Book Review

Imam Khomeini, the Dynamic Star that Never Sets

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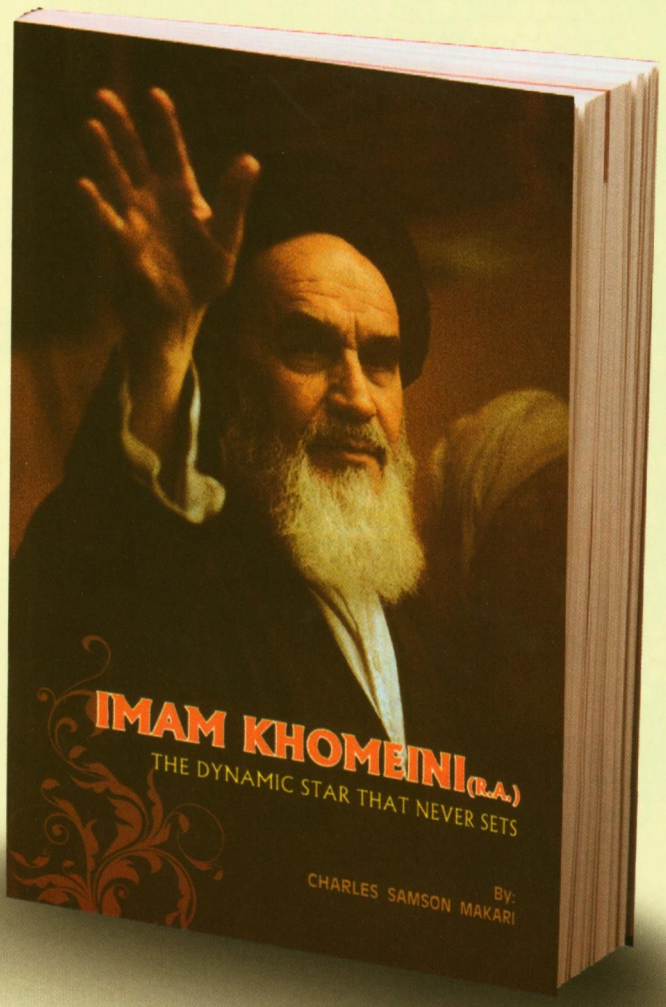
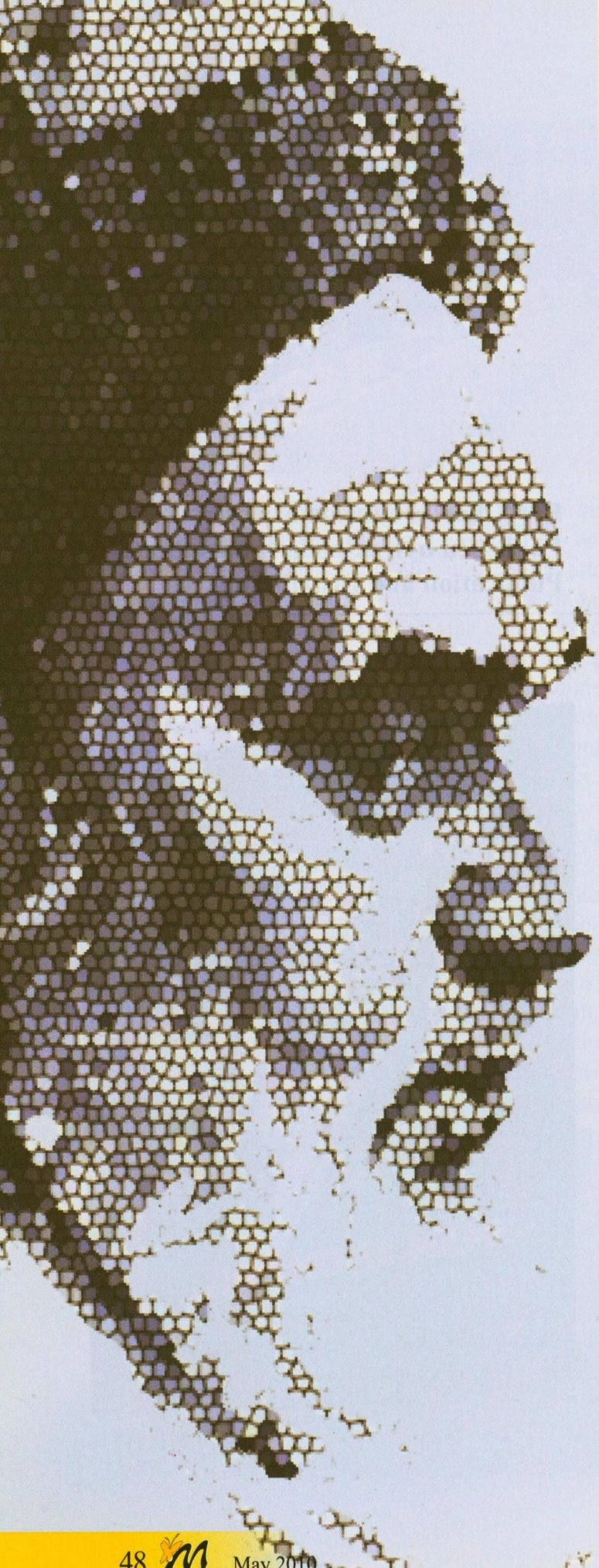
Imam Khomeini (ra), the Dynamic Star that Never Sets, is the book published by Alhoda International Publication and Distribution on the life of Imam Khomeini (ra). The book is divided into 15 chapters.
A part of its preface reads as follows: "After going through Imam Khomeini (ra), the Dynamic Star that Never Sets, one realizes the amazing passion with which Mr. Charles Samson Makati has presented the book. The author has vividly blended the ancient and modern history of Iran in order to portray the dynamism of one of the Iran's gallant personalities, Imam Khomeini (ra), the leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran."
"The book is a revelation of Imam Khomeini (ra)'s leadership drive bearing unique leadership qualities..."
"The book helps the reader to recall and relive the event and processes that culminated the Victory of the Islamic Revolution if Iran. The author presents and brings back the memories of how the Imam administered the liberation movement. The book is marketed by Alhoda International Publication and Distribution in Iran."
Here, for being more acquainted with the book, we provide you with certain parts of it:

