

*Say*  
*O Prophet:*  
*If you love God,*  
*Follow Me,*  
*God will love you*  
*and forgive you*  
*for your sins..."*

( Quran, 3:31 )

*O Almighty Allah,  
my Creator, Owner and Sustainer,  
Watcher of all my deeds,  
I implore You, beseech You, beg You  
to accept this humble effort of mine,  
help the readers of this book to  
the Light of Guidance and grant me  
pardon on the Day of Judgment  
when nothing except  
Your Mercy and Blessings  
will be of only Help.*

*Ameen !*

# FOLLOW ME

God Will Love You

Muhammad for All

( Peace be upon him )

SYED HAMID MOHSIN



Promotes Peace and Brotherhood  
[www.salaamcentre.in](http://www.salaamcentre.in)

FOLLOW ME, God Will Love You

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I hope and pray that the book will continue to receive support from Muslims and non-Muslims.

This book is intended for a large audience, both Muslims and non-Muslims. It is rather an endeavour in bringing to high relief those aspects of Prophet's life for the benefit of the countrymen which could ensure development and salvation for the society in the contemporary world. It is my humble request that recipients of this book should go through this, not as a life-history of the Prophet, but engage themselves in extracting guidance from a personality responsible for giving history its most notable turn.

This is not an attempt to write a new biography of the

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in a conventional sense. This book is neither an outcome of any special fondness to compile yet another biography of the Prophet, nor is an attempt in venting out my understanding of the Prophet Muhammad's life and mission. It was during the 'Quran for All' campaign that a spark lit in me. It set me on the mission to bring to light the life of the Prophet to the common man in the simplest of idioms.

Way back in 2008, I prepared the 'Quran For All' project. The thought of implementing it kept me restless for a while. It was my wife Shabana and daughter Sufiya who motivated me into going ahead with the project. There was no looking back. The duo stood by me at every step and provided courage at every turn to see its successful accomplishment, May Allah reward them adequately! Needless to say that the 'Quran for All' project was to remove the veils that curtained off the truth from the eyes of the humanity.

There can be no task more exhilarating than conveying the Divine message to the countrymen. India has enjoyed exemplary communal camaraderie through the ages. It is the most valuable asset of the Indian society. Some of it could be witnessed during those sessions that were organized to popularize the message of the Holy Quran among professionals such as honorable judges, advocates, police officers, academicians, intellectuals and students. The way these audiences honoured me in person and my efforts, served as pointers of the great reverence the co-countrymen harboured for things Divine and sacred. It is my fervent hope that Allah will honour me the same way on the Day of Judgment and deliver me at the doorsteps of eternal success.

I would like to thank Mr. Mohammed Numan Khan who showed steadfastness in carrying out the composing of the book.

I am sincerely thankful to all the Ulemas, intellectuals and authors from whose works I have benefitted in compiling/writing this volume of biography of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). A complete bibliography is included in the book.

I am also thankful to my family members, brothers, sisters; I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my Mother whose constant encouragement prompted me to stay with the project. It was her grooming that has ushered us here, on this important mission, after the martyrdom of our father, Late Syed Abdus Salaam in the 1970's, may Almighty Allah bless him, *Ameen* ! It was her burning zeal to see us engaged in this mission of bringing the message of Islam to one and all. Her happiness is the most valuable asset I can cherish in this mortal world. It was this zeal that kept her listening to accounts of my work of this biography of the Prophet Muhammad. Finally, I thank Almighty Allah, who bestowed the boundless energy and insight on this humble servant to fulfill this mission.

I implore Allah, my Creator, to accept my sincere efforts. I beg Him to guide and help me to dedicate everything I have for His sake. May pardon my countless lapses and favour me with His mercy and blessings. *Ameen*.

Bangalore  
January-2014

Syed Hamid Mohsin



## Prophethood

Prophethood is one of the major themes of the Quran. God guides humanity, away from error and sin and towards goodness and justice, through Prophethood. Prophets brings 'good news' about humanity's potential for advancement and elevation, and warning that we can sink, as individuals and communities, into the depths of ignorance and barbarity. The function of Prophethood is to put humanity on the track of physical and moral advancement, to inspire nobler and higher sentiments and inspire and instil in men and women virtues that take them closer to the Divine. Prophethood is thus not only the method through which God communicates His Message to humanity; it is also a sign of His mercy and favour.

The Quran presents Prophethood as a universal phenomenon: 'we have dispatched a messenger to every nation. [16:36]. All prophets are equal; *'We make no distinction between any of them.'* (Quran, 3:34), but *'We have made some Messengers more excellent than others.* (Quran, 2:253). Muslims are required to believe in the revelation of every single one. The prophets are not just the bearers of the Divine message, but they also, through their lives, demonstrate how the message is to be interpreted in practical life. This is why they are *'only human beings.'* (Quran, 14:11) *'who come from within the community. They understand the suffering of the community, are anxious about its turmoil, and are trusted by all.'* (Quran, 9:128-129). They are chosen because of their pure character and special personalities, and endowed with knowledge and wisdom to *'recite His signs'* (Quran, 3:164) to their communities. They become guides and leaders, and communicate the revelation from God to their people without fear and with resoluteness and patience.

Islamic monotheism (The belief that there is only One God) has always stood in continuity with the sacred history

of Prophethood.

From the beginning, the One God, Allah, sent mankind Prophets and Messengers with the message, the reminder of God's presence, His commands, His Love, and His hope.

Adam was the First and Muhammad is the Last Prophet. In between, the Quran mentions 23 other prophets, many being familiar names from the Bible:

- Idris (Enoch) (Quran, Chapter 19, Verse: 56-57, 21 :85-86)
- Nuh (Noah) (6:84)
- Hud (11:50-60)
- Saleh (11:61-6)
- Ibrahim (Abraham) (6:83, 11:69-76)
- Isma'il (Ishmael) (6:84, 19:54-55)
- Ishaq (Isaac) (11:70-74)
- Lut (Lot) (7:80-84)
- Ya'qub (Jacob) (11:71)
- Yousef (Joseph) (6:84, and chapter 12)
- Shu'aib (7:85, 11: 84)
- Ayyub (Job) (6:84)
- Musa (Moses) (6:84, 20:9-99)
- Harun (Aaron) (6:84, 20:90)
- Dhull-kifl (Ezekiel) (21:85-6, 38:48)
- Dawud (David) (6:84)
- Sulaiman (Solomon) (6:84)
- Ilias (Elias) (6:85)
- Al-Yasa (Elisha) (6:86)
- Yunus (Jonah) (6:86)
- Zakariyya (Zachariah) (6:85)
- Yahya (John) (6:85)
- Isa (Jesus) (3: 45-8; 43:57-9; 19:88-98; 5:116-17; 19: 16-36; 5:46-7; 5:72-5; 43: 63-5).

All these prophets are one community; they



communicated the same message of the Oneness of God and the importance of upholding justice and equity. (Quran,42:13)

The One Almighty God has forever been accompanying us, from our beginning to our end. This is the very meaning of *Tawhid* (the Oneness of God) and of the Quranic formula that refers to mankind's destiny as well as to that of each individual:

“To God we belong and to Him we return.” (Quran, 2:156)

By choosing Muhammad (peace be upon him) to be the finality of Prophethood and the Quran to be the completion of Revelation, God had established a permanent medium of communication between Himself and man, and had erected an ever-radiating beacon of guidance and light.

But what is revelation? The Quran's answer to the question is given in Chapter 42, verses 51-52: *“It is not granted to any mortal that God should speak to him except, through revelation or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger to reveal by His command what He will: He is exalted and wise. So We have revealed a Spirit to you [Prophet] by Our command: you did not know before what the Book is nor what faith is, but We have made it a light whereby We guide whomsoever of our servants”* What we are being told is that God does not speak directly to a prophet, but the communication, or revelation, comes from the Angeles or more specifically, Angel Gabriel (or Jibreel), who brings Revelation, and the Message from God.

Prophet Muhammad received and transmitted the last revealed book, The Quran, which repeatedly insists on the eminent and extraordinary position of the Messenger of God, a Prophet, a bearer of news, a model, and a guide. He transformed the world in the light of the revelation and inspiration he received from God, his Lord (*Rabb*). That he was chosen and inspired by God, and was also fully accepted

by his own people is what makes Muhammad an example and a guide for mankind. He occupies a special place in the life and conscience of Muslims today, just as he did in the past.

Muslims do not consider Prophet Muhammad, as a mediator between God and people. Each individual is invited to address God directly, and although the Messenger did sometimes pray to God on behalf of his community, he often insisted on each Muslim believer's responsibility in his or her dialogue and relationship with the One God, Almighty Allah. Muhammad simply reminds mankind of God's presence: he initiates people into His knowledge and discloses the initial path of spirituality through which he teaches his companions and the Muslim community that they must transcend, conquer the respect and love they have for him, in by worshipping and loving the One God, who begets not and is not begotten.

To those who, in his lifetime, wanted miracles and visible evidence of his Prophethood, Revelation of Quran ordered Prophet Muhammad to reply:

“I am but a man like yourselves; the inspiration has come to me that your God is One God.”  
(Quran, 18:110)

“You have indeed in the Messenger of God an excellent example for he who hopes in God and the Final Day, and who remembers God much.”  
(Quran, 33:21)

These Revelations of Quran also inform the Muslim believers, for all eternity, of the outstanding status of Muhammad as the Messenger chosen by God.

This book *Follow Me, God Will Love You* is a very humble effort to compile those dimensions of the life and teachings of Prophet Muhammad which will enlighten readers, on how he transformed the lives of Arabs, and established peace and prosperity in the Arabian Peninsula.

Our attention is mainly focused, throughout the narration of the story of Prophet's life, on situations, attitudes, or words that could reveal Muhammad's personality and what it can teach and convey to us, guide and educate us today. When Aishah, his wife, was once questioned about the Prophet Muhammad's personality, she answered: "His character [the ethics underlying his behavior] was the Quran." The initial idea was therefore to plunge into the heart of the Prophet's life and draw out its timeless spiritual teachings.

A second type of lesson can nevertheless be drawn from the historical events that filled the Prophet's life. In the seventh century, at the heart of a specific social, political and cultural environment, God's Messenger acted, reacted, and expressed himself about human beings and events in the name of his Islamic faith, in the light of his Islamic morals. Studying his sayings, his actions in this particular historical and geographical setting should enable us to throw light on a number of principles about the relation of faith to human beings, brotherhood, love, adversity, community life, justice, laws, and war. We have therefore endeavored to approach Muhammad's life from the perspective of our own times, considering how it still speaks to us and what its contemporary teachings are.

The reader whether Muslim or non-Muslim, is thus invited to look into the Prophet's life and follow his steps, inspired by the facts narrated. The choice to focus on certain events is of course determined by the wish to draw out teachings that speak to our lives and to our times. In each section of the (deliberately short) chapters that make up this book, the reader will notice constant movements between Prophet Muhammad's life, the Quran, and the teachings relevant to spiritual, philosophical, social, judicial, political, or cultural nature, and the present-day situation that can be drawn from the various historical situations.

Our aim is more to get to know the Prophet himself: What is sought is immersion, fascination, sympathy and essentially, love. Whether one believes or not, it is not impossible to try to immerse oneself in the Prophet's quest and existence and recapture the pulse and the spirit that infused his Islamic mission with meaning. This is indeed the primary ambition of this work: making the Messenger's life a mirror through which readers facing the challenges of our time can explore their hearts and minds and achieve an understanding and meaning of broader ethical and social concerns.

Prophet Muhammad is the master whose teachings one studies, the guide one follows on the way, the model one wishes to emulate, and, above all, the elect whose sayings, silences, and actions one is invited to ponder upon and follow.

This book is intended for a large audience, both Muslim and non-Muslim. The sequence of events, interwoven with reflections and meditations, is easy to follow and endeavors to convey Islam's spiritual and universal teachings. The Messenger's historical experience is clearly the privileged way to grasp the eternal principles shared by more than 1.7 billion Muslims throughout the world. This book is thus a living introduction to Islam.

Prophet Muhammad's companions loved him and drew their spiritual energy from his presence among them.

Prophet Muhammad taught his companions and the Muslim community to love God, and the Quran says:

“Say [O Messenger]: ‘If you love God. Follow me: God will love you.’” ( Quran, 3:31 )

Muslims make every effort to follow the Prophet's example, driven by a love for him that itself was manifested by the intensity of their love for God.

This love finds expression in the permanent remembrance of the Prophet's life in their hearts and memories, and in the human and moral requirement to follow his example in their daily life, constantly offering prayers for him with all their heart and love:

“God and His angels send blessing on the Prophet,  
O you who believe! Send blessings on him, and salute  
him with all respect.” (Quran, 33:56)

This book endeavors to fulfill this requirement with love and knowledge. Prophet Muhammad's life is an invitation to spirituality and teaches us in the course of events, trials, hardship, and our quest that the true answers to existing, current questions are more often those given by the heart than by the intelligence. Deeply; simply: he who cannot love cannot understand.

I have presented the facts after intense research and study. I implore Allah, my Creator, to accept my sincere efforts. I beg Him to guide and help me to dedicate everything I have for His sake. May pardon my countless lapses and favour me with His mercy and blessings. *Ameen!*

“And my success in my task can only come from  
Allah. In Him I trust and unto Him I turn.”  
(Quran, 11:88)

Bangalore

Syed Hamid Mohsin

January - 2012

Map of Arabian Peninsula as at the time of  
Prophet Muhammad (s), 570 - 632



## Etiquettes of reading the names of Prophet Muhammad and his Companions

Saying “*Sallal Laahu Alaibi wa Sallam*” ‘May Allah’s Peace and Blessings be upon him’.

It is obligatory on Muslims to offer *Durood* (prayers) for Prophet Muhammad whenever his name is mentioned. Therefore, the supplication “*Sallal Laahu Alaibi wa Sallam*” (May Allah’s Peace and Blessings be upon him) follows the Prophet’s name.

The prayers offered for the Prophet, reinforces the Islamic belief that Muhammad is not God – but a human being, though leader of humanity and the final Prophet for all – he also needs the Mercy and Blessings of Allah. This is the most important implication that reminds Muslims of the Prophet’s position and warns them to refrain from elevating him to the status of God or equivalent to God or anywhere near Godhood. This basically safeguards the Islamic Creed, ‘Oneness of God.’

Saying “*Razi Allahu Anbu*” for Prophet Muhammad’s Companions

It is desirable for Muslims to offer the prayer “*Razi Allahu Ta’ala Anbu*” (may God be pleased with him) as a mark of respect for the Companions of Prophet Muhammad whenever their names are mentioned.







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# I

## Kaabah

### The House of God

According to Islamic tradition, the House of God (Kaabah) had been built by Prophet Abraham (Peace be upon him) and his son Prophet Ishmael (Peace be upon him) in the name of pure monotheism, for the worship of the One God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the God of mankind and of all the Prophets. Centuries past by and Makkah became a place of pilgrimage, and an important marketplace and a trading center, giving rise to extensive cultural and religious blending. After some time, worship of the One God gave way to the cult of tribal or local idols, to multi-form polytheism. Islamic tradition reports that when the revelation of the Quran began, more than 360 idols, images or statues were housed and worshipped in the Kaabah.

Only a small group of believers remained attached to the worship of the One God and refused to join in the general idol worship. They were called the Hunafa and identified with the Abrahamic monotheistic tradition, (meaning "Pure" "Following a faithful.") The Quran qualifies Prophet Abraham (Peace be upon him) and the nature of his worship as pure (hanif).

“Who can profess a better religion than one who submits his whole self to God, does good, and follows the way of Abraham, pure monotheism [or the pure monotheist]? For God chose Abraham as a beloved friend.” (Quran, 4 : 125 )

## The Birth

Muhammad the Prophet of God was born on a Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> April 570 C.E., in one of Makka’s noble families, Banu Hashim, which enjoyed great respect among all the clans in and around Makkah. This noble descent was combined with a particularly painful and unbearable personal history. His mother, Aminah, was only two months pregnant when his father, Abdullah died during a trip to Yathrib, north of Makkah. Fatherless at birth, young Muhammad was to live with the tension of the dual status implied in Makkah by a respectable descent, on one hand, and the instability of having no father, on the other.

The name Muhammad (The meaning of Muhammad is “he who is often praised ” or “ he who is worthy of praise.”), quite unknown at the time in the Arabian Peninsula, came to his mother in a vision while she was still pregnant. This same vision is also said to have announced to her the birth of the “master of the people ” according to the vision, when he was born, she was to say the words, “ I place him under the protection of the One God [ al-Wahid ] against the treachery of the envious. ” Torn between her grief at her husband’s death and the joy of welcoming her child, Aminah (may God be pleased with her) said repeatedly that strange signs had accompanied the gestation, then the extraordinarily easy birth of her child.

## The Desert

For four years, Muhammad as orphan was looked after by a wet-nurse Halimah and lived with the Banu Sa'ad Bedouins in the Arabian Desert. (In Makkah, it was customary to entrust infants to wet nurses belonging to the nomadic Bedouin tribes living in the nearby desert.) He shared a nomad's life in the most barren and difficult natural environment, surrounded, as far as the eye could see, with horizons bringing to mind the fragility of the human being and the urge to meditate. Although he did not yet know it, Muhammad was going through the first trials designed for him by the One God, Allah, who had chosen him as a Prophet and was, his Educator, his Rabb (the Arabic word Rabb is often translated as "Lord").

The Quran would later recall his particular situation as an orphan as well as the spiritual teachings associated with the experience of life in the desert:

“Did He not find you an orphan and give you shelter?  
And He found you wandering, and He gave you  
guidance. And He found you in need, and made you  
independent. Therefore [for that reason], do not  
treat the orphan with harshness, nor chide him who  
asks. But the bounty of your lord, proclaim.”  
( Quran, 93 : 6-11 )

These verses of the Quran carry several teachings: being both an orphan and poor was actually an initiatory state for the future Messenger of God, for at least two reasons. The first teaching is obviously the vulnerability and humility he must naturally have felt from his earliest childhood. This state was intensified when his mother Aminah, died when Muhammad was six. This left him utterly dependent on God, but also close to the most destitute among people. The Quran reminds him that he must never forget this throughout his

life and particularly during his Prophetic mission. He was orphaned and poor, and for that reason he is reminded and ordered never to forsake the underprivileged and the needy. Considering the exemplary nature of the Prophetic experience, the second spiritual teaching from these verses is valid for each human being: never to forget one's past, one's trials, one's environment and origin, and to turn one's experience into positive teaching for one self and for others. Muhammad's past, the One God Almighty Allah reminds him, is a school from which he must draw useful, practical, and concrete knowledge to benefit those whose lives and hardships he has shared, since he knows from his own experience, better than anyone else, what they feel and endure.

## Education through Nature

Life in the desert was to fashion the man and his outlook on creation and the elements of the universe. When young Muhammad came to the desert, he was able to learn from the Bedouins' rich oral tradition and their fame as speakers to develop his own mastery of the spoken language. Later on, the last Prophet was to stand out through the strength of his words, his fluency, and above all his ability to convey the deep and universal teachings of Islam through short, pithy phrases.

In the first years of Muhammad's life, he developed a specific relationship with nature that remained constant throughout his mission. The universe is loaded with signs that recall the presence of the Creator, and the desert, more than anything else, opens the human mind to observation, meditation, and introduction into meaning. Thus, many verses of the Quran mention the book of creation and its teachings. The desert, apparently devoid of life, repeatedly shows and proves to the watchful consciousness, the reality of the

miracle of the return to life:

The Quran Says:

“In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of night and day; in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of humankind; in the rain that God sends down from the skies, and the life which He then gives to the earth after it had been lifeless; in the beasts of all kind that He scatters through the earth; in the change of the winds, and the clouds that run their appointed courses between the sky and the earth; [here] indeed are signs for a people who are wise.” (Quran, 2:164)

The first years of Muhammad’s life undoubtedly fashioned his outlook, preparing him to understand the signs in the universe.

Many years later, when the Prophet was in Medina, facing conflict and wars, a Revelation in the middle of the night turned his gaze towards another horizon of meaning:

“Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are Signs for people of understanding.” (Quran, 3:190)

It has been reported that Prophet Muhammad wept all night long when this verse was revealed to him. At dawn, when Bilal, the muezzin (one who calls for Prayer), coming to call for prayer, asked about the cause of those tears, Prophet explained to him the meaning of his sadness and added: “Woe to anyone who hears that verse and does not ponder upon it!”

## The Orphan and His Educator

Now back in Makkah, young Muhammad stayed with his mother Aminah for two years. When he was six, she wanted her son to get acquainted with members of her family who lived in Medina. They went there, but on the way back, Aminah fell ill and died at Abwa, where she was buried.

Now fatherless and motherless, young Muhammad was surrounded by signs of his election as well as by grief, suffering, and death. Barakah, who had traveled with them as Aminah's servant, took the child back to Makkah. His grandfather, Abdul Muttalib, immediately took him into his care. He was constantly to show deep love and particular respect for his grandson. However, he also died two years later.

Muhammad's story is a difficult one, as is emphasized by the repetition in this verse from the Quran,

“So verily, with every difficulty there is relief. Verily, with every difficulty there is relief.” (Quran 94:5-6)

At the age of eight, young Muhammad had experienced a life of poverty, solitude, and the death of his mother and then of his grandfather. Yet all along his path he continually encountered signs of a destiny that, through people and circumstance, accompanied and facilitated his evolution and education.

On his deathbed, Abdul Muttalib asked his son Abu Talib, Muhammad's uncle, to look after him. Abu Talib carried out this mission as a father would have done for his own child.

Later, the Prophet constantly recalled how much his uncle and his uncle's wife, Fatimah, daughter of Assad had loved and taken care of him. “Verily, with every difficulty there is relief.”

Throughout the hardships of his life, young Muhammad of course remained under the protection of the One God, his Rabb, and his Educator. In Makkah, traditions report that he was persistently protected from idol worship and the festivals, feasts, or weddings where drunkenness and lack of restraint prevailed.

One evening, he heard that a wedding was to be celebrated in Makkah and he wanted to attend. On the way there, he reported, he suddenly felt tired; he lay down to rest and fell asleep. The next morning, the heat of the sun woke him from his deep slumber. This seemingly trivial story is nevertheless most revealing as to the methods used by the Prophet's Educator to prevent His future Messenger from being tempted into lack of restraint and drunkenness. Almighty God, always present at his side, literally put him to sleep, thus protecting him from his own instincts and not allowing His heart to develop a sense of wrongdoing, guilt, or any such moral torment as a result of an attraction that was, after all, natural for a boy of his age.





## Young Shepherd

In the ensuing years, young Muhammad became a shepherd to earn his living, looking after flocks of sheep and goats on the outskirts of Makkah. He moved around with flock of sheep in the vast expanse of the Arabian Desert. It provided him with a unique opportunity to have a clear vision of nature and to see the wonders of the creation of Almighty God.

Muhammad was very proud of having spent his boyhood as a shepherd. He used to say,

‘Allah sent no Prophet who was not a shepherd.  
Prophet Musa (Moses) was a Shepherd; Prophet  
Dawud (David) was also a Shepherd.’

It is very difficult to control a flock of sheep, goats or camels which do not have any understanding or sense of right and wrong. It needs a lot of patience to handle animals.

As a shepherd, young Muhammad learnt solitude, patience, contemplation, and watchfulness. Such qualities were necessary for all Prophets to carry out their mission among their people.

From his childhood, as we have seen, Muhammad was to be accompanied by signs and trials that educated and prepared him for the Islamic mission.



## 2

### Signs of Prophethood

Abdul Muttalib, Muhammad's grandfather, had seen his riches dwindle during the last years of his life, and Abu Talib, who was now his nephew's guardian, was also going through particularly difficult financial and commercial circumstances. Therefore, Muhammad had started to earn his own living very early, and he was always trying to help the members of his family.

Abu Talib was a merchant. Once when he was preparing to go to Syria on a trading journey, young Muhammad expressed a keen desire to accompany him. Though he was very young to undertake such a difficult journey, Abu Talib was so full of affection for him that he could not refuse, and agreed to take him.

Their trade caravan halted in the city of Busra in Syria. There was a Christian monk by the name of Bahirah. He had read in the ancient books about the emergence of the final Prophet.

Muslim traditions report that Bahirah, just like most of the Christians, Jews, and Hunafa in the peninsula, was expecting the imminent coming of a Prophet and was continuously watching for signs of this.

When Bahirah saw the caravan approaching, he noticed that a cloud was accompanying the group and shielding them from the heat.

Determined to learn more, Bahirah decided to invite all the travelers to partake of a meal. After carefully observing each member of the group, he fixed his gaze on young Muhammad. He took Muhammad aside, and asked him a number of questions about his family situation, his social position, his dreams, and so on. He finally asked if he could have a look at his back, and young Muhammad agreed. Between the boy's two shoulder blades, the monk noticed a skin growth identified by his books as "The seal of Prophethood". He recognized in Muhammad, the signs of Prophethood and knew at once that this boy would become the last Prophet.

The Christian monk Bahirah asked Abu Talib, "In what way you are related to this child?" he said, "He is my son." Bahirah said "It cannot be. His father could not be alive." Then Abu Talib informed him that his father was no longer alive.

The monk Bahirah said, "He is the Master of all humans; God will send him with a message, which will be the mercy to all beings." Abu Talib was surprised and asked "How do you know that?" Bahirah replied, "When you appeared from the direction of Aqabah, all stones and trees themselves prostrated, which they never do except to a Prophet. I can recognize him also by the seal of Prophethood which is below his shoulder, like an apple". Bahirah advised him to return with his nephew immediately and protect him from enemies. He said, "By God, if he is recognized, he will surely be harmed." Abu Talib obeyed and sent him back to Makkah.

## The Pact of the Righteous

When Muhammad was fifteen, a local war broke out during the Pilgrimage, *Hajj* season between the tribes of Quraysh and Hawazin. According to Makkan tradition, war was forbidden in the pilgrimage season (known as ‘Sacred Months’). Despite this, the war lasted for four years, and caused tremendous hardship to people on both sides. Life was becoming intolerable because of the senseless War.

Young Muhammad felt quite disgusted at the senseless war and bloodshed. It also made people think. It inspired many of them to take steps to stop the war and make peace.

The influential and wealthy Perfume trader, Abdullah, son of Judan, decided to invite to his home all those who wanted to put an end to the conflicts and establish a pact of honor and justice.

Chiefs and members of numerous tribes thus pledged that it was their collective duty to intervene in conflicts and side with the oppressed against the oppressors, whoever they might be and whatever alliances might link them to other tribes. This alliance, known as *Hilf al-Fudul* (the Pact of the Righteous), was special, in that it placed respect for the principles of justice and support of the oppressed above all other considerations of kinship or power. Young Muhammad, like Abu Bakr, who was to become his lifelong friend, took part in that historic meeting.

Long after the revelation of the Quran had begun, Prophet Muhammad was to remember the terms of that pact and say:

“I was present in Abdullah, son of Judan’s house when a pact was concluded, so excellent that I would not exchange my part in it even for a herd of red

camels; and if now, in Islam, I was asked to take part in it, I would be glad to accept.”

Not only did the Prophet stress the excellence of the terms of the pact as opposed to the misused tribal alliances prevailing at the time, but he added that even as the bearer of the message of Islam – even as a Muslim – he still accepted its substance and would not hesitate to participate again.

Again, the key point is that Muhammad clearly acknowledges the validity of adhering to principles of justice and defending the oppressed, regardless of whether supporters for those principles come from inside Islam or outside it.

## The Truthful

After being a shepherd, young Muhammad became a trader and built a reputation for honesty and efficiency, acknowledged all over the area.

When Muhammad entered his adulthood, God Himself was protecting him from the widespread evils of the period of ignorance. He lived a very simple life and hated vanity and pride. He was compassionate to the poor, orphans and widows and shared their suffering by helping them. He had the reputation of honesty, good morals, a gentle nature and sincerity.

Young Muhammad avoided all vices such as gambling, drinking wine and indecency. He always kept himself aloof from quarrels and neither used foul language nor abused anyone. He was well-known as *As-Sadiq* (the truthful one).

## The Trustworthy

As a caravan merchant leader, Muhammad acquired a new name: *Al-Ameen*, the trustworthy one. The same root, incidentally, gives the English word *ameen*, often used at the end of prayers, an expression of hearty approval. Everyone in Makkah, rich and poor alike, men and women, used to keep their cash and valuables as safe deposits at Muhammad's house. It was Muhammad's reliability and scrupulous honesty in this role that earned him his reputation for being trustworthy.

He was always trusted as a mediator between two conflicting parties. Abu Talib's son Ali said, "All those who came close to him loved him."

## Marriage


One of the wealthiest traders in Makkah was a woman called Khadijah, a widow. She was the cousin of a Christian monk, Waraqah. She had been hearing of a young man, Muhammad who was "honest, fair, and efficient," and eventually decided to test him. She asked him through her representative to take some goods of hers to Syria and sell them there. She promised to double his commission if he was successful. Muhammad accepted and set out with Maysarah, a servant of Khadijah. In Syria, Muhammad managed a commercial operation that more than doubled Khadijah's expectations.

After the return of the caravan, Khadijah silently listened to Maysarah's report, carefully observing the appearance and behavior of the young man who was now about twenty five. Maysarah told her that all along the journey, he had noticed a series of signs – in Muhammad's attitude and behavior – attesting that he was like no other man. Khadijah then asked

one of her friends, Nufaysah, to approach Muhammad and ask whether he would be interested in marriage.

Muhammad told Nufaysah that he could not afford marriage. She mentioned the name of Khadijah with whom he would find “nobility, lineage, beauty and wealth,” Muhammad responded that he was interested, but that because of his status, he could not contemplate such a union. Nufaysah suggested he leave things to her, that she could arrange the match. She then informed Khadijah, of Muhammad’s favorable frame of mind. Khadijah invited Muhammad to her home and a proposal of marriage was made, which he accepted. Their relatives and clans agreed to the marriage.

Traditions report that Khadijah was forty years old when they married, their firstborn, a boy named Qasim, lived for only two years; then came Zaynab, Ruqayyah, Ume Kulsum, Fatimah, and at last Abdullah, who also died before he reached the age of two. During those years, the Prophet decided to free and adopt as his son, his slave Zayd, son of Haris, gifted to him by his wife a few years earlier. Later, when his own son Abdullah died, he sought to help his uncle Abu Talib – in great financial difficulty and burdened with a very large family – by taking his young cousin, Ali son of Abu Talib into his home. Ali was later to marry Muhammad’s youngest daughter Fatimah.



## Adopted Son

The story of Zayd, the adopted son, is interesting for many reasons. Captured during a battle, he had been sold several times before becoming Khadijah's slave, then Muhammad's. He remained in the Prophet's service for several years.

On hearing that Zayd was there, his father and uncle decided to bring him back to his tribe. They heard he was at Muhammad's house and came to him proposing to buy Zayd back. Muhammad in turn suggested they should let Zayd choose for himself: if he decided to go back with his father and uncle, he would let him go without asking for any compensation, but if on the contrary Zayd wanted to stay with his master, his relatives would have to accept his choice. They agreed and they went together to ask Zayd what he wanted. He decided to stay with his master, and explained to his relatives that he preferred slavery with Muhammad to freedom away from him.

He therefore remained with his master, who immediately freed him and announced publicly that Zayd was now to be considered as his son, that he would be called Zayd ibn Muhammad (Zayd, son of Muhammad), and that he would inherit from him, he was to bear that name until Revelation commanded that all adoptive children keep their family names when known. (Pls see Quran 33:45)

This story – Zayd's choice, while still a slave, of his master over his father – adds another dimension to the portrait of Muhammad that is gradually emerging, and it tells a lot about Muhammad's personality before commencement of revelation of Quran. Simple, meditative, and courteous, but also honest and efficient in business, he expressed constant respect towards all women, men, and children, who in turn showed him gratitude and deep love. He was *as-Sadiq*, a man of truth and his word; he was *al-*



*Ameen*, a trustworthy and dignified person; he had been surrounded with signs announcing his fate; he was rich with extraordinary human qualities that already pointed to his marvel and spectacle.

## Sharp Intelligence

Another event shows Muhammad's sharp intelligence, which he used in the service of respect and peace among the people and among the clans.

The Quraysh decided to rebuild the Kaabah, after a sudden flood had shaken its foundations and cracked its walls. The old structure was pulled down to the foundations. They rebuilt it until they reached the place, where the Black Stone (Black Stone is a Muslim relic, which according to Islamic tradition dates back to the time of Prophet Adam and Eve, it is in the eastern cornerstone of the Kaabah, called *Hajr-e-Aswad*) was to be placed, in the east corner of the Kaabah. At that point, bitter quarrels broke out among members of the different clans over who would have the honor of putting the Black Stone back in its place. Some were nearly ready to take up arms in order to determine to which clan the privilege would fall.

An old man among them suggested that the first man, who entered the sacred place the next morning, be asked to judge the issue, and a consensus was formed on that idea.

Muhammad was the first to enter the sacred space, and clan elders were happy that chance had chosen him to arbitrate the dispute. He listened to them, and then asked for a cloth. He placed the black stone on it and asked the chiefs of each clan to hold the cloth's edges and lift the stone together. Once they had lifted it to the desired height, he himself placed the black stone in the required space – to the

satisfaction of all, since nobody had been wronged.

This spontaneous intelligence of Muhammad had immediately managed to reconcile the pride of each clan. Later, during his mission, this characteristic feature of his mind was to be often illustrated by his ability to maintain the first Muslim community's unity despite the presence of very strong personalities with widely differing temperaments.

In the quest for peace, Muhammad constantly strove to achieve again what he had done in this difficult situation between the Quraysh clans: teach the heart not to give way to proud emotions and arrogant thinking; bring the mind to heart-soothing solutions that make it possible to control oneself gently and wisely. In the years before revelation, the Messenger's Educator, Almighty God had granted him this particular quality, an alliance between a deep heart and a penetrating spirit, of knowing how to be reasonable in all circumstances, with oneself and among other people.

By the time Muhammad was thirty-five, he had built such a reputation for himself that many among the Banu Hashim tribe thought that he would soon take up the mantle of his forefathers and restore the greatness of his clan by becoming its leader.

With his marriage, his own activities, and his personal qualities, he became politically and financially prominent, and he began to receive marriage proposals for his daughters, as for instance from his uncle Abu Lahab, who wished to marry his two sons, Utbah and Uthbah, to Ruqayyah and Ume Kulsum. Clan ties were woven in the expectation of the benefits that would grow, should Muhammad become clan chief.



## Evil Deeds

The world before Muhammad became the Prophet was characterised by tribal feuds for gaining superiority, quarrels, shedding of blood on petty matters, vice and barbarism.

Oppression and violence spread in every nook and corner. Thus, humanity was engrossed in darkness and ignorance, gasping in agony and groaning under torture, injustice, depravity and decadence. The Quran describes the above evils as:

“Evil (sins and disobedience of God, etc.) has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of men have earned (by oppression and evil deeds, etc.)” (Quran, 30:41)

The religions of the Jews and the Christians at that time were so corrupted by the rabbis and priests that they no longer had any appeal to reason and wisdom. The Makkan Quraysh worshiped idols made by them. These idols, including the three biggest *Habal*, *al-Lat* and *al-Uzza*. The Quraysh and the tribes of Arabian Peninsula worshiped them, asked their help, took oaths in their name and fought for them.

There was no respect for human beings particularly for weaker sections and the weaker sex. Women were considered commodities to be used for the pleasure of men, women were battered and ragged. The birth of a daughter was the subject of embarrassment and seen as economic burden, she was buried alive by the father himself.

In the Quran, Almighty God says:

“And when the good news is given to any of them of a daughter, His face turns dark and he is filled with grief.” (Quran, 16:58)

## The Quest for Truth

During this time, young Muhammad started to spend periods of retreat in one of the caves near Makkah. When the month of *Ramadan* came, he would go to the cave of *Hira* with some supplies and remain in isolation, returning periodically for additional food, for a period of about a month.

To reach that cave, he had to climb up a small mountain and go to the other side of a small peak, following a narrow path. From the mouth of the cave, one could see the Kaabah far below and, a greater distance away, the barren plain stretching out as far as the eye could see.

Away from other people, amidst nature, Muhammad was searching for peace and meaning. He had never taken part in idol worship, had not shared the beliefs and rites of the region's tribes, and had remained aloof from superstition and injustice. He had been protected from false gods, whether it be the worship of statues or the worship of power and riches.

For some time already, he had been telling his wife, Khadijah, about some dreams that turned out to be true and which troubled him because of the strong impression they left when he woke up. It was indeed a quest for truth; dissatisfied with the answers offered by those around him, driven by the intimate conviction that he must search further, he decided to isolate himself in contemplation. He was nearing forty and had reached a point in his spiritual development that made deep introspection the necessary next step.

Alone with himself, in the cave of *Hira*, he meditated on the meaning of his life, his presence on earth, and the signs that had accompanied him throughout his life. The spaces stretching out all around him must have reminded him of the horizons of his childhood in the desert, with the difference now that maturity had filled them with many fundamental

questions.

Muhammad was searching, and this spiritual quest was naturally leading him towards the calling and signs that were pointed to him throughout life. The signs had protected and calmed him, the vision that first appeared in dreams and then came to pass in waking life, and the question asked by the mind and heart allied to the horizons offered by nature, were leading Muhammad to the supreme introduction into the meaning, to the encounter with his Educator, the One God. At the age of forty, the first cycle of his life had just come to an end.

It was when he was approaching the cave of *Hira* during the month of *Ramadan* in the year 610 C.E., that he first heard a voice calling and greeting him;

“ *As-salamu alayka, ya rasul Allah !* ”

‘ Peace be upon you, Messenger of God ! ’





## The First Revelation

Alone in the cave of Hira, Muhammad (Peace be upon him) continued to search for truth and meaning. Then the Angel Gabriel (Peace be upon him) suddenly appeared to him on Monday, *Ramadan* 21 at night, that is, August 10, 610 C.E., and ordered: “Read!” Muhammad answered “I am not of those who read”. The Angel Gabriel held him so tightly that he could hardly bear it and again ordered: “Read!” Muhammad repeated “I am not of those who read!” The angel held him tightly again, almost choking him and repeated the order for the third time: “Read!” The same answer was repeated “I am not of those who read!” The Angel, maintaining his hold, recited:

“Read in the name of your Lord [Rabb, “Educator”],  
who created humankind out of a clinging clot. Read,  
and your Lord is most bountiful, He who taught by  
means of the pen, taught humankind that which they  
did not know.” (Quran, 96: 1-5)

Those words were the first verses of the Quran revealed to Muhammad through the Angel Gabriel.

After speaking these words, the Angel Gabriel went away, leaving Muhammad in a deeply troubled state.

Muhammad (Peace be upon him) decided to go back to his wife. He eventually arrived in great distress and said: “Cover me! Cover me!” Khadijah wrapped him in a cloak and asked what the matter was. Prophet Muhammad explained what had happened and expressed his fear: “What is happening

to me? I fear for myself". Khadijah comforted him and whispered: "You have nothing to fear. Have rest and calm down. God will not let you suffer any humiliation, because you are kind to your kinsfolk, you speak the truth, you help those in need, you are generous to your guests, and you support every just cause".

## Waraqah, the Monk

Khadijah (may God be pleased with her) thought of seeking the opinion of her cousin, the Christian monk Waraqah. She went to him and told him of Muhammad's experience. Waraqah recognized the signs he had been waiting for and answered without hesitation: "By He who holds Waraqah's soul, it is the sublime Namus [the friend of the secrets of Supreme Royalty, the angel bringing the sacred Revelation] who has come to Muhammad; the same who had come to Prophet Moses. Indeed Muhammad is the Prophet of this people".

Later, during an encounter with Muhammad near the Kaabah, Waraqah was to add: "You will certainly be called a liar, ill treated, banished, and attacked. If I am still alive then, God knows I will support you to bring His cause to victory!" Aishah reports that Waraqah also said: "Your people will turn you away!" This shocked the Prophet, and he asked, "Will they turn me away?". Waraqah warned him: "Indeed they will! No man has ever brought what you have brought and not been treated as an enemy!"

The Prophet's mission had only just begun, and already he was allowed to grasp some of the fundamentals of the final revelation as well as some of the truths that had been presented throughout history by prophecies among people.

Khadijah understood this, and became the strongest helper and supporter to Prophet Muhammad.

## 3

### The Message

During the initial years of revelation, the Quranic message had gradually taken shape around four main axes: *the Oneness of God, the status of the Quran, prayer, and life after death*. The first Muslims were called to a profound and radical spiritual conversion, and this had been well understood by opponents within their own clans who feared the considerable upheavals the new religion Islam, was bound to bring about in the beliefs and organization of their society.

### Acceptance of the Message

Khadijah was the first to accept Islam, and throughout the first ten years of Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) mission, she remained at his side, as an unfailingly faithful companion.

After Khadijah, initially, members of his close family, then his friends accepted Islam. Ali son of Abu Talib, who was the young cousin in his charge, Zayd, his adopted son, Ume Ayman, the nursemaid who had cared for him after he returned to Makkah at the age of four; and his lifelong friend Abu Bakr were among the first to recognize the truth of his message and to pronounce the profession of faith expressing their adherence to Islam: "There is no Deity (worthy of



worship) except Allah (The One True God) and Muhammad is the Prophet of God.”

The number of converts to Islam grew slowly as a result of the Prophet’s own thoughtful preaching and the very determined involvement of Abu Bakr who was always ready to speak about the new faith and take action for its sake. He would buy slaves from their masters and set them free in the name of Islam’s principles, stressing the equality of all human beings. During those years, Muhammad’s presence in Makkah, his actions, and his examples were to attract a large number of men and women who were gradually to embrace the new faith of Islam.

During the first three years, only thirty to forty individuals from Quraysh became Muslims. They would meet the Prophet at the home of one of the Muslim converts and learn the basic teachings of Islam, while the new revelations kept arriving. The surrounding atmosphere was becoming more and more hostile as the inhabitants of Makkah learned about the essentials of this new message of Islam and took stock of its impact on the poor and the young people.

From the beginning, Prophet Muhammad had given priority to quality over quantity, and preferred to concern himself with the nature of the hearts and minds of those he addressed rather than their numbers. Prophet Muhammad, aware of those conflicts and of the dangers ahead, decided to concentrate on gradually giving solid education to a small group. He knew well that they would face criticism, rejection, and most probably expulsion. It was this very strong Muslim group, who were later to remain committed in the face of difficulties and harassment.

For three years, Prophet Muhammad quietly built up the first community of strong believers of Islam, whose particular feature was that it gathered, without distinction, men and women of all clans and all social categories.

## Revelation

### The Divine Transmission

The first revelations of Quran oriented Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) consciousness towards God's supreme, educating presence, since He constantly spoke to Him as *Rabbika*, Muhammad's Educator, his Lord. The Angel Gabriel had transmitted the first fundamentals of the message and of the recognition of God-the essence of faith-while expressing the centrality of knowledge (reading and writing) allied to good behavior. The announcement of good tidings was also accompanied by a warning about future opposition to Muhammad, for never did a person of truth appear on earth without giving rise to a fury of hatred, lies, and calumny. Even some of his own kin, who had loved him, came to hate him so much as to want to kill him.

The Angel Gabriel appeared to Prophet Muhammad several times. The Prophet was later to report that the angel sometimes appeared to him in his angelic personality and sometimes as a human being. At other times, Prophet would hear a bell-like sound and revelation would come suddenly, requiring of him such extreme concentration that he came close to suffocation. This last mode was particularly painful, even though at the end of the process, he was able to repeat word for word the contents of revelation he had received. For twenty three years, the Angel Gabriel was to accompany him and reveal, as the situation warranted, the verses and chapters that would ultimately constitute the Quran. Revelations were not placed in order of the events in the book that was taking shape; they followed an order that the Angel Gabriel indicated to the Prophet. Every year, during the month of Ramadan, the Prophet would recite to the Angel Gabriel, all the revelations he had received of the Quran so far in the order the angel had indicated. This was like a regular verification of the contents and form of the Book that was slowly being constituted over a period of twenty-three years.

## Purification and Prayer

While Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was walking in the surroundings of Makkah, Angel Gabriel came to him one day on the high ground above Makkah, and struck with his heel the turf of the hillside, whereupon a spring gushed forth from it. Then he performed the ritual ablution to show him the postures and movements of the prayer, the standing, the inclining, the prostrating and the sitting, with the repeated magnification, that is, the words *Allahu Akbar*, God is Most Great, and the final greeting, *as-Salamu 'Alaykum*, peace be on you, and again the Prophet followed his instruction one by one. Then the Angel left him, and the Prophet returned to his house, and taught his wife Khadijah all that he had learnt and they prayed together.

The religion was now established on the basis of the ritual purification and prayer; and after Khadijah, the first to embrace it were Ali and Zayd and the Prophet's friend Abu Bakr. During the early Makkan period, ritual prayer was performed only twice a day, in the morning and in the evening. Later it became an obligation for all Muslims to perform daily prayers for five times.

In the heart of Makkah, in an increasingly hostile environment, the women and men who had accepted Islam were training unsparingly, quietly: they rose at night to pray to God, reciting by heart the signs (*Verses*) of the Quran, which God had established as the privileged link between His infinite kindness and the heart of each being. This deep and intense spiritual training determined the most significant characteristic of the first believers: pious, discreet, and determined, they prayed to the God of mercy and peace; kept reciting His revelation, which is a reminder and a light and followed the example and teachings of the last Prophet. The essence of the Islamic message is wholly expressed in this

intimate relationship of trust and love with Almighty God, the Most High, establishing a direct link between the individual and his or her Creator, Almighty God, who has chosen to demonstrate an exemplary behavior through a Messenger, whom He has set as a model. Three verses were later to produce the exact substance of this teaching:

“When My servants ask you concerning Me, I am indeed close [to them]: I respond to the prayer of every supplicant when he or she calls on Me.”

( Quran 2 : 186 )

The Prophet, at the heart of this intimate relationship, opens the way:

“Say: If you love God, follow me: God will love you and forgive you your sins.” ( Quran, 3 : 31)

He is the epitome of the human being aspiring to the divine beyond the limit of life:

“You have indeed in the Messenger of God an excellent example for the person who hopes in [aspire to get close to] God and the Final Day and who remembers God intensely.” ( Quran, 33 : 21 )





## Oppression and Persecution

After recovering from the initial experience of Revelation of Quran, and as he began to receive the subsequent Revelations. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) began to share the message with those closest to him, he had not yet received instructions on how to present the message to his people, but he anticipated fierce opposition, as had been foretold by Waraqah, the Monk.

### The Public Call

After three years, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) received a Revelation enjoining him to make his call public;

“And admonish your nearest kinsmen.” (Quran, 26 : 214)

Prophet Muhammad understood that he now had to convey his message of Islam to the members of the family to which he was linked by their relationship ties. According to Arab custom, people used to climb a hill when they had to announce some important news. One day, the Prophet climbed up Mount As-Safa and called the tribal chiefs one by one. Thinking he had an urgent or important announcement to

make, they gathered at the foot of the hill to listen to him. From where they stood, they could not look into the valley, whereas Muhammad was facing it.

Prophet Muhammad called out to the people of Quraysh and announced; *“If I warned you that down in this valley, armed horsemen are closing in to attack you, would you believe me?”* They answered, almost with one voice: “Certainly – you are trustworthy and we have never heard you telling lies!”

The Prophet then went on: “Well, I am here to forewarn you of violent torments! God has ordered me to admonish my nearest kinsmen. I have no power to protect you in this life, or to grant you blessings in the life to come, unless you believe in the One God.” He added “My position is like that of one who sees the enemy and then runs to the people to warn them before they are taken by surprise, shouting as he runs: ‘Beware ! Beware !’ “

Prophet Muhammad’s Uncle, Abu Lahab’s response was immediate and scathing: “May you perish! Is this why you have gathered us?” He turned away instantly, taking the assembled chiefs with him. Abu Lahab was thus to set apart those who rejected Muhammad’s message and opposed him most violently.

Initially, Abu Lahab, his wife and other leaders of Makkah tried to bribe Prophet with money and power including an offer to make him king if he were to abandon his message. When this did not work, they remarked that he was obsessed with the devil and some said he had gone mad.

Later on, when the Prophet organized two meals to present the message of Islam, the first was a failure because Abu Lahab again intervened to prevent his nephew from speaking. During the second meal, Muhammad was able to convey the substance of his message, which was heard and

secretly accepted by some members of the clans he had invited.

Prophet Muhammad continued to speak to his family members until he received another Revelation of the Quran ordering a straightforward, determined attitude:

“Therefore expound openly what you are commanded, and turn away from those who join false gods with God.” (Quran, 15 : 94 )

The Prophetic mission was now entering a new phase. Now, the message of Islam was addressed to all and required a clear-cut distinction between *tawhid*, faith in One God, and the polytheism of the Quraysh. The Prophet had gathered around him a solid core of trustworthy women and men. Some were his relatives, but many came from different social categories and tribes, and he had been providing them spiritual and religious education for the previous three years. With commitment and tolerance, Muslims were to face rejection, harassment, and elimination in a Makkan society that was beginning to split apart.

