after the reality of religion that led him to Allah and helped him to find his role in this life.

What kind of a noble person was this man? What great superiority was achieved by his aspiring spirit, that restless spirit that withstood difficulties and defeated them, confronted the impossible and it gave way! What devotion to the truth, and what sincerity that led its owner voluntarily away from the estate of his father, with all its wealth and luxury, to the wilderness, with all its difficulties and suffering.
He moved from land to land, town to town, seeking acquaintances, persevering,worshiping and searching for his destiny among people, sects, and different ways of life. And adhering all the way to the truth with all its noble sacrifices,for the sake of guidance until he was sold into slavery. He was then rewardedby Allah the best of rewards, making him reach the truth and come into thepresence of His Prophet. And then He granted him longevity, enough for himto see the banner of Islam fluttering in all parts of the world and His Muslim worshippers filling its space and corners with guidance, progress and justice!

What do you expect of the Islam of a man with such a noble character but to be a man of such truth!
It was an Islam of the God- fearing and innocent. In his devotion he was intelligent, pious, and the person nearest to `Umar Ibn Al-khattaab.

He once stayed with Abu Ad-Dardaa', under the same roof. Abu Ad-Dardaa' used to pray all night and fast all day. Salmaan blamed him for this excessive worship. One day, Salmaan wanted to stop him from fasting and to say it was supererogatory. Abu Ad-Dardaa' asked him, "Would you prevent me from fasting for my Lord and from praying to Him?" Salmaan replied, "No, your eyes have a claim upon you,your family has a claim upon you, so fast intermittently, then pray and sleep."

This reached the Prophet (PBUH) who said, "Salmaan is, indeed, full of knowledge." The Prophet(PBUH) was often impressed by his wisdom and knowledge,just as he was impressed by his character and religion. On the Day of Al-khandaq the Ansar stood up and said, "Salmaan is of us," the Muhaajiruun stood up also and said, "Salmaan is of us." The Prophet called to them saying, "Salmaan is of us, O People of the House (Prophet's house)."

Indeed, he deserved this honor! `Aliy lbn Abi Taalib , (May Allah honor his face) nicknamed him "Luqmaan the Wise ". He was asked about after his death: "There was a man who was of the People of the House. Who among you is like Luqmaan the Wise? He was a man of knowledge who absorbed all the scriptures of the People of the Book. He was like a sea that was never exhausted!"

He was held in the minds of Prophet's Companions with all highest regards and in the greatest position and respect. During the Caliphate of `Umar, he came to Al-Madiinah on a visit and `Umar accorded him what he had never accorded to anyone before when he assembled his Companions and said, "Come, let us go out and welcome Salmaan!" They received him at the border of Al-Madiinah.
Salmaan had lived with the Prophet (PBUH) ever since he met him, and believed in him as a free Muslim, and worshiped with him. He lived during the Caliphate of Abu Bakr, `Umar and `Uthmaan, in whose era he met his Lord. In most of these years, the banner of Islam spread everywhere, and the treasures of Islam were carried to Al Madiinah in floods and distributed to the people in the form of regular allowance and fixed salaries. The responsibilities of ruling increased on all fronts, as well as duties and the overwhelming burden of holding official posts. So where did Salmaan stand in this respect? Where do we see him in the time of splendor, plenty, and enjoyment?

Open wide your eyes. Do you see that humble man sitting there in the shade making baskets and utensils out of palm fronds?

That is Salmaan. Take a good look at him. Look at his short garment, which is so short that it is only down to his knees. That was him in grand old age.His grant was 4,000 to 6,000 dirhams a year, but he distributed all of it,refusing to take a dirham of it, and he used to say, "I would buy palm fronds with one dirham to work on and then sell it for three dirhams. I retaine done dirham of it as capital, spent one dirham on my family, and gave awayone dirham, and if `Umar lbn Al-Khattaab prevented me from that,I would not stop."

What next, O followers of Muhammad? What next, O noblest of mankind in all ages? Some of us used to think, whenever we heard the conduct of the Companions and their piety - for example, Abu Bakr, `Umar, Abu Dhar and their brethren - that it was based on the life of the Arabian Peninsula, where the Arabs find pleasure in simplicity. And here we are before a man from Persia, the land of pleasure,luxury, and civilization, and he was not of the poor but of its upper class. What about him now refusing property, wealth,and enjoyment, and insisting that he live on one dirham a day from the workof his hands? How about his refusing leadership and position except for something relating to jihaad and only if none but he were suitable for it, and it was forced upon him, and he accepted it weeping and shy? How about when he accepted leadership which was forced upon him but he refused to take his lawful dues?Hishaam lbn Hasaan relates from Al-Hassan: The allowance of Salmaan was 5,000. He lived among 30,000 people and used to dress in a garment cut into halves. He wore one and sat on the other half. Whenever his allowance was due him, he distributed it to the needy and lived on the earnings of his hands!