Imam Khomeini (ra)-Great Leader of all Times

"Leader and leadership in the divine religions including Islam is not in itself something grand to make men proud and self conceited.





"If they call me a servant, its better than being called a leader. Being a leader is not what matters. What matters is service, Islam has made it necessary for us to serve! I am a brother to Iranian people and regard myself as their servant and soldier."
Imam Khomeini (ra)

The Islamic Revolution of Iran is no doubt a unique and rare event of the twentieth century. Imam Khomeini (ra), the leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, inspired a multitude of people to fight for their rights. He challenged such intimidating forces as the Shah's powerful regime with its heinous SAVAK apparatus. To lead such a revolution, required a courageous leader of considerable character, a leader who would appeal to all levels of his followers' physical, social and spiritual motivations.

What name of a leader springs up other than that of Imam Khomeini (ra)? What gimmicks did this enigma employ to spring up such a grandiose movement? What were his motivations and inspirations? In this chapter, we purport to look into those unique leadership traits possessed by Imam Khomeini (ra).

The Islamic Revolution of Iran came at a time when the Pahlavi Dynasty had reached its highest peak of majestic power. The allied nations, had placed foot, like a giant claw, in Iran. They had established a strong military base equipped with the most advanced technology of the time. This was meant to counter Russian military activities. The SAVAK committed unimaginable crimes in order to intimidate the Iranian masses. It controlled the press and bullied the clergy and everyone else in the country. Indeed, one would find it difficult to imagine or believe how a poor religious man, placed miles away in exile marshalling his followers by only issuing instructions and commands could plot and topple such a powerful government.

How did the Imam effectively inspire so much loyalty in his supports to the extent that they would go to war armed with only their fists and shouts and win? The victory changed a 2500-year old dynasty ruling system, overnight, into an Islamic State, the

first of its kind. To me, that is the greatest example of exceptional leadership. Perhaps at this stage in time, there is a need for the reader to fully understand the meaning behind a leader or leadership.

What is a leader? What really is leadership? What are the attributes of good leadership? The definitions of a leader are numerous. Words like head, boss, manager, person in charge, organizer, principal, chief, director, guide and many more come into play.