## Offers and Demands

The call to Islam was now public, and even though the training that the new Muslim converts received at al-Arqam’s home was sensitive, Muslims did not hesitate to speak to their relatives and to the people around them. Day after day, the Quraysh chiefs became increasingly aware of the danger the new religion posed: this was a straightforward rebellion against their gods and their customs, and it was eventually bound to endanger the chiefs’ power. If Islam spread, the tribes would stop visiting the Kaabah to pay homage to the idols. This would deprive them of the respect they commanded as guardians of the Kaabah. Besides, the prosperity of Makkah



depended mainly on these idols, to which offerings were made all the year round by great numbers of the neighboring tribesmen. Trade flourished side by side with the pilgrimage, and this was good income for Makkans, since the town's people had no other way of making money.

The Quraysh chiefs first decided to send a delegation to the Prophet's Uncle, Abu Talib, who had so far been protecting his nephew. They asked him to speak to Prophet Muhammad and make him stop spreading his message of Islam, which they considered dangerous and unacceptable because it directly attacked their gods and their ancestors' heritage. Abu Talib took no action after their first visit, so they came back and insisted that the matter was urgent. Abu Talib then sent for his nephew and tried to convince him to terminate his activities in order not to embarrass him.

Prophet Muhammad's answer was firm. *"O my uncle, I swear to Almighty Allah that, should they place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left hand in order for me to abandon this cause, I would not abandon it before He (God) had made it triumph or I had perished for its sake!"* In the face of such determination, Abu Talib did not insist; in fact, he assured his nephew of his permanent support.

A new delegation of Quraysh chiefs came to Prophet Muhammad and offered him goods, money, and power. He refused their offers one by one and confirmed that he was interested only in his Islamic mission: calling people to recognize and believe in One God, whatever the price might be.

"I am not possessed, nor do I seek among you honors or power. God has sent me to you as a Messenger, He has revealed to me a Book and has ordered me to bring you good news and warn you. I have conveyed to you my Lord's message and I have given you good advice. If you accept from me

what I have brought, this will cause you to succeed in this world and in the hereafter; but if you reject what I have brought, then I shall wait patiently until God judges between us.”

With those words, Prophet Muhammad was setting the limits of possible compromise. He would not stop conveying his message and he would trust in God and be patient as to the consequences of this decision in this world. Hostilities had now begun: clan chiefs kept insulting the Prophet and saying that he was insane, possessed or a sorcerer or a magician.

## Quraysh Take Action

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was facing humiliation and mockery. The Makkan people asked him for miracles and proofs, and he tirelessly answered by quoting from the Quran and saying, *“I am but a Prophet!”* The pressure grew, and increasingly violent manifestations of opposition started to appear.

- The Quraysh chiefs particularly attacked poor Muslims and those who were not protected by any clan. Thus the slave Bilal (may God be pleased with him) was tied up by his master in the desert sun. A boulder was placed on his stomach to force him to reject Islam, but Bilal kept repeating: “God is One, God is One.” Abu Bakr later bought Bilal (as he did for many other slaves) and set him free. Bilal was later to become the muezzin (caller to prayer) of Medinah, unanimously respected for the sincerity of his faith, his devotion, and the beauty of his voice.

- ‘Enemy of Islam’ Abu Lahab took the initiative in the new series of persecutions, and started to share out countless

aspects of harmful deeds, hatred and nastiness against Prophet Muhammad, starting with throwing stones at him, forcing his two sons to divorce their wives Ruqayyah and Ume Kulthum, the Prophet's daughters, showing delight on Prophet's second son's death and calling him 'the man cut off with the offspring.' Tariq, son of 'Abdullah narrated that Abu Lahab would not stop at merely rebuking the Prophet, rather he would throw stones at him until his ankles bled.

- Abu Lahab's wife, Ume Jamil also had a share in this merciless campaign. She proved that she was not less than her husband in the enmity and hatred she had for the Prophet. In order to cause him bodily injury, she used to tie bundles of thorns with ropes of twisted palm-leaf fiber and scatter them in the paths which the Prophet was expected to take.

She was an ill-mannered and bad-tempered woman with abusive language, highly skilled in the art of hatching intrigues, and enkindling the fire of enmity and hatred. She was stained as *'the carrier of firewood'* in the Quran.

- "Once the Prophet was offering prayers at the Kaabah, and the enemy of Islam Abu Jahl was sitting with some of his friends, one of them said, 'Who among you will bring the guts of a camel and put it on the back of Muhammad, when he prostrates?' The most wretched of them, Uqbah got up and brought it. He waited till the Prophet prostrated and then placed it on his back between his shoulders.

They started laughing and falling on one another. The Prophet was in prostration and he did not lift his head up till Fatimah [the Prophet's daughter] came and removed it from his back.

- While the Prophet was praying in Kaabah, they confronted and surrounded him, Uqbah came and put his garment around the Prophet's neck and strangled him violently. Someone came screaming to Abu Bakr, "Look at

your Prophet.” Abu Bakr came and caught Uqbah by his shoulder and pushed him away from the Prophet and said: “Do you want to kill a man just because he says: ‘My Lord is Allah?’”

- Uqbah once approached Prophet Muhammad and most rebelliously and shamelessly shouted at him, “I do not believe in Quran.” He then started to deal arrogantly with the Prophet and laid a violent hand on him, tore his shirt and spat at him, but he missed the face of the Prophet.

- Abu Jahl, the archenemy of Islam, once addressed some of his accomplices: “O people of Quraysh! It seems that Muhammad is determined to go on finding fault with our religion, degrading our forefathers, discrediting our way of life. I bear witness to our god that I will carry a very heavy rock and drop it on Prophet Muhammad’s head while he is in prostration to rid you of him, once and for all. I am not afraid of whatever his clan might do.” The unfortunate audience approved his plan and encouraged him to translate it into a decisive action.

Next morning, Abu Jahl laid waiting for the arrival of Prophet Muhammad to offer prayers at the Kaabah. The people of Quraysh were in their assembly rooms waiting for news.

When the Prophet prostrated himself, Abu Jahl proceeded, carrying the big rock to fulfill his wicked intention. No sooner had he approached the Prophet than he turned back pale-faced, shuddering with his hands straining while the rock dropped. The people watching hurried forward asking him what was wrong. He replied: “When I approached, a camel unusual in figure with fearful canines intercepted and almost devoured me.” Ibn Ishaq reported that the Prophet in the context of his comment on the incident, said:

“It was Angel Gabriel, if Abu Jahl had approached closer, he would have killed him.”



## Media Bashing

### Use and Misuse of Freedom of Expression

During the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) period, technology and communication was not as developed as today or rather did not exist at all. There was no print or electronic media then. But this did not stop tongues to utter blasphemy against Prophet Muhammad and his message of Islam. There was absolutely no dearth of poets hanging around in Makkah who wrote and recited poems derogatory of the Prophet and Islam. The poems were nothing but the choicest of abuses directed at the Prophet.

History records poets of those times who indulged in character assassination of the Prophet. Ka'ab, son of Zuhayr, Haritah, son of Talatil, Hubayrah, son of Abi Wahab, Huwayrith, son of Nafidh and Abdullah, son of Hanzal, to name a few were some poets who rather than using their poetic skills for spirituality, abused it to tarnish the Prophet's pure image.

The Quraysh chiefs organized programs for these poets where they sang their anti-Islam and anti-Prophet lyrics. It did not stop at this. Qartana, slave-girl of Abdullah, son of Hanzal, a poet, Sara, slave-girl of Ikrimah, son of Abu-Jahl would dance to the anti-Islam and anti-Prophet poetry sung by the poets. This was a common occurrence during the Quraysh's wine-drinking orgies. The vulgar and abusive poetry hurt the Prophet and his Companions terribly and it was a mental and psychological torture.

Like it is said in the Quran, "*After every difficulty, comes ease*", to the great relief of the Prophet, a few years

later, great poets Ka'ab and Hassan son of Thabit embraced Islam. Pronouncement of profession of faith in Islam by poet Hassan was one of the happiest moments for Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

The Prophet advised and encouraged poet Hassan (may God be pleased with him) to compose verses in reply to abusive verses of the enemies of Islam. He even allowed Hassan to use the Pulpit (*Mimbar*) from where the Prophet delivered his sermons, to express the positive values and principles of Islam, and Prophet remarked that *"the verses of poet are more effective against the enemies than daggers."* He also once said, *"A Muslim performs Jihad with the swords as well as with his words."* In this way, the anti-Islam and anti-Prophet poets and poetry got an answer to their abuses against Islam.

The scene is no different today. Vicious people across the world, be it intellectuals, writers, painters, artists or cartoonists abuse their freedom of expression and make caricatures, cartoons maligning the Prophet Muhammad, Islam and Muslims.

In this Modern world, only one kind of expression has the full freedom to express itself. Indeed, the notion of freedom of expression sometimes becomes an instrument of power to frame Islam and Muslims in images of violence, immorality, evil, ignorance, stupidity and horror.

The Quran general advice to Muslim believers is to ignore the opinions of those who hurl abuse at them demonize them in their fiction, films and television shows, mock their Prophet in cartoons, and scorn and stereotype them in their media.

In matters of blasphemy, unfair criticism or expression of serious differences, the Quran expects the believers to show moral restraint, and not to be unnecessarily oversensitive.

“Now if you paid attention to the majority on earth, they would lead you away from the path of God. They follow nothing but speculation; they themselves do nothing but guess.” (Quran: 6:116)

## Magician

The Quraysh chiefs kept mocking at Muhammad (peace be upon him) and encouraging others to criticize and humiliate him. People questioned God’s choice in selecting a man who held no particular power, who went about in market places without any sign setting him apart from other men. They mocked him and his claims as much as the message.

Rumors spread that Muhammad was actually a sorcerer or a magician, who broke up families, separated parents from their children and husbands from their wives, and was a troublemaker.

*‘ God guides whom He wills ! ’*

When the time for the Makkans’ annual market grew near, the Quraysh chiefs, fearing that Prophet Muhammad might spread his message of Islam among visitors, had their men posted at the various entrances of Makkah. They were to warn arriving visitors not to meet or listen to the Message of Muhammad.

The isolation strategy of Quraysh against Muhammad worked fairly well, although some people did not allow themselves to be influenced, such as the highway robber Abu Dharr, from the tribe of Banu Ghifar. Having heard of this new message calling for faith in One God, Abu Dharr came to Prophet Muhammad in spite of the Quraysh people’s warnings. He found Muhammad lying in the shade near the Kaabah. He called the Prophet’s name and asked about his

message, listened to him, then immediately pronounced the profession of faith. The Prophet was taken by surprise and said: *"God guides whom He wills!"* Abu Dharr al-Ghifari was to become one of Prophet's Muhammad most famous Companions, known for his devotion, his rigor, and his criticism of luxury and laziness.

## First Martyrs of Islam

Ammar (may God be pleased with him), a young man of Yemeni origin, had adhered to Islam's message very early and received training from Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in al-Arqam's home. His father, Yassir (may God be pleased with her) and then his mother, Sumayyah (may God be pleased with her), became Muslims shortly after he did, and continuously learned the Islamic teachings; enemy of Islam, Abu Jahl, chose them as the object of his revengeful hatred: he took to beating them, tying them up in the sun, and torturing them. "Despite those tortures, this went on for weeks, Sumayyah and Yassir refused to reject their faith. Sumayyah even shouted at Abu Jahl and his cowardly behavior. Furious Abu Jahl stabbed her to death, then in the same raging anger, he turned to her husband and beat him to death as well. Sumayyah and Yassir were the first martyrs (shuhada) of Islam: persecuted, tortured, then killed for refusing to deny God, His Oneness, and the truth of the revelation of the Quran.

The situation was getting increasingly difficult for Muslims, particularly for the most vulnerable among them as far as social status and clan affiliations were concerned. The Prophet's protection was entrusted by his uncles, Abu Talib and Hamzah, but this protection by no means extended to the first spiritual community of Muslims. And insults, rejection and ill-treatment became the rule.





## Revolution In Mentalities and in Society

The Quraysh's opposition was not merely to a man and a message. Indeed, all of God's Messengers have met with the same reception, the same opposition and hatred from a considerable part of their own community – it is because the contents of what they brought meant a radical revolution in the order of things in society.

The Quran reports the words that greeted the Prophets, in different ages, when they came to convey the message to their respective peoples. The first response was most often a rejection of change, mingled with the fear of losing power, as in the answer given to Prophet Moses and Prophet Aaron by Pharaoh's people:

“They replied: Have you come to us to turn us away from the ways we found our fathers following, in order that you and your brother may have greatness in the Land? But we shall not believe in you.”  
( Quran, 10 : 78 )

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was calling people for the rejection of idols, recognition of One God, for Life after life, for ethics and justice. Prophet Muhammad

initiated an outright revolution in mentalities as much as in society. What was evident was the fact that his message was oriented towards the hereafter, and as such shook the foundations of worldly power.

Recognition of the One God and consciousness of Eternity allied to the ethical teaching appeared to the new Muslims as elements of their spiritual, intellectual and social liberation. The Quraysh leaders knew the significance of the essential affirmation of faith in the One God, which all at once expresses an intimate conversion and a general transformation of order:

“Say: He is Allah, the One; God, the Absolute; he does not beget, nor is he begotten; and there is none like Him.” (Quran, 112 )

This statement from the Quran points to the existence of a barrier: “Say: O you who reject faith [whose hearts are veiled]! I do not worship what you worship, nor do you worship what I worship! I am not a worshiper of that which you worship, nor are you worshipers of what I worship. To you be your religion, and to me mine.” (Quran, 109)

This chapter was revealed when some Quraysh leaders suggested a kind of adjustment between their forefathers’ polytheistic religion and the monotheism brought by the Prophet. The Revelation’s answer is clear and final; it determines the inescapable character of the distinction.

## The Three Questions


The Quraysh were at a loss to know about how to prevent Muhammad’s (Peace be upon him) message from spreading further. They decided to send a delegation to Medinah to ask Jewish dignitaries about the nature and truthfulness of

this new revelation. Medina's Jews were known to profess this same idea of the One God, and Prophet Muhammad often referred to Moses, their Prophet; they were therefore best suited to express an opinion or even to suggest a strategy.

Consulted about the new Prophet, the Jewish rabbis suggested that the people of Makkah should ask Muhammad three key questions in order to find out whether what he said was actually revealed, then he is a Prophet sent by God, but if he tells you not, then the man is a forger of falsehood. The first question involved the knowledge of a story about a group of young men's exile from their people; the second was about a great traveler who had reached the ends of the earth in the east and the west; the third was a direct request to define *ar-rub* (the soul). If he tells you these things, then follow him, for he is a Prophet. The Quraysh delegation left convinced that they now had the means to entrap Muhammad. Back in Makkah, they went to him and asked him the three questions. Prophet replied almost instantly: "*I shall answer your questions tomorrow!*"

But the next day, the Angel Gabriel did not appear. There was no revelation. Nor did the angel come the day after, or during the next fourteen days.

The Quraysh rejoiced certain they had at last managed to prove the duplicity of the so-called Prophet who could not answer the Jews rabbis' questions. As for Prophet Muhammad, he was sad, and as the days passed by, he was increasingly afraid of having been forsaken: without doubting God, he again underwent the experience of self-doubt amplified by his opponents' sneers.



*Insha Allah*

## ‘ If God So Wills ’

Two weeks later, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) received a Revelation and an explanation:

Never say of anything, “I shall do that tomorrow,’ except: ‘If God so wills,’ and remember your Lord [Rabb, ‘Educator’] when you forget, and say: ‘I hope that my Lord will guide me ever closer than this to the right course.’” ( Quran, 18:23-24)

This revelation once again involved a reproach and a teaching: It reminded the Prophet that his status, his knowledge, and his fate depended on his *Rabb*, on the One sovereign God, and that he must never forget it. This is how one should understand the meaning of the phrases *Insha Allah*, “*if God so wills*”: it expresses the awareness of limits, the feeling of humility of one who acts while knowing that beyond what he or she can do or say, God alone has the power to make things happen. This is by no means a philosophical message: of inaction on the contrary, one should never stop acting while always being aware in one’s mind and heart of the real limits of human power. For the second time, the Prophet was called to account by the Magnificent. Whatever adversity one faces, one’s strength and freedom on earth consists in remaining constantly aware of one’s dependence on the Creator.

Only later was the Prophet to receive the answer to the three questions he had been asked. The delay was surprisingly to strengthen the believers’ conviction. Prophet’s initial inability to answer and then the belated communication of revelation proved that Muhammad was not the author of the Book that was being constituted and that he did actually depend on his *Rabb’s* will.

The answer to the question about *Ar-Rub* (the soul) directly referred – in the same way as the requirement of humility he had previously been reminded of – to God’s superior knowledge: They ask you concerning the soul [*Ar-Rub*].

“The soul is of the command [the exclusive knowledge] of my Lord [Rabb, “Educator”]; of knowledge, it is only a little that is communicated to you.” (Quran, 17 : 85)

As for the two stories (*that of the Seven sleepers of Ephesus and ‘that of the traveler’ Dhu al-Qarnayn*), they are told in Quran Chapter-18 “*The Cave*”. The stories are teeming with information and details which the Makkan Quraysh and the Medinah Jewish rabbis could not have expected and of which the Prophet knew nothing before revelation. The same chapter also tells the story of the Prophet Moses, who in a moment of forgetfulness and oversight had lapsed into the saying that because of his status as a Prophet, “he knew.” God then tried him by confronting him with one who knew more than he did... the character of al-Khidr in the Quran, who initiated him to understanding God’s superior knowledge, to patience, and to the wisdom of remaining humble.

From this experience of Muhammad, as well as the teaching addressed to all human beings (who, of knowledge, have received “only a little”), everything reminds Muslims of their own fragility and of their need for God, whatever their status, and this teaching is present throughout the Quranic chapter, “*The Cave*.” Later, the Prophet was to recommend that every Muslim should read this chapter in its entirety every Friday so as to remember, week after week, that they must not forget themselves, nor forget Him.



## 6

### Exile Abyssinia

The humiliations and persecutions increased as Revelation of Quranic verses went on. Now they were no longer aimed only at the most vulnerable among Muslims but also at men and women whose status normally would have protected them, such as Abu Bakr. Muhammad, protected by his uncle Abu Talib, was also tortured by jeers and ridicule, seeing that the situation in Makkah was getting worse, the Prophet suggested;

“If you went to the land of the Abyssinians, you would find there a king under whose command nobody suffers injustice. It is a land of sincerity in religion. You would remain there until God delivered you from what you suffer at present.”


Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was referring to the king of Abyssinia, Negus, who was a Christian and who was reputed to be respectful and fair with his people. Part of the Muslim community therefore started to prepare for departure, and eventually a number of individuals and families discreetly left Makkah, towards Abyssinia. There were in all about a hundred Muslims, eighty-two or eighty-three



men and around twenty women.

This took place in the year 615 C.E, five years after the beginning of the Revelation of the Quran and two years after the beginning of the public call. The situation had become particularly difficult, so much so as to prompt those Muslims to take the risk of going into exile very far from Makkah .

The Quraysh leaders soon found out that some Muslims – ironically, not the most weak – had left Makkah. It was not long either before they knew where the Muslims had gone. They had some reason to worry: if this small group of Muslims managed to settle elsewhere, they were bound to tarnish Makkah's reputation and perhaps arouse hostility towards them or even try to constitute an alliance against them with a king who they knew shared the faith in one God. After the Muslims had gone, the Quraysh leaders decided to send two emissaries to King Negus. Amr, son of Al-As and Abdullah, son of Rabiah, in order to discourage him from granting those immigrants his protection and to convince him to send them back to Makkah. The two emissaries went to Negus's court, carrying many presents that they knew to be particularly valued by Abyssinian dignitaries. They met the dignitaries one by one, gave them the gifts, and received assurances of their support when the Makkans submitted their request to the king.



## The King Negus

The emissaries of Quraysh, Amr, son of al-As and Abdullah, son of Rabiah would have liked the king to agree to send the Muslims back without even hearing the migrants' (Muslims) case. The Negus refused, arguing that those who had chosen him to protect them had the right to present their case. He called for an audience that would include the emissaries from Makkah and a delegation of Muslim immigrants. The Muslim group chose Jafar (may God be pleased with him) son of Abu Talib, who was wise and a good speaker, to represent them. The king asked them about the cause of their exile and particularly about the contents of the new message brought by Prophet Muhammad. Jafar explained to the king the basic principles contained in the Revelation of Quran and embodied in Muhammad's teaching, faith in One God, the rejection of idol worship, the injunction to respect kinship ties, to say the truth, to oppose injustice, and so on.

Jafar pleaded;

“O King, we were plunged into the depth of ignorance and barbarism; we adored idols; we lived in sin; we ate dead animals and we spoke hatred; we disregarded every feeling of humanity, never practiced hospitality and ill-treated our neighbors; we knew no law, but that of the strong. Then God raised among us a man whose birth, truthfulness, trustworthiness and purity everyone vouched for. He asked us to believe in One God, and taught us not to associate anyone with Him. He forbade us the worship of idols and enjoined us to speak the truth, to be faithful and merciful, and to respect the rights of our neighbors. He forbade us to speak evil of women, or to defraud the properties of orphans. He ordered us to abstain from evil, to offer prayers, to

render alms, to observe fast. We have believed in Him, we have accepted His teachings and injunctions. For this reason, our people have risen against us, persecuted us and asked us to forgo the worship of One God and to return to the worship of idols of wood and stone and other abominations. They have tortured us and injured us, until, finding no safety among them, we have come to your country; we hope you will protect us from their oppression.”

King Negus was moved by the plea asked Jafar whether he had a copy of or could recite a passage from the text of Revelation (Quran) brought by Prophet Muhammad. Jafar answered in the affirmative and started to recite some verses from the chapter “*Mary*” of the Quran:

“Relate in the Book [the story of] Mary, when she withdrew from her family to a place in the East. She placed a screen [to screen herself] from them: then We sent to her Our angel, and he appeared to her as a man in all respects. She said: ‘I seek refuge from you in the shelter of the Most Gracious, if you fear Him.’ He said: ‘I am only an angel from your Lord [to announce] to you the gift of a pure son.’ She said: ‘How shall I have a son, seeing that no man has touched me, and that I am not unchaste?’ He said: ‘so [it will be]; your Lord says: That is easy for Me and [We wish] to appoint him as a sign to men and a mercy from Us’. It is a matter decreed.”

(Quran, 19 : 16-21)

The king and his dignitaries were moved by the beauty of the text recited in Arabic, and they were even more so when the text was translated for them and they understood that it announced the miraculous birth of Prophet Jesus. The King Negus exclaimed, “Indeed, this comes from the same

source as what Prophet Jesus brought". And he turned to the two Makkan emissaries to reject their request and informed them that he would not hand over to them the Muslim immigrants, to whom he would continue to grant refuge.


## Jesus son of Mary

Emissaries of Quraysh, Amr and Abdullah went out, most annoyed, but Amr quickly determined that he would go to the Negus again to inform him about what this new message actually said of Prophet Jesus and which by no means coincides with Christian beliefs. He did so the next day, and after listening to him, the king again sent for Jafar and his delegation and demanded to know more about what Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said about Jesus. The Muslims were aware of the dangers this encounter involved: and explanation of the differences between the two religions might lead Negus to send them back. They nevertheless decided to keep to the contents of the message and explain what it said truthfully. To Negus's direct question, "What do you profess about Jesus, son of Mary?" Jafar answered no less directly: "We say what our Prophet has taught us: Jesus is God's servant, His messenger, His Spirit, His Word, He has breathed into Mary, the Virgin." There was no reference to his status as "son of God," yet the Negus responded by taking hold of a stick and exclaiming: "Jesus, (peace be upon him) son of Mary (may God be pleased with her) , does not exceed what you have just said by the length of this stick." The religious dignitaries were surprised at this answer and expressed it by coughing discreetly, but King Negus ignored them and ordered that the two emissaries from Makkah be sent back and that they take all their presents with them. To the Muslims, he renewed his welcome, assuring them that they would find protection and security in his land.

## Risk and Truth

This was a major setback for the Makkans, whose revenge was soon to come with the stepping up of atrocities against Muslims after the two emissaries, returned. As for Jafar and his Muslim community, they had found a predominantly Christian country where, although they were exiles and did not share the population's faith, they were received, protected, and tolerated. Muslims had decided to say the truth: at the most hazardous moment of the encounter with King Negus, they had neither tried to evade the question nor lied about what Prophet Muhammad said of Jesus, son of Mary. They indeed risked being sent back and extradited. In spite of the dangers involved, there was no way out: the Muslims kept to their beliefs, which they expressed with sincerity and honesty. They had no other choice, but to say the truth, and so they did.

Subsequently, King Negus converted to Islam and remained in continuous contact with Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The Prophet Muhammad performed the prayer for the absent deceased (*Salat-al-Ghaib*) when he learned of King Negus's death. The majority of Muslims exiled in Abyssinia stayed there for about fifteen years, until the Khaybar expedition (in 630 C.E.), at which time they joined Prophet Muhammad in Medina. Others had gone back to Makkah earlier upon receiving positive news from there, but none ever met with any trouble in Negus's kingdom.





## Spirit and Courage

### HAMZAH

( may God be pleased with him )

In a gloomy atmosphere infested with dark clouds of injustice and oppression, there shone on the horizon a promising light for the oppressed, i.e., the conversion of Hamzah son of 'Abdul-Muttalib, in the sixth year of Prophethood.

It is recorded that the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was one day seated on the hillock of Safa near Kaabah, when Abu Jahl happened to pass by and abused the religion preached by him. Muhammad, however, kept silent and did not utter a single word. Abu Jahl went on unchecked, took a stone and cracked the Prophet's head which began to bleed. The aggressor then went to join the Quraysh in their assembly place. Shortly after that, Hamzah while returning from a hunting expedition, passed by the same way, his bow hanging by his shoulder. A slave-girl, who had noticed the offensive behavior of Abu Jahl, told Hamzah the whole story of the attack on the Prophet.

On hearing that, Hamzah was deeply offended and hurried to the Kaabah and there, in the courtyard of the holy Sanctuary, found Abu Jahl sitting in a company of Quraysh. Hamzah rushed upon him and struck his bow upon

his head violently and said: "Ah! You have been abusing Muhammad: I too follow his religion and profess what he preaches." Hamzah went to the Prophet and said "Muhammad you should be happy, for I have taken your revenge on Abu Jahl." The Prophet replied: *"I have nothing to do with revenge; yet if you become a Muslim, submit yourself to God alone, then I will be pleased."* Hamzah understood the message and became a Muslim.

Hamzah (may Allah be pleased with him) announced that he himself had become a Muslim and that he would now personally take on his nephew's protection. As a result, Abu Jahl stopped abusing Prophet Muhammad: instead, started to ill-treat the Prophet's poorest and most vulnerable Muslim companions.

In fact, Hamzah's conversion derived initially from the pride of a man who would not accept the concept of others humiliating his relative. Later on however, God purified his nature and he managed to grasp the most trustworthy handhold (faith in God). He proved to be a source of great strength to the Islamic faith and its followers.

## UMAR

( may God be pleased with him )

Another significant addition to the strength of Islam was the conversion of 'Umar bin Khattab, in the sixth year of Prophethood, three days following the conversion of Hamzah. He was a man of courage and determination, feared and respected in Makkah, and until then a bitter opponent of the new religion. The traditional account reveals that the Prophet Muhammad once raised his hands in prayer and said:

"O God! Give strength to Islam especially through

either of two men you love more: ‘Umar bin Khattab or Abu Jahl bin Hisham.’”

One day, Umar was frustrated; He decided the only thing that could be done was to kill Prophet Muhammad. This was the surest means of putting an end to the disorder and sedition that was endangering Makkan society as a whole.

Umar went out of his house, his sword in his hand, to look for Prophet Muhammad. On the way, he met Nuaym, who had secretly converted to Islam. Nuaym asked him why he looked so angry, and Umar told him about his intention to kill the Prophet. Nuaym quickly thought of a means to divert his plan. He advised Umar to restore order in his own family before setting upon Muhammad. He informed him that his sister Fatimah and his brother-in-law, Sayid had already converted to Islam. Astonished and furious, Umar changed his plans and made straight for his sister’s home.

Umar’s sister Fatima (may God be pleased with her) and her husband were reading the Quran with a young companion, Khabbab (may God be pleased with him) , when they heard someone approaching their house. Khabbab stopped reading the Quran and hid. Umar had heard the sound of the recitation of the Quran inside, and he accosted them coldly, bluntly asking what they had been reciting. They both denied the fact, but Umar insisted that he definitely had heard them reciting a text. They refused to discuss the matter, which caused Umar’s anger to flare. He sprang to his brother-in-law to strike him, and when his sister tried to intervene, he struck her, causing blood to gush out. The sight of blood on his sister’s face produced an immediate effect and Umar stopped short. At that very moment, his sister exclaimed with spirit: “Yes, indeed, we are Muslims and we believe in One Almighty God and his Messenger. As for you, you can now do as you please.” Umar was taken aback; he was torn between regret at having hurt his sister and bewildered at the news



he had just received. He asked his sister to give him the text they had been reading when he arrived. His sister demanded that he should first perform ablutions to purify himself. Sobered, but still upset, Umar accepted, performed ablutions, and then started reading:

“Ta Ha, We have not sent down the Quran to you to (cause) your distress, but only as an admonition for those who Fear (God). A revelation from Him who created the earth and the heavens on high, the Most Gracious is firmly established on the throne. To Him belongs what is in the heavens and on earth, and all between them, and all beneath the soil. Whether (Or Not) you speak aloud, verily He knows what is secret and what is yet more hidden. He is God! There is no God but him! To Him belong the most beautiful names.” (Quran, 20: 1-8)

These were the first verses and Umar went on reading the rest of the text, which was an account of God’s call to Moses on Mount Sinai, until he reached this verse:

“Verily I am God: There is no God but I: so serve me and establish regular prayer for my remembrance.” (Quran, 20 : 14)

Umar then stopped reading and expressed his enthusiasm about the beauty and nobleness of those words. Khabbab, encouraged by Umar’s apparent good disposition, then came out of his hiding place and informed him that he had heard the Prophet praying to Almighty God to grant his community support through the conversion of Abu Jahl or of Umar. Umar asked him where Prophet Muhammad was, and when told that he was at al-Arqam’s dwelling place, Umar went there. When he reached the door, the occupants were afraid because Umar was still carrying his sword in his belt. But the Prophet told them to let him in and Umar immediately announced his

intention of becoming a Muslim. The Prophet exclaimed, “*Allahu-Akbar*” (God is the Most Great) and received this conversion of Umar to Islam as an answer to his prayer.


## Revolution of the Hearts

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) knew he had no power over hearts. In the face of persecution, in great difficulty, he had turned to God, hoping that He would guide one or the other of those two men ( Abu Jahl or Umar ) who he knew possessed the human qualities as well as the power necessary to reverse the order of things. The Prophet of course knew that God alone has the power to guide hearts. For some individuals, conversion to Islam was a long process that required years of questioning, doubt and steps forward and backward, while for others, conversion to Islam was instantaneous, immediately following the reading of a text of the Quran or responding to a particular gesture or behavior. This cannot be explained. The conversions that took longest were not necessarily the most solid and the reverse was not true either. When it comes to conversion, the heart's disposition, faith and love matters, and all that remains is the extraordinary power of the divine.

Umar had gone out of his home determined to kill Prophet Muhammad, blinded by his absolute denial of the One God; there he was a few hours later, changed, transformed, as the result of a conversion induced by a text of the Quran and the meaning of God. He was to become one of the most faithful Companions of the man he had wished dead. Nobody among the Muslims could have imagined that Umar would recognize the message of Islam, so forcefully had he expressed his hatred for it. This revolution of the heart was a sign, and it carried a two-fold teaching: That nothing is impossible for God, and that one should not

pronounce final judgments on anything or anybody.

Umar (may God be pleased with him), with his spirit and courage had decided to make his conversion to Islam public. He immediately went to Abu Jahl to tell him the news, and he suggested to the Prophet that they should pray publicly at the Kaabah. This certainly involved risk, but it was also a matter of showing the Quraysh chiefs that Muslims were present among them and were determined. Umar and Hamzah, both known for their strong personalities entered the Kaabah enclosure ahead of the group and the Muslims prayed in a group without anyone daring to interfere.



## 7

## The Ban

Nevertheless, things had gone too far. The tension was rising every day, and the Quraysh leaders, met to put an end to the expansion of Islam, they wanted to take more radical measures. The first converts to Islam came from all tribes, and this situation made it impossible to resort to a strategy based on the usual alliances. After prolonged discussions and heated arguments, which divided clans from within, they decided to banish all the Banu Hashim, which was Prophet Muhammad's clan, and set up a total boycott directed at the clan and its members – they would no longer marry their daughters and sons, nor trade with them, establish any other type of contract, and so forth.

A treaty was signed by about forty Quraysh leaders and hung up inside the Kaabah to signal the solemnity and finality of the decision. Abu Lahab, who himself belonged to the Hashim clan, decided to disown his clan and support the banishment.

This period of boycott was one of great hardship for the Banu Hashim tribe and the Muslims. While this ban was in force, Prophet's uncle Abu Talib, the chief of the Banu Hashim, had to take refuge in a narrow valley. For three years, the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions lived in this

valley. All supplies to the valley were cut off. Prophet and his Companions sometimes had to live on the leaves and roots of trees.

The situation became serious, and more and more of them suffered from sickness and hunger. The banishment lasted for more than three years, and it economically weakened the two clans. Abu Bakr had lost most of his fortune as a result of the boycott, and the social and psychological pressures were unbearable.

## The Dissolution of the Pact

Among the Quraysh, many thought that this boycott was unnecessary, if not useless. Some of course were linked to the clan by kinship ties, which were impossible to forget or disown. There were numerous attempts to put an end to the banishment in the course of those three years, but they never succeeded because a number of key figures, such as Abu Lahab and Abu Jahal, refused to discuss the matter. Finally, change came through the initiative of a few individuals seeking allies in each of the clans. Some of the members of the group who had initiated this little uprising set out to abolish the pact and declare all relevant clauses null and void. They swore they would never relent until the parchment of boycott was torn to piece and the pact broken at once. Abu Jahl, standing nearby, retorted that it would never be torn.

Abu Talib meanwhile came to communicate to Quraysh leaders that a Quranic Revelation had been sent to his nephew, the Prophet to the effect that ants had eaten away all their proclamation that smacked of injustice and aggression except those parts that bore the name of Allah. He contended that he would be ready to give Muhammad up to them if his words proved untrue; otherwise, they would have to take back and cancel their boycott. The Makkans agreed to the

soundness of his proposition. The Quraysh leader, Mut‘im went to see the parchment (the skin of sheep or goats, prepared for use as a material on which to write.) and there he did discover that it was eaten away by ants and nothing was left, save the part bearing [*in the name of Allah.*]

The hard liners felt there was no point in resisting, the proclamation was thus abolished and the ban was lifted, Prophet Muhammad and his Companions were permitted to return home. In the context of this trial to which the Muslims were subjected, the Quraysh leaders had a golden opportunity to experience a striking sign of Muhammad’s Prophethood (the white ants eating away the parchment), but to their miserable lot, they desisted and Increased in disbelief.

Quran says : “But if they see a Sign, they turn away, and say ‘this is continuous magic.’” (Quran, 54:2)

## The Year of Sorrow

For several months after the boycott ended, the situation improved for the small Muslim community. They again were able to develop ties of friendship and working relationships with the Quraysh. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) continued to convey his message of Islam in Makkah, although the insults and persecutions had not stopped.

Things were soon to change dramatically, however Khadijah, the Prophet’s wife, died shortly after the boycott was lifted. She was richest women in Makkah; she sacrificed and donated her entire wealth in charity. She had been Muhammad’s wife, companion in faith, and the most reliable support for over twenty-five years, and God called her back to him nine years after the beginning of the Islamic mission, in 619 C.E. The Prophet’s grief was very deep: he knew that Khadijah’s presence by his side had been one of the signs of


God's protection and love.

It was not long before the Prophet's uncle, Abu Talib, fell seriously ill. Prophet Muhammad visited him where he saw his enemies, Abu Jahl and Abi Umayya. He requested his uncle Abu Talib: *"My uncle you just make a profession that there is no true god but Allah, and I will bear testimony before Allah (of your being a believer)."* Abu Jahl and Abi Umayya addressing him said: "Abu Talib, would you abandon the religion of your father?" Prophet Muhammad continued to request him, and the same thing was said to him (by Abu Jahl and Abi Umayya) till Abu Talib gave his final decision and he stuck to the religion of his father and refused to profess that there is no true god but Allah. Upon this, Prophet Muhammad remarked:

"By God, I will persistently beg pardon for you till I am forbidden to do so (by God)."

They did not have the time to discuss the matter any further. Abu Talib died with the Prophet by his side. This man, who, with dignity and courage, had granted the younger man his protection, as well as his love and respect, had not embraced Islam. Prophet Muhammad loved and respected him, and his sorrow was all the more intense. From this sorrow and powerlessness, a Quranic verse, revealed in relation to this event, draws an eternal teaching as to the disposition and the secrets of the hearts:

"You will not be able to guide (towards faith) everyone whom you love; but God guides those whom He will, and He knows best those who receive guidance." (Quran, 28 : 56)



## KHADIJAH

‘ A Caring Wife ’

( may God be pleased with her )

It is important to stress here the role played by Khadijah (may Allah be pleased with her) throughout those years ridden with events, some extraordinary and others deeply painful. She was the one who had first noticed and then chose Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) for his honesty, his fairness, and the nobleness of his character. And against usual practice, she had the courage to propose marriage to him through her friend Nufaysah. Their union was to bring them happiness, sorrow, and grief: they lost their two sons, Qasim and Abdullah, in infancy and only their four daughters survived. This family destiny was difficult enough, but among the Arabs, the birth of a daughter was considered shameful; tradition reports how much, on the contrary, Prophet Muhammad and his wife Khadijah surrounded their daughters with deep love and constant care, which they never hesitated to express in public.

When at the age of forty, Prophet Muhammad received the first revelation of Quran, it was to his wife he immediately turned, and she was the first to stand by him and comfort him. During all the previous years, she observed a man whose nobleness of character was a distinctive feature. When Prophet Muhammad came back to her from the cave of Hira, troubled and assailed with deep doubt as to what he was and what was happening to him, she wrapped him in her love, reminded him of his qualities, and restored his self-confidence. The first revelations were both an extraordinary gift and a terrible trial. He was alone and confused; he turned to his wife, who immediately lent him comfort and support. From that moment on, there were two of them facing the trial, trying to understand its meaning, answering God's call and



following the path of spiritual initiation. In this respect, Khadijah is a sign of God's presence at the heart of Muhammad's trial; Khadijah was to be the first to accept Islam, and throughout the first ten years of Muhammad's Islamic mission, she was to remain at his side, an unfailingly faithful Companion. Her role in the Prophet's life was tremendous. She was for twenty-five years, his only wife, whose presence alone protected the Prophet, but who also underwent with him rejection by his kin, persecution, and isolation. He loved her so much. Khadijah received the good news of his election by God; she was independent, dignified, and respected, then, as a wife, strong, attentive, faithful, and confident; she was a pious Muslim, sincere, determined, and enduring. Muhammad, the last Prophet of God, was not alone, and one of the clearest signs of God's bounty and love for him was a woman in his life, his wife.

In the light of her presence and of the role she played in his life, one can grasp the multiple possible meanings in a Quranic verse that was to be revealed much later, which describes the relationships between husband and wife:

'They are your garments as you are their garments.'  
(Quran, 2 : 187)

She had been the garment that protects (emotionally as much as physically), conceals (weakness and doubts as well as riches), and brings warmth, strength, status, dignity and modesty.

Prophet deeply mourned over the death of his wife Khadijah, in an honest burst of tender emotions:

"She believed in me while the people disbelieved me.  
And she trusted in me while the people belied me.  
And she helped and comforted me, in person and  
wealth, when the people would not. God provided  
me with children by her."

## Taif

In the space of a few months, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) seemed to have become doubly weak as he had lost the person who had offered him love and the person who had granted him protection. In spite of his grief, he needed to react quickly and find the means to protect the community of Muslims who had remained in Makkah. Muhammad decided to seek support outside the city.

In the beginning of June 619 C.E. of the tenth year of Prophethood, Muhammad (Peace be upon him) set out on foot towards Taif, about 60 kilometers from Makkah, in the company of his freed slave Zayd, inviting people to Islam, and spoke to the leaders of the Thaqif tribe, hoping that they would hear the message of Islam. He met with a very cold reception, however and the chiefs mocked his claim to be a prophet. They asked, how could God allow his Messenger to beg for the support of strange tribes? Not only did they refuse to discuss the matter, but they mobilized the population against the Prophet: as he was leaving, insults followed him and children threw stones at him, blood flowed down from his legs; and Zayd trying to shield him, was wounded in the head. The crowd did not cease until they had chased him two or three miles across the sandy plains to the surrounding hills. There, tired and exhausted, he finally had to seek refuge in an orchard in order to escape his tormentors. Alone, having found no protection among his fellow human beings, he turned towards Almighty God and prayed:

“O God, to You alone I complain of my weakness, the meagerness of my resources and my insignificance before men. O Most Merciful of the Merciful, You are the Lord of the weak and You are my Lord [Rabb, “Educator”], Into whose hands do You entrust me? To some remote stranger who will

ill-treat me? Or to an enemy to whom You have granted authority over my affairs? I harbor no fear so long as You are not angry with me. Yet Your gracious support would open a broader way and a wider horizon for me! I seek refuge in the light of Your face, by which all darkness is illuminated and the things of this world and the next are set right, so that I do not incur Your anger and am not touched by Your wrath. Nevertheless, it is Your privilege to caution as long as You are not satisfied. There is no power nor strength but in You.”

At that particular moment, away from other people, in the solitude of his faith and of his confidence in the Most Gracious, he literally and wholly put himself in God’s hands; in this sense, this prayer reveals all the confidence and peace, Muhammad drew from his relationship to the Most Near Almighty God. This prayer, which has become famous, tells of humanity’s helplessness and of the Messenger’s extraordinary spiritual strength. Seemingly lonely and without support, he knew that he was not alone.

## A Slave

The two owners of the orchard had seen Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) from a distance as he entered, and they had observed him as he raised his hands and prayed to God. They sent their slave Addas, a young man who was a Christian, with a bunch of grapes. When Addas gave him the grapes, he heard the Prophet say: “*Bismillab!*” (“In the name of God,” “I begin with God”). Addas was most surprised and inquired about the identity of this man, who said words, which, he a Christian had never heard polytheists (a person who does not believe in One God, but believed in more than One God) say. Muhammad asked him where he was from and Addas answered

that he came from Nineveh (now in Israel). The Prophet added: *“The land of Jonab the Just, son of Matta”*. The young man was puzzled and wondered how this man could know of that. After informing him that he was a Christian, Addas in turn asked Prophet Muhammad who he was and how he had received his knowledge. The Prophet told him:

*“Jonab is my brother. He was a Prophet and I am a Prophet.”*

Addas gazed at Prophet Muhammad for a while then kissed his head, hands, and feet; his masters were shocked at this, and when he went back to them, he told them that only a Prophet could know what that man knew. Addas accepted Islam immediately, after a few minutes' discussion.

The Christian king of Abyssinia had immediately recognized the linkage between the two messages, and now it was a young slave, also a Christian, who shared the same feeling. Twice already, in sorrow and isolation, Prophet had encountered on his path Christians who offered him trust, respect and shelter: a king welcomed Muslims and granted them security; a slave served their Prophet when everybody else had rejected him and his message of Islam.

God's Last Messenger Muhammad was then refreshed and his heart was set at rest in the light of that invisible divinely provided aid and then he proceeded towards Makkah.



## Responsive in Medina

At Al-Aqabah, not far from Makkah, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) met a group of people from Medina. They were from the Khazraj tribe, one of the two great rival tribes in Medinah (the other being the Aws), and Muhammad began to deliver his message of Islam to them. They listened to the Prophet and eventually accepted the message of Islam. They promised to inform the members of their tribe of the substance of the message and to keep in permanent contact with the Prophet. They went back home and began preaching the message of Islam in Medina.

A year later, pilgrims and traders were again flocking to Makkah for the celebrations. A second meeting was organized at Al-Aqabah between the Prophet and the Medinah delegation that had come to report on the evolution of the situation in their Medinah city. Twelve people from Medinah, two of whom belonged to the Aws clan, took part in the meeting. They pledged allegiance to the Prophet, stipulating that they would worship only One God, and that they would honor the duties and requirements of Islam. They were therefore to constitute the first Muslim community in Medina. Prophet Muhammad sent back with them a Companion, Musab son of Umayr, known for his calm, wisdom, and the beauty of his recitation of the Quran.

Back in Medinah, the delegation kept spreading the message of Islam and Musab (may God be pleased with him) taught Islam, recited the Quran, and answered questions put to him by the people of Medinah.

In spite of the age-old sharp divisions between the Aws and Khazraj, members of both tribes converted to Islam and realized that their former rivalries had become pointless. Islam's message of brotherhood united them. Clan chiefs nevertheless remained very reluctant to embrace Islam. Musab neither reacted to their attacks nor to their aggressive attitude; rather, he answered: "Sit down and listen to the Islamic message. If you like it, accept it. If you do not, leave it." As a result, even among leaders, the number of conversions to Islam was high.

During the following year's pilgrimage, the Prophet met an important delegation of Medinah Muslims, composed of seventy-three people, two of them women, they belonged to both the Aws and the Khazraj, and they had come to bring the Prophet the good news of their commitment to Islam. After few discussions about the nature of their future relationship, they concluded a second covenant stipulating that the Medinah Muslims pledged to protect the Prophet, as well as Makkan Muslim women and children, against any aggression.

This second agreement, granting refuge and protection and a commitment of Medinah Muslims to support their Makkan Muslim brothers and sisters, opened before the Prophet, the prospect of a promising future. From then on, Prophet encouraged Muslims to immigrate to Medinah discreetly, while his closest Companions still remained by his side.



## A Conspiracy

Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) most recent protector in Makkah, Mutim, had just died. The situation was becoming particularly difficult, and the Quraysh, who had noticed that the Muslims were beginning to leave Makkah, were in their turn becoming more and more violent in their opposition. The Quraysh chiefs decided to unite, and at Abu Lahab and Abu Jahl's instigation, they resolved that the Prophet must be done away with. Their plan was to nominate an executioner from each clan in order to prevent the Banu Hashim from taking revenge from any particular clan and asking for blood money. They agreed that no time must be lost and that they must get rid of Muhammad as soon as possible.

The Angel Gabriel had come to confirm to the Prophet the meaning of a dream he had seen a few days before, when in a vision he had seen a flourishing city appear and welcome him. The Angel Gabriel announced to him that he must prepare to immigrate to Medinah and that his companion was to be Abu Bakr. Prophet conveyed the news to Abu Bakr, who wept with joy. Prophet Muhammad asked Ali to take his place in his bed the following night, and not to leave Makkah until he ordered him to.

When Quraysh executioner's heard some noise inside the house, which they took to be Muhammad arising and preparing to leave, they were almost ready to launch their attack when they realized that they had been deceived and that the man inside the house was his cousin Ali. Quraysh and their Allies' plan had failed.

## 8

### *HIJRAH* Emigration

Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) trust in One God Allah, was absolute and had never caused him to drift with the tide of events. Revelation of the Quran had reminded him that he must never forget to say "*Insha Allah*" (If God so wills) when he planned to act, and that the memory of God must be associated with humility, (especially in regard to his own powers as a human being).

Prophet Muhammad had been planning a *Hijrah* (emigration) to Medinah for almost two years, and nothing had been left to chance. Only after making intelligent and careful use of his human powers had he trusted himself to the divine will, thereby clarifying for us the meaning of "*At-tawakkul 'ala-llab*" (reliance on God and trusting Oneself to God). Each one of us has been granted qualities such as intellectual, spiritual, psychological, sentimental, etc. along with the ability of exercising them. At the same time, humbly remembering that beyond what is humanly possible, God alone makes things happen. Indeed, this teaching is the exact opposite of the temptation of fatalism, ( fatalism means, the philosophical doctrine according to which all events are fated



to happen, so that human beings cannot change their destinies. ) God will act only after humans have, at their own level, sought out and exhausted all the potentialities of action. That is the profound meaning of this Quranic verse:

“Verily never will God change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves.”  
(Quran, 13: 11 )

## ABU BAKR

( may God be pleased with him )

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) decided to leave Makkah at night and proceeded towards Yemen to avoid attracting attention. Having headed south, they went into hiding for a few days in the Thawr cave.

Not with standing all the arrangements made, a group of Quraysh men, suspecting a trick, went south to look for Prophet Muhammad. They arrived in front of a cave and prepared to enter. From where he stood, Abu Bakr could see them, and in alarm, he told the Prophet that, should the men happen to look down they could not fail to see the two of them. Prophet Muhammad reassured him and whispered, “*Have no fear, for God is with us.*” (Quran, 9:40)

Then he added, “What do you think of two [people] whose third is God?” Those words soothed Abu Bakr. In front of the *Thawr* cave, the group noticed that a spider web covered the entrance and also that a dove had nested there. It seemed obvious that Muhammad could not be hiding in the cave, and they decided to look for them somewhere else.

