

Prophet Muhammad [s]: A Brief Biography

Simple account of the life of the final Messenger (s)

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Introduction

He did not speak or advocate the cause of some particular race or ethnic group, but stood up for all humanity irrespective of race, color, class, language or geographical barriers. The Message he preached was universal, transgressing all obstacles whether artificial or otherwise. A Message so complete and comprehensive that it not only revolutionized the era in which it was proclaimed, but even today its timeless beauty has lost none of the original charm and continues its profound appeal to the human intellect.

What was that unique Message and who was the Messenger? Is it capable of solving the modern world's myriad problem? Will it cater to the complicated aspects, characteristics and needs of human beings, especially those of contemporary man? Does it provide political or social answers? Can it stimulate the intellect for scientific and technical discoveries? And how about morals and spiritual aspects? Did the Messenger set any worthy example by practicing what he preached, or was he just one of those fanciful visionaries?

The answer to all the above questions and even many more is, yes, it does. If the principles of this immortal message are sincerely observed, and if we are ready to tread the footsteps of that fantastic man, not only does it guarantee us a harmonious co-existence on this earth but also a blissful life in the hereafter. The moment modern man is ready to cast aside his bunkered lenses of prejudice and vain pride, he will understand that the eternal truth called 'Islam' and the final Prophet named Muhammad were not something special or essential to the Arabia of 14 centuries ago, but are capable of remarkably solving the complex issues of our era, the Space Age.

Islam is a derivative of the word 'Salaam' (peace) and literally means submission. Submission to none except the One and only Allah, Who designed this vast universe, shaped the human race as the most excellent form of life, and moreover endowed them the power of intellect. Wonderful indeed! Because this unique submission frees mankind from all other forms of submission to idols, objects, ideas and the supposedly mysterious powers of nature.

As it is quite clear, Islam was not just some spontaneous burst or mirage on the burning sands of Arabia. In fact it marks the culmination and perfection of all previous divine messages ever revealed. And to carry out the great task of proclaiming His final message, the Almighty chose Muhammad (the Admirable) as the last Prophet, who was prophesied in all earlier Scriptures and whose life-style serves as a perfect model for us.

What can we write about a man who changed the destiny of the world and saved the human race from sure disaster! The loss in words becomes more apparent when we consider that he was divinely chosen for this great task and carried out the mission entrusted, in a most impeccable and flawless manner. He was every inch a perfect man, so complete that even his detractors and enemies could not find the smallest fault in his glowing personality.

When the Qur'an describes him as the "Noblest Exemplar" for the human race including generations to come, it becomes all the more obvious that Prophet Muhammad (S) was something extraordinary and endowed with all

fine qualities such as patience, courage, wisdom, generosity, intelligence, love and magnanimity - to cite a few - which show us how to mould our own lives.

This Foundation in its endeavours to enlighten mankind with the eternal truth of Islam, is pleased to present this booklet on the life and times of the greatest Prophet. We hope it will be of interest to our dear readers, whose great enthusiasm has encouraged us to carry on our mission. May Almighty Allah accept our humble work.

Al-Balagh Foundation

The State of the World before Islam

When Almighty Allah sent His last and greatest Prophet, Muhammad (S), mankind was immersed in a state of degeneration. The messages of the past prophets had been distorted and ignored, civilisation was on the decline and humanity had slumped into an age of darkness, with disbelief, oppression and corruption rife everywhere. The whole world presented the gloomiest picture ever of human history. Hence, the Qur'an's terming of this chaotic state of affairs as 'Ignorance', or to put it exactly in the words the Holy Book has used 'Jahiliyah'.

Consequently it is incorrect to view 'Jahiliyah' as something of the remote past, for it is quite clear from the Qur'an's terminology that any people rejecting Divine Messengers, turning a deaf ear to the Almighty's revelations and overcome with carnal desires, can aptly be termed an ignorant lot. Therefore broadly speaking, the term 'Jahiliyah' is not limited to any particular era but can also be applied to all similar societies irrespective of whether they existed in the past or are still found in our contemporary era, the so-called, Space Age.

Accordingly, it is easy to recognize the symptoms of 'Jahiliyah', there is oppression and corruption, because the salient features of such a society are disbelief, deviation, breach of divine commandments, spread of injustice and vices such as usury, drinking alcohol, adultery, gambling, bloodshed, moral decadence, etc. Thus any society in which such perversions prevail is without doubt 'Jahiliyah'.

Such was the sad state of affairs in which mankind lived, before Allah sent them a Prophet, describing him as a 'Mercy for the creation'. The Arabs among whom Muhammad (S) was born were fragmented into a number of heterogeneous tribes constantly engaged in internecine bloodshed. They had replaced Abraham's monotheism with the worship of idols, stars, angels and demons, turning the Ka'aba built for the One and Only Creator, into a pantheon of idols. Tribal rivalries and blood feuds, fuelled among them like the burning desert sands of Arabia.

Ignorance was not confined to the Arabs alone, for on the fringes of Arabia where the desert gives way to hospitable lands, met the ever changing borders of 'World Arrogance', the two superpowers of the age; the Persian and the Byzantine Empires. Both bidding for hegemony over the known world had bled white with wars, and despite their massive territories, it was obvious they were in their death throes.