Why do you think he was doing all this work and worshiping with all this devotion, and yet he was a Persian child of luxury, the upbringing of civilization? You can hear the reply from him. While he was on his deathbed, the great spirit mounting forth to meet his Lord, Exalted and Merciful, Sa`d lbn Abi Waqaas went to greet him, and Salmaan wept! Sa'd said, "What makes you weep, O Abu`Abd Allah?
The Prophet of Allah died pleased with you!" Salmaan replied, "By Allah,I am not weeping in fear of death, nor for love of the world. But the Prophet of Allah put me on an oath. He said, "Let any of you have in this world like the provision of the traveler,' and here I have owned many things around me. "Sa'd said: I looked around, and I saw nothing but a water-pot and vessel to eat in! Then I said to him, "O Abu Abd Allah, give us a parting word of advice for us to follow." He said, O Sa'd, remember Allah for your cares,if you have any. Remember Allah in your judgment, if you judge. RememberAllah when you distribute the share." This was the man who filled his spirit with riches just as it filled him with renunciation of the pleasures of this world, its riches, and pride. The oath which he and the rest of the Companions had taken before the Prophet of Allah was that they must not let the world possess them and that they should take nothing from it but the provision of the traveler in his bag.

Salmaan had kept the oath, yet still his tears ran when he saw his soul preparing for departure,fearing that he had gone beyond the limits. There was nothing around him except a vessel to eat in and a water-pot and yet still he considered himself lavish! Did I not tell you that he was the nearest in resemblance to `Umar? During the days of his rule over the Madiinah area, he never changed his way.
He had refused, as we have seen, to receive his salary as a ruler, but went on making baskets to earn his living. His dress was no more than a gown,resembling his old clothes in simplicity.

One day while on the road, he met a man arriving from Syria, carrying a load of figs and dates. The load was too heavy for him and made him weary. No sooner did the Syrian see the man in front of him,who appeared to be one of the common people and poor than he thought of putting the load on his shoulders and when he reached his destination he would give him something for his labor.So he beckoned to the man (Salmaan, the governor), and he came up to him.

The Syrian said to him, "Relieve me of this load." He carried it, and they walked together.

While on their way, they met a group of people. He greeted them and they stood up in obeisance,replying, "And unto the governor be peace!" "Who is the governor?" The Syrian asked himself. His surprise increased when he saw some of them rushing towards Salmaan to take the load off his shoulders.  "Let us carry it, O governor". When the Syrian knew that he was the governor of Al Madiinah, he was astonished. Words of apology and regret fell from his lips, and he went forward to grab the load. But SALMAAN shook his head in refusal, saying, "No, not until I take you to your destination."

He was asked one day, "What troubles you in the leadership?" He replied, "The pleasure of nurturing it and the bitterness of meaning!"

A friend of his came to him one day at his house and found him kneading dough. He asked him,"Where is your servant? "He replied, We have sent her on an errand and we hate to charge her with two duties."

When we say "his house" let us remember what kind of house it was. When Salmaan thought of building it, he asked the mason, "How are you going to build it?" The mason was courteous and yet witty. He knew the piety and devotion of Salmaan, so he replied to him saying "Fear not. It is a house for you toprotect yourself against the heat of the sun and dwell in the cold weather. When you stand erect in it, it touches your head." Salmaan said to him, "Yes, that is it, so go on and build it."

There was nothing of the goods of this world which could attract Salmaan for a moment, nor did they leave any traces in his heart except one thing, which he was particularly mindful of and had entrusted to his wife, requesting her to keep it far away in a safe place. In his last sickness, and in the morning on which he gave up his soul, he called her, "Bring me the trust whichI left in safe keeping!"

She brought it and behold, it was a bottle of musk. He had gained it on the day of liberating the city of Jalwalaa' and kept it to be his perfume on the day of his death. Then he called for a pot of water,sprinkled the muskinto it, stirred it with his hand and then said to his wife, "Sprinkle iton me, for there will now come to me creatures from the creatures of Allah. They do not eat food and what they like is perfume."

Having done so he said to her, "Shut the door and go down." She did what he bade her to do. After awhile she went up to him and saw his blessed soul had departed his body his frame. It was gone to the Supreme Master, and it ascended with the desire to meet Him as he had an appointment there with theProphet Muhammad (PBUH) and his two Companions Abu Bakr and `Umar and the noble circle of martyrs!

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