Once again, in spite of their carefully planned strategy, Prophet Muhammad and his Companion, Abu Bakr, were

going through the trial of weakness. Their lives had been preserved by nothing, but that fragile spider web; trust in God (*at-tawakkul-alallah*), of which the Prophet reminded Abu Bakr at that particular moment and thus took on its full meaning and strength. God alone had power to save His Messenger. When Prophet Muhammad emigrated, he took care to owe nothing to anyone (he refused gifts, settled his debts, and gave back the deposits he had), but he also knew that he owed everything to Almighty Allah, that his indebtedness and obligation to Him were infinite.

Abu Bakr had enlisted the services of a non-Muslim Bedouin, Urayqat, to guide them to Medinah by an unnoticeable, unfamiliar route. At the time appointed for departure, Urayqat came to meet them at the *Thawr* cave with camels, and they headed west, then south, before eventually going north towards Medinah, 340 km from Makkah. It was a very risky journey, and were the Quraysh to catch up with the three travelers, they were sure to kill them so as to put an end to Muhammad's Islamic revolutionary activities.

The Prophet Muhammad and his Companion, Abu Bakr, had entrusted themselves to God, yet they had not hesitated to enlist the help of a Bedouin who, although shared their enemies' polytheistic beliefs, was well known to them for his trustworthiness (he was proudly true to his word) and his abilities as a guide (he knew better than anyone else the steep, out-of-the way paths they took). Again, such an attitude was present throughout the Prophet's life. The women and men he surrounded himself with, may not have shared his Islamic faith, but they were known to him for their moral qualities and / or their human abilities. Muhammad, like those who came after him, did not hesitate to rely on them.

## *HIJRAH*

### A Trial of Trust

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and all his Companions had to leave Makkah because of persecutions and adversity from their own brothers and sisters within their respective clans. The situation had become unbearable: women and men had died, others had been tortured, and the Quraysh had finally decided to set upon Muhammad himself and get rid of him. The emigration is first of all the objective reality of Muslim women and men who were not free to practice their Islamic faith and who decided to make a clean break for the sake of their beliefs. Because: *'God's earth is spacious,'* as the Quran puts it, they decided to leave their homeland, to break with their universe and habits, and to experience exile, all for the sake of their Islamic faith.

Revelation of the Quran was to praise the courage and determination of those Muslim believers who, by taking such a difficult and humanly costly step, expressed their trust in One God Allah:

“To those who leave their homes in the cause of God, after suffering oppression, we will assuredly give a goodly home in this world; but truly the reward of the Hereafter will be greater, if they only realized [this] !, Those who persevere in patience, and put their trust in their Lord.” (*Quran, 16:41-42*)

Exile is then, another trial of trust. All prophets have intensively experienced this trial of the heart, as all believers have after them. How far are they prepared to go, how much are they prepared to give of themselves and of their lives, for the One God, His truth and His love? Those are the eternal questions of faith, which accompany every temporal and historical experience of the believing conscience. *Hijrah* was

one of the Muslim community's answers at the dawn of its existence.

In effect, exile was also required so that the first Muslims learn to remain faithful to the meaning of Islam's teachings in spite of the change of place, culture, and memory. Medinah meant new customs and new types of social relationships.

Exile was the most profound experience, since it implied uprooting oneself while remaining faithful to the same God, to the same meaning, in different environments.

Persecuted because of their beliefs in Islam, the faithful Muslims decided to break away from their tormentors and march to freedom. In doing so, they stressed that they could not accept oppression, that they could not accept the status of victim, and that basically the matter was simple: publicly speaking the name of God implied either being free or breaking free. This same message had already been conveyed by the Prophet, then by Abu Bakr, to all the slaves in Makkah: their arrival in Islam meant their liberation, and all the teaching of Islam pointed to the ending of slavery. Henceforth, a broader call was addressed to the Muslim spiritual community as a whole: faith requires freedom and justice and one must be prepared, as was the case with *Hijrah*, to pay the personal and collective price for it.

*Hijrah* is the exile of the conscience and of the heart from false gods, from evil and sins. Turning away from the idols of one's life (power, money, the cult of appearances, etc.); emigrating from lies and unethical ways of life; liberating oneself, through the experience of breaking away, from all the appearances of freedom ironically reinforced by our habits – such is the spiritual requirement of *Hijrah*. Later on, questioned by a Companion about the best possible *Hijrah*, the Prophet answered:

“It is to exile yourself [to move away] from evil [abominations, lies, sins].”

This requirement of spiritual exile was to be repeated in different forms.

Thus, the Muslims who performed *Hijrab*, emigrating from Makkah to Medinah, in effect experienced the unique dimension of Islam’s teachings, since they had to achieve a new return to themselves, an emigration of the heart. Their physical journey to Medinah was a spiritual exile towards their inner selves; in leaving their city and their roots, they came back to themselves, to their intimacy with God, to the meaning of their lives beyond historical contingencies.

Umar (may God be pleased with him) was later to decide that this unique event would mark the beginning of an Islamic era, which begins in 622 CE.

What remains, and is open to everyone to see through the ages and for eternity, is the experience of spiritual exile, which brings the individual back to him-or herself and frees him or her from the illusions and false impression of self and of the world.

Exile for the sake of God is in essence a series of questions that God asks each individual being:

“Who are you? What is the meaning of your life?  
Where are you going? Accepting the risk of such an  
exile, trusting the One God, is to answer: through  
You, I return to myself and I am free.”



## 9

## MEDINA

The journey from Makkah to Quba lasted twenty days. Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and Abu Bakr (may God be pleased with him) reached the little village of Quba, which lay outside Medina. The people were waiting for them and gave them a warm welcome. They spent three days in the village and began construction of a mosque there, the first of the emigration period. When he left Quba, the Prophet headed towards Medinah and halted at noon, prayer time, in the Ranuna valley, where he performed the first Friday prayer with his Companions: there again, construction of a mosque was begun. He then arrived at Medinah on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> October 622 C.E., (*on the first year of Hijrah*). Many people stopped him, inviting him to reside with them. He asked them to let *Qaswa*, his camel, go unhampered, for she would indicate the exact spot where he would settle. She moved back and forth through the crowd, and then at last stopped near some land belonging to two orphans. The Prophet purchased the land from two orphans by paying more than double amount. On this spot, construction of his private residence and a mosque began immediately.

## Mosque

In building these three Mosques, at Quba, Runana valley and Medinah city, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was pointing to the importance and centrality of the Mosque in relation to God, to space, and to human communities. The building of a *Masjid*, Mosque (the place where one prostrates oneself) institutes a specific observance within the primary and essential observance of the universe as a whole; as the Prophet said, *the whole earth is a Mosque*, this saying of Prophet Muhammad has the simple meaning that, the Prophet was permitted (by Allah) to offer prayers anywhere on earth; no part of the earth was “unclean” as such. Similarly, Muslims following the Prophet are allowed (by the Islamic law) to pray anywhere. Hence one can routinely observe Muslims offering prayers in such diverse places as parks, by the roadside, on railway platforms, airport terminals, etc... The whole of the earth is a “place of worship” for Muslims; they remember God and offer prayers at the appointed time, wherever they may be.

Apart from this simple meaning, the saying of the Prophet has another, more profound meaning. A Muslim realizes that a mosque is a “peaceful” place; people enter it in a state of “purity”. Their body and their clothes are clean. Their minds and hearts are also clean; they approach the mosque as humble servants of God. When they enter the mosque, they pronounce *Assalamu Alaikum* (Allah’s peace be upon you) to those already present in the mosque. This is a declaration of “peace” by the newcomers. The mosque radiates “peace” and harmony and it gives the twin message of *tawheed* (oneness of God) and human brotherhood. The central mosque in the world is Kaabah. Kaabah has been declared as *haram* in the Islamic law. No bloodshed is permitted in Kaabah or in its vicinity. Thus the message of “peace” associated with a mosque, attains its highest degree in the context of the

central mosque (the Kaabah).

Thus when the Prophet likened the earth to a mosque, he was also emphasizing the need of making the earth a “Peaceful” place. All human beings should be able to enjoy “Peace” everywhere on earth, according to the Prophetic vision. The ideal of peace would be achieved when the earth actually resembles a mosque and, like a mosque, spreads the message of harmony and human brotherhood.

### *Assalaamu Alaikum* God’s peace be upon you

Prophet Muhammad’s (Peace be upon him) first words on arriving at Quba informed the Muslims of their basic responsibilities: Spread peace with the Islamic greeting, *Assalaamu alaikum* (Allah’s Peace be upon you) with the reply *Walaikum-us-salaam* (Allah’s peace be upon you too). Feed the hungry, honor kinship ties; pray while people sleep, you shall enter paradise in peace. The two references to peace, at the beginning and at the end of his address, point as to how the Prophet wished his Companions to understand their settlement in their new city. Caring for the poor and honoring kinship ties appear as remainders of the ethical basis of the Muslim presence, which each believer must pledge to permanently respect. Night prayer — “while people sleep” — makes for the spiritual exile mentioned above, and thereby provides the heart with the strength and peacefulness in faith that make it possible to fulfill the requirements of respecting ethics and of spreading peace. This quest for inner peace (alone, but in the warm light of one’s family’s love) is the path the believer must follow to be able to spread peace in the world and serve the poorest people.

These teachings were present throughout the Prophet



Muhammad's life including at each stage of his settlement in Medina. On arriving in Medinah, he already possessed symbolic and political power that none of the city's dignitaries could ignore. Many of Medina's inhabitants had converted to Islam and recognized him as God's Messenger; those converted to Islam came from both the Aws and Khazraj clans, which had been at war for ages. The message of Islam had been powerful enough, to unite women and men from different clans, different social classes, and different origins.

## A Treaty with the Jews

Soon after immigrating to Medinah and making sure that the pillars of the new Islamic community were well established on the strong basis of administrative, political and ideological unity, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) started to establish regular and clearly-defined relations with non-Muslims. All of these efforts were exerted solely to provide peace, security, and prosperity to all mankind at large, and to bring about a spirit of understanding and harmony within his region, in particular.

Geographically, the closest people to Medinah were the Jews. While harboring evil intentions, and nursing a bitter feeling of resentment, they showed neither the least resistance nor the slightest hostility. The Prophet decided to conclude a treaty with them with clauses that provided full freedom in faith and wealth. He had no intention whatsoever of following severe policies involving expulsion, seizure of wealth and land or hostility.

The treaty came within the context of another of a larger framework relating to inter-Muslim relationship.

Medinah and its suburbs, after the endorsement of the treaty, turned into a coalition democratic state, with Medinah

proper as capital and Muhammad as ‘president’. Authority lay mainly in the hands of the Muslims, and consequently it was a real capital of Islam. To expand the zone of peace and security, the Prophet started to enter into similar treaties with other tribes living around ‘his state’.

The contract (*al-Abd*) was to become central in Islam, from marriage contracts to social or commercial contracts and those drawn up to settle conflict or war situations. Quran states the importance of contract and the need to stand by their conditions: “*For every engagement will be inquired into.*” ( Quran, 17: 34 )

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said in this respect:

“Muslims must stand by the terms of their contracts.”

## Hypocrites

In spite of the agreements, in spite of Prophet Muhammad’s (peace be upon him) efforts to reassure the different tribes and the different religious leaders, the situation was far from simple. It involved dealing with some people’s jealousy, greed, and struggle for power, and with others’ frustrations.

In Medinah, Prophet Muhammad was confronted with attitudes which he had little opportunity to know in Makkah, where conversion to Islam required such sacrifices in human terms that it could spring only from sincere and deeply believing hearts. Henceforth, things were to be different. The social configuration in Medinah, the different power centers there and the very nature of Prophet Muhammad’s role – exerting such obvious influence over hearts and social affairs alike – entirely transformed the situation. Some individuals saw an opportunity to gain power in publicizing their conversion to Islam. In the first chapter revealed in Medinah,

the Quran refers to this troubling ghost of the “hypocrites,” the *munafiqun*, who are a major danger, since they attack the Muslim community from within. Thirteen long verses of the Quran in chapter-2 (*Al-Baqarab*, The Cow) (which is also the longest chapter in the Quran) describe the hypocrites’ attitudes and speech, laden with duplicity and treachery. Of the people, there are some who say:

“We believe in God and the Last Day”, but they do not believe. They attempt to deceive God and those who believe, but they only deceive themselves, and realize it not!” (Quran, 2 : 8-9)

Then further on:

“When they meet those who believe, they say: “We believe,” but when they are alone with their evil ones, they say: We are really with you; we were only jesting [when pretending to believe].” (Quran, 2:14)

The danger was real, and it was to become permanent. Some of those people stirred up ancient quarrels between the Aws and the Khazraj, and one of these attempts would almost have succeeded if one member had not, just in time, reminded them of the superior nature of their brotherhood in Islam.

One member of the Khazraj clan, Abdullah, son of Ubay, had converted to Islam, but appeared to many believers as a troublemaker, the typical figure of the hypocrites as described in the Quran. Abu Amir of the Aws clan was perceived in the same way, and he did spread the poison of trouble. No particular measure had been taken against them, but Muslim’s were wary of them and took care not to fall into snares that could cause division in the Muslim ranks.

## Pinnacle of Brotherhood

In order to tighten the bonds between Muslims, and in particular between those Muslims who were from Medinah (the Ansar) and those who had emigrated from Makkah (the Muhajir), Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) decided to set up a formal pact of brotherhood between the Muslims. This meant that each Muhajir was bound by pact to one among Ansar, who was to help him settle down, share his belongings with him, and enable him to live in Medinah in the best possible circumstances. On a broader level, their relationships were based on brotherhood, sharing, and mutual spiritual assistance (the Muslim exiles from Makkah would teach their sisters and brothers in Medinah what they knew). This pact was to provide the new Muslim community settled in Medinah with particular strength and unity. Extremely deep relationships were created between believers of Islam who were later to attest to the intensity of their mutual love in God. Prophet Muhammad had presented this love as the pinnacle of brotherhood in faith, and his Companions strove to achieve it in their daily actions and commitments: “On the Day of Resurrection, Allah will say:

“Where are those who loved one another for the sake of My grace [My glory]? Today, I shall shade them with my shade, on a day when there is no shade but mine.”

The way the Muslims dealt with the many painful, difficult, and dangerous situations they encountered show that they had achieved a highest degree of brotherhood and trust that no harsh conditions could ever manage to destroy.

Those bonds constituted the Muslim community’s spiritual and social strength, and in this lay the secret of their success before God and among men; faith in God, love for parents, fraternity among people, and ethics at the service of the universe and of all beings.

*AZAN*

## The Prayer Call

As months went by, ritual practices had been gradually instituted: fasting in the month of Ramadan and a more precise imposition of *Zakat* (*Zakat* meaning: purifying one's wealth to gain Allah's blessing to make it grow in goodness), were added to the profession of faith and to prayer. The Muslims met in the mosque at precise times and prayed together.

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was looking for a means to call the faithful to prayer. He had been considering the possibilities of imitating Jewish or Christian practices, with bells or with a horn. One day, however, Abdullah, son of Zayd, an Ansar, came to Prophet Muhammad and told him of a dream in which a man taught him the manner in which he was to call others to prayer. The Prophet listened to him and immediately recognized that the vision was genuine. He sent for the former slave Bilal, whose voice was extraordinarily beautiful, and had him stand on top of the highest house near the mosque and call the people to prayer.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. <i>Allahu Akbar</i>                             | Allah is the Greatest,<br>(repeated four times)                                 |
| 2. <i>Asbhadu An La-ilaha Illa-l-Lab</i>           | I bear witness that<br>there is no god but<br>the One God<br>(repeated twice)   |
| 3. <i>Asbhadu Anna Muhammadan<br/>Rasulu-l-Iba</i> | I bear witness that<br>Muhammad is the<br>Messenger of Allah,<br>(repeat twice) |

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 4. <i>Hayya 'Ala-s-salah</i>   | Come fast to Prayer,<br>(repeated twice)               |
| 5. <i>Hayya 'Ala-l-falah</i>   | Come fast to success,<br>(repeated twice)              |
| 6. <i>Allahu Akbar</i>         | Allah is the Greatest,<br>(repeated twice)             |
| 7. <i>La illaha illa-l-lah</i> | there is no god but the<br>One and True God,<br>(once) |

- Two additional phrases are added after '*Hayya 'Ala-l-falah*' for morning prayer's Azaan, those are:

*'Assalatu Khairum menan Naum'* "Prayer is better than sleep" (repeated twice)

This same, never changing call, based on the affirmation of God's greatness (*'Allahu Akbar'*), the profession of faith,

("I bear witness that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is God's Messenger"), and an invitation to prayer and success in this world and the next, has for almost fifteen centuries been resounding through all places where Muslim have been living. In all its different accents, rhythms, and voices, this call in its musicality, has been singing praise of God and inviting people towards spirituality. If it serves as a wake-up call at dawn, it comes as a reminder at the end of a hectic day in the evening and lends a finishing touch to the day after the night has settled.

It is a reminder of the One God, Allah, who intends to draw his servants (the people) for spiritual regeneration out of their busy schedules to remember God and go back recharged with piety to their duties after having renewed their commitment to Him.

## MEDINAH

### The Welfare State

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and his Companions who had come from Makkah were gradually settling down in Medinah and they were beginning to find their marks in this new environment.

A society was being constituted under particularly difficult circumstances. Inter-tribal and power conflicts often complicated the relationships between Muslims and members of different Jewish clans, in spite of the agreements and alliances.

The Prophet Muhammad's Companion's, religious and spiritual education nevertheless went on, and the Prophet was always available to remind them of the principles to which believers must henceforth remain faithful.

In Makkah, resentment was high, and the success of the emigration was evident not only as a humiliation, but also as a threat to the balance of power in the Arabian Peninsula as a whole. For decades, the Quraysh had been naturally acknowledged as the unchallenged leaders on account of not only their past, but also of the fact that they were in charge of the city of Makkah, the idols' sanctuary and the site where all the tribes converged once a year to trade.

The news of Muhammad's secession and settlement in Medinah had spread all over the Arab Peninsula, and this significantly affected the Quraysh's reputation and actual power. Prophet Muhammad and his Companions knew it and were expecting some imminent reaction from the clan, their own family members and leaders of Quraysh members they knew so well.

## Dispute with the Quraysh

Not all the Muslims had immigrated to Medina; those Muslims who had stayed behind in Makkah were ill-treated by the Quraysh leaders, as the latter were obviously most upset by Muhammad's success. Indeed, some Muslims had stayed in Makkah without publicizing their conversion to Islam, and they now feared the violent revenge that would inevitably follow if that fact became known.

Some of the Quraysh went further and even decided, in violation of the honor code respected by all the clans in the Arab peninsula, to seize the property and belongings which the Muslim emigrants had left behind in Makkah. When the Muslims heard of this behavior of Quraysh, which was considered shameful and cowardly, Prophet Muhammad and the Muslims who had settled in Medinah were naturally angry.

For more than a year, Prophet Muhammad had been setting up pacts with some tribes along the Red Sea coast, on a route generally taken by Makkan caravans traveling north, beyond Medinah, to Iraq or Syria. This was bound to inconvenience the Quraysh, who had to find new routes to the east. Tensions were growing steadily, and the Quraysh, who wished to tarnish the exiled Muslims' reputation started to mobilize the area's tribes against them.

Over the same period, Prophet Muhammad also sent out missions whose main purpose was to gather intelligence about the Quraysh's movements and activities, their intentions (or possible war preparations), and the new alliance they might set up in the area. Watchfulness was essential, as the Quraysh's hostility was intensifying and becoming increasingly open and widespread. The intelligence gathered here and there by Prophet Muhammad's envoys pointed to the fact that a War was imminent.





## *JIHAD*

### Resistance

Whenever his opponents attacked him, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) used the Quran to answer, protect himself and resist. This is what the Revelation of the Quran clearly taught him, this verse which marks the first incident of the word *Jihad* in the Quran:

“Therefore do not obey the negators, but strive against them (Jahidhum) with the Quran with the utmost resistance (Jihadan Kabira).” (Quran, 25:52)

Confronted with pressures of all sorts, from the mildest to the most violent, Prophet Muhammad received a verse (revelation of Quran) that pointed to the ways and means of resistance – of the *Jihad* – he was to undertake.

What we find here is the initial and essential meaning of the concept of *Jihad*, the root of which in Arabic *‘Ja-ha-da’*, means “making an effort” – but also in this instance, “resisting” (that is, resisting oppression and persecution).

Almighty God orders His Messenger Muhammad to resist the Quraysh’s ill-treatment of him by relying on the Quran. The Quranic text is actually Prophet’s spiritual and intellectual weapon against Quraysh aggression: To those who sneer, insult, and humiliate, to those who attack, torture, and kill, to those who want miracles and proofs, Prophet Muhammad invariably answers with the weapon and shield of the Quran.

Armed with the knowledge of Quran, Prophet Muhammad and his Companions first of all tried to convey their message freely while avoiding confrontation.

The Quraysh leaders did not want it to be so, and they intensified their persecutions as Revelations of the Quran followed upon each other in rapid succession. The first Muslim Companions, like the Prophet, engaged in resistance – in jihad – reminding people of the existence of the One God, of Life after life, of the Last Judgment, and of the necessity for good, and the Quran was always the weapon of their spiritual and intelligence judgment and their shield in the face of physical brutality.

However, the persecution was so violent and continuous that this Jihad was sometimes difficult to bear. One day, a group of Muslims came to the Prophet Muhammad. They asked him: “Won’t you invoke God for us, that He may help us?” The Prophet firmly answered:

“Among the Muslims who came before you, many were thrown into ditches dug for them and were sawed in two from head to foot, and this did not turn them away from their religion; their flesh was torn apart from their bones and sinews with iron combs, and this did not turn them away from their religion. By God, this cause will certainly prevail, so it will be possible for a lone traveler to go from Sanaa to Hadramout [regions in Yemen] without fearing anything but God, or the wolf for his sheep. But you are too impatient!”

They therefore had to be patient, endure, persevere, and never despair of Allah and of His will. Prophet Muhammad was teaching his Companions the difficult association of trust in God with pain. The experience of physical and moral suffering made it possible to reach the state of faith where one accepts adversity, where one can doubt oneself without doubting God.

## *QITAL* Armed Resistance

During this same period, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) received two successive Revelations of Quran, totally different in nature, but whose consequences were equally to constitute a break with the past. For more than thirteen years, Muslims had been called upon to exercise patience and passive resistance in the face of the persecution and terror they suffered at the hands of Quraysh leaders. They had endured, persisted, and then emigrated to Medinah, without responding to aggressions, avoiding confrontation.

Once the Muslims had settled in Medinah, it had become obvious that the Quraysh were going to step up their opposition and find other means to put an end to the Prophet's Islamic mission, which now no longer threatened only the political balance in Makkah, but also the order of powers throughout the Arab peninsula. What was at stake was the Quraysh's position with regard to all the other tribes and clans, their religious and military standing was at risk.

Then the Prophet received a Revelation that left no room for doubt: "Permission (to fight) is given to those against whom war is being wrongfully waged-and verily, God has the power to help them-those who have been driven from their homelands unjustly for no other reason except that they say: "Our Lord is Allah!!" (*Quran, 22:39-40*)

Henceforth, the Muslims' were no longer required to resist passively; rather, they were to defend themselves against enemy aggression. To the *Jihad* of spirituality and intelligence, which had consisted either in resisting the darkest attraction of the selfish, greedy, or violent self, or in answering the pagan contradictors' argument through the Quran, a new possible form of *Jihad* was now added: *al-qital*, necessary armed

resistance in the face of armed aggression and self-defense against oppressor.

All the forms of *Jihad* are, as can be seen, linked to the notion of resistance. On the level of *Qital*, armed fighting, it is so as well. At the end of the verse fighting is presented as a necessity in order to resist human beings' natural tendency for expansionism and oppression. See this verse:

“Had God not checked one set of people (the oppressor) by means of another, monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of God is commemorated in abundant measure, would surely have been destroyed, God will certainly aid those who aid His Cause; for verily God is most powerful Almighty.” (Quran, 22:40)

The need for balance and regulation of forces is presented as an objective necessity, given our human nature. Absolute power for one individual, one nation, or one empire would result in the total destruction of diversity among people and the destruction of the various places of worship (the list ending with mosques), which here symbolize the freedom of religion permitted by God. Hence, the confrontation of forces and resistance to human beings' temptation to war are presented, in an apparent paradox, as the promise of peace among human beings. This is what the other verse of the Quran confirms on a more general level:

“And had God not checked one set of people (the oppressors) by means of another, the earth would indeed be full of mischief.” (Quran, 2:251)

Humans are, by nature, greedy for power and inclined to spread evil and to kill: the other aspect of humans, their love of good and justice.

Thus, the essence and spirit of *Jihad* is the quest and mission for peace and *Qital* is, at times, the necessary path to peace.



## GREATER JIHAD

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) nevertheless remained very accessible and constantly ready to receive the women and men who tried to understand Islam or were in quest of truth. He observed them, answered their questions, and accompanied their progress. Years later, when returning from the Hunayn war expedition, the Prophet had declared: “*We are back from the lesser Jihād [efforts, resistance, and struggle for reform] to the greater Jihād.*” A Companion asked: “What is the greater *Jihād*, Messenger of God?” He answered: “*It is fighting the self [the ego].*” For the Muslims, or Non-Muslim as for all human beings, this inner struggle was the most difficult, the most noble, and the one that required the most understanding, forgiveness, and, of course, sincerity to oneself.

War and its lesser *Jihād* had shown how difficult it was to die for God; daily life and its greater *Jihād* now showed Muslims that it is even more difficult to live for God, in light, transparency, consistency, spiritual demand, patience, and peace.



## IO

### The First Battle

#### BADR

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) had just learned that a caravan led by the Quraysh leader, Abu Sufyan was on its way back from Syria with a large quantity of goods and that most of the Quraysh clans had a share in this trading venture. The Quraysh sent an army towards Medinah, in order to protect their caravan, as well as to crush the emerging power of Muslims.

Prophet Muhammad set off with 313 of his Muslim Companions from Medina. They were carrying with them substantial weapons - even though they were not really fitted out for war. The Prophet had asked Usman (may God be pleased with him), who would normally have been a part of the expedition, to stay behind to look after his wife Ruqayyah (may God be pleased with her), the Prophet's daughter, who was seriously ill.

The Quraysh leader Abu Sufyan had been warned of the impending attack by his own spies. He sent an envoy to the Makkan Quraysh leaders to inform them of the danger he was in and ask for help. He immediately changed his route as well, and once he was sure that he had managed to avoid the

attack, he sent a new envoy to the Quraysh leaders to tell them that danger was over and that he no longer needed help.

However, by this time, the Quraysh leaders had already set off with more than a thousand men, and they decided, at Abu Jahal's insistence, that the expedition must go on in spite of the apparent lack of danger. Even though the confrontation might be avoided, they in their turn intended to stage a show of strength against Muslims.

Prophet Muhammad and his Companions, who had set up their camp near Badr village, located 130 km southwest of Medinah, heard that a mighty army had set off from Makkah. This meant now an army three times the size of their own force was marching towards them, with its leaders seemingly intent on fighting it out. This was war, and the Muslims were not really ready for it.

## Consultations

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) decided to consult his Companions and find out what they thought about the matter. His Companions confirmed their readiness to move forward and risk a full-scale confrontation. Al-Miqdad spoke: "Go ahead, you and your Lord, and fight; and with you we shall also fight, to the right and to the left, in front of you and behind you".

This attitude comforted and pleased the Prophet, but this was what he could naturally have expected from the *Mubajirun* (Exiled Muslims of Makkah). It was from the *Ansar* (Muslims of Medina) that he needed explicit support, since they were not directly involved in the conflict with the Quraysh and had signed an assistance agreement binding them only in case of War in Medinah, not outside the city. Sa'ad, speaking on behalf of the Ansar, said with determination: "Do

what you will, and we are with you. By He who has sent you with the truth, were you to order us to cross the sea and dive into it yourself, we would dive in with you. Not one of us would stay behind.” Having thus obtained the assent of both groups, Prophet Muhammad decided to move forward without allowing the Quraysh’s military exercises to threaten him.

## Intellectual Creativity

Here, we are presenting that dimension of Prophet Muhammad’s (peace be upon him) life which shows how the Prophet encouraged the culture of freedom of thought and the democracy that he maintained in the collective life. It shall be examined in the context of lifestyles that the people with political and religious power maintain. It is presumed that religious heads do not need consultation because they are guided by gods, or god himself is incarnate in them. This was the situation in olden days and is practiced today too.

Throughout his mission the Prophet sought his faithful Companions’ advice, encouraging them to express their opinions and paying careful attention to them. Furthermore, the Prophet had evolved a genuine pedagogy through which he allowed the Muslims to develop their critical faculties, express their talents, and mature in his presence.

Prophet Muhammad would often ask questions on various subjects and give answers only after his companions had thought by themselves and expressed different views. Sometimes, more subtly, he would utter a judgment in a contradictory form, thereby prompting his listeners to consider the matter more deeply. For example, he once said: “A strong man is not a man who overcomes his enemy.”



The companions mulled this over among them, and then asked him: "Then who is a strong man?"

The Prophet surprised his audience and led them to a deeper understanding of the question with his answer:

"A strong man is a man who controls himself when he is angry."

Prophet Muhammad would sometimes speak figuratively:

"Wealth does not lie in the riches you possess"

After the companions pondered over this, Prophet would elaborate:

"True wealth is the wealth of the soul."

On occasions, the Prophet's statement appeared to contradict common sense or ethics,

"Help your brother, whether he is just or unjust".

The Companions could not, but wonder about the nature of the help they were to give an unjust brother: how could that be? The Prophet would add:

"Prevent him (the unjust brother) from acting unjustly; such is the way for you to help him."

Both by asking questions and by formulating paradoxical or seemingly contradictory statements, the Prophet stimulated his Companion's critical sense and their ability to go beyond mere blind obedience or mechanical mind-destroying imitation. This method developed the intellectual capacities necessary for consultations to be effective indeed, if they were to give useful advice, the Companions had to be intellectually awake, bold and independent, even in the presence of a Prophet whose personality and status impressed

them. By Inspiring and motivating stimulating their intelligence and giving them opportunities to speak, he exercised a type of leadership that made it possible for his companions to learn to assert themselves and take initiative.

Young Hubab (may God be pleased with him) was the most outstanding example of this. When he arrived at the Battle of Badr, the Prophet set up his Camp near the first well he found. Seeing this, young Hubab came to him and asked: "Was this place where we have stopped, revealed to you by God, so that we must not move either forward or backward from it, or is it an opinion and a strategy of yours, linked to war methods?" The Prophet confirmed that it was his own personal opinion. Hubab then suggested another plan that consisted of camping near the biggest well, the nearest to the way from which the enemy was to arrive, then blocking the other wells in the area so that the enemy could not get to the water. During the battle, the Muslims' opponents Quraysh were thus bound to find themselves in difficulty. Prophet Muhammad carefully listened to the explanations of this strategy from young Hubab and accepted it straightaway. The camp was moved and Hubab's plan was implemented.

This example shows that the Companions made a distinction between Revelations the Prophet received from Almighty God, which they obeyed without a second thought, and the opinions of Muhammad the Man, in matter of strategy which could be deliberated, debated and improved on. The Messenger's authority in human affairs was neither oppressive nor unrestricted; he allowed his Companions a substantial role in consultation, and his teaching, as we have seen, developed the conditions for acquiring those critical and creative faculties.

Prophet Muhammad gave his companions, women and men alike, the means and confidence to be independent, to dare to address and contradict him without his ever

considering it as lack of respect for his status. Through this attitude, the Prophet showed them his deep respect for their intelligence and for their heart: as for them, they loved their Prophet, their leader, for this availability, this attention, and this demand to use their abilities to the fullest.

## Battle of Badr

When it had become clear that the Quraysh leader Abu Sufyan's caravan had escaped and that a full scale war lay ahead, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) tried to discourage the Quraysh from choosing war. He sent Umar to suggest to the Quraysh leaders that they should turn back and thus avoid confrontation. Some among the Quraysh also wanted to avoid war. However, nothing helped the advocates of war among the Quraysh, as they were determined and they knew that their numbers were clearly in their favor. Indeed they considered Umar's attempt a sign of weakness. This was a great opportunity for them to destroy the Muslim community and get rid of Muhammad.

Having received all the available intelligence information Prophet Muhammad decided to meet the enemy outside Medinah at a place called Badr, (319 km from Makkah and 130 km from Medina). He set out with three hundred and thirteen (313) of his followers. This small force was marshaled out of Medinah with the youthful Ali holding the banner of the Prophet. Early next morning on Saturday, March 13, 624 A.D, *17 Ramadan, second year of hijrah*, the Prophet divided his small force of 313 men into five sections and named their commanders and assigned them to man the right, the left, and centre of the field. He took every possible precaution for the safety and security of his men. A small hut was set up on top of a hill so that the Prophet could survey the whole scene during the battle and issue appropriate orders

to his commanders. he performed his duties as commander in-chief of the Muslim army

The Muslim army patrol arrested two men who were approaching the well to draw water. They were taken to the Prophet who was busy in his prayers. The Muslim soldiers interrogated both the prisoners. The prisoners said that they were from the Makkan army. The Muslim interrogators insisted that they confessed that they were part of Abu Sufyan's caravan. Later, on being interrogated again, they retracted and made a statement that they belonged to the Makkan army.

When the Prophet was free after having finished his prayers, he told his Muslim soldiers: *"You beat them when they tell the truth and you leave them when they tell a lie"*.

Then the Prophet personally interrogated them. *"Who are you?"* he asked. *"We are men of the Makkan army"*, they replied. *"And what is your number?"* They were asked. *"We do not know"*, they answered and they were right. *"How many camels are daily sacrificed to feed your men?"* *"Nine on one day and ten on the other"*, they answered. The Prophet deduced that their number would be between nine hundred and a thousand because one camel is enough to feed a hundred persons. In fact the total number was 950. They were asked questions about the names of chiefs who led various wings of the army – the right, the centre, etc. The Prophet was familiar with all the names because their bearers were his compatriots.

The Makkan Quraysh led-by Abu Jahl had 950 men, while the Muslims numbered 313. The Muslims' force had no more than two horses while the Quraysh had more than a hundred. The Muslims had a dozen pieces of armour while the Quraysh had two hundred. In every way the enemy was superior and more powerful. The Prophet prostrated himself in prayer to

Almighty God in his little hut and invoked His help. The prayer was poignant and indeed most moving:

“If this small group of believers is defeated today; then till the Day of Judgment; none will worship you, O God!”

The battle began with three duels involving Hamzah, Ali, and Ubaydah. Hamzah and Ali overcame their opponents, but Ubaydah was fatally wounded. Then hostilities began, and the Muslims showed such determination that the Quraysh were rapidly defeated. Although they were three times as numerous, the Quraysh could not hold back the Muslims’ onslaught.

Prophet Muhammad introduced for the first time the pattern of arranging the battle lines with rank and files being assigned particular tasks during the desert wars. Warfare followed no specific discipline earlier. The Prophet organized the forces in such a manner that they could confront the enemy as an iron wall and nothing could force them to retreat, except by way of a definite strategy. There were contingents of four persons who fought together and complemented each other’s role. They were able to assault the enemy simultaneously with swords, spears, and arrows and defend themselves with a shield. It could not have been the feat of a small mind. Fact is that the Prophet Muhammad led the armies like a successful general.

The revelation of the Quran was later to mention God’s constant protection at the battle, His angels, and the fulfillment of His promise:

“God helped you at Badr, when you were helpless. Then fear Allah [be intimately conscious of His presence]: thus may you show your gratitude.”  
(Quran 3 : 123 )

This victory of Muslims over mighty Quraysh was a turning point. The Quraysh’s status and supremacy had been

seriously affected and the news of their defeat spread like wildfire throughout the Arab Peninsula.

The Muslims had lost fourteen of their men, while the Makkans had lost more than seventy, including Abu Jahl, who had been one of Islam's fiercest opponents and who had been most eager for that battle to take place.

Abbas, the Prophet's uncle (in whom the latter had confided in Makkah, and who had witnessed all the preparations preceding the emigration), was among the seventy Quraysh prisoners.


## In Makkah Calling For Revenge

The Quraysh's return to Makkah was painful, as most of the clans had suffered the death of a member. Some were already calling for revenge, such as Hind, who had lost her father, brother, and uncle in the battle. She swore she would drink the blood of Hamzah, who had killed her father and her uncle. The Quraysh leaders wasted no time in reacting, striving to set up alliances with neighboring cities and tribes in order to fight the Muslims, avenge their humiliation, and put an end to the Muslims' presence in the Arab Peninsula.

Abu-Lahab the staunch enemy of Islam, whose ill health had prevented him from taking part in the fighting, had remained in Makkah. He asked Abu Sufyan to tell him what had happened and the circumstances of the defeat. "There is no more to it than this," said Abu Sufyan. "We met the enemy and turned our backs, and they drove us in flight or took captives even as they pleased. Nor can I blame any of our folk, for we had to face not only them, but also men in white on multicolored horses between heaven and earth, and nothing could stand up against them."

While Abu Sufyan was narrating what had happened, Abu Rafi a slave who was sitting nearby, and who had so far kept his conversion to Islam secret, could not control his joy at the news of the Prophet's victory; and when he heard, speak of the "men in white between heaven and earth", he exclaimed in wonder and in triumph: "Those were the Angels". Abu Lahab sprang to him and he struck Abu Rafi with a wounding blow on the face, while holding him down.

Um al-Fadl, Abu Lahab's sister-in-law and Abbas's wife, who was also present and who had also secretly embraced Islam rushed on her brother-in-law and gave him a violent blow with a tent post. The deep head wound became infected in the following days and the infection eventually spread to Abu Lahab's entire body. He died within a few weeks. Both Abu Lahab and his wife had always given free rein to their hatred of Islam, and in fact the Quran had, years before, announced his fate, as well as his wife's fate (Quran, 111. Abu Lahab is the only person who is condemned by name in the Quran). Unlike some other oppressors who eventually changed their minds, neither Abu Lahab nor his wife ever showed the least sympathy for Muhammad's message. Abu Lahab's death, which occurred in rejection and violence, confirmed what Revelation had announced: both of them would, to the end, remain among those who deny and rebel.



## Joy and Sorrow at Medina

At Ar-Rawha', a suburb of Medinah, the Muslim army was received by the joyous Medinese who had come to congratulate the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) on the manifest victory that God had granted him.

The Prophet was informed of the death of his daughter Ruqyyah, He had just lost his first Companions in the battle of Badr and now he was given the news that his daughter was gone as he was returning from a victorious expedition. The blending of sorrow and joy reminded him of the fragility of life and, once more, of his essential relationship to the 'Almighty God' through hardship or success. Nothing was ever acquired to last.

The Prophet encouraged the Muslims to treat the prisoners well to such an extent that the Muslims gave the prisoners their bread and ate only dates themselves. ( Bread was costly at those times. )

Bargaining with the prisoners' relatives began. Some relatives came to pay their due and returned with their family member. Other prisoners were freed without any ransom, while the poorest were dealt with individually, according to their particular circumstance. For example, those of the captives who could read and write and who could not pay a ransom pledged to teach ten Medina's Muslim youth to read and write in exchange for their freedom. Once more, the Prophet demonstrated the importance of 'knowledge' by means of the message he sent the members of his community: whether in peace or in war. Knowledge – learning, reading and writing – provides people with essential skills and gives them dignity. The knowledge some captives possessed was their wealth and that became their ransom.





## Just at Heart

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) held one of his Companion, called Abu Lubabah (may God be pleased with him), in great esteem, so much so that he had left him in charge of Medinah when he had left for the first Badr expedition. Sometime later, a young orphan came to Muhammad to complain that Abu Lubabah had taken from him a palm tree that had long been his. The Prophet summoned Abu Lubabah and asked him to explain. An investigation showed that the palm tree did belong to Abu Lubabah, and the Prophet judged in Lubabah's favor, greatly disappointing the young orphan, who thereby lost his most precious belonging.

After delivering the Judgment, Prophet Muhammad privately asked Abu Lubabah, justice having now been rendered, requested to him to give the tree to the young orphan, for whom it was so important. Abu Lubabah adamantly refused. He had gone to such lengths to assert his right of ownership that to concede to this request was unimaginable. This passion disguised his heart and sympathy.

Revelation of Quran was to recall, on both the individual and collective levels, the singular nature of the spiritual elevation that makes it possible to reach beyond the

consciousness of justice, that demands right, to the excellence of the heart, that offers forgiveness or gives people more than their due :

“God commands justice and excellence.” (Quran, 16 : 90)

It was not a question of giving up one’s right (and Abu Lubabah had been justified in requiring it to be acknowledged); rather, it involved learning to sometimes reach beyond, for the sake of those reasons of the heart that teach the mind to forgive, to let go, and to give from oneself and from one’s belongings, moved by shared humanity or love.

Prophet Muhammad was saddened by the reaction and attitude of his Companion Abu Lubabah, whom he held in great esteem: he realized that Abu Lubabah’s almost blind attachment to one of Islam’s recommendations, justice, prevented him from reaching the superior level of justness of the heart: excellence, generosity, giving.

Eventually, another Companion, Thabit who had witnessed the scene, offered Abu Lubabah an entire orchard in exchange for that single palm tree, which he then gave away to the young orphan. Prophet expressed joy at that outcome and did not resent or dislike Abu Lubabah’s attitude.

Prophet Muhammad, later entrusted Abu Lubabah with other missions, such as conveying to the Jewish tribe Banu Qurayzah the terms of their surrender. In the siege of Banu Quraizah, Abu Lababah was sent to negotiate with the people of Banu Quraizah, but he unintentionally disclosed the Muslims top secret to them. Ashamed of his behavior, he repented for this and tied himself to the pillar of the mosque for 6 days, hoping God and his Prophet would forgive him his lapse and his lack of steadfastness.

One morning, when Prophet Muhammad was in the house of Ume Salamah, he got up smiling. “May God keep you smiling for ever; what is the reason for this smile?” Ume

Salamah enquired, "*The repentance of Abu Lababah is accepted... break this news to him, if you wish.*" Prophet replied. Then Ume Salamah stood at the door of her compartment and shouted loudly, "Abu Lababah! Congratulations, your repentance is accepted." Hearing her voice, the whole town of Medinah rushed towards the mosque.

Forgiveness came, and the Prophet himself unfastened and untied Abu Lubabah.

This individual experience shows that spiritual learning was never totally accomplished, that consciences were constantly being tried, and that the Prophet accompanied his teaching with discipline, strictness but also with benevolence.



## II

### Gentleness, Caring and Loving

Irrespective of Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) daily busy schedule, he remained mindful of the small details of life and of the expectations of people around him. His Companions and his wives saw him pray for hours during the night, away from the others, alone with the whispered prayers and invocations that cherished his dialogue with God. Prophet Muhammad's wife Aishah (may God be pleased with her) , was impressed and surprised; "Don't you take on too much [worship] while God has already forgiven all your past and future sins?" The Prophet answered "How could I but be a thankful servant?"

Prophet Muhammad did not demand of his Companions, the worship, fasting, and meditations that he exacted of himself. On the contrary, he required that Companions ease their burden and avoid excess. To some Companions who wanted to put an end to their sexual life, prayed all night long, or fasted continuously (such as Uthman, son of Mazun or Abdullah, son of Amr), he said:

"Do not do that! Fast on some days and eat on others. Sleep part of the night, and stand in prayer another part. For your body has rights upon you, your eyes have a right upon you, your wife has a right upon you, your guest has a right upon you." He once

exclaimed, repeating it three times: “Woe to those who exaggerate [who are too strict]!” And on another occasion, he said: “*Moderation, moderation! For only with moderation will you succeed.*”

Prophet Muhammad kept striving to soothe the conscience of Muslim believers who were afraid of their own weaknesses and failings. One day, the Companion Hanzalah met Abu Bakr and confessed to him that he was convinced of his own deep hypocrisy because he felt divided between contradictory feelings: in the Prophet’s presence, he almost saw paradise and hell, but when he was away from him, his wife and children and daily affairs caused him to forget. Abu Bakr in his turn admitted that he experienced similar tensions. They both went to the Prophet to question him about the seemingly dismal state of their spirituality. Hanzalah explained the nature of his doubts, and Prophet answered:

“By He who holds my soul in His hands, if you were able to remain in the [spiritual] state in which you are when in my company, and remember God permanently, the angels would shake your hands in your beds and along your paths. But it is not so, Hanzalah : there is a time for this [devotion, remembrance] and a time for that [rest, amusement].”

Their situation had nothing to do with hypocrisy: it was merely the reality of human nature, which remembers and forgets, and which needs to remember precisely because it forgets, because human beings are not angels.

In other circumstances, Prophet Muhammad would surprise his Companions by stating that the sincerity of a prayer, an act of charity, or an act of worship found expression at the very heart of their most human needs, in the humble acknowledgement of their humanity: “*Enjoining*

*good is charity, forbidding evil is charity. In having sexual intercourse with your spouse, there is charity.*” The Companions, surprised, asked “O Messenger of God, when one of us satisfies his [sexual] desire, does he also get a reward?” Muhammad replied:

“Tell me, if one of you had, had illicit intercourse, would he not have committed a sin? That is why he is rewarded for having lawful intercourse.”

He thus invited them to deny nothing in their humanity and taught them that the core of the matter was achieving self-control. Spirituality means both accepting and mastering one’s instincts: living one’s natural desire in the light of one’s principles is a prayer. It is never a misdeed, nor is it hypocrisy.

The Prophet hated to let his Companions nurture a pointless feeling of guilt. He kept telling them that they must never stop conversing with the Almighty God, the most Kind, and the Most Merciful, who welcomes everyone in His grace and benevolence and who loves the sincerity of hearts, which regret their misdeeds and return to Him. This is the profound meaning of *at-tawab*, offered to everyone: sincerely returning to God after a slip, a mistake, a sin. God loves that sincere return to Him and He forgives and purifies.

Prophet invited all his Companions to that constant effort of gentleness and forgiveness:

“If you hear about your brother something of which you disapprove, seek from one to seventy excuses for him. If you cannot find any, convince yourselves that it is an excuse you do not know.”

The faithful Companions felt that Prophet Muhammad respected, understood, and loved them. Indeed, he did love them, and he told them so. Thus Prophet offered both love and spiritual teaching, and the teaching was all the more deeply assimilated because it was wrapped in that love.

*Abl As-Suffah*  
The People of the Bench

A number of new converts to Islam who had no home and often nothing to eat had settled around the mosque, near the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) house. They were poor and their survival depended on the Muslims' charity and gifts. Their number kept increasing, and they were soon called *Abl As-Suffah* (the people of the bench). The Prophet was most concerned by their situation and showed them continuous solidarity. He would listen to them, answer their questions, and look after their needs. One of the characteristics of his personality and of his teachings, as much in regard to the people of the bench as to the rest of his community, was that when the Muslims asked him about matters of spirituality, faith, education, or doubt, he would often offer different answers to the same questions, taking into account the psychological make-up, experience, and intelligence of the questioner.

Prophet Muhammad lived very modestly: his dwelling was particularly bare, and he often had nothing, but a few dates left to eat. Yet he kept helping the needy around him, especially *Abl As-Suffah*, the people of the bench.

He kept this simplicity in his life and allowed the members of his community to approach him. Prophet owned nothing, and he let himself be approached by women, children, slaves, and the poorest people. He lived among them; he was one of them.



## FATIMAH

### ‘ A Daughter ’

( may God be pleased with her )

Prophet Muhammad’s (Peace be upon him) daughter Fatimah (may Allah be pleased with her) was very close to her father. Married to Ali, the Prophet’s cousin, she had eventually moved near her father’s dwelling and she was most devoted to the cause of the poor, including *Abl as-Suffah*.

Three sons were born to the Prophet, all of whom died in infancy. His four daughters, all by his first wife, Khadijah , grew to adulthood. Fatimah was the Prophet’s youngest daughter, and he was extremely attached to her. When he returned from any journey, the first thing he would do, after offering prayer in the mosque, was to visit Fatimah and kiss her hand and forehead. Jumai son of ‘Umayr once asked ‘Aishah’ whom the Prophet loved most. “Fatimah,” she replied. The Prophet said: “*Fatima is part of me, so whoever angers her angers me.*”

When the Prophet was at home or in public and his daughter Fatimah came to him or entered the room, he would stand up and greet her, publicly showing her great respect and tenderness. Both the people of Medinah and the Makkans were surprised at this behavior towards a daughter, who in their respective customs did not usually receive such treatment.

The Prophet would kiss his daughter, talk to her, confide in her, and have her sit by his side, without paying attention to the remarks or even the criticisms that his behavior could give rise to.



Once he kissed his grandson, Al-Hassan, Fatimah's son, in front of a group of Bedouins, who were shocked. One of them, Al-Aqra, expressed his shock and said: "I have ten children and I have never kissed any one of them!" The Prophet answered, "*He who is not generous [loving, benevolent], God is not generous [loving, benevolent] to him.*" In the light of his silent example and his remarks, the Prophet taught his people good manners, kindness, gentleness, respect for children, and regard for and attentiveness towards women. He was later to say: "*I have only been sent to perfect noble manners.*"

Fatimah received that love and the teaching of Islamic faith and tenderness from her father and spread them around her activities with the poor. One day, however, Fatimah told her husband Ali about her difficulties: like her father, they owned nothing, and she felt it increasingly difficult to manage her daily life, her family, and her children. Her husband Ali advised her to go to her father for help; perhaps he will help. She went to see him, but she dared not to express her request, so deep was her respect for her father.