In an attempt to find out the attributes of Imam Khomeini (ra)'s leadership styles, one is confronted with several obstacles. I must confess that I found it a difficult task to match Imam Khomeini (ra)'s leadership styles with any other that I have known... Therefore, I decided to explore the aspects of his leadership feats from various plenary levels and angles.

Before venturing any further, I wish to mention at this point that, the concept of leadership is a tricky one. For us to stand on firm ground, we need to agree on the limitations that make the subject we are dealing with difficult to comprehend.

First and foremost, leadership styles differ according to culture, setting, and number of people led, class, climate, race, creeds, age groups, level of civilization and many more. Besides, who sets the standards with which to measure good or bad leadership? Is it the leader, the led or the observer's perspective that is used when judging the success of leadership? Therefore, in my opinion, leadership can never be the same to anyone, in any age, at whatever time. The enigmatic nature and uniqueness of leadership styles of Imam Khomeini (ra) is what made my task almost insurmountable.

However, judging by the success of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, one chooses to defy all odds in the bid to uncover that essential cog that ignited a revolution of such magnitude. The essence of Imam Khomeini (ra)'s leadership role in this revolution is what I intend to shine my light upon despite all these obstacles.

One does not become a leader overnight. The road to the apex, still, is riddled with strife, pain and tribulations. Like in the case of Mandela's book, 'it is no easy walk to freedom.' Imam Khomeini (ra) was subjected to both mental and physical torture. He was a target of abuse and ridicule by the regime. How he took to his cup of suffering, the fathomless foundations of his resilience all lend a touch to this unparalleled leader's style.

From an early age, Ruhollah displayed intellect and leadership qualities. That was why his father Sayyed Mustafa Musavi had a great liking for his youngest son, Ruhollah. Yet, fate had it that he was orphaned at a tender age. The ordeal seemed to have quickly seasoned up the young boy who appeared to have matured earlier than his age. The young Ruhollah must have been extensively haunted by the nightmare of his father's martyrdom and death of both his dear mother and aunt.

At school, Ruhollah was exceptionally intelligent and a bookworm. His brother Morteza Passandideh (Musavi), who guided him during his early learning, must have discovered some rare qualities of potential future leadership acumen. Socially, he was a peacemaker who detested violence of any sort. His amicable behavior brought about his fame in the small town of Khomein. People were impressed by the young boy's amicable gentle nature. It appears this was a preparatory period for the leadership roles he was going to execute in the future. His special talents were recognizable as early as at the age of ten.

At some stage in his life, Ruhollah vowed to do something to change conditions in Iran when he grew older. People did not take him seriously yet like in the case of Joseph the Dreamer; the events that followed are proof enough that indeed the young boy, Ruhollah Musavi later changed the lives of millions of Iranians.

Ruhollah was outstanding as a revolutionary leader. It was an awesome feat on his part to harness the aspirations of the masses, guide and inspire them to struggle towards the attainment of their revolutionary goals. The Imam possessed both the audacity and clarity of expression in summing up the objectives of the Islamic Revolution of Iran.

Imam Khomeini (ra) managed to attract a large number of followers because he identified himself with the masses by leading a modest and simple life dictated by performing prescribed religious duties without fail.

The various facets of this amazing Islamic leader may be summed up as an exceptional personal integ-

rity, unselfish lifestyle, iron-will, incredible courage and steadfastness. He had the capacity for stoic endurance, empathy with the suffering and oppressed people and, above all, extraordinary and spellbinding communication and oratorical skills.

His sterling revolutionary leadership is perhaps summarized by Khalil Ismail's essay when he says, ' ... the cornerstone of Imam Khomeini (ra)'s revolutionary leadership was his ability and charisma to unite the disparate opposition to the established order around the highest demands: putting an end to monarchial despotism and to dependency on the west...'

In achieving this, he maintained his finger on the pulse of the people, skillfully gauging the latent moods and dispositions prevailing among the Iranian masses who loathed the authoritarian Pahlavi Dynasty. As such, he never wavered in his relentless exposure of the regime as an edifice of tyranny and a puppet of foreign powers.

