

THE LATE RADEN SOEDEWO PARTO KERTODINEGORO

Bro. Soedewo P.K. was born in Jember in February 1906 and passed away on 22 November 1971 in Jakarta, Indonesia. He was buried in Bogor. He was an active member of *Jong Islamieten Bond* (Union of Young Muslims/Young Islamic Association) and launched a vigorous campaign in 1928 for the liberation of Indonesia from Dutch domination with a slogan, “One Homeland, One Nation, One Mother Tongue”. He organised in Bogor, Sukabumi and Cianjur teachers, who took a solemn oath on 28 October 1928 not to cooperate with the Dutch Government until the country was given freedom. He also took an active part in the guerrilla war as a freedom fighter. In recognition of his zealous efforts for the independence of his motherland, he was awarded the “*Satya Lancana Karya*” (Decoration of Loyalty) medal by the Republic of Indonesia.

Bro. Soedewo finished his elementary school education at Hollands Inlandse School (HIS), in 1919. He completed teacher’s training courses (Kweekschool) in 1923, and High Training College (Hogere Kweekschool) in 1926. Then he specialised in the Dutch language and obtained a higher certificate in the Dutch language (Hoofdakte) in 1934. He was an intelligent student and loved English poetry and language. When Mirza Wali Ahmad Beg, missionary from the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha‘at-i Islam, Lahore arrived in Indonesia, his keen interest in English poetry helped develop a close friendship between the two.

Mirza Wali Ahmad Beg not only helped Bro. Soedewo in obtaining proficiency in the English language and understanding poetry, but he also explained to him that there is yet another poetry more beautiful and inspiring, *viz.*, the Holy Quran, the revealed word of Allah. The idea struck this intelligent young man and he started studying the English translation and commentary of the Holy Quran by Maulana Muhammad Ali. The study of the Quran impressed him so much and created in him such a love for the Quran that he decided to render it into Dutch. His thoughts and interest were thus diverted from English poetry to the study of Islamic books written by Maulana Muhammad Ali. He acquired a thorough knowledge of the Quran and the teachings of Islam and became a renowned scholar of Islam.

From a young age, he was an active member of the Muhammadiyya organisation. But after the death of its founder, Kh. Ahmad Dahla, the organisation suffered badly and became inactive and in disarray. Soon after, some members of its Committee established a new organisation, Ahmadiyya Centrum Lahore, which ultimately became Geraken Ahmadiyya Centrum Lahore, Indonesia. Mr. Soedewo became its first secretary and H. H. Ng. M. Djojosoegito its founding president. This organisation was entirely devoted to the propagation and publication of literature on Islam. The late Bro. Soedewo played a leading role in producing invaluable literature in Dutch.

Soedewo’s passion for knowledge and devotion for the propagation of Islam enabled him to accomplish at the young age of twenty-eight the Dutch translation of such a voluminous and literary work as the English translation of the Holy Quran with commentary by Maulana Muhammad Ali. It may be pointed out that the first edition of the English translation which he ventured to translate into Dutch contained more copious footnotes and a very exhaustive introduction as compared to the revised edition published in 1951. This Dutch translation was the first translation of Maulana Muhammad Ali’s English Translation in any foreign language. It was followed by an equally remarkable translation into Dutch of yet another encyclopaedic work of Maulana Muhammad Ali *viz.*, *The Religion of Islam*. He then went on translating English publications from the Central Ahmadiyya Anjuman in Lahore into Dutch. Some of the translations from English into Dutch were:

1. *Muhammad the Prophet* by Maulana Muhammad Ali
2. *Islamic Principles*
3. *The Secret of Existence* by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din
4. *The Sources from God*
5. *The Sources of Christianity* by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din
6. *The Birth of Jesus* by Dr. Basharat Ahmad
7. *Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Man* by Maulana Muhammad Yakub Khan
8. *The Muslim Prayer Book* by Maulana Muhammad Ali
9. *The Truth of the Holy Prophet Goes to Europe*
10. *The Holy Prophet's Way of Life*
11. *A Brief Sketch of the Holy Prophet's Life* by Maulana Muhammad Ali
12. *Introduction to the Study of the Holy Quran* by Maulana Muhammad Ali / Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din

Some of his own publications were:

1. *Islam – A Way of Life*
2. *How to Study the Holy Quran*
3. *A Handbook to Study Arabic*
4. Editor *As-Salaam* (Dutch)
5. Editor *Risalah Ahmadiyya* (Dutch / Indonesian)
6. *Safinah-i Nuh* (The Ark of Noah) (Dutch / Indonesian)
7. *Freedom Movement of Indonesia*
7. *The Ahmadiyya Movement* (Dutch / Indonesian)
8. *The Theme of the Holy Quran*
9. *Islam that we Defend (or Believe)*
10. *Islam and Science*
11. *How to Study the Quran*
12. *Jesus Did Not Die on the Cross*
13. *Who was Sacrificed: Isaac or Ishmael?*
14. *Is Jesus Still Living with his Body in Heaven?*
15. *Ascension of the Holy Prophet*
16. *A Guide to Learn Arabic*
17. *Unity of God*

Unity of God was his last masterpiece. As chairman of “Sale and Publications” viz., *Ikhtiar*, he worked very hard in promoting the publication and distribution of the Dutch translation of the encyclopaedic work on Islam, *The Religion of Islam* by Maulana Muhammad Ali. It became so popular that it was considered a standard work on Islam in all Islamic institutes of the universities of Indonesia.

His lectures and discourses in meetings and annual conferences were always highly intellectual. His favourite subjects were the unity of Allah, *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, and salient features of Islam. His thought-provoking lectures were always impressive and inspiring. It will not be an exaggeration to record that he was the main Indonesian architect of the invaluable literature produced on Islam and the Ahmadiyya Movement. He deserved to be classed as the pioneer of Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement in Indonesia. May his soul rest in eternal peace. “To Allah we belong and to Him is our return.”