When she came back silent and empty-handed, Ali decided to go with her and ask for the Prophet's help himself. The Prophet listened to them and informed them that he could do nothing for them, that their situation was far better than that of the *Ahl As-Suffah*, (the people of bench) who urgently needed his help. They had to tolerate and be patient. They left, sad and disappointed: although they were the Prophet's daughter and cousin, they could not claim any social privilege.

Late in the evening, the Prophet came to their door. They wanted to get up to receive him, but Muhammad entered and sat at their bedside. He whispered: "*Shall I offer you something better than what you asked me for?*" They assented, and the Prophet told them:

They are words Angel Gabriel has taught me, and that you should repeat ten times after each prayer:

Glory to God [*Subhan Allah* ],  
then Praise be to God [*al-humdu liLLab* ],  
then God is the Most Great' [*Allahu Akbar* ].

Before going to bed, you should repeat each of those phrases thirty-three times.

These spiritual teachings that have come down to us through the ages and that each Muslim now adopts as his own at the heart of his daily life. Fatimah, like her husband, Ali, was a model of piety, generosity, and love. She lived in the light of her father's spiritual teachings: getting by on little, asking everything of the One God, and giving everything of herself to others.

One day Fatimah, beloved daughter of Prophet Muhammad visited him. Replying to a query from Fatimah, Prophet Muhammad said, "*Fatimah, you being a daughter of Prophet shall not be under the impression that you will be granted special position in the Paradise. It will be your deeds which will decide your position.*" The Prophet wanted to explain that lineage with the Prophet will not help anyone on the day of the Judgment. It is not the lineage with a pious person, clan or family that will take one to the heaven, but it is his or her own deeds.

Years later, by her dying father's side, she was weeping intensely when the Prophet whispered in her ear that God was going to call him back to Him, that it was time for him to depart. A few minutes later, Fatimah smiled happily when, Prophet told her in confidence – loving confidence seems to reveal the essence of this father-daughter relationship – that she was to be the first in her family to join him.

## AISHAH 'A Wife'

( may God be pleased with her )

Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her), Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) wife, was also cherished by Muhammad's example and conversation. Everything led to spiritual learning, and she was later to be an invaluable source of information about the Messenger's personality, attitude in private life, and public commitments. She has told how Muhammad was attentive to her expectations and wishes when, while still quite young, she arrived in his home in Medina. Play was part of the lives, and Muhammad never refrained from sharing in it or allowing her to satisfy her curiosity, as for instance when a delegation from Abyssinia visited him. The Abyssinians performed various games and traditional dances in the courtyard of the Prophet's house, and the Prophet stood on the doorstep of his dwelling, thus allowing his wife to watch the performance discreetly from behind his shoulder.

Time and again, she spoke of the particular nature of his attentiveness to her, of his expression of tenderness, and of the freedom he allowed her in her daily life. The contents of the Prophetic traditions she later reported shows to what extent Muhammad spoke to her, conversed with her, and expressed his love and tenderness, in her presence, through the example of his behavior towards his wife.

Aishah behaved like all other women and was most present in Medina's public life. The Prophet involved her and

wished his Companions to understand, through her example, the role that women, and particularly their wives, were to assume in their daily and public lives.


A Persian neighbor once invited the Prophet to a meal. The Prophet answered: "*What about her?*" pointing to his wife Aishah. The man replied negatively, implying that the invitation was meant for him alone. Prophet Muhammad then refused the offer. The neighbor invited him again sometime later. The Prophet again asked: "*What about her?*" The Persian answered negatively, and Prophet Muhammad once more refused. The Persian invited him a third time, and when the Prophet asked, "*What about her?*" he answered in the affirmative. The Prophet accepted the invitation and went to the neighbor's with Aishah. Through consistently maintaining a position, the Prophet was reforming customs and practice among the Arabs and Bedouins in the Arab Peninsula without attacking their conventions. Aishah, as well as Khadijah before her, and indeed all of his wives and daughters, present in his life, was active in public life, and never confused modesty with disappearing from the social, political, economic, or even military sphere.

Prophet had granted them the means to be and develop, to express themselves and be critical, and to avoid false modesty and speak of delicate subjects linked to their womanhood, their desires and expectations. Years later, Aishah was to recall with respect and admiration the courage intellectual characteristic of Medinah (*Ansar*) women who, unlike most Makkan women, dared to speak out and ask direct questions: "blessed be [what excellent women were] the Ansar women: modesty did not prevent them from seeking instruction [regarding their religion]."

Aishah had been trained in the same way by the Prophet: she was present when the Quranic Revelations took place, and she remained by the Prophet's side when he conveyed

the message or gave recommendations and advice, or simply when he was alone and lived his religion in private. She would listen, question, and attempt to understand the reasons and meaning of her husband's choices and attitudes. Thanks to her memory, intelligence, and critical mind, more than two thousand *Hadiths* (Prophetic Traditions) have come down to us through her, and she also repeatedly corrected the Prophetic traditions (*Hadith*) given by other Companions.

The love that the Prophet Muhammad and Aishah showed for each other was powerful and intense. Aishah remained sincere in her faith and in her love for the Prophet, and she became a model, as much in her holiness and devotion as in her intellectual and social commitment. She was a model in the light of the love shown to her by Prophet: It was in her apartment that the Prophet wanted to breathe his last, and there he was buried.



## PROPHET MUHAMMAD ' S MERCY FOR ALL CREATIONS

In the Quran, God's pre-eminent attributes are: *Ar-Rabmaan* (the Most Gracious) and *Ar-Rabeem* (the Most Merciful). When combined, these two words encompass the meanings of mercy, love, benevolence, compassion, kindness and grace.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "*When God created all things, He wrote in the sacred book with Him in the highest heavens, 'My Mercy precedes My wrath.'*" God then states that He divided His Mercy into 100 parts, ninety-nine of which He kept with Himself and one part He sent down to Earth for the sake of all creation. By means of this single part, mercy in all created things towards one another is manifested.

"Almighty God states, We have sent you [Muhammad] as a mercy for all creation, a mercy for all the worlds." ( Quran, 21 : 107 )

The mercy, with which God endowed the Prophet, is not restricted to humanity alone; rather all of creation partakes in this greatest of divine favors.

The commentators of the Quran have stated that since

the Quran is the spring of all mercy in the world, it was first taught to Prophet Muhammad, who would be the sole carrier of the message of mercy to humanity. Thus, this verse elaborates upon the one that states that Prophet Muhammad was sent as a mercy to all creation, since without him there would have been no Quran.

Both the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad are manifestations of God's All-Embracing Mercy. The result is a portrait of a man who, in addition to his many other qualities, embodied the ideals of compassion and mercy.

## Mercy towards Birds and Animals

Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) introduction of a unique and comprehensive view of mercy even now remains unprecedented. This can best be understood from the following examples from his life.

- A Companion had once taken a baby-bird from a nest which caused mother bird to search in panic for it, and suddenly mother bird attacked the companion: The Prophet asked his companion to put the baby-bird back in the nest and told those companions who were present, *"God's goodness (mercy) to you is superior to that of this bird for its offspring."*

Here, birds are a sign of God's existence, an infinite Mercy and Blessings. They constitute yet another nation.

Allah says in the Quran;

"Are you not aware that it is God whose limitless glory all (creatures) that are in the heavens and on earth extol, even the birds as they spread out their wings? Each (of them) knows indeed how to pray unto Him and to glorify Him, and God has full knowledge

of all that they do.” (*Quran, 24 : 41*)

Drawing on this divine guidance, the Prophet was extremely concerned about the welfare of birds and animals. He displayed his mercy towards all creatures (human and non-human). He taught his companions to observe the elements, to marvel at and draw teachings from the nature around them and the smallest creatures of life.

It is also reported that Prophet prohibited killing birds merely for pleasure and without a specific need to do so. He said, “Anyone who kills a bird without cause, this bird will come on the Day of Judgment and say, ‘O God, this person killed me for pleasure and not for benefit.’”

- Consider the numerous instances of mercy the Prophet Muhammad displayed towards animals and the pains he took to teach his fellow companions how to treat them properly. He states, “*Some people whose hearts are like the hearts of birds (in terms of kindness and humility) will enter Paradise*”.
- Prophet Muhammad forbade the burning of living creatures. When he once passed by an anthill that appeared to have been burnt, he asked: “*Who burnt it?*” When he was told that so and so had done it, the Prophet said: “*Only the Lord has the right to punish with fire*”, thereby instructing his people and protecting this vulnerable nation’s well-being.
- Prophet Muhammad considered even apparently harmful things in nature as part of the system that God created. Once, when the Prophet was with his companions in a place called Arafat near Makkah, a snake emerged from a cave and the companions tried to kill it, but it escaped. Thereupon, the Prophet said, “*God saved you from its harm as He saved it from your harm*.” The Prophet’s statement that “*God saved it from your harm*” has a profound indication that the snake also plays a role in the natural world. The Prophet considered all creatures in the world as part of the system.



- The Prophet Muhammad also ceaselessly advised that the camel, another great creature of the natural world, be treated properly. The Quran asks:

“Do they not look at the camels, how they are made?”  
(Quran, 88: 17)

The Prophet came across a camel so famished to the extent that its stomach had shrunk, due to hunger. He told those with him, “Be conscious of God as regards such speechless creatures. If you ride them, ride them when they are healthy. When you travel in a fertile country, do not deny the camels their due from the ground. When you travel in a barren and dry land, cover it quickly.”

Anas, a companion of the Prophet reported, “The Prophet of God has prohibited shooting of tied or confined animals.”

- These merciful teachings are present throughout Prophet’s life as far as animals are concerned. We have seen that when marching towards Makkah with his army, Prophet had advised that a dog’s puppies lying by the wayside be protected. When the Prophet noticed a dog feeding its pups, he immediately ordered his companion soldier, Juaail, son of Suraga, to stand guard so that the advancing army would not disturb them. He did so until the entire army had passed. This shows the extent of concern and compassion that the Prophet had in his heart for animals, for he was mindful of the predicament of that dog and her pups even while leading an army faced with enormous tasks.

- Prophet Muhammad particularly loved cats but more generally, he constantly made his companions aware of the need to respect all animals. He once told his companion this story:

“A man was walking on a road in scorching heat; he saw a well and went down into it to quench his thirst. When he

climbed up again, he saw a dog panting with thirst and said to himself: "This dog is as thirsty as I was." He went down into the well again, filled his shoe with water, and climbed up, holding it between his teeth. He gave it to the dog to drink and God rewarded him for this and forgave his sins". The Prophet was then asked; "O Prophet, do we get a reward for being good to animals?" And the Prophet answered: "*Any good done to a living creature gets a reward.*"

- On another occasion, Prophet Muhammad said: A woman was punished for a cat, which she had imprisoned until it died. Because of this cat she went to hell. She did not give it food or drink, while she imprisoned it, nor did allow it to eat its prey". Through such traditions, the Messenger stressed that respect for animals was part of the most essential Islamic teachings. He made use of every opportunity to insist on that dimension.

- Prophet Muhammad had warned: "*Whoever kills a sparrow or a bigger animal without respecting its right to exist will be accountable to God for it on the Day of Judgment*". Prophet Muhammad thus taught that an animal's right to be respected, to receive the food it needs, and to be treated well could not be negotiated: it was part of the duties of human beings and should be understood as one of the conditions of their spiritual elevation.



## Nature and Environment

Almighty God explained that, earth and all of its creatures, are obedient servants who are dear to Him and prostrate for His sake:

“Are you not aware that before God prostrate themselves all [things and beings] that are in the heavens and all that are on earth, the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the mountains, and the trees? And many human beings [submit to God consciously], whereas many [others, having defied Him,] will inevitably have to suffer [in the life to come]; and he whom God shall scorn [on Resurrection Day] will have none who could bestow honor on him: for, verily God does what He wills.”  
(Quran, 22: 18)

The most important concept in the Quran, from which everything else is derived, is *tawheed*, or the unity of God. God, according to the Quran, is one and the absolute possessor of the universe. He is its merciful Sustainer and unquestioned Master. He has created all that is in it, and brings new things into existence, by His command:

*Tawheed* becomes an all – embracing value when this unity is asserted in the unity of humanity, unity of man and nature, and the unity of knowledge and values. As such, nature is not there simply to be exploited and abused. Indeed, given the intimate connection between nature and man, its abuse is nothing but self – abuse. Just as human life is sacred, nature in the Quran is a religious, hence sacred institution.

“The earth, ‘with its fruits, with its palm trees with covered bunch, its shell grains, its fragrant plants’”  
(Quran, 55:10 – 13) is there for our benefit. But it has to be treated with respect, justice and balance:

“He has set the balance so you may not exceed the balance: weigh with justice and do not exceed the balance.” (Quran, 55:7-9)

The earth and its environment have rights. And its first right is the acknowledgement that we do not own it. We have not created it and hence we cannot own it. Rather, we have it on trust from its rightful owner. The concept of *tawbeed* emphasizes that nature has no meaning without reference to God; without divine purpose it simply does not exist. This is why the Quranic term for nature is created order’.

### Human Beings are *Khalifa* on Earth

The second most important concept in the Quran is the concept of *khalifa*. It is usually translated as ‘vicegerent’ or ‘trustee’. Those human beings are *khalifa* or trustees of God on earth are made clear in Quran, Chapter 2, verse 30, where God tells the angels: ‘*I am putting a khalifa on earth*’. The *khalifa* comes as a representative of a higher authority. He or she has no exclusive right to anything. The function of trustees is to carry out their responsibility diligently and ensure that the trust survives and thrives. As trustees of God on earth, it is our individual and collective responsibility the balance or harmony of nature, preserve the environment with all its flora and fauna, and treat all God’s creation with due respect and reverence. Thus, we are not independent of God but responsible and accountable to God for our activities on the planet: scientific and technological and business, individual and collective. The trust, maintaining the integrity of the earth and its environment, is a test from God; and we will be judge on how our responsibilities as trustees are carried out:

“It is He who has made you trustees on earth.” (Quran, 6:165)

Nature, therefore, is a trust or *Amanat*, and a theatre for our moral and ethical struggle. While we enjoy temporary

control over nature, we have no sovereign authority.

In the Quran, nature is a 'Sign' of God: "There are signs in the creation of heavens and earth, and in the alternation of night and day, for those with understanding, who remember God Standing, sitting, and lying down, who reflect on the creation of heavens and the earth." (Quran, 3:190-91)

As such, nature is necessary for both our survival and salvation as well as for 'understanding'. All creation is sacred. Looking after the environment, and maintain harmony and balance between people and nature, are thus part of our function as human being. When we fail in our custodianship of nature, we also fail as human beings and become strangers in.

"Hence, do not spread corruption on Earth after it has been so well ordered." (Quran, 7:56)

Prophet Muhammad stated, "Be merciful to all that is on Earth and He who is in Heaven will be merciful to you."

Modern Muslim societies have lost much of their traditional consciousness and concern for the environment. The reasons are varied: not least, the decline of Muslim civilization itself, along with the negative effects of colonialism and then the mad rush for modernization. But in the age of climate change, Muslims are duty-bound to return to the ecological insights of the Quran and to implement them in their individual lives, as well as their use and treatment of the environment.

The preservation and conservation of our flora and fauna, the diversity of which is truly amazing to behold, is a religious duty and a moral responsibility for all Muslims. If Muslims fail to play an active part in looking after the gardens and rivers of the globe, to reflect on the needs of the 'spread out earth', to use our reason to develop appropriate policy and strategies for safeguarding the future of the planet, we will be ruined both here and in the Hereafter:

“It is He who spread out the earth, placed firm mountains and rivers on it, and made two of every kind of fruit; He draws the veil of night over the day. There truly are signs in this for people who reflect. There are, in the land, neighboring plots, gardens of vineyards, cornfields, palm trees in clusters or otherwise, all watered with the same water, yet we make some of them taste better than others; there truly are signs in this for people who reason.” (Quran, 13:3-4)

### *Haram and Hima*

Nerveless, love and conservation of nature were a major concern for Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his companions.

*Amanat* or Trust and *Khalifa* or Trustee are not just theoretical concepts. They were actualized, translated into specific policies right from the time of the Prophet Muhammad.

The Prophet established two types of inviolate zones bordering around towns and watercourses: *haram* and *hima*. The *haram* zones, within which certain activities were forbidden, were maintained around wells, water sources, towns and cities. Around wells a space was left to protect them for impairment, to provide room for their operation and maintenance, safeguard their water from pollution, and provide resting areas for livestock, and room for irrigation facilities. Around rivers and natural watercourses, people could not carry out any activity that would pollute their water. Around towns and cities, people could not cut trees or forage or burn, to ensure that wildlife and their habitat were protected and the carrying capacity of the town or city was not exceeded.

## Green Belts around Medina

The *hima* zones were set aside outside cities specifically for the conservation of forests and wildlife. The Prophet declared the area surrounding Medina as *hima*; and, within the city, he established a number of *haram* zones.

One of such zones, known as *Hima Al-Naqee* was ordered to be set up in the valley of Aqeeq, 20 miles out of Medina. This was designated as the grazing ground for horses. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) organized planting of trees in large numbers. Soon the area became so green that it was difficult to spot a horse rider passing through it. He designated its boundaries by asking a person to call from a tree top. The place where his voice could not be heard was marked as its outer limit. No trees would be allowed to cut in the area.

Once Prophet Muhammad returned from the Valley of Aqeeq and described its beauty and serenity to his beloved wife Ayesha. Moved with the description, Ayesha suggested that the Prophet moved his residence to the *Aqeeq*. Several rich people from Medina later built their summer homes near the place. Soon the place turned into a resort for the citizens of Medina and families began to go there for the purpose of recreation.

The instruments of *haram* and *hima* were an integral part of Islamic law or *Sharia*, and there were Islamic law or *Sharia* for protection of animal rights. God says in the Quran, '*all the creatures that crawl on the earth and those that fly with their wings are communities like you.*' (Quran, 6:38)

Popular Islamic culture reflected the love of animals, birds, nature and the urge for conservation.

## Green Earth

Anas narrates that the Prophet Muhammad had said:

‘If any person plants a tree and people or other creatures of God eat of its fruits, it would be an offering on his part.’

In this tradition, the excellence of planting shady trees by the side of the road, raising social forestry, parks and conservation of forests have been stressed.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) once said:

‘If a person cuts a tree in a desert that gives shade to passersby and animals, God will punish him or her on the Day of Judgment.’

This shows how keen the Prophet was to keep the earth green. The Prophet brought a completely different dimension to the idea of protecting the world in which we live, as it has rights over us and will expose our deeds to God on the Day of Judgment.

Prophet also said:

‘If the hour of Judgment comes while one of you holds a sapling in his hand let him hurry and plant it.’

The Muslim believer’s conscience must thus, to the very end, be sustained by this intimate relation with nature, to the extent that one’s last gesture should be associated with the renewal of life and its cycles.

## Natural Resources

Nature is God’s creation and its resources are His bounties to humanity. Thus, Almighty Allah commands us not to



destroy it or even waste any part of it: Nature is God's creation and its resources are His bounties to humanity. Thus, He commands us not to destroy it or even waste any part of it:

“O children of Adam. Beautify yourselves for every act of worship, and eat and drink [freely], but do not waste: verily, He does not love the wasteful.”  
(Quran, 7: 31)

The merciless plunder of natural resources is a vicious act against the Creator of nature and against humanity. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) taught his companions to be extremely conscious of using any natural or other resources. For example, he taught them to be as economical as possible when using water.

One day the Prophet passed by Sa'ad, a prominent companion who was performing his ablution (*Wazhu*). Noticing his extravagant use of water, the Prophet said to him, “*Why such waste O Sa'ad?*”, “Is there waste even when performing ablution?” Sa'ad asked and the Prophet answered, “*Yes, even when using the water of a running stream.*”

The Prophet taught Sa'ad and his other companions never to consider water, or any other element of nature as a simple means towards their spiritual edification; on the contrary, respecting nature and using it moderately was already in itself a spiritual exercise in their quest for the Creator.

The Prophet's insistence on not wasting any natural resource, “*even when using the water of a running stream*” indicates that he placed respect for nature on the level of the essential principle that must regulate behavior whatever the situation and whatever the consequences.

The Quran reminds us that water is one of God's blessings:

“And we send down water from the skies in accordance with a measure (set by Us), and then We

cause it to soak into the earth, but behold, We are most certainly able to withdraw this (blessing).”  
(Quran 23: 18)

Today, many countries face serious water shortage, these are timely reminder that we need to be thankful to the Creator, and with this in mind, be more careful how we use water in our personal lives. Thus, we all need to pay heed to these Prophetic reminders and avoid wasting anything and ‘spreading corruption throughout the land.’

Karen Armstrong, A former catholic nun, who has become the well known writer on ‘the Life of Prophet Muhammad, has referred to Prophet Muhammad as “a prophet for our time”. She writes that, the Prophet’s teachings concerning earth and her inhabitants – insects, animals, birds, trees, rocks, mountains, rivers and oceans – are everlasting in scope and nature.

Today, when humanity faces the dangers of environmental disaster, ecological imbalance, the depleting of the ozone layer, global warming etc., we can no longer afford to ignore the precious treasures of wisdom embedded in the vast books of Prophet’s sayings and actions.



## Mercy towards Humanity

Needless to say, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), the mercy for the Universe was sent first and foremost, for human beings. As a result, his mercy is perhaps most dramatically manifested in the theatre of human actions, for it encompasses the countless spectrums of human roles, men and women, parents and children, husband and wife, master and slave, rich and poor, friend and foe, neighbor and stranger and so on. He cared for every human being regardless of gender, color or creed. His heart was a flowing fountain of compassion, sympathy and tenderness. At the sight of other's tragedy, his heart would bleed and eyes would flow with tears.

### Parents

Parents are regarded as the people most deserving of mercy, for the Quran connects *Tawhid* (God's Oneness) with being kind and merciful to them:

“Your Lord has commanded that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to your parents.”  
(Quran, 17:23)

After giving commands to serve God, we have been asked to behave with kindness towards the people. In this regard parents are mentioned first.

“And do good to parents.” (Quran, 4:36)

At numerous places in the Quran, after the worship of God, kind behavior towards one's parents has been given prominence. It means that after God's favours, parents' favours are the greatest. They play a great role in man's existence, his birth, his up-bringing, his education and his moral and material progress. Without parental care, his progress would have been in peril. Even the illiterate and the

indigent parents sacrifice so much for their children that there is no match to it in the whole society. In the favour of the parents, we have the reflection of the favours of God. Worship in reality is to be thankful to the favour of God. Parents' status is not that of God's. So they cannot be worshipped, but they are treated with utmost respect. Kindness in treatment is the way to return their favours. The Quran has commanded us to express our thankfulness to God and parents.

“Show gratitude to Me and to the parents. To Me is (the final) goal.” ( Quran, 31 : 14 )

Modern civilization has disrupted the family institution. The higher values attached to this system have also been shattered. In the process, it has affected the aged parents to a great extent. Today people are discussing what to do with the aged parents who have lost their use. How long they could be tolerated when they could no more play any useful role in making the future. The parents, who are held in contempt to-day, once had so much power over their children that they could have easily exterminated them in their infancy, but they didn't do so. The modern generation was once at the mercy of these old parents, yet they toiled and spent the sweat of their forehead in bringing up their children. The Quran has commanded in particular to treat the aged parents with kindness and humility.

“If one of them or both of them reach old age with you, do not say to them a word of disrespect, or scold them, but say a generous word to them. And act humbly to them in mercy, and say: ‘My Lord, have mercy on them, since they cared for me when I was small.’” ( *Quran, 17 : 23-24* )

In Islam, it is not enough that we only pray for our parents, but we should act with limitless compassion,

remembering that when we were helpless children, they preferred us to themselves. Mothers are particularly honored.

The strain of caring for one's parents / elders in this most difficult time of their lives is considered an honor and a blessing and an opportunity for great spiritual growth.

When parents reach their old age, they should be treated mercifully, with kindness and selflessness.

*"Say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour."*

(Quran 17:23)

## Mother

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, *"Verily, Heaven lies under the feet of our mother."*

Prophet Muhammad taught his followers that mercy and compassion towards one's parents is a high human value and tried to impress it upon their hearts and minds.

A person came to Prophet Muhammad, and asked him, who is the person who deserves the maximum love, companionship and rights in this world.

The Prophet replied, *your mother.*

The man asked, who Next?

The Prophet replied, *your mother.*

The man asked, after that who?

The Prophet repeated for the third time, *your mother.*

The man asked, after that who?

Then the Prophet said, *your father.*

So, 75% or  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the love, companionship and rights of the children are due to the mother and only 25% or  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the love and companionship goes to the father. In other words, the mother gets the gold medal; she gets the silver medal, as well as the bronze medal. The father has to be satisfied with

a mere consolation prize.

Asma says that her non-Muslim mother visited her when the Muslims had a peace treaty with the Quraysh. She asked the Prophet, "My mother, who is ill-disposed towards Islam, has come to (visit) me. Should I show her affection and treat her with kindness?" The Prophet replied, "*Yes, do so.*"

Prophet Muhammad told his companions to treat their parents with kindness, regardless of their faith. One companion reports, "My mother who is an unbeliever, traveled from Makkah to Medina to visit me and asked something from me. I asked the Prophet, "My mother has come to see me and is expecting something from me. Should I heed her request?" He said, "*Yes, be kind to your mother.*"

## Father

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "A father has no better gift for his son than inculcating in him a noble character."

Muhammad said: "The best things a father can give his children are refined manners and fine education."

Prophet said: "A man's deeds come to an end by his death but for three things: Charity that benefits posterity, fruitful knowledge and the solicitations of his children who pray for him."

Muhammad said, "The highest form of righteousness is for a person to be kind and generous towards his father's friend." In another transmission, Abbas son of Umar said, "I heard the Prophet say, "It is most virtuous that a person treats his father's friends well after his father's death."

## Kinsfolk

Allah says in the Quran: "Treat the Kinsfolk with kindness."  
( *Quran, 4 : 36* )

After the parents, Quran has mentioned the kinsfolk as they deserve our kindness the most. Kinsfolk are related to us through our parents. Maintenance of ties with one's kinsfolk makes social life pleasant. Where this is absent, social discord sets in. Sulaiman son of Aamir narrates from the Prophet:

'To give propitiatory offering to any indigent person (who is not related) is mere offering but the same given to a relative is an offering as well as a mark of maintaining tie with one's relation.'

It means spending on relations is doubly rewarded. It is a fact that man feels a natural attachment with his Kinsfolk but it is also a fact that these relationships are very fragile. Simple incidents snap these relations. Prophet says that these relations should not be allowed to snap. Every attempt should be made to maintain these relations.

Abdullah son of Umar narrates that the Prophet had said: 'Maintaining of ties with relations does not mean that reciprocates the relations but in reality it means to mend relations when they are ruptured.'

## The Elderly

Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) teachings also established a high regard and respect for the elderly, and to rejuvenate in them feelings of hope and vigor during the sunset of their lives. Anas reported that the Prophet said, "*If a young man supports an old man because of his old age, God will definitely assign people who will respect him when he is old.*"

Prophet Muhammad once narrated that *"The Angel Gabriel commanded me to give priority to the elderly. He taught that, 'When serving food and during ceremonies, the elderly people must be given priority over others.'"* He said, 'start with the elderly while serving food.' This demonstrates what Abdullah, son of Amr reported: The Prophet said, *"One who does not show mercy towards our young and does not respect our elderly is not among us (are not Muslims)."*

Muhammad put the elderly right at the top of those who must be respected and honored. The priority remained intact even during the times of war, as the Prophet ordered his commanders, *"Do not kill the elderly, the children or the young, and the women."*

On the day of the victory of Makkah when the Prophet entered the sacred mosque, Abu Bakr brought his elderly polytheistic father to meet the Prophet. When he saw his companion's elderly father, he asked Abu Bakr, *"Why didn't you leave him at home? I would have gone to him."* Abu Bakr replied, *"O Prophet of God, he should come to you, rather than you go to him."* The merciful Prophet seated the elderly man in front of him and honored him. He then touched the man's chest and said, *"Become a Muslim,"* and he did so.

## Children

Prophet Muhammad ( Peace be upon him ) loved children, with their innocence, gentleness and ability to be present in the moment. Close to God, close to his own heart, he remained attentive to those who primarily understood the heart's language. He kissed children, carried them on his shoulders and played with them, reaching towards their innocence, which is in its essence the expression of a permanent prayer to God. The Prophet's attitude was a constant reminder of this. If his ritual prayer to God was



disturbed by a baby crying, the Prophet would then shorten his prayer as if to respond to the child's prayer.

The Prophet was very kind to children and called them the *"Flowers of Paradise."* He also said, *"Among the good fortunes of a man is the virtuous child."*

When anyone brought the first fruits of the season, the Prophet would give it to the youngest child present. He used to greet children with a friendly kiss on the cheek or head. Once when he was greeting some children with a kiss, a Bedouin said, "You love children very much. I have ten children, and I have never kissed one of them." The Prophet replied, *"What can I do if God takes away love from you?"*

One of his Companions was martyred on the battlefield, Prophet Muhammad asked the man's wife to bring their children to him. The Prophet then embraced them and, while crying, told them about their father's death. He asked his own family to prepare food for them because they were too grief stricken to cook food for themselves.

Prophet's love and kindness was not confined to Muslim children alone. In fact, he proclaimed each child's purity and innocence, *"Every child is born with a pure nature"*.

During a battle, some children who were accidentally caught between the opposing forces were killed. When he learned of this, the Prophet was very distressed. A man said, "O God's Prophet, they were the children of non-Muslims". The Prophet replied,

'Even children of non-Muslims are better than you.  
Beware! Do not kill children. Beware! Do not kill  
Children. Every soul is born in the nature of God.'

The Prophet said: *'To lie is bad, be it in jest or in earnest. Do not make false promises to young children.'*

## Neighbors

In the following verses of the Quran, gentleness and mercy towards neighbors has been advised.

“Do good to neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, and the companions by your side.”  
(Quran, 4 : 36)

The people with whom we co-exist and the neighbors, with whom we have social contacts cannot be left out. They enjoy more rights than those with whom we have no such links. Here the neighbors have been classified into three categories – the neighbors who are related to us, the neighbors who are not related; and those who accidentally meet us while on travel, in offices, in schools or colleges, or in work places. Such people are also neighbours.

All the religions of the world have given importance to generous behavior towards neighbours, but Islam has not only given importance to this behavior, but has given such a wide meaning to the concept of neighbor that we cannot find its parallel elsewhere. Even brief togetherness of any kind is enough to establish their rights. If this togetherness is longer, the rights are equally more established.

Aaiesha and Abdullah, son of Umar have both narrated that the Prophet Muhammad had said:

‘Angel Gabriel has emphasized generosity in treatment towards neighbors to such an extent that I was afraid he would apportion the share of neighbors in the inheritance.’

Islam not only says that neighbours should not be hurt in any way but stresses that they deserve our moral and social help. We should treat them in the noblest manner so that

every member of the society could live with the confidence that he is secure amongst the well-wishers who would be at his service at any time. In this regard, Islam's attitude could be inferred from the following traditions.

Abu Hurairah says that the Prophet repeated thrice:

*'By God, he is not a Muslim!'*  
*'By God, he is not a Muslim!'*  
*'By God, he is not a Muslim!'*

When he was asked who that person was, he answered:  
*"Someone whose neighbor is not safe from his mischief"*

This tradition makes it clear that hurting a neighbor is in contradiction to faith. In another tradition, Abdullah, son of Abbas says that the Prophet said:

*'That person is not a Muslim whose stomach is full and his neighbor remains starving.'*

It is clear from these traditions that the mark of belief is that his neighbors should be at peace with him and he should be of help to his neighbors in times of their crisis.

## Poor

*"When it will be asked to some of the people who enter the hellfire, 'What has brought you into hell fire?' They will answer, 'We were not among those who prayed, and neither did we feed the needy.'"*  
*( Quran, 74 : 42-44 )*

Even before he was raised to the status of Prophethood, Muhammad was a very hospitable person and known for his generosity. The poorest and most destitute companions, the As-Suffah (the companions of the bench), were the permanent guests of the Muslims and of the Prophet himself most of

the time. Once the Prophet said, “anyone who has enough food for two persons should take three of them (home to feed); anyone who has enough food for four should take five of them (home to feed).” Abu Bakr took three into his home, while the Prophet took ten.”

The Prophet Muhammad said to his wife Ayesha; “O Ayesha! Never turn away any needy person from your door empty handed. Give something, even if all you can give a half a date. O Ayesha, love the poor and bring them near to you, and God will bring you near to Him on the Day of Resurrection.”

The Prophet forcefully stated: ‘The food served at a feast to which only the rich are invited and from which the poor are excluded is the dirtiest food.’

Once a man passed by Prophet. He asked his companions, “*What do you think about this man?*” They replied, “O God’s Messenger, we think he is of the gentle people; if he asks for marriage, people will accede to his request; and if he intercedes for someone, his intercession will be accepted; and if he talks, people will listen to him attentively.” After some time, another man passed by and the Prophet asked his companions, “*What do you think of this man?*” they said, “He is a poor man; if he sends a message for marriage, none will accept; if he intercedes, none will accept his intercession; and if he talks, none will listen to him.” The Prophet said, “*even if the world is full of people of the first type, the latter is the best of all.*”

The Prophet’s companion Jafar loved the poor, sat with them, stayed with them and talked to them. The Prophet called him *Abu Al-Masakin* (*father of the poor*).

Another of the Prophet’s Companion Sa’ad was temperamentally slightly boastful and thought himself superior to the poor. The Prophet spoke to him, saying, “*Whatever success and wealth you have is due to the labor of the poor.*”

## Slaves / Servants

Abdullah bin Umar narrated that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, *“Give the laborer his wages before his sweat dries”*.

Prophet Muhammad was particularly kind to slaves. He used to say, “They are your brothers and sisters, so give them to eat what you eat and give them to wear, what you wear.”

Slaves often felt humiliated when called as slaves. The Prophet advised his companions not to say, “My slave” or “my slave girl”, but “my son” or “my daughter”. He also told slaves not to call their masters “lord”, for God alone is the Lord. He was so kind to them that his last advice before he passed away was “Fear and respect God, in the matter of slaves”.

Prophet Muhammad also said,

“These slaves are your brothers and sisters over whom God has given you temporary power. If they are not suited to your temperament, release them. Do not be hard on God’s creatures. Give them to eat what you eat, and give them to wear what you wear. Do not give them so much work that they cannot do it all. If you give them a lot of work, then give them a hand to finish that work.”

Muhammad’s treatment of the people is best illustrated by his personal assistant secretary Anas, “I had been working for the Prophet for ten years and he never snubbed me even once. He never criticized anything I did for him and he never resented if I failed to do something. He treated all his servants and dependents the same way. He never beat any of his servants.

## The Disabled

The Prophet (Peace be upon him), with his overflowing compassion and love, was extremely concerned about and gave special attention to those who were physically and or mentally challenged. Throughout history until the present day, societies have unjustly neglected the disabled and weak. They were and still are, treated as outcasts, unwanted burdens on society. The Prophet of mercy raised them from the abyss of misery and pity to the heights of happiness and success by teaching:

‘Show mercy to those on earth, and He who is in the heavens will have mercy upon you.’

This profound prophetic dictum encompassed the normally neglected sections of society: the blind, the deaf, and the mentally and/or physically disabled.

One of the most striking examples of this is the incident concerning a blind man named Abdullah, son of Makhtum, which shows that God used even the Prophet’s slight inattention towards the weak to instruct humanity. This blind and poor person once came to the Prophet to learn something. The Prophet who was talking with some Quraysh leaders in an attempt to persuade them to accept Islam ignored the blind man. As a result of this, God revealed a verse pointing to this action of the Prophet.

“He frowned and turned away, because the blind man had approached him. Yet for all you did know, [O Muhammad,] he might perhaps have grown in purity, or would have remained [for the truth], and helped by this reminder. Now as for him who believes himself to be self-sufficient – to him did you give your whole attention, although you are not accountable for his failure to attain to purity; but as for him who came unto you full of eagerness and

in awe [of God] – him you disregard.”(Quran, 80:110)

Afterwards, whenever Abdullah, son of Makhtum, visited the Prophet, the latter would give him the warmest welcome saying, “*Welcome to the one because of whom my Sustainer blamed me.*” Not only that, the Prophet appointed the blind man as governor of Medina twice.

## Orphans

The rights of parents and the kinsfolk have the foremost priority. After these people, the weaker sections of society deserve our kind treatment. In this regard, the orphans and the indigent persons have been mentioned first.

The Quran says:

“And treat with kindness the orphans and the indigent ones.” (Quran, 4:36)

The father’s or mother’s demise deprives a child of love, care and sometimes economic stability which are of basic importance. So it is the responsibility of a society to take care of these orphan children, and not to allow these children to feel the loss of their fathers or mothers. Any negligence on the part of the society would not only affect their physical growth, but impair them mentally and emotionally. It is very likely that such uncared for children may harbour rebellious tendencies against such heartless society. Instead of being good citizens, they could turn into anti-social elements.

Prophet Muhammad became an orphan at an early age. His father (Abdullah) died before he was born, and his mother (Aminah) died six years later. His status as an orphan had a great impact upon his life, as seen in his deep concern for orphans and their welfare throughout his life. In fact, he even considered them his own children. He was always a shade

and support for them. The Prophet tirelessly endeavored to raise and educate orphans so that they would be a vital part of society.

“But nay, nay, [O men, consider all that you do and fail to do:] you are not generous towards the orphan, and you do not urge one another to feed the needy, and you devour the inheritance [of others] with devouring greed, and you love wealth with boundless love.” (Quran, 89:17-20 )

The Quran and the traditions of the Prophet have repeatedly stressed the need to take care of these orphaned children, their educational needs and their property.

Prophet Muhammad was kind to all people, especially to orphans. He asked his companions to follow his example and be gentle with them.

Abu Hurairah reported, Prophet Muhammad as stating that: *“The best house among the Muslims is the one which contains an orphan who is well treated, and the worst house among the Muslims is the one which contains an orphan who is badly treated.”*

And Abu Umamah reported the Prophet as saying: *“If anyone lovingly patted an orphan’s head, doing so only for God’s sake, he will have blessings for every hair over which his hand passes; and if anyone treats well an orphan girl or boy under his care, he and I shall be like these two in Paradise,”* putting two of his fingers together.

Orphans could not take care of their own rights because of their helplessness and lack of understanding. It is easy to usurp their rights. The Quran has condemned such usurpers.

“Those who unjustly eat up the property of orphans, eat up a fire into their own bodies, they will soon be enduring a blazing fire.” (Quran, 4:10 )



Islam makes the society responsible for not only taking care of these orphaned children, but also helps them to become God-fearing and civilized citizens who would be an asset to the society.

## Indigent

In the Quran, the indigent have been mentioned along with the orphans. The indigent persons are those who cannot meet their own basic needs because of their physical handicaps and economic depravities. People in economic distress should be helped so that they will not only be able to meet their basic needs, but also be able to regain economic stability. The Quran and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) have both repeatedly mentioned the moral and the legal rights of the indigents and the needy persons. At one place, the Quran says:

“So give what is due to kindred, the needy, and the way-farer. That is best for those who seek the countenance of God, and it is they who will prosper.”  
( *Quran, 30 : 38* )

The indigent and the needy persons are commonly said to be beggars. Begging is not an indication of helplessness or hard times, some people beg without any helplessness. They are not the indigent, but indigent-faced. On the contrary, there are people who are in dire need, but their self-respect prevents them from extending their hands before others. The Quran says that such persons of genuine needs are left far behind economically and they should be taken care of.

The Quran says:

“The ignorant man thinks, because of their modesty, that they are free from want, you shall know them by their [unfailing] mark: they beg not importunately [demandingly] from all and sundry.” (*Quran, 2 : 273*)

In one narration of Abu Hurairah, we find an explanation of this verse. He says, the Prophet had stated:

‘An indigent person is not the one who goes begging and whom you give one or two handfuls of food, or one or two date fruits, but he is the one who inspite of being helpless to meet his minimum needs, appears to be such that no one could either make out his real condition to give him any offering or a charity, nor does he stand begging from people.’

In this way, attention has been drawn to these respectable, but really needy people in society.

## Sick Persons

Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was particularly keen on calling upon sick persons and on visiting them, he enquired about their health, sat by their side, passed his hands over the sick person’s forehead and if they asked for anything to eat, he would arrange for it. He caressed the patient, pacified them and told them “God willing, you will recover soon.” The moment he heard of an illness of any person, Muslim or non-Muslim, he went to see them. He even called on Abdullah, son of Ubayy, enemy of Islam and the leader of the hypocrites, when he was ill.

## Women

In order to judge the incorrect ideas held by western people, it would be useful to survey the attitudes towards women in different societies in the past: During the Roman civilization, for example; a woman was regarded as a slave. The Greeks considered women as a commodity to be bought and sold.

Early Christianity regarded women as temptresses, (a woman who sets out to allure or seduce a man or men) responsible for the fall of Adam from Heaven.

In India, Sati was a religious funeral practice among some Indian communities in which a widowed woman would have immolated herself on her husband's funeral pyre. The practice had been banned several times.

In France, in 587 CE, a conference was held to study the status of women and to determine whether a woman could truly be considered a human being or not! Henry VIII in England forbade the reading of the bible by women and throughout the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church treated women as second-class citizens. Before 1850, women were not counted as citizens in England and English women had no personal rights until 1882.

Many incidents reported these days from various parts of the world give us the impression that we, at least in terms of the treatment of women, are going back to a time identical to the ignorance period, the age before the emergence of Islam in 7th Century.

Prophet Muhammad completely rejected and condemned the attitude of the pre-Islamic Times of Ignorance when the girls were hated and the news of the birth of female child was the worst news one could ever expect in his lifetime.

The Quran says about this era:

“And when the good news is given to any of them of a daughter, His face turns dark and he is filled with grief.”(Quran, 16 : 58)

In Pre-Islamic 7th century Arabia, the custom of killing female children was very common. The Prophet made it unlawful and cautioned parents that there would be a severe punishment for this act on the Day of Judgment. They killed

their children for three reasons and the Quran has mentioned all the three. First, they sacrificed their children at the altar of their gods to please them: (See Quran,6:37 and again, see Quran, 6:140)

Secondly, they killed their children for fear of poverty. The Quran cautioned them against this and made it absolutely unlawful for anyone to kill their children:

“And you should not kill your children for fear of poverty, for We provided sustenance for them also.”  
(Quran, 6:151)

And again, in chapter 17 *‘The Night Journey,’* we find these words,

“Do not kill your offspring for fear of want: for it is We Who provide for them and for you as well.  
Indeed their killing is a heinous excuse.”  
(Quran, 17:1)

This verse cuts at the very root of birth control, which has been going on from ancient times to our present age. It was the fear of want that induced people to kill their children or resort to abortion. In our age, another means has been added to these, i.e., contraception and pre-natal ultra sound imaging.

A newly born girl child was a subject of embarrassment and she was buried alive in order to avoid disgrace of having a female child, one out of every ten men was guilty of this crime. Not only men, but women also participated in the act. Mothers handed over their girl child for burial. These practices are continued in today’s modern world in the form of female foeticide. According to a World Children’s Report by UNICEF, boys are outnumbering girls in India, there are only 880 girls per 1000 boys in India. It also reveals the global sex ratio of 954 girls to 1000 boys. The drop in female

birth rate is due to female foeticide.

An estimated number of about 70 million of Female children are caused to perish before their birth every year; these staggering figures must put the whole mankind to shame and must jolt from head to toe every person with conscience. But still, we are forced to believe that we are living in a civilised world that cares for the human rights?

The combination of a strong cultural preference for boys and pre-natal ultrasound imaging has led to couples identifying and aborting female fetuses so that their only permitted child is male.

The Quran mentions this in connection with accountability on the Day of Judgment when the murderer of the girl child will be questioned as to why they killed their daughter:

“On the Day of Judgment ‘When the infant girl buried alive is asked,’ for what crime she was killed.”  
(*Quran, 81:8-9*)

Once a man narrated to the Prophet something gruesome that he had done, following the pre-Islamic practice of female infanticide, he had taken his daughter to the desert and, after placing her in a ditch, had started to bury her alive. The innocent little girl had cried out “Daddy! Daddy!”, but the man ignored her cries. The Prophet, visualizing this tragedy overwhelmed by emotions and tears.

The Quran totally changed this attitude of parents towards their children and taught equal treatment towards them, irrespective of their sex or color. All are children are entitled to the same treatment. In order to change this long established attitude of parents, the Prophet actually leaned more towards female children. His love and affection for his daughter Fatimah was a bright example.

Anas reported Prophet Muhammad as saying;

'He, who brought up two girls properly till they grew up, he and I would come (together) (very closely) on the Day of Resurrection, and he interlaced his fingers (for explaining the point of nearness between him and that person).'

Prophet Muhammad has clearly demonstrated that a girl is not a matter of humiliation to a family. On the other hand, she is a matter of pride. A man who brings up his daughters in a proper way will be among those who have the honor of standing close to the Prophet on the Day of Judgment.

In Arabian peninsula prior to Islam, had a number of rather strange marriage customs. Men married frequently, taking as many wives as they liked. Ten, twenty, some times hundreds of wives as a measure of social status. Divorce was easy and frequent. Quran abounded this practice and puts restriction and strict rules. There was another prevailing practice: men would swear oaths to abstain from sex with their wives, thus leaving them in limbo: they would neither be divorced and free to remarry nor be treated as proper wives. Some women could pass their entire life in such bondage. The Quran tells these men to make up their mind, 'either keep or release them in a fair manner. (see Quran, Chapter 2, verse 224 to 227).

The Pre-Islamic Arabia, females were not entitled to any inheritance. On the contrary, women were used as property to be bought and sold or owned and inherited and assigned as payment for debts. Inheritance was the sole preserve of those who wielded the sword. The Quran repeals all this and establishes new rules. It insists that women have a right not just to inheritance but also, by corollary, to property.

Caliph Umar once said: 'During the pre-Islamic period, we did not consider women to be worth anything. However, after the coming of Islam, when God Himself expressed His concern for them, we realized that they also had rights over us'.

Islam is the first religion to recognize the rights of women. Islam brought far reaching reforms in respect to the condition and status of women. For the first time in the history of human civilization, the principle of equality between the sexes was recognized and practically put into effect. Islam provided an efficient legal frame work for the protection of her dignity and safeguards against her exploitation. The Islamic law bestows on her all the rights due to her as an independent human being.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) presided over a process of social transformation, in 23 years of his Prophethood, he liberated women from the dark age of obscurity, insecurity and he elevated the women to a dignified level; after reforming the society, he applied strict Capital punishment for Rape, Murder and Killing of newly born girl child, and also he abolished and imposed ban on Prostitution, Gambling, Dance and Wine drinking Orgies (live bands). He did not allow females to be looked upon as 'economic burden' plaything or object of lust.

The contribution of Prophet Muhammad, in social transformation, had far-reaching impact; He liberated women from the dark age of obscurity, insecurity and he elevated the women to a dignified level.

The Prophet urged men to be kind and considerate towards their wives. He is reported to have said; "*The best among you are those who are the most kind to their wives.*"





‘ *Al - Suffah* ’

The First University of Islam

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was particularly conscious of creating mass literacy, he worked out a comprehensive scheme for the dissemination of knowledge through the establishment of schools; *Al-Suffah* was such an example. Suffa, a rectangular platform erected for the purpose of new emigrants, who had none by the way of family to look after their needs, were provided shelter here.

The Prophet asked those among them who were literate, to impart literacy to general folk in Medinah. Some others who had scholarly disposition would be engaged in communicating the precepts and practices of Islam to the new entrants to the fold of Islam. Yet others would be dispatched to hamlets of tribes who were accepting Islam on a daily basis and demanded instruction in their new faith.

Suffah was a school by day and a hostel by night for the swelling ranks of neo-Muslims. In essence, it was the first residential university of Islam. Maaz son of Jabal, an eminent companion, was appointed the chief mentor.

The Prophet came to the *Al-Suffah*, one day from his private quarters. He saw two groups of people. Some were busy with rosaries and the other in learning. The Prophet commented that ‘*even though both were engaged in good acts, but the group which was busy in learning was better.*’ Having said this, he joined the learning group.

Prophet Muhammad also said:

“An hour spent at night acquiring knowledge is worthier than a whole sleepless night spent in worship.”



Soon after the founding of *Al-Suffah*, other schools were established. Islamic Scholar, Baladhuri, has stated that apart from *Al-Suffah*, there were nine schools attached to mosques in different locations in Medinah city.

## Promotion of Knowledge

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) attached great importance to the pursuit of knowledge and declared that, *“The acquisition of knowledge is an obligation on every Muslim.”*

“A small amount of knowledge is better than a lot of prayer.”

Prophet observed that, *“The superiority of a scholar over a pious person is like the superiority of the full moon over the stars.”*

“Angels spread out their wings for the seeker of knowledge.”