The fire-worshipping Persians with their strange concept of dualism were further plagued by the still weirder Mazdakite doctrine which advocated communal ownership and went to such an extent as to rule women to be the common property of all men. Like Mani a few centuries earlier, who had claimed a new religion by combining the teachings of Jesus and Zoroaster, Mazdak's movement was also a reaction to the corruption of the traditional priestly class. Both creeds had flattered to deceive and died away after the execution of their proponents, who more or less depended on royal patronage. On the other hand the Sassanian aristocracy aligned with the Zoroastrian clergy was steeped in pleasures burdening the downtrodden masses with heavy taxes and oppression.

At the other end was the Byzantine World, which though claiming to profess a divinely revealed religion had in fact polluted the monotheist message of Prophet Jesus (a) with the sediments of ancient Greek and Roman pagan thoughts, resulting in the birth of a strange creed called Christianity.

Way back in 381 A.D., the Greco-Roman Church council had declared as heresy, the doctrine of Arius of Alexandria, to which most of the eastern provinces of the empire adhered, and in its place the council had coined the absurd belief that God and Jesus are of one substance and therefore co-existent. Arius and his followers had held the belief in the uniqueness and majesty of God, Who alone, they said has existed since eternity, while Jesus was created in time.

Throughout the 5th and 6th centuries the church continued to be racked by a myriad of controversies over its illogical attempts to define the alleged dual (divine and human) nature of Jesus in the light of Greek mythology and Persian Mithraism, the influence of both of which was quite visible on the Christian church.

In addition, weirder beliefs like Holy Ghost, Mother of God (Mary) and Trinity cropped up which caused trouble in Syria, Egypt and North Africa, where the Monophysite Christians held 'god the father' to be infinitely superior to 'god the son'. In short, terror, oppression and sectarian persecution were the order of the day in Christendom.

Scattered here and there across West Asia and North Africa were colonies of Jews, to whom several outstanding Messengers had been sent by the Almighty. But these divine favours had failed to reform the crime hardened Jews, whose very name had become synonymous for treachery.

They had long deviated from the commandments of Allah, distorting the laws brought by Prophet Moses (a), tampering with divine scriptures, slaying prophets and in the end coining the chauvinist creed called Judaism. It was more a racial sedition rather than a set of beliefs and the Israelites' vehement opposition to the last great reformer, Prophet Jesus Christ (a), was still fresh in the minds of the people.

Further to the east lay the once flourishing cultures of China and India which were now groping in the dark. Confucianism had confused the Chinese, robbing their minds of any positive thinking.

The Sui dynasty (581-618) espousing the cause of Buddhism had plunged China into a blood bath. If Buddhism was never intelligible to the masses, Taoism the religion of the former court was even more remote and expensive to practice looking like a huge complex of rites, cults and strange rituals. The victims of these feuds were of course the poor masses, bewildered as ever and seething under oppression.

In the subcontinent, the fabric of the Indian society was in even more shambles. Hinduism and the absurd philosophy of the caste system it preached had created water-tight compartments between the human race reducing the so-called lower classes to the ranks of mere beasts of burden.

Hinduism had no universal pretensions whatsoever, and had evolved and was peculiar to the geographical confines of India, or more properly Northern India and its Aryan invaders. Conversion of foreigners was

difficult because one had to be born in a particular caste and it was the mystery of 'Karma' that determined one's fate.

In addition, India presented a confusion of castes and creeds and a pantheon of idols more weird and in erotic postures than found anywhere else. Tantric rites including demon-worship, sacrifice of humans and possibly cannibalism were the order of the day. No intermarriage, no inter-living, burning of the widows on the dead husband's pyre, exploitation of the so-called lower class women dedicated to temples as devdasis but whose actual work was to satisfy the carnal desires of the priests, were some of the sordid affairs in practice.

Outside the periphery of the civilized world, beyond the River Jexartes in the endless steppes of Central Asia, dwelt the marauding Turks and other related tribes. They adhered to the magical rites of Shamanism and ancestor worship.

Africa, beyond the Sahara was steeped in animism while in Europe bands of barbarians such as Avars, Bulgars, Germans, Franks etc. wandered around pillaging what remained of the Roman civilization.

In short, wars, bloodshed, slavery, oppression of women and the deprived held sway everywhere. Might ruled right. The world was in dire distress but no one seemed around to deliver it from darkness. No religion, ideology, creed or cult could offer any hope to the agonies and frustrations of humankind.

None of the religions in currency had any universal outlook or even pretensions and were limited to insurmountable geographical and psychological barriers, preaching discrimination and the narrow-minded superiority of a particular race.

Thus it was in such a chaotic state of depression that Almighty Allah sent His last great Prophet, with the universal Message of Islam to save mankind from disbelief, oppression, corruption, ignorance and moral decadence that was dragging humanity towards self-annihilation.

The Makkan Society

The society at obscure Makkah where Prophet Muhammad (S) opened his eyes, was rife with vices and oppression. It was as barren as the harsh Arabian landscape, with declining morals, rising perversion, ignorance and poverty. Like the rest of Arabia it was polytheist in nature, deeply engrossed in the worship of a multitude of idols.

The Makkan society roughly speaking was divided into three classes as follows:

1. The Arrogant Wealthy

In their hands was vested the wealth, authority and leadership of Makkah, and it was this class which vehemently opposed the Messenger of Allah and his call to Islam. They terrorised and forbade people from believing him, for fear of losing their unjust hegemony over Makkah. To this class belonged Abu Jahal, Abu Sufyan, Abu Lahab, Walid bin Mughira, Uqba bin Abi Moayyit, Aas bin Wael Sahm and others, who had built up large fortunes by oppression and foul means.