Some people believe in the old saying that says, 'leaders are born'. Yet, I must admit that it is impossible to either identify or determine leadership acumen at birth. My understanding of a leader is someone in authority over others. A leader may be in control of people whether by prerogative or by tyrannical ascent. Therefore, leadership traits are often traced down to birth only late in life after an individual has been exposed to a situation where he has exercised his leadership attributes. An effective leader is someone who is voluntarily followed because of his ability to guide and control other people. In most cases one tends to think of a leader having arrived at his position mainly because of his talent for influencing others and for acting in a guiding force. At the same time, we should also take cognizance of the fact that not all the leaders are same.

In their leadership styles, some tend to perform and excel better than others yet; the rating goes with some limitations when it comes to determine which leader is better than the other. This is further complicated by the fact that the leaders would be performing in different countries with different environment and conditions prevailing.

In most cases, one gets to the position where he is regarded as a prominent leader because of the administrative skills he exhibits during the process of the leadership. Some of the qualities of an effective outstanding leader are that people voluntarily follow him because of his ability to manipulate and guide them.

Such qualities go hand in glove with Imam Khomeini (ra)'s leadership styles. The Imam preferred to be called 'the people's servant'. He did not want to call himself the boss, quite contrary to how other leaders impose themselves into leadership and command people to look upon them as demy-gods.

Agreeably, every country or organization has its own share of leaders who are poor or effective performers. In the process, some leaders become more outstanding than others. Their prominence is gauged by the quality of their performance to the call of duty.

Indeed, leaders occupy various stretches of periods in the history of their respective countries. Some leaders represent ancient history whereas some are found in the so-called modern history. However, whether ancient or modern history, it turns out to be a common factor that apart from playing their pivotal roles in their countries, their leadership activities should permeate and find recognition beyond their borders and get international recognition.

Iran, like any other country of the world, had also its share of ancient and modern history. Its monarchial rulers stretch their recorded history to some 2,500 years ago. Iran is one of the countries of the ancient world with a civilization and culture that has remained unchanged for several years. The country could boast of its great kings and rulers such as Cyrus the Great, Xerces, Alexander the Great, Abbas, the list is endless.

However, in modern history, Iran produced Imam Khomeini (ra), one of its own illustrious sons, who is regarded as one of the most prominent leaders and whose leadership styles proved to be incomparable to most of the leaderships existing today. The Imam's leadership qualities, being so unparalleled, with other rulers, have not only been emulated by his country alone but also by the contemporary world.

His remarkable oratorical skills when inspiring his followers are demonstrated in the following extract from one of his speeches,

"I assure you gentlemen, and the Iranians that the regime will meet defeat, their forefathers were slapped by Islam... they too will be slapped ... stand firm. Do not submit to oppression... They shall be gone and you shall remain... These dull and borrowed swords shall be back into their sheaths..."

From Imam Khomeini (ra)'s speech delivered on 16 April 1967.

Imam Khomeini (ra) distinguished himself considerably from other leaders of his time. He attracted many scholars who attended his lectures in large groups. They found him a unique lecturer in rational sciences. The charismatic leadership style of the Imam manifested itself when he effectively administered the Islamic Revolution of Iran even when he was far away from Iran where the Revolution was taking place. He managed to direct and control the struggle from remote in exile.

Furthermore, his leadership stamina was a shining example when it was demonstrated by his ability to defeat the world of arrogance and create a sense of self-confidence amongst the oppressed people. The victory of his movement was like an earthquake that left the so-called super-powers trembling.

The Imam must have been a very daring and courageous, fearless character to say the following words, to a cruel and lawless dictator, without fear of repercussions,

"Let me advise you Mr. Shah! I advise you to desist from this policy and act like this. I do not want the people to offer up thanks if your masters should decide one day that you must leave. I do not want you to be like your father...."

One of his outstanding and unique leadership qualities was that he was the embodiment of selfless and trustworthy life. Imam Khomeini (ra) set goals during the Islamic Revolution of Iran and fully implemented them. Most people regarded him as a guardian of the true Islam and many put their hopes reflected in his virtue, knowledge and awareness. He was a man who regarded the fulfillment of divine duties as the only purpose in life.

Imam Khomeini (ra)'s humility and character is fully portrayed by the simple life-style he lived.