## Education of Women

The Prophet Muhammad has said: “If you educate one man you are educating only one person, whereas when you educate one girl or women you are educating a whole family.”

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) made no distinction between men and women with regard to the pursuit of knowledge. As and when the verse of the Quran was revealed, the Prophet used to recite them first in the assembly of men and then in the assembly of women. He also set apart one day during the week exclusively for the education of women. They would ask him all sorts of questions. The Prophet would answer them with patience and affection.

## UHUD

### Nothing is ever Final

Beyond his spiritual and social teachings, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) remained watchful of the security of Medinah Muslims, and he knew that the Quraysh were preparing for their revenge for their defeat at Battle of Badr. He received a letter from his uncle Abbas informing him that an army of more than three thousand men had set out towards Medina. Muhammad had only about a week to think up his strategy and organize the resistance.

Prophet Muhammad very quickly decided to organize a consultation meeting (*Shura*) to get his Companions' opinions on the matter. They could choose between remaining inside the city and waiting for the enemy to enter, so as to ambush them, or marching out of the city and directly facing the enemy in a nearby plain. The Prophet, like many of his Companions, including the unreliable Abdullah, son of Ubayy, a hypocrite, felt that they should wait for the enemy inside the city. Nevertheless, during the debates, his opinion was defeated, particularly through the opposition of the younger Muslim Companions and those who had not taken part in the Battle of Badr.

The majority had voted in favor of marching out of the city and confronting the enemy face-to-face. Prophet Muhammad accepted the decision and promptly went home to put on his battle gear, for they had no time to waste. Feeling guilty and thinking that perhaps it would be better for them to obey the Prophet; some Companions came to him as he was walking out of his home and suggested that the decision should be reconsidered and they should act according to his opinion. Prophet Muhammad refused categorically. The decision had been taken collectively, he had dressed for battle, and turning back was out of the question.

## The March to Uhud

The Muslims set out towards Uhud located five kilometers north of Medinah on 23 March, 625 C.E, third year of hijrah, at Mount Uhud. The Muslim army was a thousand strong, about to face an enemy of three thousand. As they were marching on, Abdullah, son of Ubayy a hypocrite decided to desert, followed by three hundred of his men. Abdullah, a hypocrite, reproached the Prophet for having allowed young, inexperienced people to influence him, instead of taking the decision – which had been his own as well – to remain in Medinah and wait for the enemy. His desertion was a serious matter, since it reduced to seven hundred the Muslim army, which could no longer change their strategy or turn back. Ibn Ubayy's hypocrisy was well known, and he was suspected of multiple betrayals: that decision, just before the showdown, was additional evidence of his duplicity. The Muslim army moved on, although they were now considerably weakened.

The Muslim army had to find an inconspicuous route to Uhud that would enable the army to approach the battleground without its movements being anticipated or discovered. Once again, the Prophet trusted a non-Muslim

guide who answered his call. Then this guide's abilities were widely known and he led the Muslim army to their destination.

Muslim army took up their positions, and the Prophet explained his fighting strategy to his troops. Muslim archers were to stay on the hillside, while the horsemen and soldiers directly confronted the enemy in the plains.

Prophet Muhammad addressed his archers:

'If you see us slain, do not come to assist us; if you see us snatched into pieces by birds, do not leave this position of yours till I send for you. Whether we win the battle or lose it, do not desert your positions, stand steadily in your position and mind that we are not attacked from your side.'

The Prophet ordered the archers not to leave their posts under any circumstance, whether the troops below might seem to be winning or losing, in order to prevent the Quraysh from coming round the hill and attacking the troops from behind.

This was in fact what one of the Quraysh divisions of the army tried to do at the very beginning of the first phase of the battle, but they were greeted with a shower of arrows that compelled them to move back. The strategy was working perfectly.



## The Battle of Uhud

The war began and, down in the plains, the Muslim troops were gradually taking control. The Quraysh were losing ground and suffering many losses, while the Muslim army displayed remarkable courage.

Among those fighters, two women stood out for their energy and vigor: Ume Sulaym and an Ansar woman called Nusaybah, who had initially come to carry water and aid the wounded, and who eventually stepped into the battle, took a sword, and fought the Quraysh. The Prophet had never invited or advised women to fight, but when he saw Nusaybah's spirit and energy in the battle, he praised her behavior and prayed to God to protect her and grant her victory and success.

It was becoming clear that the Muslim army was winning, in spite of setbacks and the death of some Companions. Nevertheless, as the battle progressed, it seemed that victory could not escape the Muslims, who kept pressing forward while the Quraysh pulled back, leaving their horses and belongings behind them.

The archers, posted on the hillside, looked at the favorable turn of events, on victory close at hand, and especially on the booty that lay within reach of the soldiers who were, unlike them, fighting at the front. They forgot the Prophet's orders and the injunctions of their leader, Abdullah, son of Zubayr. Only a few archers stayed on the hillside, while about forty of them ran down the hill, convinced

that victory was achieved and that they too were entitled to a share in the booty.

Quraysh army commander, Khalid, a fine tactician who led one of the three Quraysh divisions, noticed the archers' move and immediately decided to sweep round the hill and attack the Muslim troops from behind. He succeeded in launching a pincer attack on the Prophet's Companions that resulted in total confusion, and the Muslim army scattered in utter disorder. Some were killed and some ran away, while others kept fighting without really knowing where to strike.

Prophet Muhammad was attacked, even narrowly escaped death, a stone from a sling split his upper lip and broke one of his front teeth; another blow from a rock drove two rings of the chain-mail under his helmet into his flesh and blood poured from the gash in his forehead. He fell to the ground stunned, but was carried away to safety. Six of his helpers were killed, while the seventh was severely wounded, desperately fighting in defense of the Prophet.

A Rumor spread that; the Prophet had been killed, which increased the chaos among Muslims. Eventually, some Companions carried him to his mount and protected him, thus enabling him to escape his attackers.

The Muslims managed to pull out of the battlefield, where it was getting increasingly difficult to see what was going on, and gathered to face the enemy again if needed. When the battle ended, there were only twenty-two dead among the Quraysh, while there were seventy dead among the Muslims.

## Revenge

Hamzah (may God be pleased with him), Prophet Muhammad's uncle had been the target of Hind, wife of the Quraysh leader Abu Sufyan, and had been seeking, she wanted

to take revenge since the defeat at Badr. Wahshi, an Abyssinian spearman had been assigned the single task of killing Hamzah, and this was what he concentrated on doing. While Prophet Muhammad's uncle Hamzah was fighting, Wahshi drew near him and threw his spear with utmost precision, hitting Hamzah and killing him instantly. Later on, Hind sought out Hamzah's body on the battlefield, and after chewing on his liver, thereby fulfilling her promise to drink his blood in revenge for her relatives' deaths, she disfigured him, cutting off his ears and nose and hanging them around her neck.

The Quraysh carried away their dead and all their belongings. When the Muslims, in their turn, went back to the battlefield, they saw that the corpses had been mutilated; The Prophet was most affected at the sight of his uncle Hamzah.

The Prophet wanted the bodies of the living as well as the dead to be respected, that no torture or mutilation be ever accepted or promoted, in the name of respect for creation and for human beings' dignity and integrity.

## Archer's Disobedience

The archer's disobedience had dramatic consequences. Attracted by wealth and profit, the archers had succumbed to old practices from their pagan past. Despite being nurtured with the message of faith in the One God, justice, and detachment from worldly goods, they had suddenly forgotten everything when they saw riches within their reach. War victories were measured, in their ancient pagan tradition, by the amount of booty gained, and that part and part of themselves and of their culture, had gotten the better of their spiritual education. Consequently, the Muslims had been trapped by the strategy of a formidable man, Khalid, son of

Walid, who a few years later was to convert to Islam and become the Muslim community's warrior hero. That particular moment of the Uhud encounter is rich with profound teaching: human beings can never completely overcome the culture and experience that has fashioned their past and no final judgment can ever be expressed as to future of their choices and orientation. The Muslims were caught up by an unfortunate feature of their past customs; Khalid, son of Walid, was to undergo a future conversion that would wipe out whatever judgments had been pronounced about this past. "Nothing is ever final" is a lesson in humility; "no final judgment should be passed" is a promise of hope.

## SHURA Mutual Consultation

The Muslims had gone back to Medinah, wounded, deeply disappointed, by the turn of events: due to disobedience of the archers; their dead were many; Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and many honorable companions were wounded.

During the days that followed, Prophet Muhammad received a Revelation that returned to the subject of the Battle of Uhud, and in particular the disagreements about strategic choices, the disobedience of archers, the deaths of companions, and then the Prophet's attitude.

The Prophet had remained composed and understanding towards the Companions who had been carried away by their desire for wealth and had disobeyed him.

The Quran relates the event and confirms what we said at the beginning of the present chapter, about the constant blending of respect for principles and the strength of gentleness in the Prophet's personality:



“It was by the mercy of God that you were lenient [gentle] with them, for if you had been severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from you. So pardon them and ask for God’s forgiveness for them; and consult them upon the conduct of affairs. Then, when you have taken a decision, put your trust in God, for God loves those who put their trust in Him.” (Quran, 3 : 159)

The string of events had started with the decision taken against the Prophet’s opinion; then, of course, there had been the archers’ disobedience.

The Quran here confirms the principle of *Shura*, consultation, whatever the result: this Revelation is of crucial importance states that the principle of deliberation, of majority decision making, is not to be negotiated and must be respected beyond historical contingencies and human mistakes in decision.

Muslims are, therefore, those who “conduct their affairs by mutual consultation,” and that principle must remain even though the ways in which it is implemented cannot fail to change over time and from place to place.

As far as the archers’ disobedience is concerned, Revelation of Quran points out that the Prophet’s qualities of heart were what enabled him to overcome the situation and keep his Companions around him. He was neither severe nor harsh-hearted, and he did not condemn them for being carried away by the reflexive greed stemming from their past customs. Prophet Muhammad’s gentleness soothed the Companions, pain and enabled them to draw many lessons from that setback: God accompanied their fate in so far as they themselves felt responsible for it.





## HUMILITY

Prophet Muhammad ( Peace be upon him ) said:

‘Humility and courtesy are themselves ways of reverencing God.’

Humility derives from the Latin word *humus*, earth. From the same root comes our name—*hominis*, human being. We are made of the earth, as it is said, and the earth we shall return. The Anglo-Saxon equivalent gives us the word *lowly*. Humility or lowliness means to acknowledge that one is a human being—no more and no less—and not God.

Almighty God says in the Quran;

“Nor walk on the earth with arrogance: for you cannot break it open nor can you match the mountains in height.” (*Quran, 17 : 37*)

Furthermore,

“And turn not your face away from men with pride, nor walk in arrogance through the earth. Verily, God likes not each arrogant boaster.” (*Quran, 31 : 18*)

Prophet Muhammad lived in such fear of God that he was always a picture of humility.

In Medinah, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) lived in the long, low, mud-brick house with open windows with a palm leaf roof that he had helped to build with his own hands. It was divided into partitions for his wives, and Prophet Muhammad – again like a Bedouin ‘lord of the tent’ – had no sleeping quarters of his own. Muhammad later introduced a curtain such as the one that divides the Bedouin black tent in the desert. He lived a most simple, and modest life. During the day, he was the busiest man of his era as he was Head of State, Chief Justice, Commander-in-Chief, Instructor, etc., all at once. At night, he was the most devoted man. He used to stay one to two-thirds of every night vigilant in prayers and meditation, often bursting with tears, his voice would get choked due to weeping before Almighty God to Grant him strength to discharge his duties.

His furniture consisted of a woven palm mat, jugs, blankets and such simple things, although he was the king and sovereign of Arabian Peninsula. His life was so severe and simple that his wives once pressed him for worldly comforts but they never had. He never ate at a table, but always kneeling or squatting on the ground in the open air in the Bedouin manner. He used only his right hand to eat, seldom a knife. He preferred the simple white dress; the house from where light had spread to the world was in darkness because there was no oil in the lamp.

● In spite of having access to all power, Prophet Muhammad left nothing behind him for his family. Neither did he leave a will. All he left behind him was the simple dictum: ‘We prophets have no heirs, whatever we leave behind is to be given in alms.’

These were the words of the founder of the world’s greatest empire, knowing fully-well that it was soon to annex Asia and Africa and cross the borders of Europe.

*'I am like a Traveler'*

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was the ruler of the Arabian Peninsula and had such a faithful band of companions, as would be hard to find again in the whole history of mankind.

Umar, one of Prophet's close Companions, narrates how one day he went to see the Prophet at his home. "When I entered his room, I saw that he was resting on a mat of date palms and had no shirt on. The marks of the mat were visible on his back. Wooden table placed in a corner and a small quantity, of barley." On seeing this, I could not help, but weep. 'What makes you weep?' The Prophet asked. "The Roman and Persian emperors enjoy all worldly comforts, yet you – the Messenger of God – are suffering so much', I replied. On hearing these words, the Prophet sat up and said, "*Umar, what on earth do you mean? Don't you want those people to have the world and we to have the Hereafter?*"

● The entire state of Medinah, where Prophet Muhammad lived, grew wealthy in the later days of his life, yet in those days of prosperity, many days would elapse without a fire being kindled in the kitchen of the emperor of the Arabian Peninsula, his food being dates and water. His family would go hungry many nights successively because they could not get anything to eat in the evening.

When Urwah, one of his Companions, asked the Prophet's wives, how they survived with food in such short supply, they answered that their diet consisted of dates and water. It seldom happened that the Prophet's family had enough grain in store to last out three days in succession.

● Once an Ansari lady came to Aishah and saw the bed of the Prophet, which was a layer of a cloak. She went back and

brought a bed stuffed with wool. When the Prophet asked, *what it was*, Aishah said, “O! God’s Messenger, one Ansari lady came and saw your bed and then sent this (for you).” The Prophet asked her to “*send it back*”, but Aishah did not send it and thought that it was better that it should remain in her house, “*By God, O Aisha, if I had wished, God would have made mountains of gold and silver for me.*” Prophet said.

- One day Prophet Muhammad was resting on a coarse mat, which had left marks on his body. Some of the Companions asked him, “If you permit us, we will get a soft bed for you.” The Prophet replied,

‘What have I to do with this world? I am like a traveler, who takes some rest for a while under the shade of a tree in a burning afternoon, and then resumes his journey.’

## Lenient

Aishah reported that Muhammad was very present and engaged in his household, that he was very thoughtful and helped with the housework, “sewed his clothes, repaired his shoes, milked his goats, and stitched his tore apparels and leather buckets. He carried loads, gave fodder to animals. If there was a servant he also worked with him and shared his labour. He himself brought provisions from the market and carried them in a sheet of cloth.” Ayesha also said, “The Prophet was the most lenient man at home. In fact, there was no one more affectionate to his people than the Prophet.”

- In the use of conveyance Prophet Muhammad preferred the horse; he cleaned the eyes, nose and mouth of the horse with his own hands.

## No Special Privilege

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) never walked ahead in front of others like a dignitary with followers. He allowed the servants or child, the dignity of leading the way.

- Prophet Muhammad would never allow a seat to be reserved for him when attending a meeting, but would sit wherever there was an empty place. Prophet Muhammad said to his Companions: *‘I am a man like you. I eat food like you and I also sit down when I am tired – like you !’*

- Prophet Muhammad did not like the idea that people should bow before him or stand up when he arrived. He was unhappy with some people who had got up as a gesture of respect for him and admonished them for imitating the manners of foreigners. In other words, he would accept no special privileges for himself.

“The true servants of the Most Gracious God are those who walk on earth with humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say ‘Peace!’”  
(Quran, 25:63)

## No Discrimination

On one of his journeys, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) asked his Companions to roast a goat. One volunteered to slaughter the animal, another to skin it, and another to cook it. The Prophet said that he would collect wood. “Messenger of God,” his companions protested, we will do all the work.” *“I know that you will do it,”* the Prophet replied, *“But that would amount to discrimination, which I don’t approve of. God does not like His servants to assert any superiority over their Companions.”*

## Forbearance

Once the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) had to borrow some money from a Jew by the name of Zayd, son of Sa'nah. A few days before the date fixed for the repayment of the debt, the Jew came to demand his money back. He went up to the Prophet, caught hold of his clothes, and said to him harshly: "Muhammad, why don't you pay me my due? From what I know of the descendants of Muttalib, they all put off paying their debts." 'Umar was with the Prophet at that time. He became very angry, scolded the Jew and was on the verge of beating him up. But the Prophet just kept quiet. All he said to the Jew was: "*There are still three days left for me to fulfill my promise.*"

Then he addressed Umar: "Zayd and I deserved better treatment from you," 'You should have told me to be better at paying my debts, and him to be better at demanding them. Take him with you, and pay him his due; in fact, give him 20 sa'ahs (about forty kilos) of dates extra because you have alarmed him with your threats.' "

The most remarkable thing about this episode is that the Prophet could still behave with such forbearance and humility even after being head of the Islamic state of Medina.

## Smiling and Cordial

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) lived among others as an equal. No bitter criticism or provocation would make him lose his composure. Once a desert-dweller came up to him and pulled so hard at the scarf he was wearing that it left a mark on his neck. "Muhammad!" he said. "Give me two camel-loads of goods, for the money in your possession is not yours, nor was it your father's." "Everything belongs

to God,” the Prophet said, “*and I am His servant.*” The Prophet then asked the desert-dweller “*hasn't it made you afraid, the way you treated me?*” He said ‘No’. The Prophet asked him, *why?* “Because I know that you do not require evil with evil,” the man answered. The Prophet smiled on hearing this, and had one camel-load of barley and another of dates given to him.

### Compassionate

“A black woman was the sweeper of the Medinah mosque. One day, failing to see her, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) queried about her. He was informed that she had passed away. The Prophet said: “*why didn't you inform me before?*” Show me her grave, he went to grave yard with his companions, standing by her grave, the Prophet prayed for her. ”

### Calmness and Dignity

Prophet Muhammad did not like noise and turmoil and preferred calm, dignity and order in everything that he did or undertook.

He even prohibited his followers from rushing to prayers (*Namaaz*) and running towards the mosque.

He used to say, “*Calmness and dignity is for you.*” Once he noticed a lot of hustle and bustle, noise and chaos on the eve of *Hajj* Pilgrimage. The Prophet restored order by raising his whip and said, “*Undue hurry is no virtue.*”

### Redemption to Mankind

Victors usually tend to be susceptible to two kinds of feeling - pride and vengeance. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), however, after his conquest of Makkah in 8 *Hijrah*, displayed neither of these traits. Prophet Muhammad has brought redemption, salvation to mankind. His victory was



that of a Prophet of God. According to Ibn Ishaq, when the Prophet entered Makkah, his head was bowed so low that people saw that his beard was touching the camel's saddle. Such was the humility of the Prophet, even in his hour of triumph. Standing at the door of the Kaabah, the Prophet delivered an address, in the course of which he said, 'There is none worthy of being served save the One God. He has fulfilled His promise and offered succor to His slave.' 'He alone has brought the hosts of enemies low.'

He did not, in other words, claim any credit for the victory: he attributed it entirely to God.

*' I am servant of God '*

Once Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) companion started to say, "If it be the will of God and the will of the Prophet..." The Prophet's face changed color in anger and became very sensitive when he heard this.

'Are you trying to equate me with God?' he asked the man severely. Rather say: "If God, alone, wills.'

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

'You should not be as lavish in your [praise and] admiration of me as Christians were of Jesus. You may call me a slave and a Prophet of God [i.e. never as son of God nor as one possessing any divine attributes].'

The Prophet said:

'Woe unto them that they turned the graves of their prophets into tabernacle; Do not turn my grave into a place of worship.'

## Trench, Treason and a Trick

The situation had become difficult for the Muslim community in Medina. The event of Uhud had had manifold consequences, not the least of which was their loss of prestige in the sight of the neighboring tribes, who now viewed them differently and thought them weak. The Muslims were seen as weakened, and many expeditions were being organized against them to try to take advantage of that situation. As for Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who was sometimes warned of planned attack on Medinah, he would send his men in groups of 100 to 150 to the various tribes to pacify them or prevent an aggression.

The fourth year of *Hijrah* (626-C.E.) was largely taken up with such low-intensity local conflicts, which nevertheless served to modify (and sometimes maintain) the alliances of the balance of power in the area. This amounted to a kind of chess game between Makkan Quraysh and the Medinah Muslims, they knew that a full – scale confrontation lay ahead. The Makkan Quraysh did not conceal their desire to eradicate the Muslim community from the Arab peninsula, and to that end, they kept making pacts with the neighboring tribes. Their situation was all the more difficult because the most direct commercial routes to the north, leading to Syria and Iraq by the coast, were still watched over and controlled by Medinah Muslims. The Quraysh therefore felt that they had to take

swift and drastic action to liberate the routes that their caravans needed to take to go to Syria and Iraq.

## The Allies

The anti-Islam tribes in the Arab Peninsula, and the Quraysh were preparing a full – scale attack to crush the Muslim community and finally put an end to Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) mission. The Banu Nadir tribe's, chief, Huyay, went to Makkah with Jewish leaders from Khaybar to seal an alliance with the Quraysh that left no room for doubt: Prophet Muhammad and his community must be attacked and eliminated. To this end, they contacted other tribes to integrate them into the pact; the Banu Nadir, Asad, Banu Ghatafan, and Banu Sulaym joined in as an Allied force to crush Islam.

The Quraysh and its allied forces assembled were considerable, and when the armies marched off towards Medinah, it seemed that the Muslims were no match for them. The Quraysh army and their allies from the south were more than four thousand strong, and another army, coming from Najd in the east, and made up of various tribes, brought together more than six thousand men. The city of Medinah was going to be attacked from two sides, and then encircled, by ten thousand warriors: one could hardly imagine its Muslim inhabitants coming out of Medinah unharmed.

When the Quraysh armies set out, the Prophet's uncle Abbas secretly sent a delegation from Makkah to Medinah to warn Prophet Muhammad of the enemy attack. When the delegation reached Medinah, the Muslims of Medinah had only a month or less left to draw up a resistance strategy. They could not hope to muster more than three thousand soldiers, less than a third of the enemy force.

## Inventiveness and Foreign War Technique

True to Islamic custom, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) gathered his Companions and consulted them about the situation and the plan of action they should adopt. Some felt that they must go out and meet the enemy, as they had done at Badr. Others thought that only by waiting inside the city would they have a chance to succeed, and that lessons must be drawn from the battle of Uhud. Among the Companions present was a Persian named Salman (Salman Al-Farisi), whose story was special in many ways. He had long been in quest of the truth and of God, and he had traveled towards Makkah in the hope of living closer to the Prophet. He took part in their meetings and stood out by his dedication and devotion. When Salman Farisi rose to speak, he suggested a strategy till then unknown to the Arabs: "O Messenger of God, in Persia, when we feared an attack from a cavalry, we used to dig a trench around the city. Let us dig a trench around us!" The idea was unexpected, but all the Companions liked it and they decided to implement it. They had to act fast, having only a month to dig a trench sufficiently wide and deep to prevent the enemies' horses from jumping over it. And it was so deep that no man who fell in it; could come out on his own.

This was the third major confrontation with the Quraysh, and it was also, in effect, the third strategy Prophet Muhammad adopted. Badr, with the gathering around the wells, and Uhud, with the strategic use of the hill, had nothing to do with the present technique of waiting and keeping the enemy at a distance, which seemed to be the only means available to withstand the attack and possibly, if the siege lasted, to give those sheltered inside the city a chance to resist. Such inventiveness in military strategy is revealing of

the manner in which the Prophet taught his Companions both deep faith and the exploitation of intellectual creativity in all circumstances: Prophet Muhammad and his Companions did not hesitate to borrow a foreign war technique, suggested by a Persian companion and adapt it to their situation in Medina. The genius of people, the wisdom of nation, and healthy human creativity were integrated into their mode of thinking, without hesitation. The Prophet forcefully stated: “[*Human*] *wisdom is the believer’s lost belonging; he is the most worthy of it wherever he finds it.*”

This was an invitation to study the best human thoughts and products and adopt them as part of mankind’s positive heritage (*Maruf*, what is acknowledged as the common good). On a broader level, it meant showing curiosity, inventiveness, and creativity in the management of human affairs, and this appeared not only through Prophet’s approach to war and its strategies but also, as we have seen, through his way of considering the world of ideas and culture.

## The Trench

Medinah was surrounded by houses and oasis on three sides, only one side was open. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) deployed 3,000 companions to dig a trench; he gave ten yards of land to everyone for digging. Trench length was 6 km, width about 10 yards and depth about 5 yards. Thus the entire work of digging and removing 3 lakh 28 thousand sq. yards of soil was accomplished in the record time of three weeks which was a unique performance in history. The resources were so poor that some digging equipments, pick-axe and baskets were taken on loan under an agreement from Banu Quraiza tribe. Working days were long, and companions labored from dawn to sunset.

‘*I am a worker*’, Prophet Muhammad said: If there was

work to do – such as digging the defensive ditch, he took up a spade or pick-axe and dug with the rest of his Companions. He carried baskets of earth on his shoulders. Salman Al-Farsi recalled working with a pick-axe in a ditch when a large rock obstructed him and he struggled to break it. The Prophet saw his efforts and came over to help him. He took the pick-axe from his hand and gave such a blow that the rock was split in two.

Prophet Muhammad seems to have been more than ready to share in any work in progress, even domestic chores. Anas, who worked as a servant to the Prophet in his later years, recalled: ‘Prophet served me more than I served him! He has never been angry with me. He never treated me harshly.’

Prophet Muhammad just could not sit back and watch while others worked. He took part in the work, and his Companions would hear him sometimes invoking God, sometimes reciting poems, in which they would all join. Such moments of communion through work molded their fraternity and sense of belonging, and also made it possible to give collective expression to feelings, aspirations, and hopes. Thus, when he needed to unite his Companions’ energies, Prophet Muhammad summoned up all the levels of their being in the world in order to perfect the unity of his community: deep faith in the One God, the poetic phrasing of feelings, the musicality of the song of emotions. From within his community, sharing their daily lives, he attested that while he was indeed at God’s service, beyond time and space, he also experienced their history and their culture: he was one of them.

The trench that was emerging as the work progressed was a great success: it would be impossible for an enemy horseman to cross it in any spot, and the Muslim archers would without difficulty be able to prevent them from undertaking any bold attempt.

## Brilliant Commander

The military strategist in the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) persona manifested itself in a more pronounced form in the build-up for the Battle of Trench. Muhammad initiated several measures prior to the Battle.

Prophet Muhammad rode on a horse and went about the city with a few Companions to survey the spots where the defense was weak and where the Trench should be dug. The Prophet assumed the role of an engineer and personally led his followers who finished the task before the enemy could attack the city.

Knowing fully-well that digging a trench around Medinah was an entirely new innovative concept for the people of the Arabian Peninsula, he saw to it that no information pertaining to it should reach the Quraysh and its allied forces who were preparing for a massive assault against the Muslims. He wanted to spring a surprise on the enemy and therefore prohibited movement of people in and out of Medinah thereby sealing loopholes against the leakage of information about the Trench project. He appointed Ali and other companions as commandos to keep 24 hours vigilance on the borders of Medina. He even ordered to build watch towers to maintain surveillance against the enemy.

On orders of Muhammad, his companions gathered all the food grains from the farm and orchards lying outside the Medinah city, so that the enemy had to rely on their own food reserves. The Prophet thereby arranged to build up the stock of food grains within the city and averted the prospect of these falling in the hands of the enemy forces.

When the Quraysh armies began approaching Medinah, the Muslim army numbered 3,000, hurried back inside the city, behind the trench, to wait for them.

Constantin Virgil Gheorghiu (Paris, France) was a Romanian writer.

He writes the following in his book "*Mahomet.*"

‘The Soviet forces also adopted this strategy in their war against Germany. They either collected the produce or damaged the crops in the farms and orchards that lay in the path of the advancing German forces, lest they benefit from them or ruin them. This pertains to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Prophet Muhammad however deployed this as early as the 7<sup>th</sup> century. So when the Quraysh arrived on the border, they were taken by complete surprise. They had never met an enemy who so artfully stalled a direct engagement through a Trench. Nor had they encountered an enemy who deprived them of the produce from their fields and gardens. So the Quraysh soon ran out of food for the soldiers and fodder for their horses and camels.’

## The Blockade

To the south and east of Medinah, the Makkan Quraysh and their allied forces estimated around 10,000 men with six hundred horses and some camels, arrived and settled around the Medinah city on March 31, 627 C.E, *fourth year of hijrah*. The Quraysh were dismayed to find that the crops of the oasis had already harvested, there was nothing for the horses of army except the fodder they had brought with them. It was therefore imperative to make an end of the Muslims as quickly as possible. With this intention, they marched towards Medina. They were surprised to see the trench, which upset their plan to encircle the city and invade it in a joint attack from all sides. The trench was indeed a war technique



unknown to the Arabs, and therefore had to find another plan of action to conquer Medinah and defeat the Muslims.

Consultation began between Quraysh and their allied forces' to find the best means of shortening the siege and taking possession of Medinah city. They decided that a majority of forces would gather to the north in order to mobilize the Medinah forces on that side, while the rest tried to cross the trench from the unguarded south, where access seemed easier near the rocks.

## Treason

The Jewish tribe of Banu Qurayzah mainly lived in that area; they had signed an assistance treaty with Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), but they constituted the weak point in Medina's unity. Huyay, the chief of the Banu Nadir clan, insisted on going to the Banu Qurayzah fortress to speak to their chief, Kaab, son of Asad, and try to convince him to break his alliance with Prophet Muhammad. Kaab initially refused to receive Huyay, but the latter insisted so strongly that the Banu Qurayzah chief let himself be convinced, first to listen to him, then to betray the covenant made with the Medinah Muslims .

This defection of Banu Qurayzah meant that the whole strategy of the Medinah people collapsed, since the Banu Qurayzah alliance with the enemy opened a breach from inside and gave the enemy access to the city, which meant certain defeat and no less certain massacre for the Muslims.

The Jewish tribe of Banu Qurayzah agreed to join forces with the Quraysh and their allies. In the meantime, Prophet Muhammad's observations of the movements of the enemy troops in the north led him to anticipate a trick, so he decided to check the reliability of his alliances with Banu Qurayzah

in the south, for he knew the Banu Qurayzah were far from being all favorably inclined towards him.

Meanwhile, Prophet heard rumors that the Banu Qurayzah chiefs had one - sidedly broken the covenant. If the news turned out to be true, not only would the Muslim army's morale collapse, but they would have little chance of winning the battle. The Prophet sent two scouts whom he asked to gather intelligence and act wisely: if the rumor was baseless, they were to announce it loud and clear to reassure the Muslim troops and restore their courage; if it was true, they were to let him know discreetly. The news was true, the scouts reported, and Prophet Muhammad had to react immediately. He sent Zayd to the southern front with three hundred men in order to prevent any enemy attempt to get through with the Banu Qurayzah's support.

The siege was getting increasingly difficult to bear, and the Muslims had to be constantly on alert. One day, the attacks were so numerous and came from so many fronts that the Muslims could not perform the early afternoon and mid-afternoon prayers (zuhr and asr) at their respective times, nor after that, the sunset prayer (maghrib). The Prophet was annoyed, and the siege was beginning to affect the Companions' morale. Revelation tells of their feelings:

“When they came on you from above you and from below you [from all sides] and when the eyes swerved and the hearts gaped up to the throats, and you imagined various thoughts about God! In that situation, the Believers were tried: they were shaken as by a tremendous shaking.” ( Quran, 33 : 10-11 )

The trial was a difficult one, and it also revealed the sincerity and fidelity of tribes as well as individuals. Not only had the war brought to light the Banu Qurayzah clan's double-dealing, but it had also, once again, exposed the hypocrites, who were quick to think of reconsidering their commitment

or even surrendering.

The Quran says:

“And when the hypocrites and those in whose heart is a disease [doubt] say: ‘God and His Messenger promised us nothing but delusions!’” (Quran, 33:12)

And again,

“And when a section of them said: Truly our houses are bare and exposed.” (Quran, 33 : 13 )

Others merely wanted to escape the fighting and protect themselves, since it seemed obvious to them that the Muslims’ defense would shortly give way. Resisting for days in this manner appeared impossible.

The Muslims, however, were faithful to the Prophet and his example and shared his determination. It is in relation to this crisis, which brought to light the depth and sincerity of faith and of commitment to the God, that the verse about the Prophet’s exemplarity was revealed:

“You have indeed in the Messenger of God an example for he who hopes in [aspires to get close to] God and the Final Day and who remembers God intensely.” (Quran, 33 : 21 )

The meaning of the verse far transcends the circumstances of that battle. It tells of the Prophet’s role and status in and for the life of every Muslim individual, but it takes on an even more powerful dimension when one remembers the circumstances of its Revelation: a besieged community, shaken, unable within the scope of human sight and intelligence to see any way out of the impending disaster, whose ranks decline away through neglect and disloyalty, and who unite around the Messenger, his faith, and his trust. Revelation confirms this:

When the Believers, saw the Confederate forces, they said:

“This is what God and His Messenger had promised us, and God and His Messenger told us what was true.” And it only added to their faith and their zeal in obedience.” (*Quran, 33 : 22*)

## An Efficient Trick

The Muslims were in serious difficulty, but as the days went by, the Quraysh and its allied forces also found themselves in a difficult position, since they did not have much food left and the nights were bitterly cold.

At that moment, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) received a visit from Nuyam; a prominent elder from the Quraysh who was well respected by all the tribes in the Arab Peninsula, Nuyam, came to tell the Prophet that he had converted to Islam, but that nobody knew it so far. He placed himself at the Prophet’s disposal.

Ibn Hisham narrates, Nuyam was well known and respected by all the chiefs who were surrounded Medinah with hostile forces. Prophet Muhammad knew it and told Nuyam,

“Do what is necessary to stir up dispute among them!”, ‘Do what you want to loosen the grip on us; war is dishonesty!’”

Nuyam came up with an efficient trick. He first went to the Jewish tribe Banu Qurayzah. He advised them to demand from Quraysh to send some of their men as hostages, as a guarantee that they would not forsake the Banu Qurayzah. Leaders of Banu Qurayzah liked the idea and decided to send an envoy to the Quraysh leaders to explain their request.

Nuyam then hurried to the Quraysh leader Abu Sufyan

to warn him that the Banu Qurayzah were deceiving him and were in fact Prophet Muhammad's allies. He declared that they were going to ask him for men as a pledge of his fidelity, but that in reality they intended to give them up to Prophet Muhammad as evidence of their good faith.

When the Banu Qurayzah envoy came to Abu Sufyan and told him about the request for hostages, Abu Sufyan was convinced that Nuyam had spoken the truth and that the Banu Qurayzah were indeed deceiving him. Abu Sufyan immediately summoned Huyay, the Banu Nadir chief, and questioned him about that betrayal. Huyay, surprised and taken aback, at first did not know what to say, and Abu Sufyan thought he could see in this an acknowledgement of treachery.

The first signs of division were appearing in the Quraysh and their allied forces camp. Mutual trust reigned among some clans, while others were wary of each others. The news greatly weakened the resolution of the fighters in alliance and in league with the Quraysh.

Nearly two weeks had passed and nothing has been achieved the provisions of their armies were running out, while more and more of their horses were dying every day of hunger some camels also died. Tiredness, exhaustion and lack of food only heightened the atmosphere of discouragement in the allied forces camp. Then a strong, bitter wind beset the plain and convinced them that it had become impossible to overcome Medina's resistance.

Prophet Muhammad had been informed of the enemy troops' morale and so he sent his Companion Hudhayfah to gather information during the night. Hudhayfah came back with the good news of their total disarray: chaos reigned in the enemy ranks, and the cold temperatures and wind paralyzed the enemy. The men were breaking camp, and many

fighters had already left.

Prophet Muhammad told his Companions the good news after the Morning Prayer, when daylight confirmed that the enemy had gone. The siege, which took place in the fourth year of hijrah (627 C.E.), had lasted twenty five days, and the Confederates were going home beaten and defeated, without having fought, bearing the burden of a real as well as symbolic defeat.

The news of the Muslims' twofold victory spread though the Arab peninsula and radically transformed perceptions and power balances. Not only had the Muslims resisted an army more than ten thousand strong, but they had also shown unfailing determination.





## Muslims' Generosity

The Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) daughter Zaynab had been married to Abul Al-As, who had not accepted Islam. She had initially stayed with him in Makkah, until the Prophet asked her to join him in Medinah with her small daughter Umamah. Zaynab deeply loved her husband, Abu Al-As, but their different life choices had eventually caused them to part. However, neither of them had remarried.

A few months after the Battle of the Trench, the Prophet had just learned that a caravan led by Quraysh leader Abul Al-As was on its way back from Syria with a large quantity of goods and the most of the Quraysh clans had a share in this trading venture. Prophet Muhammad decided to intercept the caravan; sent Zayd to command Muslim army, to stop rich caravan coming from Syria, one reason that had propelled him to attack the caravan: the wish to recover the wealth appropriated by the enemy Quraysh, when they had seized the Muslim emigrants' belongings after their departure from Makkah to Medina. The second reason was it would serve as a show of power to impress the inhabitants of Mekkah, who were increasingly plotting against Medina.

Zayd, who commanded the Muslim horsemen, seized the caravan's goods and captured most of the Mekkan men, while others managed to get away. Among the latter was Abul al-As, who decided on his journey back to Makkah to stop at Medinah and pay a secret visit to his wife and daughter. This in itself was madness, but his desire to see his wife and child was stronger than his awareness of the risks incurred. He knocked on his wife's door in the dead of night, and Zaynab let him in, he stayed with her.

And when dawn drew near, Zaynab went to the mosque for prayer as she usually did. She entered the mosque and stood in the first line of women, just behind the men. When the Prophet said the formula announcing the beginning of prayer, she took advantage of the short pause to exclaim in a very loud voice: "O you people! I grant my protection to Abul Al-As, son of Rabi!" When the prayer was over, the Prophet, who had no prior knowledge of what had happened between his daughter and her husband, had the Companions confirm that they had heard the proclamation as well. Prophet insisted that the protection granted whether by his daughter or by any other ordinary Muslim must be respected.

Prophet Muhammad went to his daughter, who told him about the situation facing Abul Al-As, whose goods had all been taken during the recent expedition in the north and who was therefore in debt, for the said goods had been entrusted to him by people in Makkah. Prophet Muhammad suggested that the people who had those goods in their possession might give them back to Abul Al-As if they wished to, and all of them complied. Some Companions advised Abul Al-As to convert to Islam and keep those belongings for himself. He refused, saying that becoming a Muslim by betraying people's trust would not have been suitable. He took all the goods, went back to Makkah, and gave each owner his due. He then came back to Medinah, converted to Islam, and was reunited with Zaynab and their daughter Umamah.

Thus, the first Muslims' generosity and open-handedness were plain for all to see. Like the Prophet, they had required nothing of Abul Al-As: he was not a Muslim, he belonged to an enemy clan, and he refused to convert, but they let him go anyway, allowing him the freedom to choose and the time needed for his spiritual development. He even received – at a critical time in inter-clan relations – the Muslim community's protection.





## Freedom of Expression

Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) daughter Zaynab, spoke out publicly and forcefully on behalf of her husband Abul Al-As. She often went to the Prophet's mosque which was a space open to both men and women, and nobody objected to her making a statement there, among men; in fact it was not at all uncommon for Muslim women to speak up publicly in such a manner.

It was in the Prophet's mosque in Medinah that a woman (we know her to be Kholah, daughter of Thalaba and wife of Aws bin Thabit) complained to the Prophet Muhammad about being insulted and abused by her husband. But this was not an ordinary complaint: she has a fierce argument with the Prophet, who by now was also the political leader of the community, and expressed her opinion openly and forcefully. Indeed, she was so outspoken that the Quran, in the opening verse of chapter 58, called 'the Dispute,' refers to the incident:

"God has heard the words of the woman who disputed with you [Prophet] about her husband and complained to God." (Quran, 58:1)

The dispute in question concerned a pagan (a community observing a polytheistic religion) divorce practice by which a wife was not only deprived of her marital rights but also prevented from marrying someone else – effectively left in

limbo and indeterminate state, neither married nor unmarried. The second Quranic verse explains what this Pagan practice amounted to:

“Even if any of you say to their wives, “You are to me like my mother’s back”. They are not their mothers; their only mothers are those who gave them birth. What they say is certainly blameworthy and false, but God is pardoning and forgiving.”  
(Quran, 58:2)

The Quranic revelation takes the women’s side; the pagan’s rules of divorce, were changed to prevent such cruel treatment of wives. The purpose of the exercise is to show that forthright opinion, expresses openly and freely, can promote justice and lead to progress in law and knowledge.

Inside the Prophet’s mosque, the women would line up behind the men’s ranks, as the postures of prayer, in its various stages, require an arrangement that preserves modesty, decency, and respect. Women prayed, studied, and expressed themselves in that space.

Moreover, they found in the Prophet’s attitude the heart of courtesy and regard: Prophet Muhammad demanded that men remain seated in order to let women leave first and without inconvenience. There was always gentleness and dignity in his behavior towards women, whom he listened to, and whose right to express themselves and set forth their opinions and arguments he acknowledged, protected, and promoted.



‘ *May God, forgive me . . .* ’

Later, in one such instance that is particularly famous in Muslim history, when Muslims at Medinah, with their increasing affluence, began to settle huge dowers (*Mahr*) on their daughters, Umar, in his capacity as caliph (a successor of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as temporal and spiritual head of Islamic state), ordered that no one should demand or pay a dower *Mahr* that exceeded four hundred dirhams, and that anything in excess of this amount would be confiscated and deposited in the public treasury (*Baitul-Mad*).

After the proclamation of this ordinance, when Caliph Umar came down from the pulpit, a tall old woman stood up and confidently said:

“The Quran has set no restriction on this matter; Umar has no right to set an upper limit to the dowers.”

To back up her contention, she loudly recited this verse of the Quran:

“If you decide to take one wife in place of another, even if you had given the latter a whole treasure for dower, take not the least bit of it back: would you take it by slander and a manifest wrong?”  
(*Quran, 4:20*)

Immediately caliph Umar acknowledged his error of judgment and said:

“May God, forgive me, everyone knows better than Umar, even this Old lady.”





## Service to Mankind

From the beginning, the Quran emphasizes two things, besides the basic faith: First, man's contact with God should be firm. He should worship Him alone and should not bow his head before others. Secondly, man should behave in the most respectable manner towards his fellow human beings. He should realize the rights of the deserving people. He should meet his commitments towards his parents, the kindred, the neighbors, the orphans and the needy. If he is strong, he should not raise his hand over the weak, but should be a source of strength to them. He should guard the life, honour and property of others as he would guard his own. He should never practice deceit, but always be fair in his deals. His existence should not be troublesome to society, but should ensure comfort and peace. The Quran gives so much importance to these teachings that they have been repeated time and again. Its best example is in the Quran, chapter 17, *Bani Israil (The Night Journey)*.

## God's Blessings

In this world, some people are blessed with all the comforts of life while some are deprived of these. The Quran demands that the former should help the latter.

The man who is better placed in life should be thankful to God and the best way to thank Him is to serve those who are in need of our help. In everything God has graced us with; our fellow-beings have a share in it. Without this sharing, our thanks to Him would always be incomplete. After being so abundantly blessed, if we do not serve, we would be faint-hearted.

In Islam, service to humanity has been construed to be service to God. To help the people in their needs is to help God. Turning away a person empty handed is to refuse help to God. The best way to please God is to please His creatures. The heaven would not be kind to earth if the people on the earth cease to be kind to one another.

### Service should be for all

Islam makes its adherents concerned, not only about Muslims, but also about every man on this earth. Bigotry teaches hatred and enmity. A man blinded in nationalistic bigotry could never be tolerant and sympathetic towards other nations. Islam is opposed to this. It considers all the creatures of God as one family. Anas narrates that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has said: "All the creatures make the family of God. Among them the man who serves the family best is beloved of God."

The Quran had given a common command to serve the needy, the indigent, the handicapped, the orphans and the unfortunate. It has never said that only Muslims or a particular group should be served. It wants that the entire mankind should be served. Whether they are related to us or not, agree with us or not, they speak our language or not, all deserve to be served without any difference or distinction. Any man on this earth in affliction will not be left uncared for but would be helped to overcome his hardships, because

in spite of different colors, nationality and homeland, human beings are one another's limbs as they are created from one essence. This fact is evident from some traditions of Prophet.

1. Jabir, son of Abdullah narrates that the Prophet said:

“God is not merciful on a person who is not merciful towards others.”

2. Abdullah, son of Umar narrates that the Prophet had said:

‘Rahman, the Merciful showers mercy on those who are merciful. Be merciful to the people of this earth, He will be merciful on you.’

3. Abdullah, son of Masood narrates that the Prophet had said:

‘You would never be people of faith unless you are merciful.’

The companions pleaded, “Oh Messenger of God! Every one of us is merciful”

Then Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

‘It does not mean the mercy that you show towards your own kith and kin, but the mercy should be for all people.’

4. Abu Hurairah says that some companions were sitting and the Prophet came to them. He asked whether he could tell them who was a good person and who was the evil one. All were silent over the question. When he repeated the question thrice, one companion said: ‘Oh Messenger of God! Please enlighten us who is good among us and who is the

evil one.' Prophet said: "The best person amongst you is the one from whom people expect only good, and they are safe from his wickedness. The evil amongst you is the one from whom people do not expect any good, and they are not safe from his wickedness."

These traditions teach us to serve all creatures of God without any distinction. Islam is of the view that we should help anyone who is in need of our sympathy and help. Dividing mankind into groups and parties as one's own and others, acquaintances and strangers, co-religionists and followers of other religion in the matter of social service is against the nature and teachings of Islam.

### Service is also Worship

The Quran considers worship to be the sole purpose of life.

Worship is offered to gain nearness and acceptance of God. Worship is physical as well as material. Physical worship consists of verbal utterance and bodily movements. But these can be considered as rituals. Spending one's wealth in service of humanity is also worship. At the time of helping a person, the idea of attaining nearness to God through it should be there. Man can thus feel the ecstasy of worship even in acts of material welfare.

In Islam, service to man is a mundane act, but it is real worship. To understand this reality, we have to look at the entire system of worship.





## Gratitude

Gratitude is the prime moral value of the Quran and the foundation of its ethics and morality. Again and again, we are asked to be thankful to God.

“The ‘signs’ of God are there to see ‘for every steadfast and thankful person’ (Quran, 14:5); God provides; you with good things so that you might be grateful’ (Quran, 8:26); and ‘God always rewards gratitude’” (Quran, 4:147).

Gratitude comes both from the heart and the mind. It is a reflection of the feelings at the wonders of God’s creation.

Almighty Allah says in the Quran;

“So remember Me and I shall remember you; give thanks to Me and do not be ungrateful to Me for my favour.” (Quran, 2:152)

“The Muslim believers are asked to say, ‘Lord, help me to be truly grateful for Your favours to me’” (Quran, 46:15)

In contrast, the Quran sometimes deplores the behavior of ungrateful, graceless people:




“Most of them do not give thanks.” (Quran, 10:60)

Even though God is;

“Bountiful to people, most of them are ungrateful.’campaigns” (Quran, 27:73)

Both gratitude and ingratitude manifest themselves through service or lack of service to humanity. Gratitude has external as well as internal, personal, dimensions. Externally, it expresses itself by working to improve the lives of others and enhancing the environment we inhabit. We have already seen that the Quran gives great importance to charity, to helping the orphans, the needy and the old and spending one’s wealth on good causes. Helping those less fortunate than oneself is not an incidental, a part-time concern for the Muslim believers: gratitude demand that in one way or another one’s entire life is devoted to promoting equity and human dignity, peace and harmony, and conserving and preserving the environment. The most profound way of thanking God is to enhance our humanity and beautify the garden of His creation.

The greatest gratitude is to organize and operate an entire society that delivers human dignity, peace and harmony, justice and equity for all-Muslim and non-Muslim alike.



## HUDAYBIYAH

### Peace wins the Battle

The victory over the Confederates (Quraysh and its allied forces) had changed the situation in the Arab Peninsula, with the power of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his Companions acknowledged. Some, such as the Persian and Byzantine (Roman) empires, were even beginning to speak of Prophet Muhammad as the “powerful king of the Arabs” since they saw him as an unchallenged regional power.

### Ramadan and a Dream

The month of Ramzaan had begun, and Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), as he usually did, intensified night worship and was even more attentive to the wellbeing of the poor and needy. This was a month of intense spirituality, when Prophet Muhammad recited back to Angel Gabriel all that had been revealed of the Quran, and during which he lengthened ritual prayers and performed the additional prayers of *Tarawih*. (Eight to twenty cycles of prayer, according to the various schools of Islamic jurisprudence, performed after the last evening prayer (*Isba*) in Ramadan and during which

all of the Quran revealed was recited). Invocations (*Dua*) were also constant, while women and men were requested to fast during the day, liberating themselves from the characteristics that most directly defined their humanity: drinking, eating, and satisfying their sexual desire. By controlling their natural needs, Muslims were to strive to get closer to the qualities of the divine and experience God's presence through meditation.