2. The Deprived (slaves and the oppressed)

This class was composed of the downtrodden like Ammar and his parents Yaser and Sumaiyya, Bilal the Abyssinian, Suhaib the Roman, Khabbab bin Arat etc., who all eagerly hastened towards the call of Islam, because they found it to be the truth and a way of deliverance from oppression, slavery and disbelief.

3. The General Public

These were neither part of the landed oligarchy nor were subjected to slavery. They could well be termed the middle class. Affiliated to their respective tribal chiefs or clan heads they blindly followed the path chosen by their leaders.

Thus since the Islamic Da'wah (call) strives for justice and equality among the human race, removing the artificial barriers of class set up by 'Jahiliyyah', the tyrants and oppressors did all they could to stop its eventual spread. Sensing that its Monotheist message, preaching submission to the One and Only Creator and forsaking the worship of idols and man-made images, would bring an end to their domination over Makkah, the pagan Quraish, decided to gang up against Prophet Muhammad (S).

Birth and Ancestry

Muhammad (S) was born at Makkah in the year 570 AC. known in the annals of Arabian history as the 'Year of the Elephant' because of a miraculous event. That year Abraha the Christian governor of the Abyssinian King, who had already subdued Yemen, marched upon Makkah with a huge army of elephants.

His intention was to destroy the Ka'aba and shift the centre of pilgrimage to San'aa, where he had built an imposing church. But the very moment Abraha's awesome army was poised for the attack, the Almighty sent a swarm of flying creatures, who blackened the sky pelting the mighty force with pebbles, and within minutes destroyed elephants and warriors alike. Thus Almighty Allah humbled the arrogantly ignorant by means of an obscure creature.

Muhammad (S) was born on the eve of 17th of the lunar month of Rabi-ul-awwal and according to some versions on the 12th of the same month. His father was Abdullah the son of Abdul Muttalib the son of Hashim and his mother, Amina, was the daughter of Wahab. His grandfather Abdul Muttalib had many wives and children, out of whom Abdullah and Abu Talib were from the same mother. Thus Prophet Muhammad (S) was a scion of the noble Bani Hashim clan a sub-division of the large Quraish tribe, descended from Prophet Ishmael (a) the elder son of Prophet Abraham (a).

He was a posthumous child, as his father Abdullah had died three months before his birth, while on a visit to Yathrib (Madina). The birth of the orphan turned the grief of the bereaved family into unbounded joy, and none were more happy than his mother, Amina and grandfather Abdul Muttalib, who were in a state of shock at Abdullah's untimely death.

The family burst into happiness, slaughtering sheep and throwing a grand banquet for the Quraish, to celebrate the auspicious occasion. Makkah overflowed with joy as throngs of people flocked to Abdul Muttalib's house to congratulate him on the birth of his grandchild.

The Upbringing of the Prophet

As was the custom in those days, babies of noble families were normally entrusted to the care of strong and healthy wet nurses, who not only gave suck but taught their wards manners and etiquette. The young Muhammad (S) was accordingly put under the care of a noble wet-nurse called Halima bint Hareth As-Saadiyah, who brought him up along with her own children; Abdullah, Eisa and daughter Shaima.¹

After four years Halima brought back the child to his mother and grandfather. Everyone was happy as the toddler started to grow up into a pretty, sober and intelligent boy, marked out from the rest of the children by his suave manners and loved and admired by all.

Mother and Grandfather Die

At the age of six, his mother took him to Yathrib to visit her family. Umm Ayman their maid accompanied them on the journey. At Yathrib, the young boy saw the grave of his father, whom he had never seen in life. What a moving scene it may have been when mother and son, set eyes on Abdullah's grave!

After a short stay in Yathrib they started back, but on the way Amina became seriously ill. The party stopped to nurse her but her condition became worse and finally she breathed her last and was buried at a place called Abwa, situated between Makkah and Madina. The child was naturally sad at losing his only surviving parent, at the tender age of 6. Now he was an orphan on both sides and alone in this wide world. But Almighty Allah is Great and Omnipresent and He alone decrees destinies. Umm Ayman escorted Muhammad (S) to Abdul Muttalib, who was shocked on hearing news of his daughter-in-law's sudden death. The doting grandfather took upon himself the task of bringing up the young orphan, never letting him feel the slightest discomfort. But there was yet another shock in store for Muhammad (S), for when he reached the age of 8, he lost his loving grandfather too.

Abu Talib Assumes Guardianship

Before his death, Abdul Muttalib instructed his son Abu Talib to see his orphaned grandson's upbringing. Accordingly, Abu Talib gladly assumed guardianship of his nephew and took young Muhammad (S) under his roof. Abu Talib and his wife Fatimah bint Asad raised the orphan as their own child, never making him feel the slightest thought of being a destitute. They loved him dearly and he loved them in turn. In later years he was often heard saying that Fatimah bint Asad, (the mother of Imam Ali) was like a mother to him.

Note

1. A deep affinity developed between the Prophet and his foster brothers and sister, and later in life they also accepted Islam.