Beyond the body's fast, Muslims were expected to "fast" with their tongues (avoiding lies, vulgarity, and indecent remarks) and their hearts (avoiding bad feelings or thought). That spiritual discipline, as we have said, went along with additional demands as to the care and attention the poor must receive: the month of Ramadan was both the month of the Quran and that of generosity, giving, and solidarity. Muslims, whether women, men, or children, were strongly advised to pay special alms at the end of the fasting month in order to take care of the needs of all the members of the community during the days of celebration they observed. The quest for proximity to the Almighty God can only be experienced and perfected through proximity to the poor: respecting, caring for, and serving them; both Muslims and non-Muslims.

During that month of Ramadan, Prophet Muhammad had a surprising dream, both puzzling and rewarding. He dreamt that he entered the Kaabah sanctuary, his head shaved, holding the key to the sanctuary in his right hand. The vision was powerful, and Prophet Muhammad, as he usually did in such circumstances, interpreted it as a sign and a message.

The next day, he told his Companions about it and invited them to get ready to go to Makkah and perform the *Umrab* the lesser pilgrimage. (*Umrab*, can be done at any time during the year, whereas the *Hajj* can be done only during a specific period each year).

Between twelve hundred and fourteen hundred faithful Companions undertook the journey. The danger was considerable, but the Prophet did not allow the pilgrims to carry weapons (apart from the other needs of the journey) and took with him one of his wives Ume Salamah. They set out and at the first half, the Prophet himself consecrated the camels that were to be sacrificed during the pilgrimage. As for the Makkans, they very soon heard that a convoy of Muslims was heading for Makkah, intending to visit the Kaabah. Visiting the Kaabah sanctuary had, for decades, been the peninsula tribes' most legitimate right.

## The Dilemma of Quraysh

The Quraysh were faced with an impossible dilemma. They did not see how they could either justify barring Muhammad and his Companions from entering or, on the other hand, allow their enemy into the city, which would award the Muslims with unacceptable prestige. Quraysh decided to send their leader, Khalid, son of Walid with two hundred men to stop the Muslim pilgrims from getting near Makkah.

On the edge of the sacred territory 310 km south of Medinah, in the plain of Al-Hudaybiyah, 18 km north of Makkah. At that point, the Prophet's camel, Qaswa, halted and refused to go on. As had been the case when Prophet Muhammad had arrived in Medinah seven years ago, the Prophet saw this as a sign. He had to stop and negotiate the Muslim pilgrims' entry into Makkah with the Quraysh.

The Quraysh were once more totally taken aback by the Prophet's attitude which did not fit with any of their religious, cultural, or warfare traditions. At the height of his new power, he was coming to Makkah unarmed, and thus in effect vulnerable, even though circumstances could have enabled him to attain even greater supremacy over his enemies.

Moreover, Prophet called people to a new religion, but did not hesitate to rely on respect of the rules of Arab traditions to protect himself from their attacks, and in doing so he put the Quraysh into a dilemma, since they had to choose between their honor (respecting the rules) and the loss of their prestige (allowing the Muslims to enter Makkah) Muhammad's tactical choices proved rewarding.

## Negotiations

The Quraysh were determined not to allow the Muslims to perform the pilgrimage, because of the crucial symbolic stakes involved but also, of course, because they did not know what Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) actual intentions were. They decided to send an envoy Budayl, from the Banu Khuzaah clan, who had no quarrels with any of the clans present and could therefore act as a mediator. He went to the Prophet, who assured him that he had no intention of waging war, but only wanted to perform the lesser pilgrimage (*Umrab*) with his Companions and go home. He added, however, that he was ready to fight anyone who opposed their right to enter the sanctuary freely, like all the other clans and tribes. If, nevertheless, the Quraysh needed time to get ready to let the pilgrims in, they would wait at Al-Hudaybiyyah until the Quraysh had finished their preparations. Budayl returned to Makkah and suggested that the Quraysh should let the Muslims in, but Budayl's proposal got a cold reception; it was flatly rejected by the Quraysh leader, Ikrimah, son of Abu Jahl.

Four attempts at negotiation had failed, then, Quraysh seemed more unyielding than ever. The Prophet decided he must make a last attempt by sending an envoy who enjoyed sufficient respect and protection in Makkah.

Prophet eventually chose Usman, his son-in-law who had solid clan connections in Makkah and whom nobody would dare attack. Usman went and was indeed well received, but met with the same refusal: the Quraysh would not allow the Muslims to perform the pilgrimage. He himself could, if he wished to, perform the circumambulations around the Kaabah, but letting in Muhammad and his men was out of the question. Usman refused the offer. His mission had taken longer than expected, and for three days, the Prophet had no news of him.

The rumor spread that Usman had been killed, and this caused the Prophet deep sorrow. Such an action on the part of the Quraysh—killing an envoy during the sacred month and opposing the Muslims' legitimate right to visit the Kaabah, as all other tribes were allowed to – could only be seen by the Muslims as a declaration of war. From then on, they had to prepare for the worst.

## The Pledge of Loyalty

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) had all the Companions summoned, and they hurried to him. He sat at the foot of an acacia tree and asked each of the Muslims to pledge allegiance (*bayat ar-ridwan*), swearing him obedience and loyalty. Through that gesture, they explicitly stated that they would remain by the Prophet's side whatever the outcome might be. They had come to perform a pilgrimage, they were unarmed, and now they faced the very high probability of a conflict for which they were not prepared. The affirmation of their fidelity to the Prophet meant to them that they pledged not to run away and to go so far as accepting death, since the balance of forces was heavily against them. The Prophet himself put his left hand in his right hand and told the assembled Muslims that this represented Usman's


pledge, since the latter had not returned and the Prophet considered him dead.

However, just as the last of the Companions had finished giving their pledge, Usman suddenly appeared. The Prophet rejoiced at this, the Quraysh had not been so rash as to act in disrespect of the custom of non-violence during the sacred months. A conflict with the Quraysh thus seemed to be less likely, and the Prophet was informed that Quraysh leaders had finally sent a new Quraysh envoy, Suhayl, to seal a formal agreement with the Muslims. Prophet decided to receive him and examine their proposals.

However, the circumstances were now completely different, with Muhammad about to start negotiations on the terms of peace between his community and the Quraysh. They had all pledged allegiances thinking that they were expressing their fidelity in a situation of conflict, and moreover one in which they were in the weak position. Now their fidelity was going to be tested through the implementation and terms of a truce in which they held a strong position. Revelation relates that pledge,

“God’s good pleasure was on the believers when they swore fidelity to you under the tree.” (Quran, 48: 18)

The Muslims were demanding their right. They had acquired great prestige after the latest battles, so keeping a low profile was out of the question.



## Creator and creations

Years later, after the death of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), that place and acacia tree step, where Prophet sat and asked each of the Muslim companions to pledge allegiance, swearing him obedience and loyalty occupied significance among the people, some people considered acacia tree sacred. The ill used to sit beneath the tree to get healed. When the practice of getting healed through this tree was gaining popularity and people almost started to worship that acacia tree this practice was neither preached nor practiced by Prophet Muhammad, it was detrimental to Islamic monotheism as the act associating the tree with God. To protect Islamic monotheism and not to deviate from the One God, Umar uprooted that tree, and he said, "People have to pray to the Creator, and not to His creations." This act clearly affirms that there is no room in Islam to associate any legacy or relic of Prophet with God.

## The Treaty of Hudaibiyah

The treaty took place between the state of Medina and the Quraysh tribe of Makkah, in March 628 C.E, 6<sup>th</sup> year of *hijrah*. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) received the Quraysh envoy, Suhayl, who came with two other men, Mikraz and Huwayidh. The negotiations began at some distance from the Companions, and each element in the agreement was discussed, sometimes sharply. When the terms of the treaty were at last settled, the Prophet asked his cousin Ali, to write them down. Ali naturally began writing the text with the usual formula *Bismillab-hirrahmaan-nirraheem* (In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful), but Suhayl opposed the phrase, saying that he did not know *Ar-Rahman* and that they should use the formula *Bismika Allabumma* (In Your



name, O Allah”), the only one all the Arabs knew (even polytheists used it to address their main god). Some Companions immediately retorted that changing the formula was out of the question, but the Prophet intervened and told Ali to write “In Your name, O God.”

Then Prophet Muhammad instructed Ali to write on, “These are the terms of the treaty signed between Muhammad, Allah’s Messenger, and Suhayl son of Amr.” Suhayl again disagreed, “If we had known you to be Allah’s Messenger, we would not have fought you. Write instead, “Muhammad son of Abdullah.” Ali, who had already written the usual formula, refused to give in and maintained that he could do no such thing. The Prophet asked Ali to show him where the phrase was written, wiped it out himself, then asked him to add what Suhayl had requested, which meant ‘Muhammad, son of Abdullah’. Ali and the other Companions were shocked and could not understand the Prophet’s attitude.

The terms of the agreement were to alarm Muslims even more, as they looked like a series of compromises highly unfavorable to the Muslims.

The treaty was based on five essential points:

1. The Muslims should not perform their pilgrimage that year, but they would be allowed to perform pilgrimage the following year and stay for a period of three days only.
2. A ten-year truce was to be observed by both sides, and all their members would be free to travel safely in the region.
3. The terms of the treaty would immediately apply to any clan or tribe that entered into a treaty with either side.

4. Any Muslim leaving Makkah for Medinah would immediately be delivered to the Makkan leaders, whereas anyone fleeing Medinah and seeking protection in Makkah would be granted asylum.
5. The arms would not be taken out of the casing nor would treachery come into play.

There were some similar provisions which were apparently humiliating and seemed to be disadvantageous for the Muslims. But the Prophet accepted them. He said that he had come with peaceful intentions and was willing to concede the demands of the Makkans.

## Medinah Between Two Enemies

The famous jurist, Sarakhsi mentions a significant point. He points out that Khaybar is situated in the north of Medinah while Makkah is situated in the south. Medinah was thus sandwiched between two enemies. Both Jews of Khaybar and Quraysh of Makkah were in a state of war with Muslims of Medina. Both were allies. They were obliged to help each other in case Muslims waged a war on either. The other party was bound to invade Medinah in that event. If the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) advanced towards Khaybar, the Makkans would proceed to Medina. If the Prophet advances towards Makkah, the people of Medinah would be vulnerable to attack from Khaybar.

Under the circumstances, a clever commander and an able politician would take the only sensible decision to make peace with one of the parties and neutralize the other. It would be easy then to deal with the threat effectively. This

was the compulsion to agree generously to the conditions of Quraysh which appeared as if they had been imposed. The crucial decision was the selection of the party with which peace had to be made. Was it to be Khaybar or Makkah? Khaybar was out of question. The Jews of Banu Nadir had been expelled from Medina. Their first demand would be to be allowed to return to the city. They were rich. Financial compensation would have no attraction for them.

The Makkans on the other hand, were near relatives of the Prophet and the other emigrants who had migrated to Medinah were their brothers, uncles, nephews etc. It was more appropriate to rescue these relatives instead of attacking them while leaving alone the Jews. Besides, the Makkans had been weakened by the three defeats they had already suffered at the battles of Badr, Uhud and Trench. Their economic condition had deteriorated and trade had suffered.

They could, therefore, be persuaded more easily to seek peace with Muslims. For various reasons the people of Makkah were sincerely ready to have peaceful relations with Muslims. The Prophet had attempted to win over their hearts during the famine.

Next, except for one provision which was aimed at establishing their dignity and honor, the Prophet accepted all other provisions of the treaty at Hdaybiyah. There is one clause written in half a line: *La islah wa la ighlal*". This was a crucial clause. Literally, it means that "the arm would not be taken out of the casing nor would treachery come into play".

The people of Makkah and the Muslims of Medinah pledged that they would not attack and fight each other nor would they flout or betray the treaty through trick or treachery and conspiracy. In other words, the Makkans undertook to remain neutral in the event of a Muslims' conflict with a third party. There would be no betrayal or treachery.

Prophet Muhammad prevailed upon the Makkans to accept this lone provision of his and in return he generously gave in to all the other conditions advanced by the Makkans. He agreed to a period of peace for ten years. He allowed transit facilities to the Makkan trade caravans through Medina. In return, he demanded their neutrality in the event of a future Muslim war against a third party. Instead of proceeding to Makkah, he ordered his crestfallen Companions to be content with their pilgrimage to Hudaibiyah. They were deeply disappointed, but they carried out his command.

## Unrest

The Muslim Companions were beginning to realize that after the signing of a treaty that appeared to them to be a swindle; they would have to return without visiting the Kaabah.

Umar rushed to the Prophet and protested sharply, with a series of questions that expressed his total dissatisfaction: "Are you not God's Prophet? Are we not right, and are our enemies not wrong? Why should we so shamefully give in against our religion's honor?" Each time, the Prophet answered calmly, but that was not enough to satisfy Umar, who, now furious with intense anger, turned to Abu Bakr for help. Abu Bakr advised him to calm down, as he believed the Prophet was right. Umar controlled himself and kept quiet, even though he clearly remained convinced that the agreement was a humiliation.

The Muslims observing the scene felt intense sorrow: they could not understand the Prophet's wisdom behind this move. The Prophet had taught Muslims courage and dignity, and now he was accepting an unfair deal obliging them to look on helplessly.

When the Prophet asked his Companions to sacrifice the

camels that had been sacred for the pilgrimage, initially, none of the Companions could bring themselves to comply, for the wounds and the bitterness was too deep. The Prophet repeated his order three times, but nobody responded.

This was the first time that the Prophet was faced with apparent disobedience from his Muslim Companions in such a collective manner. The Prophet surprised, saddened and disappointed, retired into his tent and told his wife Ume Salamah about what had just happened and the Companions' reluctance to sacrifice the camels.

Ume Salamah listened, and then suggested he should act wisely and silently. She advised him to go out without saying a word and sacrifice his own camel, merely setting the example. "O Prophet of God, you can't make these fifteen hundred men do what they don't want. Just do your own duty, which Allah has imposed on you. Go ahead and perform your own rites yourself – in an open place so that every one of them can see you. This will be sufficient." Prophet Muhammad listened to her advice, which turned out to be well judged. He went to his camel, pronounced the ritual formula, and sacrificed it. When they saw this, the Companions rose one after another and did the same. Then the Prophet shaved his head, and the Companions did too.

## Passionate Blindness and Genius

The Muslim Companions were soon to realize that their first judgments about the treaty had been completely wrong and that they had not sufficiently appreciated the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) deep spirituality, strict rational logic, extraordinary intelligence, and strategic genius. He listened for signs, and when his camel had stopped at Hdaybiyah and refused to move, he had the intuition that the Muslims would not travel any further than the plain of

Hudaybiyah that year. The failure of the first four negotiations and the Quraysh's stubbornness convinced him that he must be patient. He was deeply confident, in his dream, he had seen himself entering the sanctuary, and this would not fail to happen, although for the moment he could not say when.

The pledge of allegiance that had initially seemed to unite the Muslims against the enemy was thus, as we have seen, to turn into a pledge of fidelity requiring them to bear with dignity the conditions of a treaty for peace.

Moreover, when Quraysh's envoy Suhayl refused the Muslims' two habitual formulas referring to God and to Muhammad's status as God's Messenger, the Prophet heard his point of view and was able, at that particular moment, to shift his perspective and see things from his interlocutor's standpoint. What Suhayl was saying was perfectly true according to his outlook. It was indeed obvious that if the Quraysh had acknowledged his status as God's Messenger, they would not have fought against him; therefore, an agreement on an equal footing could not possibly state an element that would in effect acknowledge what one side held as truth while contradicting the other's position. The Companions, whose respect for the Prophet was so deep, had been unable to immediately hear the other's truth, but the Prophet's attitude and his reasonable approach to the terms of the treaty were loaded with spiritual and intellectual teaching.

The point was that the heart's relation to the truth – deep spirituality – must never be allowed to turn into emotional, passionate blindness. Reason must always be called upon to analyze the situation, temper one's reaction, and help establish an attentive, logical relation to the other's position. What appeared as an unacceptable compromise from the sole viewpoint of the Muslims' faith was fair and equitable from the double viewpoint of the respective rationalities of each

of the parties drawing up the peace treaty.

Prophet Muhammad did not humiliate the Quraysh in order to save the Muslim's honor and prestige, or even to take advantage of the new political situation after the Trench victory. Agreeing not to enter Makkah that year took into account the Quraysh's weakness and protected their prestige, and this contributed towards long-term peace. Such peace, which considered the general interests of both the camps, was soon to turn to the Muslims' advantage.

The clauses stating that emigrants to Medinah should be sent back and the Muslims leaving Medinah for Makkah given asylum only marginally affected the Muslims' interests. A non-believer leaving Medinah was of no use to the Muslim community, and the Muslim faith of a Makkan sent back to his clan ought not – despite the suffering – to be shaken by this forced exile.

## A Clear Victory

Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) trust in God, allied to strict Passion for truth and an exceptionally sharp mind, had enabled him to establish a ten-year truce with the prospect of a visit to the Kaabah the following year. Most of the Companions, and particularly Umar, considered only immediate results, however, and felt this was a humiliation that could amount to nothing but a defeat. Like many others, he regretted his violent reaction against the Prophet, but he remained convinced that the agreement was a capitulation (a document containing the terms of surrender). On the way back, he was told that Prophet Muhammad had sent for him, he was afraid the Prophet was going to blame him for his inappropriate attitude or, worse still, tell him that a verse had been revealed disapproving his behavior.

Umar found the Prophet with a beaming face, and the latter told him about the revelation of the verse quite different from what Umar might have expected.

“The Divine Word announced, Verily We have granted you a manifest victory.” (Quran, 48 : 1)

Then it mentioned the pledge of allegiance, saying,

“He knew what was in their hearts, and He sent down as-sakinah (tranquility) to them, and He rewarded them with a victory near at hand.” (Quran, 48 :18)

All this was recalled in the light of Prophet Muhammad’s initial dream, which was therefore truthful:

“Truly did God fulfill the vision for His Prophet: you shall enter the Sacred Mosque, if God wills, with minds secure, heads shaved or hair cut short, and without fear. For He knows what you do not know, and he has granted you, besides this, a victory near at hand.” (Quran, 48 : 27)

The events of the recent past were presented in a manner totally at odds with the Companions’ perception of them: the pledge of allegiance to prepare for war was in reality a pledge of trustworthiness for peace. The apparent defeat was presented as a ‘*manifest victory*’, and a seemingly abandoned dream was announced as a certainty in the future, ‘*You shall enter the Sacred Mosque*’. The vast majority of Muslims had not understood, had not seen, or had been unable to perceive the prospects and hopes the treaty allowed.

The signing of the pact was therefore, once again, a privileged moment of spirituality, with an exceptional lesson about the value of intelligence and wisdom. Listening, the ability to shift one’s point of view, sensitivity to the other’s dignity, and foresight were some of the qualities shown by the Prophet, contributing to his personality as a role model.





## UME SALAMAH'S Solution

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was an example too in another dimension of his life, when his Companions refused to sacrifice the camels, he went back to his wife Ume Salamah , who listened to him and comforted him. She showed him her trust and suggested the solution to his problem. That dialogue, and that understanding, expresses the very essence of the Prophet's attitude toward his wives. As with Khadijah many years earlier, he never hesitated to take time to disclose problems to the women around him, to consult them, talk with them, and adopt their opinions. At a time when the future of the whole community was playing out through visions, pledges of loyalty, and peace treaties, he returned to his wife's side and, like a simple human being, told her of his need for love, trust, and advice—an example for all human beings.

Ume Salamah (may God be pleased with her) , Pious, enterprising, and particularly beautiful, she enjoyed a considerable position and role at the Prophet's side, and Aishah confessed that she felt jealous of Ume Salamah , it seems, because the Prophet listened to her and was greatly influenced by her opinions.



## Opening Floodgates to Islam

The Muslims had returned to Medinah and daily life had resumed its course, in a far less tense atmosphere than before. The truce allowed them to lower their guard against the outside and give more attention to the Muslim community's internal affairs, developments and to spread Islam over areas not explored.

The message of Islam had penetrated the four corners of the Arabian Peninsula. There were people in every tribe in whose hearts the Prophet's religion had found a place. Such was the pull of the Prophet's personality!


A host of factors were keeping people away from joining the torrent that headed towards Islam. Many of the clans and tribes who had realized the truth of Islam were reluctant to join it because they feared that declaration of faith in Islam amounted to a declaration of war against the mighty Quraysh. And therefore, they were, reluctant to do anything that would earn them the Quraysh's anger. They also feared the loss of economic benefits that accrued out of their friendly relations with the Quraysh.

The Treaty of Hdaybiyah brought cheer for all such clans and tribes. The Treaty had ushered the Peninsula into a new era of peace by ending the warfare. Now the two sides

were committed to end the active hostilities, maintain peace between themselves for ten years, this removed the fear of reprisals. The Quraysh would no longer be able to take reprisal against people becoming Muslims. There was now nothing to stop people from accepting Islam. It was as if a large crowd had gathered around the portals of a fort which had kept its gates closed. Now that the gates were suddenly flung open, they rushed in.

The Muslims gained more from the Treaty of Hudaibiyah than from any of their campaigns. Within two years, following the conclusion of the treaty, thousands of people entered Islam than ever before. And also the fence-sitters were eager to jump onto the bandwagon of Islam which had proved itself a superior organizing force for the society. This is supported by the fact that the Prophet went to Hudaibiyah with only 1,400 men, but when he led army to liberate Makkah, two years later, he had 10,000 men with him.

The new converts to Islam had to be educated and taught the principles of their new religion, and their incorporation and Islamic education had to be constantly planned and organized. Highly influential and powerful figures in the Arab Peninsula were to join the unidentified thousands who accepted Islam in Medinah or came to settle in the city.





## Great Lesson

The great lesson of Hdaybiyah is that one should avoid impatience and should not judge matters by appearances alone. The unfavourable Treaty of Hdaybiyah held great opportunities for the Muslims, which only people of insight could perceive. The Treaty offered a new lesson in diplomacy. The Prophet used it as a means to inculcate patience among his companions and followers.

Ibn Asakir has recorded some of the comments of Abu Bakr about the Treaty of Hdaybiyah. "It was the greatest Islamic victory," he said, "Though on that day people were too shortsighted to realize the secrets between Muhammad and his Lord. People are impatient, but God is not. He lets matters take their course, until they reach the stage that He intends." Obviously the people want instant success in this world; it is realism which brings success in this world; but people want instant success, and they are unwilling to go through the lengthy stages it takes to achieve it.





## Beyond Borders to All Rulers

In the course of the year following the treaty, the number of Muslims was to double. During those months of truce, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) decided to send letters to all the rulers of the neighboring empires, kingdoms, or nations, calling them to Islam. In order to authenticate the credentials of his Prophethood, a silver seal was made in which were engraved the words, “ ‘Muhammad’ the Messenger of God.”


Thus, the King Negus of Abyssinia received a new letter from the Prophet before he converted to Islam, (and he agreed to represent the Prophet at his proxy wedding with Ume Habibah.) Muhammad also wrote to Chosroes, the King of Persia, to Heraclius, the Byzantine emperor, to Muqawqis, the ruler of Egypt; to Mundhir son of Sawa, king of Bahrain; and to Al-Harith, son of Abi Shimr al-Ghassani, who ruled over part of Arabia up to the outskirts of Syria.

The content of the letters was always more or less the same. The Prophet introduced himself as ‘God’s Prophet to the recipients of the various letters, reminded them of God’s Oneness, and called upon them to accept Islam. If they refused, he held them responsible before God for keeping their whole people in error.

The kings and rulers reacted differently to those various letters. Some (the Negus, Mundhir, son of Sawa) accepted the message, while others (Muqawqis, Heraclius) showed respect with no desire to either fight or convert, and others (al-Harith, son of Abi Shimr al-Ghassani, for instance) rejected the message and threatened to attack. Nevertheless, the message was known to all and the Muslim community henceforth settled in Medinah, acknowledged in its religious identity, and respected as a regional power. Its leader, Muhammad, son of Abdullah was the Prophet whose reign was designed by God.

The treaty of Hudaibiyah was indeed a victory and an opening to the world: the battles had taken up all the energy of the community, who sought to protect themselves, resist, and survive.

Things had now changed, and in that peaceful situation, the Prophet was at last able to convey and propagate the message of Islam, the principle of God's Oneness (*at-tawhid*), which liberates human beings from possible alienation to temporal interests or powers, in order to direct them towards respect of a spiritual teaching, an ethic, and values to which they must remain faithful. Peace, which now reigned over the whole Peninsula, had transformed the situation; more and more clans could now grasp the essence of Islam's message. Some converted, others respected Islam without embracing it, others fought it, but with full awareness, and not merely for matters of domination, wealth, and power relations.





## Prophet Muhammad WITH NON - MUSLIMS

Islam recommends co-operation, interaction, dialogue and tolerance in the human society. Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) maintained socio-cultural, economic, and political co-operation with non-Muslims; he continued co-operating with them on all national, community and cultural issues. The Prophet's excellent behavior, mercy, was for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Some important points of these issues are discussed below in order to highlight the Islamic stance in the human society.

### Relations with NON - MUSLIMS OF MAKKAH

#### Non - Muslims Trade Partners

Since his youth Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was engaged in trading on partnership basis. He used to take the goods of Makkan businessmen to Syria and Yemen and received a share in the profits. After his marriage to the wealthy widow Khadijah, the husband and wife had a joint



business venture. After assuming the office of messenger-ship he devoted himself fully to the cause of Islam. He did not have any time to carry on trade. Therefore, he sent his goods through leading Quraysh traders and non-Quraysh brokers to the markets. This improved his financial position. As a part of his trading activity the Prophet Muhammad had sent his goods through a non-Muslim, Abu Sufyan, to Syria and reaped rich dividends. He had trust in Abu Sufyan's integrity as a trader and his business acumen. Even after learning about the Prophet Muhammad's Islamic mission, Abu Sufyan did not abandon his trade or social links with Prophet.

Ibn Kathir has narrated; Once Abu Sufyan went on a business trip to Syria and Yemen along with his friend Umayya and returned to Makkah after five months. People called on him in order to find out about their investments. The Prophet Muhammad, too, visited him while Abu Sufyan's wife Hind was playing with her children. The Prophet greeted Abu Sufyan and felicitated him on his safe return. He discussed with him about his travel and stay there but asked him no questions about his share, when he returned, Abu Sufyan told Hind, 'I marvel at this man. I do like him. Every Quraysh who had given me his goods enquired about them. However, Muhammad did not ask me any questions.' A little later Abu Sufyan went to the Kaabah and met Prophet Muhammad there. He told him about the profit he had made and asked him to take it from him. Abu Sufyan refused to take the commission which he usually charged. The Prophet however, declined this offer, Abu Sufyan obliged on taking the standard commission.

One day, when the Prophet was engaged in preaching Islam privately, Abu Sufyan returned from his trade journey to Syria. He had carried there the goods of the Prophet and of other persons as well. When Prophet learnt about it, he said that Abu Sufyan would act honestly in trading matters.

## Trade Links

The economy is the core of the social life of a society. Wealth is like the blood supply that sustains the entire community. If people are not financially sound or are dependent upon others, their life tends to be more difficult. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and some Makkan Muslims were essentially traders and knew well the significance of wealth in economic, social and community life.

Prophet Muhammad and his companion traders resolved to stand on their feet and to improve their economic life. They drew up a plan for their trade activities and acted on it systematically.

Apart from Abu Sufyan, his trading partner, Prophet had trade links with other Quraysh and Arab tribal traders. Among the non-Muslims his prominent trade partners were Hakim, 'Abdullah (son of Abi Hamsa), Al-Taymi, Al-Sa'ib and Quys. Al-Baghdadi and other writers on the Prophet's life have written extensively on the Quraysh trade partners. Al-Baghdadi speaks of fifty-eight Muslim and non-Muslim trading partners.

Among the companions Abdul Ar-Rehman ibn Awf, had non-Muslim partner. His close friend and partner was Umayya ibn Khalaf, a leading Makkan businessman, opposed to Islam. Al-Walid, son of the Quraysh chief Utbah was friend and trade partner of Abbas. Uthman and Rabi'ah ibn Harith had been friends and trade partners. Abbas and Abu Sufyan were good partners. They remained close friends, partners and associates until their death. Wars did no dent their ties. Nor did religious differences estrange them.

## Matrimonial Alliances

In the Makkan period an outstanding instance of the matrimonial tie between Muslims and Non-Muslim Quraysh is of the marriage between the Prophet's (peace be upon him) eldest daughter, Zaynab and Abul Al-as. For Abul Al-as was Khadijah's dear nephew. According to Ibn Hisham, during the ignorance period, this tie had been fixed by Khadijah and was to the Prophet's liking. (The Quranic verse relating to prohibition of marriage between Muslim women and disbelievers had not been revealed then).

An interesting and significant report by ibn Sa'ad is that initially 'Aishah was to be married to Jubayr, son of a Makkan chief Mut'im. It was Mut'im who had extended protection to Prophet Muhammad after Abu Talib's death. Later Mut'im and family, however, refused to accept a Muslim girl as their daughter-in-law lest she might preach Islam in their family. This incident again points to the matrimonial ties between the two communities.

## Coalition Government of Quraysh Majority and Muslim Minority

At the time of the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) advent, the Quraysh tribe held twelve important political and social positions and these were the hereditary offices of the twelve most important families of Quraysh. Some of them had embraced Islam. For example, Abu Bakr was the earliest Muslim. Later 'Umar accepted Islam, Abbas is taken as an early Muslim, while 'Uthman and Khalid also entered the fold of Islam. Almost half of these Quraysh chiefs had abandoned their ancestral faith and accepted Islam. Yet, they did not give up their office. In other words, fanatic Makkan

Quraysh chiefs did not depose them. Even as Muslims they carried on looking after the affairs of their tribes and cooperated with the Makkan chiefs until their emigration to Medina. Therefore, the Makkan polity was ruled by a coalition of Muslim and non-Muslim office bearers. It was a mixed government of both Quraysh majority and Muslim minority communities.

Muhammad always pursued the path of friendly, cordial relations, co-operation and interaction in political, socio-cultural and economic matters with his non-Muslim brothers. The Quraysh, too, pursued the same in their own interests.

## Social Relationships

### The Prophet's Meal Parties

After receiving the divine command for preaching Islam publicly the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) arranged meal parties for the non-Muslim majority Quraysh for improving social relations and for spreading the message of Islam. This was reflective of Arab social traditions and the Prophet's and Companions' regular practice. With the preaching of Islam, this became a strong social tradition. Abu Bakr had invited 'Uthman, Zubayr, Talhah, 'Abd al-Rahman, and Sa'ad before their acceptance of Islam.

## Buying and Freeing Slaves

Prophet Muhammad liberated helpless non-Muslim slaves from their unjust masters and set them free. He granted equal status for freed slaves. The Prophet's gentleness soothed their pain. It is generally held that some affluent Muslim Companions had freed their slaves. It was no doubt a noble gesture on their part. However, on close study it emerges that it was the Prophet

Muhammad's strategy that they should be bought for securing their release from the clutches of their oppressive masters and for freeing them from exploitation. It was Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) who had exhorted rich Muslims to do so.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) resorted to employing the principle of buying slaves to free them. All the rich members of the Muslim community acted on his directive. The Prophet's first wife Khadijah, mother of Muslim believers, donated all she had in this cause, as the Prophet acknowledged. Abu Bakr secured the release of a large number of slaves. It helped protect the weak against oppression. In the Makkan period, Abu Bakr had more than forty thousand dirham's in cash, besides his property and goods. He spent all this in the cause of releasing slaves. At the time of emigration to Medinah he was left with only five thousand dirham's, and this, too, was meant for the Muslim community. Umar, 'Abd al-Rahman son of Awf and many other affluent Makkan Muslims generously spent their wealth on buying and freeing slaves. Abdullah al-Nahham sponsored several poor Makkan non-Muslim slaves. Even the fanatic Makkan Quraysh leaders were so much impressed by his charity that they did not let him emigrate to Medinah, fearing that the orphans and poor persons supported by him would have no one to help them. He actively pursued the Islamic directive to engage in charity and help the poor.

## Greatest Respect

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) always retained very strong ties with the members of different clans and with his kin who had not accepted Islam, including his uncle, Abu Talib, thanks to whom the Prophet had enjoyed immunity among the Quraysh. Muhammad visited him just as he was about to breathe his last. Abu Talib confirmed that he had

been happy to protect his nephew, who had always been moderate and just. Abu Talib died with the Prophet by his side. This man, who, with dignity and courage, had granted Prophet Muhammad his protection, as well as his love and respect, had not embraced Islam. Muhammad loved and respected him, and his sorrow was all the more intense.

## Deepest Confidence

Another uncle, Abbas, remained by the Prophet Muhammad's side even though he had not yet converted to Islam. Muhammad's trust in him was tremendous, and he did not hesitate to confide in him or have him take part in private meetings involving the future of the Muslim community. Later, Abbas was present when the second agreement of al-Aqabah was concluded. The Prophet would also keep him informed of the highly confidential preparations for his emigration to Medina. Abbas remaining a polytheist never prevented the Prophet from showing him the greatest respect and deepest confidence in situations where his very life was at risk.

## Honesty

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) himself was a model of equity toward those who did not share his faith. Through all the years of Muhammad mission at Makkah, he continued to receive important deposits from non-Muslim traders who went on dealing with him and wholly trusted him. On the eve of his departure for Medinah (*Hijra*), the Prophet Muhammad asked Ali to give back to their respective owners the deposits he still held. He carefully applied the principles of honesty and justice that Islam had taught that Muslims should observe with regard to all, no matter who they are in the terms of religion, whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims.

## Reliability


Prophet and his Companion Abu Bakr decided to migrate to Medinah, and had entrusted themselves to God. Yet, they did not hesitate to enlist the help of a non-Muslim guide who shared their enemies' polytheist beliefs, but at the same time was well known for his trustworthiness and abilities. As a guide he knew better than anyone else the steep, out-of-the-way, inconspicuous and unfamiliar route they took to escape from the Quraysh. At that time, the Quraysh had declared a reward of hundred red camels to anyone who would bring Muhammad to them. The non-Muslim guide was fully aware of the reward that he would get from the polytheist Quraysh had he betrayed the Prophet, but he was true to his word and helped the Prophet reach Medinah safely.

## Nobleness

Every day before the Prophet left his house to go to the Kaabah, an elderly woman would throw trash on his path, out of disrespect and because she didn't like the message the Prophet was preaching. One day, when the Prophet did not notice any garbage in his path, he visited her. When elderly lady saw the Prophet at her house, she was shocked. When she asked why he had come, the Prophet responded by saying that he did not find any garbage in his path so he thought she might be sick and that is why he came to visit her. She felt guilty and embarrassed because of her mis-behavior. This attitude of the Prophet softened the heart of this non-Muslim lady and she was convinced that the Prophet was truly a Prophet of God, and she accepted Islam.

## Tenderness

After the great conquest of Makkah, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was patrolling Makkah and taking care of the people of Makkah; he saw an old woman struggling to carry her luggage and was leaving Makkah. The Prophet took her luggage on his shoulders and helped her to cross the border of Makkah. While walking along with the old woman, Prophet enquired why she was leaving Makkah at night. She replied that Makkah has been conquered by Muhammad: I am a non-Muslim; I thought that the army of Muhammad may capture me and harm me. They are victorious. They may ruin Makkah. I don't want to see that scenario." She cursed the Prophet for having brought her to this position and at the same time thanked and praised the man who helped to carry her luggage. She asked the Prophet, by the way as to who he was, and expressed her fear that the Muslims might capture him. Prophet replied "*I am Muhammad*". The woman was astonished, she could not believe this and enquired if he was the same Prophet who had conquered Makkah and yet was so kind, patrolling and taking care of the people of Makkah." The Prophet's response and behavior toward her had such an effect that she immediately apologized to him and accepted Islam.





## Relationship with NON - MUSLIMS OF MEDINAH

### *‘ Tolerance and Peaceful Coexistence ’*

Soon after migrating to Medinah and making sure that the pillars of the new Islamic community were well established on a strong base of administrative, political and ideological unity, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) started to establish regular and clearly-defined relations with non-Muslims. All these efforts were exerted solely to provide peace, security, and prosperity to mankind at large, and to bring about a spirit of understanding and harmony.

Geographically, the closest people to Muslims in and around Medinah were the Jews. He decided to conclude a treaty with them with clauses that provided full freedom in faith and wealth.

The Prophet did not compel anybody to convert to Islam. He made it clear that he wanted relations within the new society to be democratic and egalitarian. He showed the utmost respect toward individuals and their beliefs.

- For many years, a young Jew was Prophet Muhammad's companion and followed him everywhere, for he loved the Prophet's company. The Prophet never asked him to abandon his faith. Eventually the boy fell seriously ill, and on his deathbed he asked his father to allow him to embrace Islam, with his father's permission, the boy became a Muslim, but during all his time by the Prophet's side he had remained what he was and enjoyed the Prophet's love and regard.

- For the most part, relations between Muslims and Christians during the time of the Prophet Muhammad were fairly cordial. The Prophet's wife Aishah is reported to have told her nephew, Urwah, "There were a few Christian neighbors of the Prophet who had some milk cattle. They occasionally sent him milk as a gift and we shared that".

## Mutual Trust

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), showed greatest confidence and trust in non-Muslims he made it possible for Muslims to migrate to Abyssinia, which was under the protection of a king who was not a Muslim. This attitude is to be found throughout the Prophet's life: he established his relationships in the name of trust and the respect of principles, and not exclusively on the basis of religious affiliation. His Companions had understood this as well, and they did not hesitate to develop solid ties with non-Muslims in the name of kinship or friendship and on the basis of mutual respect and trust, even in perilous situations.

Thus, Ume Salamah and her young children had been detained by her family while they were about to migrate to Medinah, from Mekka. She was not allowed to accompany her husband. And also, her in-laws separated her young children from her. For about one year, Ume Salamah, underwent this agonizing experience. Every morning she would be on the road leading to Medinah and cried there until evening. One of her cousins took pity and reunited her children with her. And also, she was allowed to migrate to Medina. She rode a camel and left for Medinah alone. In desert she was spotted by 'Uthman son of Talhah, who was not a Muslim, offered to escort and protect her until she reached the place where her husband was. She did not hesitate

to trust him: he accompanied her and her children to their destination, and then took leave of them in the most respect full manner. Ume Salamah was often to tell this story, always praising Uthman's noble character.

Another noble Mekkan chief was Abu Sufyan, full of love for his family. He had assisted in the freedom and travel of the Prophet's eldest daughter Zaynab to Medinah. In the battle of Badr her unbelieving husband, Abul Al-As, was released on the condition that he would send Zaynab to Medinah. When Hind, wife of Abu Sufyan learnt about it, she offered to help her. However, Zaynab did not trust her. Finally, when she sought to leave along with her husband's brother, Kinnah, some Quraysh chiefs forcibly stopped her. Kinanah vowed to fight and it could lead to bloodshed when Abu Sufyan reached on the spot along with Quraysh chiefs and persuaded Zaynab and Kinanh to return to Makkah. As things cooled down, Abu Sufyan helped them leave for Medinah.

Examples of this nature abound, and neither the Prophet nor the other Muslims ever restricted their social and human relations to their co-religionists alone. Later, the Quran was to establish the rightfulness and the principle of such relationships formed on the basis of mutual trust:

“God does not forbid you, with regard to those who do not fight you for [your] faith, nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly [showing affection] and justly with them: for God loves those who are just. God only forbids you, with regard to those who fight you for [your] faith, and drive you out of your homes, and support others in driving you out, from turning to them [for friendship and protection]. It is those who turn to them [in these circumstances] who do wrong.” (Quran, 60 : 8-9)

This teaching was to remain the same in spite of

difficulties, treason, and wars. No one was compelled to convert, differences were tolerated, and all people were treated justly. This is the Quranic revelation's key message and the heart of the Prophet's action: all the verses of the Quran that refer to conflicts, killing, and fighting must be read in the context of their revelation (Muslims being in a situation of war and needing to defend themselves) and by no means alter the essential contents of the message as a whole.

## Compassion

No discrimination was exercised against non-Muslims on the basis of religion. The attitude of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) toward his Jewish neighbors was kind and cordial. He always visited their homes to enquire about health of their sick person's. There was a Jewish tribe by the name of Banu 'Arid in Medina. The Prophet had been pleased with them and had fixed an annual remuneration for them.

## Trust and Loyalty

The attitude of Muslims toward their non-Muslim compatriots was one of kindness, consideration and extreme tolerance. Non-Muslims reciprocated the generous, treatment with their trust and loyalty. In 2 A.H (*After Hijra*), after the Muslims victory in the battle of Badr, Makkan leaders sent yet another delegation to the King Negus with a view to seek the repatriation of Muslims from Abyssinia so that they could be persecuted at home. To counter the move, the Prophet sent a Non-Muslim, 'Amr, son of Umayya, as his ambassador to the court of the Negus. The ambassador succeeded in thwarting the evil intentions of the Quraysh leaders against the Muslims.

## Non - Muslims' Supported Prophet to fight against Enemies

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was very realistic, so he did not ignore preparations for war or slacken in his efforts. He achieved a wonderful balance between spiritual and material power. He employed the former most ingeniously in building a very high morale in his men, unparalleled in human history, and, at the same time, took all possible steps for preparing his forces with the military equipment of his times. He did not leave anything to chance but made full preparations, using all the available resources. In the battle of Hunayn, even though he had a strong force of twelve thousand, he borrowed a hundred suits of arms and armour from a non-Muslim named Safwan bin Umayya to further strengthen his defensive and striking power. Thus Safwan, a non-Muslim helped the Prophet to fight the enemies of Islam in the Battle of Hunayn.

- Two Non-Muslims, Safwan and Suhayl, fought bravely against enemies of Islam, along with Muslims in the battle of Hunayn. The Prophet recognized and honored them. When Prophet began sharing out the goods, he gave the important and large part of the captured treasure to them, and he did not require them to convert to Islam.

- While getting ready for the battle of Uhud, the Muslim army had to find an inconspicuous route to Uhud that would enable the Muslim army to approach the battleground without being anticipated or discovered by their Quraysh enemies. For this purpose, the Prophet Muhammad trusted a non-Muslim guide whose abilities were widely known. Thus, a non-Muslim guide, led the Muslim army to their destination.

## Flagrant Sin

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) upon his advent in Madinah did not force anybody to convert to Islam and he made it clear that he wanted relations within the new society to be democratic. Later, when conflicts arose and alliances were betrayed, the situation deteriorated and relations with one or another of the Jewish tribes came under strain.

For instance, a few years later, in Medinah, at a time when the Muslim were in conflict with a Jewish tribe whom they suspected of double dealing, treason and disloyalty, a Muslim thought he might escape responsibility for a theft he had committed by laying the blame on a Jew.

Prophet Muhammad immediately ordered judicial inquiry into this incident. After the investigation, it was reported that a Muslim had committed the theft and put the blame on a Jew. The probe freed the Jew from the blame held the Muslim guilty.

An eight-verse Quranic revelation denounced the serious treachery committed by the Muslim culprit and revealed the Jew's innocence. (See Quran, 4: 108-115)

Almighty Allah says in the Quran: "But if anyone earns a fault or a sin and throws it into one, who is innocent, he burdens himself with a false charge and flagrant sin." (Quran, 4: 112)

The Quran states that any hatred that may incidentally arise from a war or conflict cannot prevent the Islamic principles to which Muslims must remain faithful: "O you who believe! Stand out firmly for God, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others make you depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety; and fear God (be intimately conscious of God) for God is well acquainted with all that you do." (Quran, 5:8)



## Nobleness and Tolerance

Gentleness and kindness were the very essence of Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) teaching. He kept saying:

"God is gentle and he loves gentleness in everything."

Prophet declared to one of his Companions:

"There are in you two qualities that God loves: nobleness and tolerance.

Prophet Muhammad himself exemplified extreme tolerance in different circumstances. Once a Bedouin urinated in the mosque, and the Muslim companions rushed to beat him up. The Prophet ordered them to leave him alone.

The Prophet poured water over the place where the Bedouin had urinated. He then explained to the Bedouin calmly, that it was a place of worship and was not expected to be polluted. After the Bedouin left the place, the Prophet told his companions:

"You have been sent to make things easy (for the people) and you have not been sent to make things difficult for them."

What is evident from the incident is that the Prophet showed great consideration for the rustic Bedouin and asked his companions to be tolerant of the uncivilized behavior of the rural and ignorant folk and tackle them with all the gentleness at their command.

## Tolerance for other Religions

In the Quran, Almighty God says: “Do not insult those who invoke others besides Allah, because they will insult (the Name of) Allah, in their ignorance.....” (Quran, 6:108 )

The message of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was emphatically clear about use of civilized language about others, religions. He always advised that deities of other faiths and their scriptures must not be insulted. He also said do not call deities of other religions with bad names in return they may also call Almighty Allah with bad names.

Further evidence of Prophet Muhammad’s attitude and respect towards other religions is given by an incident that occurred as he and his followers were leaving Khaybar for Medina.

A Jew Rabbi noticed that some new young Muslims had taken with them, as spoils of war, copies of the Jews Holy Book, ‘Torah’. The rabbi protested to Prophet Muhammad: The Prophet got very upset and ordered the Muslims to return every copy of the sacred book and Prophet personally apologized for his companion’s misbehavior.

Commenting on this, Dr Israel Welphenson, a Jewish scholar of repute, writes that the event shows the high regard the Prophet Muhammad had for their scriptures. His tolerant and considerate behavior impressed the Jews who could never forget that the Prophet did nothing which insulted their sacred scriptures. The Jews knew how the Romans had, when they captured Jerusalem in 70 B.C., burnt their scriptures and trampled them under their feet. The fanatic Christians persecuting the Jews of Spain had likewise consigned their scriptures to fire. This is the great difference we find between these conquerors and the Prophet of Islam.





## No Compulsion in Religion

The Quran explicitly states that *“let there be no compulsion in religion”* (Quran, 2 : 256). The Prophet was advised to invite people to the path of righteousness and guidance not through intimidation and coercion but in a gentle and amiable manner.

Thus the Quran Says,

“Invite (all) to the way of the lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and argue with them in the best of ways” (Quran, 16:125)

A Delegation of fourteen Christian religious leaders from Najran (Yemen) visited the Prophet in order to question him about the new religion, about his faith and of course, about the status of ‘Prophet Jesus in Islam.’ The Prophet answered their questions, pointing out the link between the two traditions’ Islam and Christianity, Islam being the continuation of Prophet Jesus’ message, but he categorically rejected the system of belief of Trinity.

Muhammad invited them to worship One God, Allah, and accept Islam as the religion, and Quran as the last revelation. This confirms the recognition of the previous Books that came down to mankind, through Prophet Moses and ‘Prophet Jesus’ the Quran is part of the same monotheistic tradition.(The belief that there is only One God.)

The delegation of Christians listened to the contents of the new religion, and put forward their arguments. However, they refused to accept Prophet Muhammad’s message. Before they left, they wanted to perform their prayers inside the mosque. The Muslim Companions present

prayers inside the mosque. The Muslim Companions present there thought it fit to oppose them, but the Prophet intervened, and said “*Let them pray*”. The Christians prayed inside the mosque itself facing east.

Before the Christian delegation left, they invited the Prophet to send with them an envoy who would live with them, answer their questions and, if needed, judge some of their affairs. The Prophet delegated Abu Ubaydah for this purpose.

The Christian delegation went home. The Christians had come to Medinah, inquired about the message, listened to the contents of the new religion, put forward their arguments, prayed inside the mosque and went back without suffering any harm, remaining Christians and perfectly free. The first Companions were not to forget the Prophet’s attitude. They were to draw from it the substance of the respect that Islam demands of its faithful, whom it invites to go beyond tolerance, to learn, listen, and to recognize others’ dignity.

With Christians, as with all other religions or spiritual traditions, the invitation to meet, share, and live together fruitfully will always remain based on these three conditions: trying to get to know the other, remaining sincere (hence honest) during the meetings, discussions and debates, and, finally, learning humility in regard to one’s claim to possess the truth. Such is the message the Prophet Muhammad had in his relationship with the faithful of other religions. As can be seen, he did not hesitate to question and even contradict the Christians’ beliefs (such as the Trinity or the role of priests), but in the end his attitude was based on knowledge, sincerity; and humility, which are the three conditions of respect. Christians were free to leave, and the dialogue went on with the Prophet’s envoy.

The command of Quran, “No compulsion in religion” is in keeping with this respectful approach to diversity.




## Khaybar

The city of Khaybar, 150 km north of Medinah, was a regional power of Jews feared by all, and attacking it seemed unthinkable because its fortresses, weaponry, and riches were far superior to what their enemies, including Medinah, could ever hope to fight and overpower. The Khaybar leaders advised by members, of Jewish tribes the Banu Quynuqa, Banu Nadir, and Banu Qurayzah, were hostile to Prophet Muhammad's presence in the region and never failed to show it and to harm the interests of his Muslim community or of isolated individuals whenever they had a chance.

Leaders of Khaybar sent special envoys to the Makkan Quraysh and other anti-Islam tribes, such as Ghatafan and Hawazin, and even supported them financially to prepare themselves for an attack on Medinah, their intrigues brought hosts of enemies against Muslims of Medinah in the Battle of Trench, and they even devised an attempt on the Prophet's life. Therefore, within a fortnight of the Muslims' return from Hdaybiyah, Prophet thought of dealing with Khaybar first. After the Treaty of Hdaybiyah, Prophet Muhammad was at peace with Makkah and could now settle the affair of Khaybar without any fear of attack on Medinah from the Makkan Quraysh.

Prophet Muhammad sent envoys repeatedly to Khaybar, for peaceful settlement, but all in vain. Consequently, Prophet Muhammad decided to organize an expedition against Khaybar, but he determined to keep it a secret until the very last moment, so as not to alert the enemy. While Khaybar and its allies could rely on nearly fourteen thousand men, Muhammad decided to go there with an army of only fourteen hundred, though he could have mobilized more. Near the city at night, he called upon a guide who knew the area well, and made his camp between two of the Khaybar fortresses: in that way, he could cut off all communication between the Khaybar people and their Ghatafan allies. When the day broke, the inhabitants of the two forts were surprised and fear immediately invaded their ranks. The siege lasted several days. During which Muhammad and his men gathered information enabling them to use the best strategy to compel their enemy to give in. They decided to attack the citadels one by one, beginning with the most exposed and vulnerable. The method worked very well, and it was not long before the first fortresses fell. The surrender conditions were discussed for each individual case, but most of the time, the vanquished were required to leave their possessions and exile themselves with their women and children.

The last major fortress, Qamus, resisted for fourteen days, but eventually gave in, for the Muslims' siege was choking it and left no hope of victory. Then the last two forts also surrendered and they, in their turn, negotiated the terms of their capitulation.



## Poison and Agreement

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) agreed to allow the inhabitant to stay and manage their farm land and orchards, provided they paid the Muslims a regular tax on their products.

The Jews agreed to the terms and conditions, and invited Prophet Muhammad and his companions for a feast to celebrate the occasion. When a shoulder of lamb was brought and served to Prophet Muhammad, he took a mouthful but, noticing the strange taste of the meat, immediately spat it out. He tried to warn one of his Companions Bisher, who had already started to eat, but it was too late. The Companion, died. The woman who had cooked the lamb was summoned, and she admitted that the meat had been poisoned, providing an excuse that if the eaters were a king, she would then rid herself of him, but should he be a Prophet, then he would be bound to learn about it. The Prophet Muhammad however, ignored her treacherous attempt, but later ordered that she be killed when his companion Bisher died of that poison. The Muslims were furious; they wanted to repudiate the agreement and resume fighting. But the Prophet forgave the Jews and honored the terms of the agreement.

A new stage reached in that seventh year of *Hijrah* (628 C.E.) with all the fortresses conquered; Prophet Muhammad had neutralized his last major enemy in the area. Peace now reigned over the Arab peninsula, and the Muslims no longer had to fear attacks from the north. Agreements regulating tribe or clan relationships, or trade in general, enabled the Muslim community to settle down with maximum security.

## Safiyyah chooses God and His Messenger

Among the war captives was Huyay's daughter Safiyyah (may God be pleased with her) (Huyay was chief of the Jewish tribes Banu Nadir and Banu Qurayzah). Safiyyah in no way resembled her father, and she had long been trying to learn the contents of Prophet Muhammad's message. She was pious and did not share her people's hostility towards the Prophet.

- The Prophet had heard of that woman and of the spirituality, and she did not hesitate to tell him about one of her dreams, associating her fate with that of the city of Medinah Muslims. Prophet Muhammad listened to her, and then gave her a choice: remain a Jew and return to her people, or become a Muslim. She exclaimed: "I choose God and His Messenger!"

The Prophet granted her, her freedom and then short time later he married her, following the example of the great conquerors who married the daughters and wives of the kings whom they had conquered, partly in order to alleviate their tragedy and partly to preserve their dignity.

The Prophet's marriages also had to do with that situation: some of his wives came from clans that had, in effect, become family to Prophet Muhammad and so considered themselves his natural allies. Hence, the Muslim community itself seemed to have become invulnerable and unassailable: in the space of eight years, it had not only settled in a new city, Medinah, but had secured unparalleled status and regional prestige.





## The Magnanimous Gesture

Famine appeared at this time in Makkah and hit its people most adversely. Since the city had no agriculture, it had to import food from outside, but the places which provided grain to Makkah were also affected by famine.

Najd was the only area of the Arab Peninsula which had escaped famine and was in a position to export grain to Makkah.

One day a 30 member Muslim military patrol under the command of Ibn Muslima arrested a person whose movements were considered suspicious and he was brought to Medina. The Prophet personally knew him. He was chief of the Najd territory, a man named Thumamah, had once visited Makkah before the migration. The Prophet as usual had preached Islam to him, but he had threatened to kill him instead. The same person now appeared as a prisoner before him. The Prophet asked, "*whether time was not ripe to renounce idolatry and submit to God.*" He replied: "O Muhammad! If you kill me, you kill a murderer and if you show mercy and benevolence, your mercy will be on a grateful person. If you want material ransom ask, and I will give it to you." Hearing this, the Prophet kept quiet.



This was an ambiguous Arabic expression which could mean that his hands were tainted with blood and that he deserved being eliminated on that score. He had possibly killed some Muslims. The conversation ended at that, but the Prophet ordered that he should be treated as a 'prisoner guest,' so that he could witness the daily life of a common Muslim in the mosque. On the second day, the same thing was repeated and when, on the third day, he gave the same reply, the Prophet ordered to release him and said: "*Thumamah you are free now, go wherever you want*".

This merciful treatment by the Prophet was against his expectations. He was deeply affected by the Prophet's magnanimous gesture. He got out of the mosque, went to a well near-by, had a bath and returned to the mosque. Presenting himself to the Prophet, he proclaimed: "I bear witness that there is no god but God and bear witness that Muhammad is His Messenger". To this he added a sentence: "A few moments ago you were for me the most hated man in the world, but now you are the man I love most in this world." No religion was worse in my eyes than your religion, now the same is dearest to me of all. No city was more unpleasant to me than Medinah, and now the same is the most pleasant of all."

Thamama's acceptance of Islam opened the way for spread of Message of Islam in the politically important area of Najd.

In the conversation that followed, he offered to cut off the supply of food from Najd to Makkah and pledged that not a grain would be exported without the express approval of Prophet Muhammad. This worsened the serious food situation of the city of Makkah, which was already reeling under famine. The Makkans were obliged at last to send a delegation to Medinah and request the Prophet to have mercy on his compatriots who were starving to death. Prophet

Muhammad at once sent a ward to Thumamah, asking him to lift the blockade, and said:

“It is Allah who gives provisions to all, including His enemies. Do what you were doing before (supplying grain), but give a little more.”

Not only that. Prophet Muhammad sent to the Makkan leader Abu Sufyan five hundred gold sovereigns, a substantial sum in those days, for distribution to the poor and the needy in Makkah.

The staunch enemy of Islam, Abu Sufyan, fretted and fumed, history has recorded his response: “Muhammad wants to mislead our young men.” In any case he was in no position to return the sum.

The Quraysh had inflicted so much injury and damage to the person, family and followers of the Prophet during his stay in Makkah that no words can describe its severity and harshness. They had imposed social boycott on the Prophet and his family for three years. The Prophet in return for this inhuman treatment allowed food grains from Yamamah to pass to the Makkans during the days of famine and saved them from starvation.

Later, other events of a similar nature took place, their collective effect was that the people of Makkah, instead of looking upon the Prophet as their enemy, began to feel proud of him for they saw in him a brother citizen who was becoming more powerful day by day. They did not have the courage to express the sentiment, but they began naturally to feel inclined towards him and his religion Islam.





## Recreation and Leisure

Recreation and leisure are essential requirements of life in order to recharge and revitalize an individual and dispel monotony. This is where people look for some fun and entertainment.

The Prophet allowed his followers to have harmless, innocent and clean diversions in life within permissible limits. He would like to go to the gardens sometimes alone and sometimes with his companions and would engage with them in chatting on various topics, under the shade of trees. Sometimes swimming competitions would be arranged among his companions. On one such occasion, Abu Bakr was with him. When it rained after a long break, the Prophet bathed in the shower wearing an overall.

He even participated in races and archery and took part in wrestling bouts and heartily laughed with others.

On joyous occasions, he liked playing drums that were open from one side. Once on the day of Eid, two girls were sitting by the side of his wife Ayesha and were singing. This angered Abu Bakr and he snubbed them. The Prophet intervened and allowed them to continue singing. He said the Ansars were fond of music, therefore a singing girl should be sent with the bride.

On another occasion, Prophet had a race with his wife Aisha. It is reported by Aishah that then; she was with the Prophet on a journey. She raced with him on foot and beat him, but when she put on some weight she raced again with him and he beat her.

## UMRAH

### Lesser Pilgrimage

One year had elapsed since the treaty of Al-Hudaybiyah, and it was now time to prepare for the visit to Makkah mentioned in the agreement. Two thousand Muslims accordingly set off with Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) with the intention of performing *Umrab*, the lesser pilgrimage. Among them was a poor man who had arrived from Makkah and had settled with the *Ahl As-Suffah* (the people of the bench). He was poor and humble, and the Prophet called him “*the father of the kitten*”, so much did he love kittens. This was Abu Hurayrah, who had converted to Islam rather late and who was to become one of the most reliable and respected narrators of Prophetic traditions (*Ahadith*).

The pilgrims went to Makkah and stopped on the edge of the sacred territory to wait for the Quraysh to move out of the area, allowing the Muslims to perform their rites freely. The Muslims were wearing the humbled garments sanctified for pilgrimage, and they entered Makkah while the Quraysh people watched them from the surrounding hills. The Prophet performed the seven circumambulations around the Kaabah, then the same number of times waling up and down between the hills of *As-Safa* and *Al-Marwa*. After that, he sacrificed a

camel and had his head shaved: he had thus completed the rites of the lesser pilgrimage, followed by all the other pilgrims. He wanted to get into the Kaabah itself, but the Quraysh refused arguing that this was not part of their agreement. The Prophet did not challenge them, and throughout his stay he remained in the enclosure of the House of God (*Bayt Allah*), from which Bilal called the pilgrims to prayer five times a day in his beautiful, powerful voice. From the hills where they looked on, many Quraysh people were impressed, as they were later to confess, by the simplicity, dignity of the Muslims' religious practice and behavior.

Around this time, the Prophet's uncle, Abbas publicly declared his conversion to Islam.

## Inner Illumination

When the Prophet (Peace be upon him) was back in Medinah and daily life had resumed its course, he heard of the unexpected arrival of three men who had met on the way and who were arriving together to meet him. Usman son of Talhah, Khalid son of Walid, and Amr, son of Al-As were all coming to convert to Islam and pledge loyalty to the Prophet, whom they had fought so violently and aggressively for so many years. The Prophet was very happy about their conversion to Islam, and so were all the Companions, who were aware of the three men's qualities: their commitment was sincere and unreserved. Those conversions to Islam, like Abu Hurayrah's some time before, were loaded with teaching, for not only was the past of Islam's worst enemies forgotten as soon as they recognized God's oneness, but during the time of these people had needed in order to follow the path of God, said nothing about their sincerity, their moral qualities, and their future status within the community of faith.

After being hostile to Prophet Muhammad and his message of Islam for almost twenty years, they had undergone a profound conversion. Thus Islamic faith, its intensity and its power to convert and transform hearts — cannot be measured on the basis of time or rationality; its very sincerity and intensity attest to its nature, and this is why a recent convert can attain a deeper, more complete inner illumination than someone else can reach after years of religious practice. The opposite is also true, and again, this requires people to refrain from judging others' hearts.

## Confronting Syria

A few months later, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) decided to send envoys to the north, to ensure the solidity of existing alliances and the ability of Muslims to travel to Syria for their trade. Fifteen men were sent out, but fourteen of them were killed; at the same time another envoy, who had been sent to Busra, was also stopped and killed by a leader of the Ghassan tribe. The threat from Syria was clearly intensifying, and those murders of peaceful envoys had to be redressed. Killing envoys and messengers used to be regarded as the most awful crime, and amounted to declaration of war. The Prophet was shocked on hearing the news and decided to send an army of three thousand men, and he placed the former slave Zayd, son of Harithah in command – which greatly surprised many Companions. He added that if Zayd was killed, Jafar, who had recently returned from Abyssinia, would take over the command, and if Jafar died, he would be replaced by Abdullah, son of Rawahah.

The battle of Syria was the most significant and the fiercest battle during the life time of Prophet Muhammad, a beginning and a start to the great conquest of the land of the Christians. It took place in 8 A.H. / 629 C.E. at Muthah

a village on the border of Greater Syria near Philistine.

The Muslim army marched out, and when they arrived near Syria, they heard that a majority of anti-Islam Arab tribes had banded together and that they had managed to obtain the support of the Byzantine (Roman) imperial troops, which made them more than a hundred thousand strong. Having only three thousand men, the Muslims had no chance. Once they reached Muthah (Syria), where the topography was more favorable, Zayd ordered his troops to launch a sudden attack, seeking to create a surprise. The strategy momentarily staggered the enemy, but it was not sufficient to tip the scales in favor of the Muslims, who were so heavily outnumbered. Zayd was killed, then Jafar, his successor, then Abdullah. The Muslim troops were in disarray until eventually Khalid took command, gathered the Muslim army, and enabled them to protect themselves from a new attack. Muslims had lost only eight men, but they had to retreat, and this was plainly a defeat; however, Khalid had managed to avoid a confrontation that could have ended up in a slaughter.

## Weeping for His Beloved

At that point, the Companions who had stayed in Medinah with the Prophet underwent a most peculiar experience. They knew the Prophet had dreams and visions that very often came true; they knew the Prophet was inspired, and they had followed him as Revelations came to him in fragments. They were therefore accustomed to the strange, fantastic dimensions of his life among them.

One day, Prophet Muhammad came to them and, though no envoy had come from the battlefield and they had not received any information about the expedition, the Prophet started to recount the battle as if he had been present among the fighters. With tears in his eyes and painful emotion, he

told them about the deaths of Zayd, Jafar, and Abdullah. He praised Khalid's feat and called him "*Sayf-ul-Islam*" (the sword of Islam), but he could not conceal his deep sorrow when mentioning the dead who were so dear to him.

Prophet went to Asma, Jafar's wife, and her children to tell them the news and comfort them; he began to weep before he could speak, and Asma burst into tears when she heard of her husband's death.

The Prophet then went to Ume Ayman, Zayd's wife, and told her about Zayd's death, his eyes full of tears: he had loved him like a son, and his family was particularly dear to him. Just after he left their dwelling, Zayd's youngest daughter came out of her home and rushed into the Prophet's arms; he tried to comfort her while tears were streaming down his face and he was sobbing.

One of the Companions who was passing by, Sa'ad, son of Ubadah, was surprised at this scene and particularly at the Prophet's tears, and asked him for an explanation. The Prophet answered that this was "*someone who loves weeping for his beloved.*" The Prophet had taught his Companions to express love and tenderness, and at that moment, when faced with the final parting of death, he taught them about human fragility and the dignity of tears expressing love and the suffering of those who love.

The Muslim army returned from Syria under Khalid's leadership and confirmed the Prophet's vision. Things had happened precisely as he had told them, and the three Companions had been killed fighting. For the whole community, those visions and that knowledge were additional signs of Muhammad's Prophethood. He was extraordinary, he acted remarkably, his intelligence and qualities did not resemble anyone else's, and yet he remained humble and fragile, and like them, he wept.

The situation remained difficult in the north, and the



Arab tribes certainly thought they could use the Muslims' defeat in Mutah (Syria) to their own advantage. Muhammad received intelligence report that some tribes were preparing a full-scale expedition against Medina. He decided to send strong army under the command of Amr. And the Muslim force was able to proceed into the Syrian territory, consolidate existing alliances, and establish new ones, which made it possible to secure that, which was till now an unsafe front.

## The Treaty is Broken

As previously noted, the treaty of Al-Hudaybiyyah applied not just to the Medinah community and the Quraysh, but to all their allies as well. The Khuzaah were Muhammad's (peace be upon him) allies, and one of their clans, the Banu Ka'af, was treacherously attacked one night by the Banu Bakr, the Quraysh's allies, who killed one of their men. The Banu Ka'ab promptly sent the Prophet an envoy to inform him of that treason. It constituted a breach of the covenant, and Muhammad decided the crime must not go unpunished: he had to help his Khuzaah allies.

As for the Quraysh, they understood how serious the situation was, and they decided to send their most influential man to convince Prophet Muhammad not to respond to that isolated action. Yet, ever since the treaty had been signed, the Quraysh had kept breaking up on the terms and limits of the treaty, and they never hesitated to prompt other clans to set upon the Muslim community to weaken or even attack them. This time, however, things had gone too far, and this was why the Quraysh leader Abu Sufyan himself went to Medinah to confer with the Prophet. Abu Sufyan tried to enlist the support first of his daughter, Ume Habibah, the Prophet's wife, then of Ali, but he found no means to

negotiate. The Prophet remained silent, as did his Companions, and Abu Sufyan did not know what to think of the situation. Though Prophet Muhammad refused to reach an agreement and Abu Sufyan returned to Makkah empty handed, these efforts ultimately ensured that the conquest of Makkah should happen.

## The Conquest of Makkah

During the weeks that followed, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) asked his Companions to get ready for an expedition, though he kept his objective secret. Only a few close Companions knew what was coming. Rumors suggested that the army would march towards Syria, or towards Taif, or against the Hawazin, so as to spread uncertainty over the whole Arab Peninsula.

The expedition set off during the month of Ramadan, and the Prophet at first let the Muslims decide whether or not they wanted to fast. He himself fasted until they reached Marr Az-Zahran; when they camped there, he required the Muslims to stop fasting, for they would need all their energy.

The Marr Az-Zahran camp lay at a crossroad: their destination might be Najd, to the east, or Taif, or Makkah. Abbas, who had left Makkah to settle in Medinah, heard about the Muslims' movement and joined them. When they established their camp, the Prophet asked every soldier to light a fire in order to impress the enemy: ten thousand fires were lit, suggesting a huge army was on the move, since each fire was supposed to provide for the needs of five to ten soldiers.

The Quraysh, as well as the other tribes who feared an attack, decided to send envoys to find out about the Prophet's intentions.

## ABU SUFYAN

### Loved to be honored

Once again it was Abu Sufyan who came to the Prophet from the Quraysh, along with two other envoys, Hakim and Budayl to convince him not to attack Makkah. They parlayed for a long time, but they eventually understood that the Prophet's determination was inflexible. They also observed the Companions, their behavior, and the calm atmosphere originating from the camp.


Hakim and Budayl decided to convert to Islam, and Abu Sufyan declared that he accepted the first part of the profession of faith (*"There is no god but God"*), but that he retained some doubt as to Muhammad's status; he needed some more time before he pronounced the second part of the profession of faith (*"Muhammad is His Messenger"*). He spent the night at the camp, and after early Morning Prayer, after observing the Muslims' devotion and their behavior with the Prophet, he decided, following Abbas's advice, to say the whole profession of faith.

The Prophet knew that this change of heart was weak, and he asked Abbas to go with Abu Sufyan to the edge of the valley so that Abu Sufyan could watch the Muslim army marching by. That produced the desired effect, as Abu Sufyan was greatly impressed. Before that, Abbas had, in a whisper, reminded the Prophet that Abu Sufyan loved to be honored

and advised Prophet not to forget that; Muhammad, a good psychologist, did not forget the advice and sent word that anyone in Makkah who sought refuge at Abu Sufyan's house, or in the Kaabah sanctuary, or simply remained inside their home, would have nothing to fear and would be spared. Abu Sufyan hurried back to Makkah before the Muslim army got there and (jeered at by his own wife Hind, who called him a madman and a coward, and by other leaders such as Ikrimah, son of Abu Jahl, who insulted him) advised everybody to surrender and offer no resistance to the Prophet's extraordinary army.

Prophet Muhammad had turned Abu Sufyan into an ally, not only because Abu Sufyan had converted to Islam, but also because the Prophet had observed his character and personality. Abu Sufyan had first recognized God, but found it difficult to confer special status on a man he had fought and considered his equal; Prophet Muhammad had understood this and had not rushed him, giving him time to observe and understand by himself. Even after Abu Sufyan had embraced Islam, the Prophet was aware that he retained an attraction for power and glory, and he took this into account when he exposed him to the strength of his army and conferred on him a specific role in the possible resolution of the conflict.

Though Prophet Muhammad insisted on common principles, he was able to take particular traits into account: his mission was to reform the latter through the former, but he never neglected the character, aspirations, and specified features that made up each individual's personality. His message insisted on the principle of equality for all in justice, as well as the psychology of differences and of each person's marvel, spectacle in faith.





## THE GLORIOUS VICTORY

Makkah was conquered by Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), in January 630 A.D, 10th day of Ramadan, eight years after the *hijrah*. It is called *Fatab-e-Mubeen*, 'The Glorious Victory.' Prophet Muhammad marched to Makkah with an army consisting of 3000 Muslims of Medinah and Muslims from other Arab communities that joined him on the way from Medinah totaling 10,000 Muslims. Prophet Muhammad had segmented his army into divisions that encircled the city and closed in on the centre together.

When the army marched through Kada for entry into Makkah, Abbas, at the instance of the Prophet took Abu Sufyan to a convenient spot to show him the strength of the Islamic force, and the clan after clan with its chief bearing its standard passed along and Abu Sufyan asked about each contingent. When Sa'ad passed by Abu Sufyan, the long history of the oppressions of the Quraysh passed before his eyes and he shouted, "Today is the day of great expedition. Today the sanctity of Kaabah will be for us." When the Prophet heard of this cry his face changed color in anger and became very sensitive, expressed severe disapproval and he immediately ordered that the standard be taken from Sa'ad. At the same time Prophet said,

"This is the day of the greatness of Kaabah and the virtue and generosity."

A few Quraysh groups posted themselves on the hills, led by Suhayl, Ikrimah, and Safwan, but after the first confrontations, they realized that resisting was pointless. Suhayl sought refuge in his home, and Ikrimah and Safwan ran away.

The Prophet had demanded that no fighting or battle should take place on that day, which he called "*The day of Mercy*".

Some eight years earlier, the Prophet had left Makkah secretly, but with dignity and with his head held high. The Prophet now came back to Makkah in broad daylight, victorious, but this time, he prostrated himself on his mount in thankfulness to the One God as he recited the verses from the Chapter "*Al-Fath*" (The Victory):

"Verily we have granted you a manifest victory, that God may forgive you your faults of the past and those to follow, fulfill his favor to you, and guide you on the straight path, and that God may aid you with powerful help. It is He who sent down tranquility into the hearts of the believers that they may add faith to their faith." (*Quran, 48 : 1-4*)

Prophet Muhammad entered Makkah expressing the deepest humility, and he wanted the greatest kindness to be shown to the Muslims former foes. He performed the greater ablution and prayed eight cycles of voluntary ritual prayer before resting for a few hours. After that, he mounted his camel, Qaswa, and went to the Kaabah sanctuary, where he performed the seven rounds of circumambulation. Then, with his stick, he removed the idols, while repeating the Quranic verse, And proclaim:

"Truth has arrived, and falsehood perished: for falsehood is bound to perish." (*Quran, 17:81*)

The Prophet had the keys of the sanctuary brought to him and requested that all religious images be wiped out, in order to reconcile the House of God with its essence, which was to celebrate the worship of the One God, Who cannot be represented and must not be associated with any image:

“There is nothing whatever likes Him, and He is the One that hears and sees.” ( Quran, 42 : 11 )

This gesture of removing the idols by the Prophet was, in appearance, the exact opposite of all that he had usually been doing since leaving Makkah, as he had had mosques (devoid of any image) built to mark the sacred space of worship of the One God. On the level of the spiritual message, however, this gesture was exactly of the same essence, since by removing the idols that lay inside and near the Kaabah, he was removing what had, in the course of centuries, perverted the message of truth. With this act Muhammad turned the Kaabah into a real mosque, in which henceforth only the One God, Almighty Allah was to be worshipped.

The Quraysh were gradually coming out of their homes and gathering inside the sanctuary enclosure. After removing the idols from the Kaabah, the Prophet exclaimed:

“There is no god but God, the One, Who has no partner. He has fulfilled His promise, supported His servant, and rioted the enemy clans; He alone has done that.”

Then he turned towards the Quraysh, told them about the rules of Islam, and recited this verse:

“O human kind we created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Verily the most honored among you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you (the most deeply aware of God’s presence).



And God has full Knowledge and is well acquainted  
(with all things).” (Quran, 49 : 13)

After that, he asked them, “*How they thought he was going to deal with them*”. They replied that as a “noble brother, son of a noble brother,” he would certainly deal with them kindly. At that point, the Prophet recited the verse that punctuates the story of Joseph [Yusuf] when he was reunited with his brothers, who had wanted to kill him:

“This day let no reproach be (cast) on you: God will forgive you, and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy.” (Quran, 12 : 92)

Then he exclaimed: *Go on, you are free!*” the Prophet granted his forgiveness to all the women and men who came to him.

## The Day of Mercy

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) triumphantly entered Makkah without any ceremony or beating of drums or burning crackers but with his head bowed in prayer and gratitude to God. “Enter the gate with bowed heads” was the general order.

The Prophet ordered his companion Bilal to stand over the roof of the Kaabah and call the Muslims to Prayer. The Prophet led the prayers, and then addressed the people of Makkah reminding them of the treatment they had meted out to him in the past twenty years and asked what they expected of him. Had the Prophet wished he could have put all the people of Makkah to the sword, and they deserved it too. He had the military might and he had conquered the city. He could have ordered at least the confiscation of their property because they had looted the property of Muslims. He could have ordered that they should be taken as slaves.

Such an order was possible and permissible and they also deserved it. But the last Prophet of God did nothing of the kind. He uttered only one sentence:

“Today there is no blame on you, there will be no retribution; go, all of you are free”!

The generosity he had shown had surprised even extremely violent opponents. While many had insulted him, fought against him, and even killed members of his family and his dearest Companions, he offered them forgiveness, Mercy and protection.

## Attab

Prophet Muhammad’s (peace be upon him) Companion Bilal stood over the roof of the Kaabah and call the Muslim to prayer. Attab son of Asid, a staunch enemy of Islam, on hearing the *Adban* (call for prayer) whispered to his friend Al-Harith sitting next to him that his father, had he been alive, could have suffered seeing a ‘black donkey’ braying on top of the House of God.

Attab, who was cursing Bilal a short while ago, on hearing the pronouncement of forgiveness and Mercy of the Prophet, suddenly got up, and presented himself to the Prophet. Addressing him he said: “I am ‘Attab, son of Asid your known enemy. I declare that *‘There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger!’*”

The effect of the proclamation of amnesty was instantaneous. Not only Attab, but the entire population of Makkah embraced Islam overnight.

When Attab, an enemy of the Prophet, declared his acceptance of Islam, the Prophet named him governor of Makkah and fixed his salary, one Dirham per day.

## Safwan

Safwan, a Makkan leader and deadly enemy of Islam, who sent 'Umir with a promise of reward if he kills the Prophet, ran away to Jeddah on that day and resolved to go to Yemen by sea. 'Umir came to the Prophet, and made the submission that: "O Allah's Messenger! Safwan is the chief of his community and out of fear from you has run away and might throw himself into the sea." Having learned that, the Prophet said, "*He is given security.*" He said, "O Allah's Messenger! Give me some sign of security so that seeing it, he might trust me." The Prophet gave him his turban, which he took to Safwan; Safwan said that he feared for his life in going back. 'Umir replied, "Safwan, so far you are unaware of the humility and forgiveness of Prophet Muhammad." Hearing this, he went to the Prophet and said, "Umir says that you have given me security." The Prophet said, "*It is true.*"

Safwan asked that he might be given two months leave (to think). "The Prophet said, "*Not two, but you are given four month's leave (to think).*" Thus, Prophet did not force him to convert to Islam, or rush for conversion, but he gave him time to observe and think.

## Habar

Habar, another deadly enemy of Islam had inflicted great injury to Zaynab, daughter of the Muhammad. When she was emigrating from Makkah to Medinah and was pregnant, Habar deliberately pulled her down from the camel. She was grievously hurt and her pregnancy was lost. He was impressed by the degree of forgiveness of the Prophet, then came to him and said, "O God's Messenger! I wanted to run away to Persia, but then I am overwhelmed by your favours and forgiveness. I admit my ignorance and crime, now I have come

to accept Islam. The Prophet forgave and pardons him. All of a sudden, feelings of mercy overpowered everything.

## Abu Sufyan

Nothing was hidden about the role of Abu Sufyan, since the Battle of Badr. All the killings and wars were initiated, organized and fought by him against the Prophet, but when he was brought by Abbas, on the Day of Victory, the Prophet, treated him with love and kindness. ‘Umar intended to kill Abu Sufyan for his previous crimes, but the Prophet forbade him. The Prophet not only forgave Abu Sufyan’s crimes, but also made his house a sanctuary of peace in these words, *“Whoever enters the house of Sufyan is safe and his crime forgiven.”*

## Hind

Hind, wife of Abu Sufyan: Her hatred of Islam was so great that in the battle of Uhud, she extracted Hamzah’s liver and masticated it. She came before the Prophet, sought forgiveness and accepted Islam. After the Prophet had forgiven her and admitted her into the fold of Islam, she went home and broke all the idols in her house, saying “Truly, you misled us.”

## Ikrimah

‘Ikrimah son of Abu Jahl who, following his father’s footsteps was an uncompromising opponent of Islam: Seeing that he was sure to meet his end in Makkah, he fled to Yemen. His wife, Ume Hakim, who had accepted Islam, appealed to the Prophet for asylum on behalf of her husband. Her request

was granted. Then she went to Yemen to bring her husband back and came to the Prophet.

Watching Ikrimah coming towards him, he said to his Companions,

“Ikrimah, son of Abu Jahl, is coming to you to embrace Islam. Do not insult his father, for insulting the dead hurts the living without reaching the dead.”

Prophet Muhammad stood up with excitement and happiness and went towards Ikrimah with such speed that his shawl fell from his shoulders, and he said, “O emigrating rider, your return is welcome.”

Prophet Muhammad thus reminded his companions not only to forgive, but also to always remember that nobody can be held responsible for someone else’s mistakes, not even their father’s, according to the meaning of the Quranic verse.

“No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another.” (Quran, 17:15)

The Quran had already announced that when those persecuted people (Prophet and Companions) were victorious, they would stand out by their human dignity and their behavior, for they are:

“Those who, if we established them in the land, established regular prayer and gave Zakat (the purifying social Tax), enjoin the right and forbid wrong.” (Quran, 22 : 41)

The Prophet was the living example of such nobleness; he showed no interest in revenge, wealth, or power. He entered Makkah prostrated, went to pray and prostrate himself in the Kaabah sanctuary, recited numerous invocations expressing his trust in the One God and his thankfulness, and then at last established peace in the city of Makkah.



## Reformation of Hearts for Leadership of Islam

Conquerors can afford to be cruel. But Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), chose to be different. He was magnanimous towards his vanquished enemies.

The Quraysh had for over two decades opposed the Prophet and his mission. The Prophet was ridiculed, his companions were tortured, and attempts were made on his life, his family and companions were imprisoned and social boycott was imposed on them for three years. Their only crime was that they had accepted Muhammad as their leader and joined the fold of Islam. The Quraysh spared no stratagem, trick to defeat and destroy Islam. But after three wars and the conquest of Makkah, the Quraysh were a defeated and demoralized lot. Now it could be the turn of the Prophet to avenge for all the excesses perpetrated against him and the Muslims. But the Prophet forgave them declaring that he intended no revenge for harm done to his person. He declared: *La Tasreeb alaikum ul yaum*. (There is no retribution against you today.) He even let the Quraysh keep the properties of Muslims, grabbed by them after they had left Makkah and migrated to Medina. He even allowed them to retain all the traditional designations as official custodians of the places of pilgrimages and ministerial portfolios of administration of Makkah.

The Prophet was wise enough to pursue the policy of peace and forgiveness following the conquest of Makkah. He knew that leniency and large-heartedness would bring greater

dividends of peace for the fledgling Islamic state and would open their hearts for reform. Punishment and revenge would only foster a cycle of revenge. What he envisioned was a genuine change of heart. It was possible only by being lenient and allowing them to repent for their past crimes.

The Quraysh were all well known personalities and held high offices in the administration of Makkah, they were super intellectuals, and had practical capabilities, dignity and influence, experience of rule and command, tact and the ability to achieve through others, understanding of human psychology and above all, they were men whose superiority has already been recognized and established in the public esteem. The Prophet had realized this and that they had great qualities in them. They could be co-opted into the great task of reform, rather than being consigned to the waste-bin of history. The Prophet knew that they were best suited for the leadership of Arabia and can carry the mantle of Islam further into a civilization. The Quraysh had fought bravely for preserving the system of the days of ignorance to which they were committed. They were expected to retain the same degree of commitment to Islam if their honour and esteem remained intact. The Prophet was also firm in his conviction that though faith and piety was the sheet anchor of Islam, the Islamic leadership also needed intellectual calibre, self-esteem, influence, experience of rule and tact and ability to command a wide body of people. Forcibly crushed and humiliated, the Quraysh could be of no use. The Prophet's vision and humility while entering Makkah as the head of the victorious army ensured that the people of Makkah came beseeching his favour rather than his wrath.

It was this grand generosity of spirit that brought about a sea of change in the Arabian Peninsula and turned the most implacable foes of Islam into the future standard-bearers of the Islamic faith.



### *O God, I am Innocent*

After the great conquest of Makkah, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) stayed in Makkah for nineteen days, and the situation began to settle down. Before returning to Medinah, he sent expeditions to make sure that his alliances with the nearby tribes were solid and that those who had accepted Islam had given up idol worship. Khalid had been entrusted with such a mission among the Banu Jadhimah, tribe, who eventually surrendered, but Khalid decided, against Abd Ar-Rahman, son of Awf's advice, to execute the prisoners towards whom he harbored particular resentment. After executing some of them, he stopped at Abd Ar-Rehman's insistence, the latter having made it clear to him that his behavior was motivated by other intentions than faith in God and justice.

The Prophet was very angry when he heard of Khalid's behavior. He decided to pay blood money for all the dead, and he kept repeating aloud:

*"O God, I am innocent of what Khalid has done!"*

Prophet Muhammad explicates that if any individual, group or a state does inflict any atrocities on human life including killing of innocents or spreading terrorism in the name of religion or associating it with the Prophet and if




those acts are detrimental to Islam, that shall not be considered as Islamic.

The path to the education of hearts and consciences of the Medinah and Makkan Muslims had still a long way to go. Deeply rooted habits and old feelings continued to rise to the surface and manifest as behaviors contrary to Islam's precepts. Moreover, the Makkans' mass entry into Islam required additional efforts in religious education. The Prophet asked his companion Ma'az bin Jabal to make this a priority: the new converts to Islam had to be educated and taught the principles of their new religion.

The unity in adversity that had prevailed so far had ironically been easier to achieve than the unity in faith, love, and respect that must henceforth be established.

More than the physical path of a life, this was the initiatory journey of a heart and conscience going through the stages of the great *Jihad* that takes people from the natural tension of passions to the peace of spiritual education.



## 20

## HUNAYN

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) realized that he still had to face a number of dangers threatening the Muslim community. All the tribes had not acknowledged the Prophet's authority, and some thought the time had come to overthrow him. Persistent rumors indicated that the Hawazin tribes and their allies had mobilized more than twenty thousand men, east of Makkah and that they were preparing to attack the Muslims. The Prophet sent scouts who confirmed the Rumors: the Muslims had to prepare themselves quickly. All the Muslims who had come from Medinah were mobilized, and they were joined by two thousand from the Quraysh. (Most of those Makkan Quraysh had recently embraced Islam, but others such as Suhayl or Safwan, fought along with the Muslims at Hunayn without having become Muslims).

In the battle of Hunayn, the violent tribes of Hawazin and Thaqif too joined. In the year of 630 C.E., the ninth year of *hijrah*, a pitched battle was fought at Hunayn, about 16 km from Makkah.

Prophet Muhammad set off with an army of twelve thousand men, the biggest he had ever led. Some, such as Abu Bakr, expressed proud confidence as to their numbers and probable victory, which displeased the Prophet.

The Hawazin army was led by a young warrior named Malik, son of Awf, who had acquired a solid reputation in the Peninsula. He had ordered his soldiers to take their children with them in order to impress the enemy with their number and stir up the troops. Malik posted a great number of his soldiers in the ravines on either side of the valley. Those men were invisible from the valley. He deployed the rest of the army opposite the gorge so that they faced the Muslims arriving from the bottom of the valley and were thus deliberately visible. The Muslims were advancing in the light of early morning when suddenly Malik ordered the soldiers hiding in the ravines to attack the Prophet's army from both flanks. The surprise was total, and Khalid, who marched ahead, could not resist the sudden attack. The Muslim warriors tried to protect themselves. Caught in the narrow parts of the gorge, Muslims army panicked.

Prophet Muhammad, who was at some distance behind in a more open space, witnessed what was happening; he immediately gathered his closest Companions and began to call the Muslims with the help of Abbas, whose voice was more resounding than his own, Muslim army came to join him and re-organized to launch a counter-attack.

The Muslim army then began to march on the enemy with such passion that Malik's Hawazin army were totally astonished; they did not expect such a sudden and massive counter-attack from Muslims.

Among the Muslims was a woman, Ume Sulaym, who took part in the battle with her husband and who showed a determination shared by all. It was now their enemies' turn to be compelled to withdraw, and then run away, with the Muslim troops following them. Hawazin's army chief Malik eventually found refuge in the city of Taif with the Banu Tha'if, while others had to hide in the mountains. They had lost many men and suffered a bitter defeat after a most

unexpected and extraordinary reversal, Revelation of Quran was later to remind the Muslim believers of the different factual, emotional, and spiritual aspects of that fight:

“Assuredly God helped you in many battlefields, and [remember] on the day of Hunayn: your great numbers elated you, but they availed you nothing. The land, vast as it is, constrained you, and you turned back in retreat. But God poured His calm [Sakinah, His Spirit] on the Messenger and on the believers.” ( *Quran*, 9 : 25-26 )

## Spoils of War

The women and children of Hawazin, who had been captured had been placed in a vast enclosure, sheltered from the sun, and properly fed until Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) return. When he came back and saw that most of the captives were rather poorly dressed, he demanded that money be taken from the booty to buy a new garment from the market for each prisoner. He then decided to share out the spoils amounting to forty thousand ounces of silver, twenty four thousand camels and forty thousand goats, but he did not hand over six thousand prisoners, who had become war captives, for he thought the Hawazin would surely send a delegation to ask for them.

Prophet Muhammad began sharing out the goods, and to the Ansar's (Muslims of Medina) surprise, he gave Quraysh, and particularly Abu Sufyan and Hakim (Khadijah's nephew, who had just converted to Islam), an important part of the captured treasure. He did the same with Safwan and Suhayl, both of whom had fought at Hunayn but still hesitated to embrace Islam. Revelation of Quran had ordered the Prophet to keep part of the booty for: “*Those whose hearts are to be reconciled (to faith)*” ( *Quran*, 9 : 60 )

This was not a means to convert people, but rather was intended to strengthen, by a material gift, a faith that had already more or less expressed itself, but remained fragile. The Prophet knew that Safwan and Suhayl were sensitive to faith and that they had fought bravely along with the Muslims, so he gave them large amounts of goods and did not require them to convert to Islam. Muhammad's forgiving attitude at the time of the conquest of Makkah, then his courage and determination during war, and finally his generosity after the battle eventually convinced them that he was indeed a Prophet. As for Abu Sufyan, the Prophet knew, how important social recognition and honor were to him, and Prophet Muhammad confirmed this status on him.

*' The Upper hand is better than the Lower hand '*

For his part, Hakim expressed some pride when he received his share of the spoils: it was considerable, and Hakim seemed to rejoice at the material gain more than anything else. Prophet Muhammad accompanied that gift with an essential spiritual teaching, reminding Hakim to resist the pride of possessing wealth and adding: *"The upper hand is better than the lower hand."* The Prophet thereby reminded Hakim that those who are generous with their wealth and care for the poor, making gifts of both themselves and their possessions, are spiritually endowed with a far higher status than those who simply receive or beg. He also advised Hakim to give some of his belongings to his family and all those who depended on him. Furthermore, he taught Hakim to receive in a more dignified manner, so as to give more humbly.

## Signs of Loyalty

The Ansar (Medinah Muslims) had watched Prophet Muhammad's attitude with astonishment, since in the end

almost all of the booty had been shared out among the Makkans. Some began to give public expression to their disappointment or even disapproval, as it seemed to them that Prophet Muhammad was privileging his kin, despite all that the people of Medinah had done for him when he needed them. When Sa'ad came to him as Ansar's envoy and voiced their complaints, the Prophet listened to him and asked him to gather all the Medinah Muslims so that he could speak to them. He talked to them about their respective debts, for, he said, they owed him for his guidance and he owed them for having provided a refuge from persecution. Prophet Muhammad declared he had forgotten none of that, and he asked them not to be upset by the way he had shared out the booty, which, after all, was meant to reinforce some people's faith, no more and no less. They should certainly not measure his love for them through the amount of booty they have received. Their love of the possessions of this world had let them to forget the meaning of true love for God, beyond the riches and life of this world. The Quraysh were leaving with sheep and camels, while the Ansar would go home with the Prophet, who had decided to settle with them in Medinah, his adopted city.

Prophet added: *"Should all people take one path and the Ansar take another, I would take the Ansar's path" "May God have Mercy on the Helpers (Ansar, Medinah Muslims), their sons and their sons' sons."* The emotions in the group were intense, and many of the Ansar began to weep, for they understood how wrong they had been in their interpretation of the Prophet's attitude and of the signs of his loyalty. His presence was the sign of his love, while the goods he had distributed were simply evidence that he knew some hearts were still attached to illusions of this world.





## Predictions

It is not possible to correctly predict any phase of the doomsday. Its knowledge is with Almighty Allah only. However, a thinking mind can analyze its coming with a good guess. Scientists can see it coming through their observations, mathematics and research; a mystic or spiritualist can see it by his inner eye, but what about the ordinary people? Somehow, they should also be able to see that this promise of God is bound to happen. To help everyone, the last of the Messengers of God, Muhammad (Peace be upon him), told in clear terms about various events and affairs of the world near its 'Doomsday' or the 'Last Day'. These are matters of common observations which do not need the brain of a scientist or the eye of a mystic or spiritualist. All of us can see them alike. The only important thing would be whether; we learn a lesson from them or keep our minds shut till we also see our end.

We are reproducing some self-explanatory *Hadith* (sayings) of Prophet Muhammad predicting the state of world affairs near the time of the earth's Doomsday. If we carefully analyze the happenings in the world today, it will appear that our Doomsday is not a far off event now.

The closest Companions, Ibn-e-Abbas and Abu Hurairah narrated that Prophet Muhammad gave us the news of the coming of the Doomsday in the following words.



- Human blood will have little value.
- Transgressors, law breakers will become leaders.
- The most wicked member of a tribe becomes its ruler.
- The most worthless member of a community becomes its leader.
- Sins will be taken lightly.
- Carnal, animal-like sexual desires will be pursued.
- Males will commit adultery with males, and females with females.
- Singing girls and string instruments (i.e. modern guitars and pop music) make their appearance.
- Singing women will be on the increase.
- Wine is drunk abundantly.
- Usury, ( Interest ) will become rampant.
- Telling lies will become desirable.
- It will not be possible to distinguish the truthful from the false.
- Children will disobey their parents.
- A friend will ill treat his friend.
- Prayers will be neglected.
- Learning is acquired for other than a religious purpose.
- Rain will do no good, for it will fall out of season.

- Earthquakes increase in frequency.
- People will compete with one another in constructing tall buildings.
- A man is honored through fear of the evil he may do.

Prophet Muhammad then warned, look at that time for:-

“Violent winds, earthquakes, metamorphosis, pelting rains and (other similar) signs, following one another like beads of a necklace falling one after the other when its string is cut.”

Anas narrated that Prophet Muhammad said:

“Near the Doomsday, knowledge will disappear and ignorance will prevail all over the world. Then, there will be great deal of adultery; wine will be consumed in large quantities.”

In the present age, we see that some of the events predicted here are already happening, across the world-drinking wine and sexual promiscuity [undiscriminating casual sex with many sexual partners.] is on the rise.

When Abdullah Bin Salam asked Prophet Muhammad about the first sign of the Last Hour, (Doomsday) the Prophet said, “The first sign of the Last Hour will be a fire that will drive people from the East to the West.”

In his commentary on this saying of Prophet Muhammad, Mohammed Asad (1900 – 1992) (formerly Leopold Weiss, was an Austrian Jew who converted to Islam), a 20th century journalist, reformer, diplomat, political, theorist and scholar, explains:

“This appears to be a symbolic description of a social disaster which will destroy the foundation of Eastern

cultures and will drive the people of the East towards a blind imitation of the West. It is described as a 'fire' because, like fire, West will consume the remaining cultural strength of the Eastern people, and turn their past into dead history without connection with the present."

Another very distinct sign of the coming of the Doomsday described by the Prophet is that near the Doomsday, unexpected and sudden deaths will be very common.

A careful reflection on the predictions and signs given in the Quran and stated by Prophet Muhammad, clarify beyond doubt that with regard to what was said some 1500 years ago, we are personally witnessing some of these signs now. This high technology civilization, littered with tension, terrorism, sectarianism, unrest, random murders, adultery and alcoholism is inviting its own Doomsday at any time.

What does all this mean? It is nothing but a warning to mankind that the Last Hour is not very far off now. The end is imminent. Who will then learn a lesson from this knowledge of impending fate and save himself from the wrath of the Hereafter? We cannot change the events, but we certainly have the free will to change ourselves.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said,

"Actions will be judged according to the intentions".

At least, we may strive to have the right intentions.



## A saying of Prophet Muhammad ( Peace be upon him )

Khalid (may God be pleased with him) narrates the following *Hadith*.

A Bedouin desert-dweller came one day to the Prophet and said to him, "O Messenger of Allah! I've come to ask you a few questions about the affairs of this Life after Death." Prophet replied;

Ask what you wish.

I'd like to be the most learned of men.

Fear Allah and you will be the most learned of Men.

I wish to be the richest man in the world.

Be contented and you will be the richest man in the world.

I'd like to be the most just man.

Desire for others what you desire for yourself, and you will be the most just of men.

I want to be the best of Men.

Do good to others and you will be the best of men.

I'd like to be the strong of men.

If you put your trust in Allah, you will be the strongest of men.

I wish to be the most favored by Allah.

Engage much in Allah's praise, and you will be most favored by Him.

I'd like to complete my faith.

If you have good manners you will complete your faith.

I wish to be among those who do good.

Adore Allah as if you see Him. If you don't see Him, He sees you. In this way you will be among those who do good.

I wish to be obedient to Allah.

If you observe Allah's commands you will be obedient.

I'd like to enlarge my provision.

If you keep yourself Pure, Allah will enlarge your provision.

I'd like to be loved by Allah and His Messenger.

*If you love what Allah and His messenger love, you will be among their beloved ones.*

I wish to be safe from Allah's wrath on the Day of Judgment.

If you do not lose your temper with any of your fellow creatures, you will be safe from the wrath of Allah on the Day of Judgment.

I'd like Allah not to disgrace me on the Day of Judgment.

If you guard your chastity, Allah will not disgrace you on the Day of Judgment.

I'd like Allah to provide me with a protective covering on the Day of Judgment.

Do not uncover your fellow being's defects and Allah will provide you with a covering protection on the Day of Judgment.

What are the best deeds in the eyes of Allah?

Gentle manners, modesty and patience.

What are the worst evils in the eyes of Allah?

Hot temper and Greediness.

## The Prophet's Love for Medinah

After staying in Makkah for two weeks, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) decided to return to Medinah. He performed the lesser pilgrimage (*Umrah*) before returning to Medinah. He had come to Medinah, seeking refuge, but now he felt at home there, even though its culture and habits were so different from those of Makkah, where he had lived for more than half a century before being compelled to leave. He had settled into his new environment of Medinah by observing the inhabitants' customs and traditions, their psychological make-up and their hopes, and then gradually integrating many of these dimensions into his own personality. He loved the people of Medinah (*Ansar*), with deep, spiritual love that excelled tribe, clan or cultural ties.

Daily life went on, and the number of Muslims increased constantly, compelling the Prophet to pay attention to teachings and to delegate that task to his most faithful and competent Companions.

Hostility was expressed here and there, and Muhammad was still sending small groups of scouts to settle matters, but it was sometimes necessary to fight tribes that remained determined to challenge Medina's supremacy.

## Secret of the Hearts

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) had sent an expedition to the northern Bedouin tribes, particularly the Banu Murra, who kept attacking the Jewish farmers working on the Fadak oasis, which was under the Prophet's authority. The Muslim army met with strong opposition, and all thirty Muslim soldiers sent on that expedition were killed. The Prophet decided to send another troop of two hundred Muslim soldiers, including 17 year old Usamah, son of Zayd ibn Harithah whom the Prophet had long considered as his adopted son.