The Prophet's Marriage

Muhammad (S) grew up in his loving uncle's house, blossoming into a handsome youth of exceptionally good character, which marked him out from rest of the young Makkans. He soon began to assist Abu Talib in trade and commerce and once accompanied his uncle's trading caravan to Syria, ably revealing his talents and integrity. His honesty and reputation preceded him and sometime after his return to Makkah he took up a trading job with one of the wealthiest and noblest Quraishite women, Khadija bint Khuwailid. He accepted to work for Khadija and was entrusted with some money, with which he busied himself in commerce. He again travelled to Syria and made great profits for Khadija during the trip.

Naturally Khadija was pleased and soon came to admire Muhammad's (S) intelligence and honesty. Eventually she offered her hand in marriage which was accepted by him. Muhammad (S) thus married Khadija and they lived a harmonious life full of love, co-operation and sincerity, sharing each other's joys and sorrows. They formed a perfect husband and wife pair, the likeness of which is something rare in human history.

When finally the Divine Message was revealed to Muhammad (S), the devout Khadija at once believed in her husband without ever expressing the slightest doubt. She was the first among women to accept Islam and subsequently put all her vast wealth and property at the Prophet's disposal for the spread of truth and justice.

Khadija bint Khuwailid was from the Quraish tribe and was born and bred in Makkah. Even in the days of Jahiliyyah she was known among the Quraish women for her nobleness of character and virtue, that is why she was called by the Makkans as Tahera 'the pure'. She married Muhammad (S), 15 years before revelation came to him from Allah.

As long as she was alive the Prophet never took a second wife and even in later years of his life after numerous marriages, he used to cherish her loving memory and refer to her as the most beloved of his spouses. She endured with him hunger, poverty and calamities inflicted by the Makkan polytheists. She bore Muhammad (S) many children, all of whom except for Fatima (a) died in infancy, including son Qasim¹ from whom the Prophet's kunya (agnomen) 'Abul Qasim' is derived.

Finally in the tenth year of the Prophetic mission, shortly after the small Muslim community quarantined by the heathens in Shaib Abi Talib had come out of the valley, Khadija breathed her last. It was a great tragedy for the Prophet. The year is known as the 'Year of Grief' in history because the Prophet suffered a further blow that year losing that other great benefactor, his uncle Abu Talib.

Note

1. Khadija bore the Prophet one more son named Taher; who also died in infancy. Later in life Prophet Muhammad (S) had another son named Ibrahim, through his Egyptian wife Maria Qibtia, who also died in infancy. Hence, the Prophet's progeny survives today through his daughter Fatima and her two sons Hasan and Husayn who are the ancestors of all 'Seyyids' (descendants of the Prophet).

Truthful and Honest

Muhammad (S), right from his childhood was known for his virtue and lofty conduct and was far removed from the prevalent vices of the day like idolatry, dishonesty, drinking, gambling, cowardice etc., which were the hallmarks of the Makkan society. His noble character stood him out as the most impeccable one ever, to the point that his people called him 'as-Sadiq' (the Truthful) and 'al-Amin' (the Honest). They put their complete trust in him and always turned to him as an impartial judge in their frequent disputes.

He was a born believer whose heart was free from the filth of disbelief and polytheism. Never had the boy been near idols let alone worship them. The All-Knowing Allah, Who had singled out the child for the greatest task and blessings that lay ahead, had inspired Muhammad's (S) young heart with His Greatness, Power and Majesty.

His pristine purity was indicative of his future greatness, for how could people believe in him and put their trust in him if they see him prostrating before manmade objects and indulging in vices like any ordinary Arab of the day.

Surely, none would have responded to his call to Islam, towards virtue and towards deliverance from oppression, and none would have believed him if they were not sure of vouchsafing his truthfulness and honesty.

Thus Divine providence was at work, right from the beginning in his case, grooming, inspiring and educating the young Muhammad (S) and finally introducing him as a model of emulation and messenger for all of mankind.

Muhammad (S) The Good News of the Prophets

It is now clear that both Judaism and Christianity had completed their historical missions, for the process of abrogation and perfection is a natural matter with respect to the divine laws. It was known that humanity should resort to another divine law in accordance with the divine will. In addition to that, both religions had been distorted and tampered with.

So, logically and with respect to following the revealed path, it is irrelevant to adopt them as ways of life. The substitute is Islam, the promised divine faith for all mankind. It is the faith about which the prophets Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses) and Isa (Jesus) (a) gave good news.

Should seekers of truth be certain of the fact that Muhammad (S) was the Prophet promised by Musa, and Isa (a), and that he was mentioned in the Old and New Testaments, this would constitute a miracle pertaining to him and be confirmation of his prophethood. It rests as a proof on the Jews and Christians who believe in the Pentateuch, the Bible and Pre-Islamic history.

Humanity was waiting for the advent of a new prophet. The Qur'an argues with the Jews and Christians on this point and reminds them of this fact:

“When there came to them a Book from Allah, confirming what was with them - and aforesometimes they prayed for victory over those who disbelieve - When there came to them the truth which they recognised, they disbelieved therein. The curse of Allah is on the disbelievers.” Holy Qur'an (2:89)

The Pentateuch and the Bible did mention the characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad (S), the place of his appearance and his message. A great number of Jewish and Christian religious scholars, at the time, embraced Islam, and believed in the Prophet (S), because they found his name and attribute in the Pentateuch and the Bible. The Qur'an drew their attention to this fact and called on them to return to the Pentateuch and the Bible:

“...the Prophet, the Ummi, whom they find written down with them in the Torah and Injeel...” Holy Qur'an (7:157)

Let us, then, read the Old and New Testaments, and the works authored by the researchers and thinkers, particularly the Christian intellectuals like Professor David Benjamin Kildani,¹ concerning the coming of the Prophet Muhammad (S).

When emphasising the character of the promised Prophet, the other prophecy, attributed to Musa (Moses), is, in any case, conducive when it speaks of the 'the bright light of God which comes from Faran'² which is the wilderness of Makkah.

In chapter 33, of the Pentateuch, the second sentence states:

“The Lord came from Sinai, and shined to them from Saer, and gleamed from the mountain of Faran. And ten thousand saints came with him. From his right hand the fire of a law for them appeared. So the brightness of the Lord is likened to the light of the sun, 'The Lord came from Sinai, and shined to them from Saer.' He gleamed with glory from Faran. He appeared with ten thousand of his followers, carrying a divine law for them in his right hand. None of the Israelites had anything to do, Christ included, with

Faran. Hajar (Hagar) and Isma'il (Ismael), her son, wondered in the wilderness of Beersheba. Then, they settled in the wilderness of Faran.³

We read in another text, page 33:

“The other prophecy is mentioned in the Book of Isaiah, chapter 21, verses 13-17. It says: 'This is a message about Arabia. You people of Dedan, whose caravans camp in the barren country of Arabia, give water to the thirsty people who come to you. You people of the land of Tema, give food to the refugees. People are fleeing to escape from swords that are ready to kill them, from bows that are ready to shoot, from all the dangers of wars.' Then the Lord of Kedar will be at an end. The bow-men are the bravest men of Kedar, but few of them will be left.”⁴

In another text, we openly and self-evidently read about the good news of the coming of the Prophet Muhammad (S):

“During that rare chance, God sent His servant, the Prophet Haggai to console those sad people. He carried with him this important message:

“I will overthrow all the nations, and Hamada will come to all nations. I will fill this temple with wealth. Such the Lord of the soldiers said. All the silver and gold of the world is mine. And there I will give my people prosperity and peace. The Lord of the soldiers had spoken.”

“I had translated this paragraph from the only copy which was in my possession which was borrowed from a lady who is a cousin of mine. This copy was written in the national language.”

Let us return to the English translation of the Bible, which we believe to have changed the word 'Hamada' from the Hebrew origin to 'Amniya', and the word 'Shalom' to 'Islam'.

The priest-professor Abdul-Ahad, who later on embraced Islam, said:

“... therefore we should view this prophecy truthful beyond question. It is identified with the character of Ahmad and his message Islam. That is because both the words Hamada and Shalom or Shalama give precisely the same meaning and have the same importance of Ahmad and Islam⁵... in many of Christ's statements we read the good news of the Prophethood of Muhammad (S) and the mentioning of his name.

Jesus' Prophecy about Muhammad (S):

“And when Jesus son of Mary said: O Children of Israel! Surely I am the Apostle of Allah to you, verifying that which was (revealed) before me of the Torah, and giving the glad tidings of an Apostle who will come after me, whose name is Ahmad...” Holy Qur'an (61:6)

“Those who follow the Apostle - Prophet, the Ummi whom they find ordained for them in the Torah and the Evangel, he enjoins them good and forbids them evil...” Holy Qur'an (7:157)

The Gospel of Jesus (a) brought into sharper focus the identity of the one who would fulfil the promise to make the line of Ishmael (a) a great nation. In the Gospel of John - a New Testament book which is not the Gospel of Jesus (a) and which may be considered as representing only in general terms portions of his teachings.

Christ informs his close companions that his work among them was drawing to conclusion, but God would send someone else after a time to

carry forward the prophetic movement. This someone, however, would be the last of the prophets.

The following passages of the New Testament lend further proof to the Prophethood of Muhammad (S):

“And this is the record of John (the Baptist) when the Jews sent priests and levites from Jerusalem to ask him, who art thou?

And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed I am not the Christ.

And they asked him, “what then? Art thou Elias?” And he said: “I am not.” “Art thou That Prophet?” And he answered, “No.”

And they asked him, and said unto him, “why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither That Prophet.”

John (1: 19-21, 25)

“If ye love me, keep my commandments.

And I will pray to the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.”

John (14: 15-16-26-30)

“But when the Comforter is come, whom I shall send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.”

John (15:26)

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.

And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement:

Of sin, because they believe not on me;

Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

Of judgement because the prince of this world is judged.

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”

John (16:7-14)

A careful study of these passages brings to light the following facts:

1. Jesus Christ (a) prophesies the coming of a Comforter after him.
2. The coming of the Comforter depends on Christ's departure.
3. He is sent by Almighty Allah.
4. He will teach everything.
5. He will draw attention towards what the Christ had foretold.
6. He will testify and glorify Christ.
7. He will not speak by himself but what he divinely hears.
8. He will foretell future events.

9. The world will follow his religion.

10. He will stay forever.

In view of these glaring facts if we cast a glimpse at the life of Prophet Muhammad (S) we will discover the amazing truth that these points perfectly tally with his mission and confirm beyond doubt that he is the Comforter Promised by Jesus.

Notes

1. Father David Benjamin Kildani embraced Islam and changed his name to Professor Abdul Ahad Dawood. He was from the Kildani sect related to the Roman-Catholic Church, holding a bachelor's degree in Theology. After embracing Islam he wrote a book under the name of 'Muhammad in the Holy Qur'an'.