The battle was difficult, since numerous tribes had joined together, hoping to defeat the Muslim troops and take over the Fadak oasis and its riches. The situation nevertheless turned to the Muslims' advantage. A member of the Banu Murra tribe mocked Usamah and his young age. Unable to control himself, Usamah decided to fight it out then and there with the man who insulted him. In a weak position, the Bedouin chose to run away. Usamah, in his anger, pursued him, ignoring the expedition leader's order to stay together at all times. Usamah managed to catch up with his enemy, threw him down, and wounded him. The Bedouin cried: "I bear witness that there is no god but God!" (*la ilaha illa Allah*), but Usamah ignored this and killed the man. When he returned to the camp and told his story, the troop leader and all the other soldiers were shocked at his behavior and he realized his serious mistake.

On returning to Medinah, Usamah promptly went to see the Prophet, who first greeted him most warmly, happy to learn about the victory. When he told him about the duel, however, the Prophet expressed severe disapproval and asked: "Usamah, *did you kill him after he had said, 'There is no god but God'?*" Usamah replied that the Bedouin had only uttered

the words to avoid being killed, and the Prophet replied angrily: “*Did you split his heart open to know whether he was saying the truth or lying?*” Usamah was horrified and feared his mistake would never be forgiven. The Prophet nevertheless forgave him, after conveying to him an essential teaching about the way one should deal with people and the secrets of their hearts, whether in war or in peace.

The Bedouin’s profession of faith required that Usamah should not have killed him. If he was sincere, his life should obviously have been spared. If he was not, his exclamation amounted to an appeal for peace and clemency. In such a case, Revelation of Quran had already enjoined the Muslims to show judgment, acumen and restraint and to seek peace:

“O you who believe! When you go out in the cause of God, investigate carefully, and do not say to anyone who offers you peace: “You are not a believer!” – coveting the perishable goods of this life: with God there are abundant gains. You yourselves were thus before, till God conferred on you His favors: therefore carefully investigate. For God is aware of all that you do.” (Quran, 4 : 94 )

The Bedouin, when he saw death coming, had appealed for peace, but Usamah, blinded by his determination to defend his honor in this world (since he had been mocked), had reverted to tribal practices, which his understanding of Islam ought to have reformed. Whatever his interpretation of the intentions behind his enemy’s profession of faith, nothing could justify his actions or his attitude. Usamah promised himself he would never again be carried away in this manner and he would henceforth act with acumen, judgment and respect. It is to Usamah, as we shall see, that three years later – when Prophet Muhammad was about to leave this world, he entrusted the recommendations and teachings that constitute Islamic war ethics.



What lies in people's hearts is beyond the limits of human knowledge, and Prophet Muhammad himself was an example of cautiousness and humility when it came to judging individuals whose sincerity or intentions were doubtful. The Prophet was well aware of the presence of many hypocrites around him, but he took no particular action on them. He remained cautious, sometimes wary, but he avoided any final judgment.

## Tabuk

The news from the north was rather alarming. Everything suggested that Heraclius's Byzantine (Roman) armies had allied with pro-Roman Arab tribes and that together, they were preparing a full-scale attack against Prophet Muhammad, "the new Emperor of the Arabs." An immediate action was required and the stakes were so important and the expedition so dangerous that for the first time the Prophet informed all his Companions of his destination. They were to march to the north preventively, in order to anticipate the advance of enemy troops and if necessary, surprise them on their own territory. The season was not favorable and the army was going to face intense heat until they reached the north. The Prophet asked the Companions to contribute as much as they could to pay the cost of the expedition. Umar gave half his fortune and Abu Bakr, put everything he had at the Prophet's disposal. Usman similarly stood out by supplying mounts for half the army. All the camels and horses in the area were requisitioned, but they were not sufficient to provide for the needs of all the soldiers; as a result, the Prophet had to refuse some Companions' requests to participate in the expedition, and some of them wept, as they knew the criticality of the expedition. The expected might of the enemy was such that the Muslim community's future was clearly at stake.

The Muslim army set out towards the grey, rocky hills of Tabuk, 500 km from Medinah on the route to Syria, at the end of the year 630 C.E, the ninth year of *hijrah*. There were 30,000 Muslim soldiers marching against Rome, the biggest force ever seen in this part of Arab peninsula and the Prophet Muhammad was in command. Rome was a great power and had organized a force of over one lakh strong on the frontiers of the Islamic state. It was the first occasion for the Islamic state to make a show of its military power and strength to a foreign power.

But still, the Muslim force was numerically small by Roman military standards. However, the enemy was so much impressed by the will and determination of Prophet Muhammad that they did not have the courage to come and face him on the battlefield. This courageous and bold venture of Muhammad paid rich dividends in terms of many political and friendly pacts and treaties with the rulers of the neighboring regions, Arab tribesmen and other potential enemies of Islam.

Although it had been very tiring, the expedition did not turn out to be useless. The considerable number of Muslim soldiers impressed the whole of the Arab Peninsula, forcing the northern tribes to realize the extent of Prophet Muhammad's capacity to raise troops and his forces' incredible mobility. As a result, the Prophet's prestige was much enhanced, and a large number of deputations representing tribes from Yemen and other far-away regions came and paid homage to Muhammad and accepted Islam.

From Tabuk, the Prophet managed to set up alliances with a Christian tribe and a Jewish one: they practiced their respective religions and accepted to pay a tax (*Jizyah*) in exchange for their protection by the Muslim community against attack. Thus, the *Jizyah* was understood as a collective military tax paid by tribes, who did not have to share in the

Muslims' military engagements, but in exchange for which the Muslim authority was to ensure their defense, their protection, and their survival if necessary.


From Tabuk, the Prophet sent Khalid further north to draw an alliance with tribes in order to secure the route leading to Iraq and Syria. All those operations were successful, and the Prophet went back to Medinah with the Muslim army.

## The Delegations

The ninth year of *Hijrah* was named "the year of the delegations": the Muslim community now enjoyed such power and recognition, that envoys came from all over the Peninsula to draw up alliances or sign covenants. The first to come to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) were the Banu Tha'qif, for Malik (may God be pleased with him) Hawazin tribe chief had subjected their city to such a siege that it was impossible for them to conclude any alliance with the neighboring tribes [most of whom had anyway either embraced Islam or established a treaty with Muhammad]. Banu Tha'qif declared they wanted to become Muslims, but they wished to negotiate elements of their faith and practice: they wanted to maintain the cult of their idol al-Lat and to be exempted from prayer. The Prophet refused to negotiate about those points, as he did whenever he was asked, for accepting Islam meant worshipping none, but the One God, Allah and praying to Him according to the norms established by revelation of Quran and the Prophet's example. They eventually accepted the terms of agreement.

Other envoys from Jewish or Christian tribes also came to Prophet Muhammad, and he did not compel them to accept Islam. For them, as he had done with the two northern tribes, he drew up an assistance pact: they would pay the

collective military tax (*jizyah*), and Prophet Muhammad and his army would ensure their protection and defense. Thus, throughout the Peninsula, the message was clear: the tribes who accepted Islam were to give up any idea of a different belief or system. The Prophet did not negotiate over the fundamentals of Islamic faith. As soon as the profession of Islamic faith had been pronounced, previous religious status were to be left-off, and Islamic practices were to be fully implemented, from prayer and fasting to the payment of purifying social tax (*Zakat*) and *Hajj* pilgrimage. When tribes wanted to remain faithful to their tradition, they drew up a pact with similarly clear terms: the payment of tax (*jizyah*) in exchange for protection. The Prophet let the clans and chiefs choose freely between these two alternatives, which many of them did during the months that followed the return from Tabuk.







## Prophet's concept of Human Rights

The West very vociferously claims that the basic concept of human rights became known to the world for the first time from the British Magna Carta. But they Conveniently have forgotten that the Magna Carta came into existence six hundred years after the advent of Islam.

The fact is that the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) gave the total concept and model of human rights irrespective of distinctions of race, color, tribe, religion, and so on. He proved that a person must be valued for his/her conduct and merit as per the Quran:

“O Mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other and not that you may despise each other. Surely the most honored of you in the Sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you.” Verily God is All-Knowing and is Well-Aware (of all things).” ( Quran, 49 : 13 )

This verse from the Quran addresses the entire humankind; it is not confined to Muslims alone. It emphasizes the equality of mankind, clarifying that all human beings have descended from the same parents and that the distinctions of their clans, tribes, races and nations are only for the purpose of identification, or to know the different people of the world in different places.

In his Farewell sermon at Arafat valley, near Makkah,

in 632,C.E., Prophet Muhammad said:

‘O people verily your Lord is one and your father is one. All of you belong to Adam and Adam is (made) of earth. Behold, there is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab and for a non – Arab over an Arab; nor for a red – colored over a black colored and for a black – skinned except in piety, Verily the noblest among you is he who is the most pious.’

This biological unity of mankind was a fact, about which the Prophet Muhammad said,

*“O God, I bear witness that all human beings are brothers”*

We find a practical example of this unity in the life of Prophet Muhammad. Once, the Prophet was with his Companions, and a funeral procession passed by. The Prophet stood up in respect for the deceased. The Muslims were surprised and said to the Prophet that this was a Jew’s funeral. The Prophet asked them with clarity and dignity:

*‘Was this not a human soul?’*

Islam accords such a high value to human life that the Quran commands:

“. . . The unjust killing of a single human being is considered equivalent to the assassination of the whole of mankind. And the protection of a single human life is equivalent to the protection of the whole of mankind . . .” (Quran, 5 : 32)

Prophet Muhammad forcefully stated: *“Whoever oppresses any non-Muslim subject of the Islamic state, I shall be his prosecutor on the Day of Judgment.”*



## Quran and Human Dignity

In the Quran there is no ‘middle management’: every individual has a direct relationship to God and is ultimately responsible for his or her actions. It is a basic principle of the Quran that,

“Each soul is responsible for its own action; no soul will bear the burden of another.” (Quran, 35:18).

However, given God’s Infinite Mercy and Benevolence, we can always pray for others to be forgiven. As for ourselves, as individuals and as communities, we have certain rights as well as responsibilities.

The idea of human rights in the Quran is firmly based on the notion of human dignity. The Quran provides a direct and uncompromising affirmation of the dignity of human beings:

“We have confirmed dignity on the children of Adam’ and ‘favored them especially above many of those we have created.” (Quran, 17:70)

This dignity is neither something that is earned, nor is it based on righteous conduct; it is innate, the natural endowment and God – given right of everyone, whoever they are, pious or sinners, whatever their race, color, creed or nationality. And it can never be compromised.



The idea of human dignity is combined with the Quran's equally categorical stand on justice and equity :

“Be ever steadfast in your devotion to God, bearing witness to the truth in all equity; and never let hatred of anyone lead into the sin of deviating from justice.”  
(Quran, 5:8)

This, the prime human right in the Quran, is echoed in the first article of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights: ‘all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood’.

Many other principles of the human rights convention can also be seen in the Quran. For example, in Quran, chapter 17, verse 33 states that ‘do not take life, which God has made sacred,’ this can be read to mean ‘everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person’ (Human Rights, article 3).

‘Whenever you judge between people, you should judge with justice’ (Quran, 4:58) implies that ‘everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law’ and ‘all are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law’ (Human Rights, articles 6 and 7).

And ‘do not devour one another’s wealth to no good purpose’ (Quran, 2:188) can be interpreted, and has been interpreted, to mean ‘everyone has the right to own property’ and ‘no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property’ (Human Rights, article 17).

The Quranic injunctions, ‘Do not let one make fun of another, do not defame one another, do not insult by using nicknames, do not backbite or speak ill of one another’ (Quran, 49:11-12), ‘Do not spy on one another’ (Quran, 49:12) ‘And do not enter any houses unless you are sure of the occupant’s.’ (Quran, 24:27) can all be read to mean ‘no one

shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attack upon his honor and reputation; every one has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks' (Human Rights, article 12).

We have already seen the Quran forbids displacing communities, sending people to exile, and recommends that asylum seekers and refugees should be protected (Human Rights, article 17).


It is quite evident that the Quran establishes many of the human rights that we find in the UN declaration of Human Rights. But the Quran goes further. A dignified life is only possible, the Quran argues, if one has the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing and shelter. So the hungry have the right to food, the naked the right to be clothed, the homeless the right to be housed: *'the needy and the destitute have a right to their wealth'* (Quran, 51:19), that is both the wealth of individuals and the collective wealth of society.

In the Quranic framework, a crucial aspect of human dignity is the absolute right of individuals and communities to the essential necessities without which life cannot be sustained. *'The bounty of God cannot be restricted.'* (Quran, 17:20); and everyone has the right to be free from want, from abject poverty that undermines human dignity. So the Quran already balance the outlook over which the United Nation became politically and ideologically divide by incorporating the substance of what became the alternative charter of human rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In its balanced approach, the Quran takes us beyond the framework of the vexed negotiations behind the UN conventions.

The difference between the Quranic view of rights and the various UN conventions is that in the Quranic framework

rights are equated with duties and both are interdependent. Humankind has the 'right' to survive, for example, only insofar as it performs the duty of maintaining the world – that is, that it acts as, a proper trustee or *khalifa* of God and fulfils properly and appropriately the responsibilities and trust that God has placed on humanity.

In the Western scheme, the emphasis is on the individual; the Quran, in contrast, gives equal importance to the community and the notion of group rights. In the western liberal tradition, the focus is on personal freedom that signifies the ability to act. In the Quran the emphasis is on the ability to be, to exist. It is necessary for the community not just to survive but to provide a social, cultural and spiritual environment where an individual can realize his or her full potential to be. The overall concern of the Quran is not just the rights of the human but the rights of humanity, including the humanity of the individual.






## Encouragement of Youth

A few months after his return to Medinah, in the eleventh year of *Hijrah*, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) decided to send an expedition to the north, near Syria and Palestine, where a few years earlier, his companions, Jafar, Abdullah, and Zayd had been killed. To everyone's surprise, Prophet gave the command to young Usamah, Zayd's son, who was only twenty years old, though this 3000 strong army included such men as Umar, Abu Bakr, Ali, Usman, and others experienced companions. This choice gave rise to much criticism, but the Prophet reacted very promptly and put an end to all arguments when he proclaimed:

“You criticize the choice of Usamah to command the army, as you had formerly criticized that of his father Zayd. Usamah is truly worthy of the command I entrust him with, as his father was before him.”

In the past, some Muslims had reacted to the choice of Zayd because they still considered him as a slave though he had been freed; now some opposed the choice of his son, perhaps because of his father, but mostly because of his young age. By confirming his choice, the Prophet informed the companions that neither a man's social origin nor his age should prevent him from exerting authority and power if he

possessed the spiritual, intellectual, and moral qualities required. One had to show judgment by offering the most poor in the society real equality of opportunity and trusting the young, so that everybody could express their skills and talents. On a more general level, this was a fine lesson in humility addressed to older companions: they were to experience the inner, greater *Jihad* of obeying a man who could have been their son and in doing so remember that their time was limited. By that choice, the Prophet taught them that time naturally exhausts one's energy, and one must be wise enough to learn to step aside, to delegate authority to those who are young and strong enough to create and build.





## War Ethics

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) gave young Usamah his recommendation and asked him to set out promptly. However, the Prophet's sudden illness was to delay that departure and the army waited near Medina. A few weeks later, Abu Bakr, according to the Prophet's wish, asked Usamah to carry out the expedition. He reminded him of the Prophet's teachings concerning war ethics, for the latter had constantly insisted on the principles Muslims must respect when dealing with their enemies. "Do not kill women, children and old people," Abu Bakr ordered him. "Do not commit unfaithful actions. Do not stray from the right path, never damage. Do not destroy trees, do not burn houses and cornfields, do not cut down fruit trees, and do not kill livestock except when you are compelled to eat them. As you move on, you will meet hermits who live in monasteries and serve God in seclusion. Leave them alone; do not kill them and do not destroy their monasteries." These teachings were essential and they were conveyed to Usamah in the light of what the Prophet had said in various circumstances about warfare, respect for nature, and how to treat animals.





## The Ruler and the Common Man are equal before Islamic Law

Islamic Law admits of no exemption in favour of the head of Islamic state. The Caliph or Ruler of Islamic state and the common man are equal before the Islamic law. It is reported that Caliph Ali once lost his armour. After a few days he happened to see it with a Christian. He filed a complaint in the court of Justice Shurayh, who summoned the Christian. The Christian claimed that the armour belonged to him. Justice Shurayh asked Ali if he had any proof or evidence in support of his claim, to which he replied in the negative. The Judge gave the verdict in favour of the Christian and dismissed the Caliph Ali's petition. The Christian was so overwhelmed by this exemplary show of justice (on the basis of available evidence) that he announced his decision to embrace Islam and exclaimed, "this is like the justice of the Prophets, that the ruler presents me before a city magistrate (who is subordinate to him), and the magistrate gives his verdict against the ruler!"

In Islamic society, the judiciary is independent of the ruling establishment. The judge is required to implement the provisions of Islamic Law (*Shariah*) without fear or favour, and in the discharge of his obligations he is accountable, not to the powers that be, but only to Almighty God. An



independent judiciary played a crucial role in ensuring compliance with Islamic law on the part of the ruling establishment as well as the general public.

- Jabala al- Ghassani, the King of a tribe from Syria, was performing the *Hajj* pilgrimage when his mantle accidentally fell under the feet of an Arab tribesman. Enraged, Jabala struck him a blow in the face. The Bedouin complained to Caliph Umar, who summoned Jabala and told the Bedouin tribesman to return the blow. "How can that be possible," asked an astonished King Jabala. "He is an ordinary man and I am a King". Umar replied, "Islam has made you one with him and you have no superiority over him except in piety and good deeds."





## Sorrow over his Son's Demise

During the tenth year of *Hijrah*, towards the end of Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) life, the religion of the One God was being established all over the Arab Peninsula, with the hostility and hatred towards Islam constantly declining and diminishing and the number of conversions to Islam were increasing.

Prophet Muhammad's wife Mariah bore him a beautiful son and the Prophet named him Ibrahim, and he expressed particular joy at the news of the child's arrival. He organized a meal in celebration. He would take the child on his lap and play with him lovingly.

Young Ibrahim who was then about a year and a half old fell seriously ill. The Prophet saw his only son about to leave life and to leave him. Every day, Prophet spent hours by his son's side. When the beautiful child Ibrahim eventually breathed his last, the Prophet wept on the death of his only son as any father would; he took his son in his arms and held him against his breast, tears' streaming down his face, so deep was his sorrow. His heart was torn apart by the new tragedy, and his face mirrored his inner pain.

Abdur Rahman, his faithful Companion, was surprised by those sobs, because he thought that the Prophet had previously forbidden such expressions of grief. At first,

Prophet Muhammad could not speak: then he explained to him that he had forbidden excessive manifestations of distress, or hysterical behavior, but not the natural expression of sorrow and suffering. Then he gave verbal expression to his grief that, in effect, became a spiritual teaching, as he declared that his tears were “*signs of tenderness and mercy.*”

Prophet added a comment springing from his own experience, but which was also true in every Muslim’s daily life:


“He who is not merciful will not be shown mercy.”

In the difficult moments of life, kindness, compassion, mercy, and the expressions of understanding that human beings offer one another bring them closer to the One God, *Ar-Rahman* (the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful). Through them, God reaches closer to the believer’s heart, offering the believer what the believer him or her has offered to a brother or sister in humanity.

Prophet Muhammad was personally affected, and he did not hesitate to show and express his grief. He added:

“The eyes shed tears, O Ibrahim, the heart is infinitely sad, and one must only utter what satisfies God.”

Almighty Allah had once more tested Prophet Muhammad through his sensitivity and his mission. He had lost so many loved ones – companions, his wife Khadijah, three of his daughters, and his three sons. In his lifetime, he had seen sorrow, but he remained both gentle with his heart and firm in his mission.





## Eclipse

A few hours after Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) return from the graveyard, an eclipse of the sun occurred. The Muslims were quick to associate the eclipse with the death of the Prophet's child and saw it as a miracle, a kind of message from God to His Prophet. But Prophet Muhammad put an end to all such interpretations, saying forcefully: *"The sun and the moon are two of God's signs. Their light does not darken for anyone's death."* Prophet Muhammad was thus reminding his Companions of the order of things and of the necessity to make no mistake in interpreting signs, in order to avoid falling into superstition. This was, for them as well as for himself, a spiritual teaching in restraint and humility: human beings, the Muslims among them, had to learn how to depart, and see their loved ones depart. The trial of faith and of humanity which made the Prophet, shed tears consisted precisely in learning how to find, at the heart of the eternity of creation and of never ending cycles, the strength to face sudden departures and death. The sign of Almighty God's presence at the time of a person's death lies not in the occurrence of any miracle, but rather in the permanence of the natural order, in the eternity of God's creation.



## The Farewell Pilgrimage

During the month of Ramadan of that tenth year, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) received another sign from God. Prophet Muhammad told his daughter Fatimah about it:

“Each year, the Angel Gabriel recites the Quran to me once, and I recite it to him once; but this year, he has recited it twice, and I think this announces my hour.”

*Hajj* (the major pilgrimage) is the fifth pillar of Islam. Every Muslim must go to Makkah at least once in her or his life during specific days of the month of *Dhu al-Hajjah*. This had not yet been accomplished by the Prophet, and the time to prepare for it was approaching. It was widely announced that the Prophet would lead the next pilgrimage to Makkah, and in the following weeks, he set out leading thirty thousand pilgrims from Medinah, who were joined by three times as many from all over the Arab Peninsula.

While they were on the road, the Prophet received an important Revelation about Makkah and particularly the rites near the Kaabah, which consisted of the first verses of chapter-9 (the only chapter in the Quran that does not begin with the ritual formula “In the name of God, the Most

Gracious, and the most Merciful”). First, the verse announced most clearly that the rites (based on ignorance) formerly performed around the Kaabah (where some pilgrims went naked) would no longer be tolerated and that idol worshippers would not be allowed.

The message was firm and established that the Kaabah, the sacred mosque, was now exclusively devoted to the worship of the One God, and that only Muslims could enter it.

The verse of Quran reads,

“The Mosques of God shall only be visited and maintained by those who believe in God and the Last Day, establish regular prayers, pay Zakat, and fear none but God. For those, it may be that they are of the rightly guided.”

Most of the companions, and scholars after them, understood this prohibition to apply only to the sacred perimeter in Makkah, not to other mosques where non-Muslims could also enter. What the message conveyed was the clear establishment of the worship of the One God (*Tawhid*).

Once in Makkah, Prophet Muhammad performed the various rites of the pilgrimage, explaining to the companions who were with him that they were thus reviving their father Abraham’s pure, monotheistic worship.

The pilgrimage, like the Prophet’s entire life, was a return to the source, to the origin: a return to God, the One God, in the footsteps of his Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), who had first built the Kaabah, the House of God, to worship the One God.

The companions observed every gesture done by the Prophet, who was in effect most precisely establishing the ritual of pilgrimage: he had told them, “*Take your rites from*

*me*". On the ninth day of *Dbu al-Hijab*, in the tenth year of *Hijrab*, the Prophet addressed 1,44,000 pilgrims on the Mount of Mercy (*Jabal ar-rahmah*) surrounded on all sides by the valley called *Arafah*, (20 km from *Makkah*). It is the central point of the pilgrimage. He spoke in short portions and men around him repeated his words so that everyone throughout the valley could hear his speech.

## Farewell Sermon

The last sermon was delivered in 632 C.E, in the tenth year of *Hijrab*, at Mount Arafat in *Makkah* on the occasion of the annual rites of *Hajj* (the pilgrimage). The content of the message was powerful and intense, and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) began by stating that he did not know whether he would again meet the pilgrims in this place after this year. Then he reminded them of the sacred character of the place and month, as well as of that of their lives, their honor, and their belongings. He explained that the period of ignorance had come to an end, and so had its practices, its rivalries, and its conflicts based on power and profit. Henceforth, all Muslims were united by faith, fraternity, and love, which were to transform them into witnesses of Islam's message. They must under no circumstances accept being "*either oppressors or oppressed.*" They were to learn of the equality of all people in front of God and the necessary humility because "*you all descend from Adam, and Adam was created from clay. The most noble in the sight of God is the most pious.*"

Prophet Muhammad said: "*No Arab is superior to a non-Arab, except by their intimate consciousness of God {Piety}.*" The Prophet reminded all the Muslims to treat their wives gently and added: "*Be intimately conscious of God as regards women, and strive to be good to them.*" Then he added, as if



to show the way and its conditions to all the faithful present and all those who were to follow his teachings through the ages: *I have left among you what will, if you keep to it firmly, preserve you from error: clear guidance, the Book of God (Quran) and His Prophet's tradition. (Hadith)*

The Prophet ended his brief sermon with an earnest question: *"O people, have I faithfully conveyed the Message? A powerful murmur of assent, "O God, yea!" arose from thousands of the pilgrims gathered in the valley. The Prophet raised his forefinger and said: "O God, be my witness! At the end of the sermon, the pilgrims answered: We bear witness that you have faithfully conveyed the message, that you have fulfilled your mission, and that you have given your community good advice."* Then the Prophet concluded: *"O God, be my witness!... And let whoever is present convey this message to whoever is absent."*

Prophet Muhammad was indeed a witness in front of the spiritual community of Muslims. In the spiritual union with them, at the heart of the pilgrimage - which itself requires simplicity and the unity of human beings before their Creator Almighty Allah, the Messenger recalled the essential point in God's message: the absolute equality of human beings before God, regardless of race, social class, or gender. The only thing that distinguishes them lies in what they do with themselves, with their intelligence, their qualities, and most of all their heart.

Wherever they come from, whether they are Arabs or not; whether black or white, rich or poor, men or women, human beings stand out by their spiritual education, control of their ego, blossoming of faith, dignity, goodness and nobility of the soul. In front of thousands of pilgrims of all origins, slaves as well as tribal chiefs, men as well as women, Prophet Muhammad bore witness that he had fulfilled his mission in the light of God's message, and all the believers testified with

one voice that they had received and understood its meaning and contents.

A few hours later, Prophet Muhammad received a Revelation of the verse that confirmed that his mission was nearing its end:

“This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.” (*Quran, 5 : 3*)

The last cycle of Prophethood was drawing to its close, and the Messenger was to return to his home beyond this life, in proximity to the One God.

*‘ O Transformer of Hearts . . . ’*

All those non-Muslims: some were searching for peace, truth and sincerity, some were still not convinced of the truthfulness of his message, while they all experienced a new form of inner conflict that required effort and patience. The Prophet advised them to observe signs of God and seek help and guidance from God to find the light of Islam.

Prophet Muhammad taught Muslims—those who had recognized the presence of the One God—to carry on their inner struggle, to remain humble and aware of their fragility, to seek to derive spiritual nourishment from *Zhikr* (the remembrance of God), and, as the Quran recommended to ask God to keep their hearts firm: “*Our Lord! Do not cause our heart to stray after You have guided us.*” The Prophet used to pray to God and say,

*“O Transformer of Hearts, keep my heart firm in Your religion!”*





## In Paradise : In Supreme Union

The celebration of *Hajj* was over. Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) had performed all the rites and wanted to return to Medinah, so he set out with the pilgrims who had come with him. They at last reached Medinah and life resumed its course.

Many Muslims taught or learned the principles of Islam and the Quran, as well as the elements of religious practice with their rules and conditions. The *Zakat* (*Zakat* means: purifying one's wealth to gain God's blessing to make it grow in goodness), was collected according to the norms that had recently been established by revelation and the Prophet's practice.

Thus, all the rites of the five pillars of Islam (*Arkan al-Islam*) had been codified, including pilgrimage, which had just been completed, and the Muslim community had received the principles necessary to live Islam in their daily lives.

## Illness

A few weeks after the month of Ramadan in the 11<sup>th</sup> year of *Hijrah*, Prophet Muhammad went to Uhud, where the second

battle between the Muslims and the Quraysh had taken place, and he performed a farewell prayer for the men who had been killed there.

He then went back to the Medinah mosque, sat on the *mimbar* (An elevated chair from which the imam addresses the faithful in a mosque), and addressed the faithful Muslim companions. First he said,

“ I am going ahead of you (in the hereafter) and I shall be a witness over you. ”

Then he advised them, concluding his speech by saying,

“I do not fear your reverting to polytheism after me, but I fear you will quarrel over the riches of this world.”

Those words clearly expressed that he felt he must get ready to leave this life. In the same breath, he expressed a fear for the future of his spiritual community: Faith would not leave them, he said, but the world with its illusions would colonize them, and both would, unfortunately, co-exist within them.

Prophet Muhammad was in effect expressing a fear that sounded like a prediction. They would continue to pray to God, but they would be divided because of honors, wealth, power, or their different affiliations which would make them forget the fraternity that united them.

In the night following that day, the Prophet went to the *Al-Baqi* graveyard, in Medinah, to greet those buried there, and he punctuated his invocations with the words:

*“You are the first (you went ahead) and we are coming after you (we are joining you).”*

On the way back, the Prophet experienced severe headache which did not leave him for almost two weeks and

kept him confined to bed during the last days of his life. At first, he continued to lead the congregational prayer, in spite of the headache and fever. As the days went on, the illness grew worse, and the Prophet had to lie down for longer periods of time.

Prophet had been staying with Aishah for a few days when his fever increased and he fainted. When he recovered, he requested that seven skins of water (water was stored in containers made from skin of animals) be poured over his face. After a few hours, he felt a little better and decided to go to the mosque with a bandage around his head. He sat on the *mimbar*, addressed the faithful companions present, and spoke to them about graves, insisting that they must never turn his own grave into a place of worship.

Prophet added, *“Do not commit acts of idolatry on my grave.”*

Muhammad (peace be upon him) was the Messenger, but he remained a man, he knew how deep his companions' love for him was, and he warned them against committing the mistakes of those who had come before them, and had idealized their Prophets to the point of worship.

This injunction never to lapse into the worship of human beings explains why Prophets cannot be represented in classical Islamic traditions, pictures, or as carved statues. One should follow the Prophets teachings and not to worship their persons: they are paths that guide people and bring them closer to God. Only God is worthy of worship.

The Prophet then rose and asked whether he owed any of his companions anything, did he have an unsettled debt? Had he offended or hurt anybody? If so, that person should speak out so that the situation could be settled. A man stood up and reminded the Prophet that he owed him three dirham's: The Prophet ordered that, *‘The money be given back to him immediately’*.

Prophet Muhammad, following the injunctions of the revelation of the Quran did not perform the funeral prayer of any Muslim – until all his earthly debts were settled. He had to depart debtless, free from owing anything to any other person, taking with him no unforgiving offense, no unhealed wound, and no unheard message.

The Prophet sat on the *Mimber* again and confessed:

“Almighty God, the most Noble, has offered one of His servants the chance to choose between the possessions of this world and that which is near Him, and he has chosen that which is near God.”

At those words, Abu Bakr burst into tears, for he had been the first to understand, from the depths of his love for the Prophet that Muhammad was speaking of himself and of his own awaiting departure. The Prophet pacified Abu Bakr and while continuing to address the congregation, directly and personally addressed Abu Bakr’s heart, in this manner:

“The Companion who has been the most generous to me with his company and his wealth is Abu Bakr. If I were to have an intimate friend besides God, he would be Abu Bakr; but Islamic brotherhood and affection are preferable.”

## Departing

Then Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) went back to Aishah’s house and lay down again. He gave a few more recommendations about faith, practice, and maintaining of the Kaabah. Then he wanted to go to the mosque, but the pain was so intense that when he tried to get up, he fainted. When he recovered, he asked if the Muslims have prayed, and Aishah informed him that they were waiting for him. He again

tried to get up, but fainted once more. When he recovered consciousness for the second time, he asked the same question and was informed that the Muslims were still waiting for him. He told Aishah to see to it that the people prayed, and that Abu Bakr was to lead the prayer.

Prophet Muhammad told her this during the following days as well, but every time he did, Aishah (may God be pleased with her) requested that her father Abu Bakr (may God be pleased with him) be exempted from leading the prayer. She insisted that he was too sensitive and that he wept when reciting the Quran. Each time she objected, Aishah received the same firm and determined answer, Abu Bakr must lead the congregational prayer.

Two days later, when his illness allowed him some respite, he was able to go to the mosque while the Muslims were praying *Zubr* (the noon prayer) behind Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr wanted to step back and leave his place to the Prophet, but the latter prevented him from doing so and merely sat on his left. The Prophet led the rest of the prayer, while Abu Bakr repeated, in a louder voice, the phrases that accompanied the different movements.

This was the Prophet's last appearance in the mosque. During the day that followed, he had all his belongings distributed, down to his last dirham and his coat of mail, and he continued to give out some advice; he repeated again and again that slaves, the poor, and the lowly must be treated well. The next morning, a Monday, at the time of dawn prayer, the Prophet raised a curtain in Aishah's dwelling, enabling him to look at the Muslims in the mosque, and he smiled. The Muslims were surprised and happy at that gesture and thought that the Prophet was going to join them, but the curtain went down again and the Prophet did not reappear.

During the hours that followed, Fatimah (may God be pleased with her), his daughter, came to visit him and made a



compassionate remark about the intensity of the Prophet's suffering. At this, Prophet told his daughter:

*"After this day, there will be no more suffering for your father."*

Prophet also whispered into his daughter Fatimah's ear, that she would soon join him, and this made her smile through her tears.

The pain was getting more and more intense, and the Prophet was soon unable to speak.

Then Aishah came to sit by the Prophet's side, pressed him against her, and laid his head on her lap while stroking his head to reduce the pain.

Prophet Muhammad closed his eyes. Aishah was holding him against her, and she heard him whisper,

*"In Paradise, in Supreme union..."*

Then he recited the end of the verse,

"In the company of those on who is the Grace of God – the Prophets (peace be upon them all), the sincere, the martyrs, and the righteous; how beautiful is their company!"

He again repeated three times,

' In Supreme union ! In Supreme union ! In Supreme union ! '

His forearm suddenly sank down and his head became heavier, and Aishah understood that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) had just breathed his last.

Prophet Muhammad departed on June 8, 632 C.E, (Age 63), {Monday, 12th Rabi' al-Awwal, Year 11*Hijrah*.}, to join his Lord, his Educator, his Friend, who had called him back to Himself at last, to let him find ultimate peace, beyond the world of human beings to whom he had been sent to bring the final message from the Most Gracious. Since that day, the spiritual Muslim community has never stopped, all

over the world and through the ages, to salute the last Prophet and recite, with all their heart and love:

“God and His angels send blessing on the Prophet  
O you who believe! Send blessings on him, and salute  
him with all respect.” (Quran, 33 : 56)

## Love and Emptiness

The news of Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) demise spread through Medinah and caused infinite endless sorrow. Faces showed dismay and tears flowed. The Prophet had recommended that grief should be expressed, but without hysteria, with restraint and dignity. There was heavy silence, reined near the Prophet's home.

Umar (may God be pleased with him) suddenly broke that silence and exclaimed forcefully that the Prophet was not dead, that he would come back. He even threatened to kill whoever dared declare that the Prophet was dead. His love was such, and the feeling of emptiness was so intense, that Umar could not imagine the future without the man who had guided and accompanied them, and whose love and attention had been stressed by the Quran itself: “Now a Prophet has come to you among yourselves: it grieves him that you should suffer, he is ardently anxious over you, to the believers he is most kind and merciful.” (Quran, 9:128)

Emotion had taken hold of his being. At this point, Abu Bakr (may God be pleased with him) arrived, sat at the Prophet's bed side, and lifted the blanket that had been laid over the Prophet's body and face. Tears were streaming down his face as he realized that the Prophet had left them. He went out and tried to silence Umar (may God be pleased with him) , who, still in a state of emotional shock, refused to calm himself. Abu Bakr then stood aside and addressed

the crowd, this was when he uttered those words, full of wisdom, that produced the very essence of Islamic belief, "Let those who worshipped Prophet Muhammad know that Prophet Muhammad is now dead! As for those who worshipped Almighty God, let them know that God is alive and does not die." Then he recited this verse:

"Muhammad is no more than a Prophet; many were the Prophets who passed away before him. If he died or was killed, will you then turn back? If any did turn back, not the least harm will do to God. But God will reward the thankful." (*Quran, 3 : 144*)

When Umar heard that verse, he collapsed, and he was later to confess that it was as if he had heard the verse for the first time, even though it had been revealed a long before. He realized, along with all the Muslims, that the Prophet had gone, that he had left them, and that the emptiness that had suddenly set in must henceforth be filled by their faith in the One God, who "is alive and does not die."; they must ask Him to help them find in themselves the strength, patience, and determination they needed to go on living without the Messenger, but always in the light of his example.



## Messenger of God : An Excellent Example

The revelation of the Quran had apprised the Muslim companions, just as it tells Muslims today and for all eternity, throughout history and across manifold societies and cultures:

“You have indeed in the Messenger of God an excellent example for him who hopes in [aspires to get close to] God and the Final Day and who remembers God intensely.” (Quran, 33 : 21)

Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is the master whose teachings one studies, the guide one follows on the way, the model one desires to emulate, and, above all, the elect whose sayings, silences and actions one is invited to ponder upon.

Throughout the Twenty-Three years of his mission, Muhammad sought the way to spiritual freedom and liberation. He received revelation, step by step, in the middle of the circumstances of life, as if the Almighty God, the Most High was conversing with him in history, for eternity, forever. Prophet Muhammad listened to God, spoke to Him, and believed His signs day and night, in the warm company of his faithful companions in an Arabian desert.

He prayed while the world of humans was asleep, he prayed to God while his brothers and sisters despaired, and he remained patient and committed in the face of hardship and insult, while many persons turned away. His deep spirituality had freed him from the prison of the self, and he kept seeing and recalling the signs of the God, the Most Near, whether in a flying bird, a standing tree, falling darkness, or a shining star.

Prophet Muhammad was able to express love and spread it around him. His wives were grateful by his presence, tenderness, affection, and his faithful companions loved him with an intense, profound, and extraordinarily generous love.

He gave and offered his presence, his smiles to his people, and if a slave happened to address him or wanted to take him to the other end of the city, he went, he listened, he loved. Belonging to God, he was nobody's possession; he simply offered his love to all. When he gave someone his hand, he was never the first to draw it back, and he knew what light and peace can surge in the heart of a being who is offered a tender word, an affectionate name and comfort. Freed from his own self, he neglected nobody. His presence was a refuge; he was the Messenger.

Prophet Muhammad loved, he forgave. Every day he begged God to forgive his own failings and oversights, and when a woman or a man came to him burdened with a mistake, however serious, he received that soul and showed her or him the way to forgiveness, consolation, dialogue with Almighty God, and His protection.

He covered other people's mistakes from the sight of others, while teaching everyone the need for personal rigor and discipline. When laziness moved anyone to ask him for minimal practice, he always answered positively and invited people to use their intelligence and their qualities to understand, improve, and free themselves from their own

contradictions while accepting their own weakness. He taught responsibility without guilt and obedience to ethics as the conditions for freedom.

Justice is a condition for peace, and the Prophet insisted that one cannot experience the taste of equity if one is unable to respect the dignity of others. He set slaves free and recommended that Muslims pledge to do so constantly: the faithful community of believers had to be a community of free beings.

The Revelation of the Quran showed the Prophet the way, and, as we have seen, he gave particular attention to slaves, the poor, and the lowly in society. He invited them to assert their dignity, to demand their rights, and to get rid of any feeling of inferiority; the message was a call for religious, social, and political liberation.

At the close of the Prophet's mission, in the plain lying at the foot of the Mount of Mercy (*Jabal ar-Rahmah*), men and women of all races, cultures, and colors, rich and poor, were present and listened to the Message of Islam, which stressed that the best among people are so through their hearts, which is determined neither by class nor by color or culture.

The Prophet had once said, "*The best among you is the best toward people,*"

In the name of human brotherhood – addressing not just Muslims but all people (*an-nas*), as he did during the farewell sermon – he taught each conscience people to transcend the appearances that might hinder their progress toward the justice. In the presence of God, nothing could justify discrimination, social injustice, or racism. In the Muslim community, a black man called the believers to prayer, and a slave's son commanded the army; faith had freed the believers from judgments based on misleading appearances.

Prophet Muhammad had listened to women in his society, who often experienced denial of their rights, exclusion, and ill-treatment. The Quran recalls this listening and the accessibility of the Prophet:

“God has indeed heard the statement of the woman who pleads with you concerning her husband and carries her complaint to God. And God hears the argument between both of you. For God hears and sees [all things].” (*Quran, 58:1*)

Similarly, the Prophet listened to a woman who wanted to divorce her husband because she did not like him anymore. He heard her, looked into the matter, and separated them.

Several women came to the Prophet asking for divorce [*kbula*] from their husbands for instance Jameela daughter of Ubayy, Habibah daughter of Sahil, Barirah, and Thabit son of Qays's wife. In this last case ibn Abbas recounts that Thabit's wife came to the Prophet and told him that she had nothing to reproach her husband with as far as religion was concerned, but that she did not want to be guilty of infidelity regarding Islam (by failing to respect his rights as a husband or betraying him through her thoughts or behavior). The Prophet asked her whether she was willing to return the garden that he had given as a dowry, and she accepted this, the Prophet then asked Thabit to accept the separation.

The Prophet also received another woman who complained that her father had married her off without asking for her opinion. He was ready to separate her and her husband, but she informed him that she was actually satisfied with her father's choice but wanted to make it known “to fathers” that “this was not their decision” and that they could not act in such a way without seeking their daughters' consent.

Prophet Muhammad conveyed to women the twofold requirement of spiritual training and asserting a femininity

that is not imprisoned in the mirror of men's gaze or separated within unhealthy relationships of power or seduction.

Womens presence in society, in public space and in the social, political, economic, and even military spheres, was an objective fact that the Prophet not only never denied or rejected but clearly encouraged.

In the light of spiritual teachings, he guided women to assert themselves, be present, express themselves, and claim the real freedom of heart and principles of ethics. Women had to choose it by themselves and trace it out for themselves, trusting in the Almighty God, the Most Gracious.

Prophet Muhammad loved children, with their innocence and gentleness. Being close to God and close to his own heart, he remained attentive to those who primarily understood the heart's language. He kissed children, carried them on his shoulders, and played with them, reaching toward their innocence, which, in its essence, is the expression of a permanent prayer to God. Children, like angels, belong wholly to God. They are signs. The Prophet Muhammad's attitude was a constant reminder of this: thus, if his ritual prayer to God was disturbed by a baby crying – the infant, in effect, praying to God by invoking his or her mother – the Prophet would then shorten his prayer as if to respond to the child's prayer.

“Sometimes”, the Prophet had said, “I prepare for Prayer intending to make it last, but when [during prayer] I hear a child cry, I shorten it for fear of distressing child's mother.”

The Messenger greatly appreciated children for their innocence. From them he learned to look at people and the world around him with wonder. From watching children experience beauty he also more fully developed his sense of



aesthetics. In front of beauty, he wept he was moved and sometimes shed tears. He was often filled with well - being by the poetic musicality of a phrase or by the spiritual call of a verse from the Quran revealed by the Most Generous, the Infinitely Beautiful.

## The light that leads to Light

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) came to humankind with a message of faith, ethics, and hope, in which Almighty God reminds all people of His presence, His requirements, and the final Day of Return and Encounter. Prophet Muhammad came with this message. Throughout his life, he kept listening to women, children, men, slaves, rich, and poor, as well as outcasts. He listened to, welcomed, and comforted them. An elect among the population of this earth, he concealed neither his compassion, sympathy and nor kind heartedness.

Absolutely everything in Prophet Muhammad's life was an instrument of renewal and transformation, from the slightest detail to the greatest events. The Muslim faithful as well as believers of any other faith, indeed all who study Prophet Muhammad's life regardless of personal religious belief-can gain much from this, thus reaching towards the essence of the message and the light of faith.

The Prophet Muhammad prayed, meditated, transformed himself, and transformed the world. Guided by Almighty God, his (*Rubb*) Educator, he offered the best in his being. Such was the meaning of Jihad, such was the meaning of the injunction commanding believers to "*promote good and prevent evil.*" Muhammad's life was a reflection of that teaching.

Prophet Muhammad's life journey exemplified at every

stage an existence devoted to the worship of One God, Almighty Allah. Everybody loved, cherished, and respected the Prophet because his demanding spirituality enabled him to rise above his ego, to give himself, and, in turn, to love without bondage. Divine Love is free from human dependence. He submitted and he was free: he submitted to God in the peace of the Divine, and he was free from the illusions of the human.

Prophet had once told one of his Companions the secret of real love:

“Keep away from [do not envy] what men love, and men will love you.”

God had inspired him to follow the path of the Love:

“My servant keeps getting closer to Me through freely chosen devotions until I love him; and when I love him, I am the hearing through which he hears, the sight through which he sees, the hand through which he holds, and the foot through which he walks.”

God’s love offers the gift of nearness to the Divine and rising above of the self. God’s Love is a love without dependence, a Love that liberates and elevates.


Prophet Muhammad followed a path that involved a number of different stages: the call to faith, exile, returns, and, finally, departs to the last refuge. All along the way, beginning with his initiation, God had accompanied and supported Prophet Muhammad with His love, and He caused human beings to accompany him with their love as well.

Prophet Muhammad carried a universal message, both in the experience of love present throughout his life and in his reminder to people of the need to adhere to a universal ethics that transcends divisions, affiliations, and false identities. This was a true freedom – the freedom of a being

who loves with justice and does not allow himself to be entrapped by passions springing from race, nation, or tribe. His love illuminating his ethical sense made him good; his ethical sense guiding his love made him free. Profoundly good among men and extraordinarily free from them – such were two qualities that all Companions recognized in the last Prophet.

Prophet Muhammad was beloved of God and an example among humans. He prayed, he contemplated, He loved, and he gave. He served, he transformed. The Prophet Muhammad was ‘the light that leads to Light’, and in learning from his life, believers return to the source of Life and find His light, His warmth, and His love.

Prophet Muhammad may have left the human world, but he has taught us never to forget Him, the Supreme Refuge, the Witness, and the Most Near. Bearing witness that there is no god but God, is in effect, stepping towards deep and authentic freedom; recognizing Muhammad as the Messenger is essentially learning to love him in his absence and to love Him in his presence. Loving, and learning to love: God, the Prophet, the creation, and humankind.





## What Great People Say About Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him)

In an American publication entitled *The Hundred*, the author mentions the one hundred people he believes to have exerted the greatest influence on human history. The author, Dr Michael Hart, was born in a Christian family, and received a scientific education. But at the top of his roll of honor he has placed neither Christ's name, nor Newton's. There was one person, he believes, whose achievements excelled all others: that person was the Prophet Muhammad. No one else has had such an impact on the history of man. He writes in the book "the 100."

"My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world's most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the secular and religious level..... It is probable that the relative influence of Muhammad on Islam has been larger than the combined influence of Jesus Christ and St. Paul on Christianity..... It is this unparalleled combination of secular and religious influence which I feel entitles Muhammad to be considered the most influential single figure in human history."

George Bernard Shaw writes in 'The Genuine Islam,' Vol. I, No. 8.

"I have always held the religion of Muhammad in high estimation because of its wonderful vitality. It is the only religion which appears to me to possess that assimilating capacity to the changing phase of existence which can make itself appeal to every age. I have studied him - the wonderful man and in my opinion far from being an anti-Christ, he must be called the Savior of Humanity."

"If any religion had the chance of ruling over England, nay Europe within the next hundred years, it could be Islam."

La Martin, a renowned Poet and Historian of France, in *Histoire de la Turquie*, Paris 1854 Vol II, and pp. 276-77 writes:

"Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas, of a cult without images; the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire - that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?"

M.K. Gandhi "Young India" 16th Sept. 1924. (17) writes:

"I wanted to know the best of the life of one who holds today undisputed sway over the hearts of millions of mankind. I became more than ever convinced that it was not the sword that won a place for Islam in those days in the utter self effacement of the Prophet, the scrupulous regard for pledges, his intense devotion to his friends and followers, His intrepidity, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in God and in his own mission. Those and not the sword carried everything before them and surmounted every obstacle."

Annie Besant, (prominent Theosophist, women's rights activist, writer and orator) in her book "The life and Teachings of Muhammad". Madras 1932, p 4, writes:

"It is impossible for anyone who studies the life and character of the great Prophet of Arabia, who knows how he taught and how he lived, to feel anything but reverence for that mighty Prophet, one of the great prophets of the Supreme. And although in what I put to you I shall say many things which may be familiar to many, yet I myself feel whenever I re-read them, a new way of admiration, a new sense of reverence for that mighty Arabian teacher."

Diwan Chand Sharma, in the book, *The Prophets of the East*, mentions:

"Muhammad was the soul of kindness, and his influence was felt and never forgotten by those around him."

Napoleon Bonaparte, Paris (Emperor of France) *Bonaparte et L' Islam*". (17) Mentions:

"Moses had revealed the existence of God to his nation, Jesus Christ to the Roman world, Muhammad to the old continent. Arabia was idolatrous when, six centuries after Jesus, Muhammad introduced the worship of the God of Abraham, of Ismael, of Moses, and of Jesus - Muhammad declared that there was none but One God, Who had no father, no son and that the Trinity imported the idea of Idolatry..... I hope the time is not far off when I shall be able to unite all the wise and educated men of all the countries and establish a uniform regime based on the principles of the Quran, which alone are true and which alone can lead men to happiness."









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