2. Faran is the wilderness of Makkah. It is a reference to the place where the Prophet Muhammad (S) was chosen to prophethood. He came to Madina at the head of ten thousand warriors to conquer Makkah. This is widely known as recorded by historians.

3. Abdul-Ahad Dawood, Muhammad fi al-Kitab al-Muqqaddas (Muhammad in the Holy Bible), 3rd ed, pp. 31-33.

4. Ibid, p.33.

5. Ibid, p.50.

The Beginning of the Prophetic Mission

Muhammad (S), though endeared and respected by Makkans for his wisdom and virtues, preferred solitude and kept his distance from the polytheist society. Disgusted with the corruption all around, he used to retire to the Cave of Hira, in a mountain a few kilometers from Makkah, meditating Allah's Majesty and worshipping Him.

Initially he used to remain in the cave for a day or two and sometimes even 10 nights or more but the next few years saw him spending a whole month in that cave, praying to Allah and contemplating guidance for the deviated people.

Finally the day dawned which was change the history of the world. When he had reached the age of 40 and was engrossed as usual in praying to Allah at his retreat of cave Hira, suddenly that harbinger of Divine tidings, the Archangel Gabriel, appeared with the first verses of the Holy Qur'an:

“Recite in the name of your Lord Who created. Created man from a clot. Recite and your Lord is most Generous. Who taught (to write) with the pen. Taught man what he knew not.”Holy Qur'an (96:1-5)

With these verses, Gabriel (a) announced to Muhammad (S) that Almighty Allah had formally chosen him to be His last and final Messenger to humankind.

Muhammad's (S) heart was filled with joy, and he thanked Almighty Allah for bestowing this great honour upon him. He hurried to his house to tell his wife Khadija about his appointment to Prophethood.

Khadija on hearing the event at once believed in her husband's Prophethood and so did his young cousin Ali (a). Consequently Ali and Khadija became the first ever male and female Muslims respectively. Thus started the beginning of a divine mission which was destined not only to cleanse the Arabian Peninsula of the filth of polytheism but whose radiance would eventually dispel darkness from all over the world.

Muhammad's (S) formal announcement of his Prophethood had a mixed reaction on Makkan society. While the oppressed classes hastened towards the call of Islam, happy that the day of deliverance had finally dawned, the Makkan oligarchy and those who felt a danger to their vested interests and hegemony; ganged up to ridicule the Prophet, in their desperate bid to nip in the bud the final revelation to the human race.

Undeterred by Jahiliyah's arrogant attempts, Muhammad (S) continued to propagate the great divine mission entrusted to him, and the next 23 years of his lifetime saw the gradual unfolding of the grand miraculous event; the Holy Qur'an, Allah's own words sent down through the Archangel Gabriel.¹

Note

1. Even today after 14 centuries, Allah's book the Holy Qur'an stands as a living miracle for humanity. Its revelation was completed a couple of months before the Messenger's passing away, and besides containing the 'Shariah' (canonical laws) for the Muslims, it is a source of knowledge goading man to contemplate and discover the mysteries of science, inspiring high ethical values and morals in its readers and showing the perfect path for mankind's happiness both in this world and the hereafter.

The Making of Early Muslims

Despite the feverish attempts of the Arab infidels to suppress the call of truth, the young Muslim community began to grow in numbers, as more and more people flocked to the call of Islam.

The Prophet's mission in Makkah can thus be classified under the following two periods:

The Secret Call

At first the Messenger of Allah called people to Islam secretly. He began with his immediate kinsmen, the Bani Hashim, explaining to them his divine mission. For three consecutive days he discoursed with them, without much success, and only his young cousin Ali (a), stood up every time saying 'I bear witness Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.' The other members of his clan either mocked at him or remained silent, perhaps needing time to ponder over his words.

Without feeling the least discouraged, Muhammad (S) continued his work, encountering individuals and inviting them to Islam. By and large, the devoted group of Muslims increased around him, and he selected a secret secluded spot, to assemble the faithful and teach them the principles of Islam and the verses of Qur'an as they were gradually revealed. When the number of Muslims had reached 40, Almighty Allah ordered His Messenger to shun the garment of secrecy and make public the invitation to Islam.

The Public Call

As the number of committed Muslims began to grow, Almighty Allah commanded His Prophet to publicly announce the call to Islam. Some of the notable converts at this stage included Muhammad's (S) kinsmen such as Ja'far bin Abi Talib, Ubaidah bin Hareth bin Abdul Muttalib and etc...

The growing presence of such a strong Muslim community in their midst naturally annoyed the obstinate polytheists, who felt increasing danger to their hegemony. The infidels, who had no logic to defend their worship of manmade objects and stop the awakened masses from flocking toward the light of Islam, resorted to torture and other methods of oppression against the fledgling Muslim society. Bilal the Abyssinian, Suhaib the Roman, Khabab bin Art, and others underwent the most rigorous forms of torture at the hands of arrogant Jahiliyah.

The Mission Continues

Despite the hardships, the infant community of Islam stood steadfast in its beliefs. The Prophet's wife Khadija bint Khwailid who was blessed with a large fortune, put all her wealth and property at her husband's disposal, to help the spread of Islam. The personality of Abu Talib, Muhammad's (S) uncle, who was respected and admired by the Quraish, was instrumental in keeping the polytheist Arabs at a distance, and they were afraid of doing any bodily harm to the Prophet.

The Prophet continued to teach the young Muslim community, the divine revelations and the basic tenets of Islam. His most enthusiastic disciple and student was none other than his young cousin, Ali, who was the closest personality to Muhammad (S).

A point to note is that while all the early Muslims were mature people and had experienced the fruits and bitterness of growing up among the idols of Arabia, it was only Ali, who entrusted to his cousin's guardianship years before the call of Islam, was like Muhammad (S) - of a pristine pure personality and far removed from contemporary corruption. Perhaps it was divine providence that Ali should be groomed personally by the last and greatest Messenger to mankind. Hence, the young Ali imbibed all the knowledge directly from the Prophet himself.

Consequently the Da'wah (Islamic Call) of the Prophet falls into two clearly discernible periods as follows:

1. The period in Makkah, beginning with the age of 40 till his emigration to Madina 13 years later.
2. The period at Madina, beginning with the Prophet's historical arrival till his sad demise 10 years later at the age of 63.

The Makkan Period

If the Prophet's emigration to Madina opened new vistas for the message of Islam and its eventual expansion over the Arabian peninsula, nonetheless the Makkah period despite the persecution and hardships, was instrumental in laying the firm foundations of Monotheism, which were to flower in Madina later on.

Briefly speaking, the major landmarks of the Islamic call in this period are explained underneath for our readers:

1. The First Revelation

The coming of the Archangel Gabriel with the tidings of Prophethood and the first revelation, as we have already explained.

2. Da'wat Dhul-Ashira

The invitation to his kinsmen the Bani Hashim to accept Islam. The event known as Da'wat Dhul-Ashira was a formal announcement of Muhammad's (S) mission and a turning point in the history of the divine message and its spread. Undeterred it set the tone for the making of the first group of dedicated Muslims, who despite severe persecution and hardships gathered around the Prophet to assimilate the teachings and principles of Islam.

3. Isra'

The night journey Isra' as described by the glorious verses of the Holy Qur'an.

“Glory be to Him Who made His servant to go on a night from the Sacred Mosque to the Remote Mosque of which We have blessed the precinct...” Holy Qur'an (17:1)

What is meant by Isra' is the bodily ascension of Prophet Muhammad (S) from the Sacred Mosque (Ka'aba) to the Remote Mosque in Jerusalem¹ and thence to the heavens to the very presence of Almighty Allah, and back to earth in a very short span of the same night.

It is related that Gabriel descended one night with the heavenly mount Buraq whose speed as the name suggests is far greater than the speed of light, and took the Prophet to the highest and furthest point of the heavens where no creature has ever set foot, and thence the wonder-struck Muhammad (S) proceeded alone to the very presence of the 'Magnificent Light', that only a curtain divided him from the Omnipotent Almighty.

Then Allah spoke with his servant and showed him the signs of His Majesty. The event also known as Me'raj confirms that no creature ever, not even the past prophets or any heavenly being either, like the Archangel Gabriel, had been so near to the Almighty's proximity, as the Habibullah (beloved of Allah) was summoned by Allah that night.

4. The First Martyrs

The idolaters maddened at Bani Hashim and other Makkans for accepting Islam, singled out some Muslims like Bilal the Abyssinian, Ichabab bin Art and Yasir, his wife Sumaiyya and their son Ammar for severe torture. Despite the barbarities inflicted, the new Muslims refused to forego their

faith in monotheism and eventually Yasir and his wife Sumaiyya were savagely martyred at the hands of the infidels.

5. The Emigration to Abyssinia

When the Messenger of Allah felt the growing danger threatening the very lives of the infant Muslim community and its helplessness against the infidels, he instructed some of them to migrate to Abyssinia. The immigrants were led by the Prophet's cousin Ja'far bin Abu Talib, and upon arrival there, were allowed to settle and practice their faith by the Abyssinian ruler Negus.

6. Siege and Social Boycott

Alarmed at the growing number of Muslims and fearing to do bodily harm to the Prophet, because of Abu Talib's towering personality, the Makkan Jahiliyah devised a plan of social boycott of the whole Bani Hashim clan. Hence a total boycott was imposed on the Bani Hashim and the new Muslims to such an extent that all links or contacts whether commercial or social, including buying or selling of goods and even matrimonial alliances were severed.

But the faithful Abu Talib was determined to protect his nephew the Prophet, and together with all his clan members as well as the other Muslims retired to the valley known as Shi'b Abi Talib on the outskirts of Makkah, where together, they could easily override the difficulties and also protect themselves from any incursions. Steadfastly, the Muslims bore the consequences of the siege, enduring pain, hunger and other difficulties for three long years, and ultimately frustrated the infidel's efforts, which forced the Makkan Jahiliyah to lift up the social boycott.

7. The Year of Great Grief

Shortly after the Bani Hashim and other Muslims emerged from Shi'b Abi Talib, a double calamity struck the Prophet. Umm al-Mu'mineen (mother of believers) Khadija al-Kubra who had given her husband unflinching support, sacrificing her great wealth and property for the cause of Islam, finally succumbed to the hardships and breathed her last. It was a great blow to the Prophet to lose his faithful beloved companion and the mother of his illustrious progeny. But another calamity was in store for Muhammad (S), and three days later that another great benefactor and sincere guardian, his uncle Abu Talib passed away from this mortal world.

These sad events occurred in the holy month of fasting, Ramadhan, three years before the Prophet's historic migration to Madina. Accordingly the year is known in the annals of Islamic History as the 'Year of Grief'.

8. The Retirement to Ta'if

Aggrieved by the double loss of his loving wife and doting uncle, and faced with the prospect of renewed hostility from the Makkan idolaters, who were emboldened by Abu Talib's death, the Prophet set out for the oasis town of Ta'if. But in Ta'if the call to Islam fell on deaf ears. No one believed in Muhammad's (S) invitation except an old Christian farmer called 'Adhasu' who embraced Islam.

The Arabs of Ta'if ridiculed the Prophet, encouraging simpletons and ignorant children to pelt him with stones and obstruct his path, wherever he moved. The Messenger convinced that his divine mission would not make much progress with the stonehearted people of Ta'if, returned back to his birthplace Makkah.

9. Meeting with a Yathrib Delegation

Even though the arrogantly ignorant Quraishites and other tribes of Makkah and Ta'if had scoffed at the message, divine providence was already at work facilitating help and the spread of Islam from hitherto unknown quarters. In the eleventh year of the Prophetic mission, Muhammad (S) started contacts with delegations.

He came across a group of people from Yathrib led by As'ad bin Zurara of the Khazraj tribe and invited them to Islam. His words received an attentive response, and the group believing in the truthfulness of this great monotheistic call became very happy. The leader asked the Prophet to send a Muslim with him to Yathrib to preach Islam, and hoped that the divine call would unite his tribe with the rival tribe of Aws, knitting them into a single Muslim people.

10. The First Allegiance of Aqaba

On returning to Yathrib the group started preaching Islam among the local people and made some progress. The next year a 12-member delegation of Yathrib Arabs came to Makkah and met the Messenger of Allah at a place called 'Aqaba' and swore allegiance to him as Muslims. On returning to their city they started inviting people towards truth. Thus Islam began to take roots and spread in Yathrib which was destined to be the Prophet's seat of power and would eventually become famous as Madina - the shortened form of Madinat-an-Nabi (city of the Prophet).

11. The Second Allegiance of Aqaba

During the next year of pilgrimage following the first allegiance, 10 men and 2 women from Yathrib called on the Prophet at the same place of Aqaba and swore allegiance to him, promising to defend and spread Islam. The historic meeting was attended by the Prophet's uncle Abbas bin Abdul Muttalib as a witness to the allegiance. The event was instrumental in spreading belief among a greater part of Yathrib citizens, who rallied to the cause of Islam as 'Ansar' (Helpers). Makkan Muslims to protect their beliefs now gradually started migrating towards Yathrib.

12. Conspiracy to Assassinate the Prophet

The Makkan Jahiliyah alarmed at the growing impact of Islam and their abject helplessness to contain its radiant rays conspired to assassinate the Prophet. Moreover, the death of Abu Talib that devoted guardian of infant Islam had removed an obstacle from their path, emboldening the haughty ignorants to plot Muhammad's (S) murder. But Makkan arrogance had reckoned the whole thing without taking into account the Omnipotent Creator Who is always watching over peoples' words and deeds and is even aware of the thoughts they entertain.

The Almighty Allah sent Gabriel to inform the Prophet of the dirty plot. As commanded, the Prophet asked his faithful cousin Ali (a) to sleep in his bed that night, and himself set out for Yathrib taking along one of his companions, the aged Abu Bakr, whom for some reasons he considered it unwise to leave behind at Makkah. That epoch-making night which marked a turning point in the message of Islam, Imam Ali (a) lay on the Prophet's bed as calm and composed as ever, that even the scores of infidels besieging the house and peeping through the windows, not the least suspected the real identity of the sleeper.

It is related that each Makkan tribe or clan was represented in the gang of conspirators hovering around the abode of divine revelation in their vain bid to extinguish the eternal light, even Muhammad's (S) own infidel uncle Abu Lahab was there claiming to represent the Bani Hashim.

At last before the break of dawn, the unholy gang burst into the Prophet's house, full of confidence to accomplish their dirty deed. But their all-night vigil proved as worthless as their stone-made gods, for to their utter surprise, the figure which calmly emerged from the covers and stood facing them was the Lion of Allah, Ali (a), and not whom they were seeking. Frustrated in their ungodly efforts, the infidels asked Ali the Prophet's whereabouts, to which they received the crisp and to the point reply: "Did you entrust him to me?" Thus Almighty Allah protected His Prophet from the evil of the idolaters, and escorted him safely away from their very midst, without the blind-hearted Arabs perceiving the least.

The event has another significance, for it brings into sharper focus the personality of Imam Ali (a) and his selfless devotion to the cause of Islam and to his cousin's life. He dauntlessly agreed to sleep on the Prophet's bed risking his life and limbs, If the late Abu Talib's personality had been until recently, a deterring factor for the Makkan polytheists from harming the Prophet, now his son the brave Ali had ably filled up the vacuum, showing readiness to sacrifice his own life for Muhammad's (S) sake. Almighty Allah rewarded Ali's selfless spirit of devotion by revealing the following verse of the Qur'an:

"And among people is he who sells himself to seek the pleasure of Allah..." (2:207)

Thus the Almighty brought the stratagem of the plotters to nought. By the time the Makkan infidels recovered from their shock, the Prophet was safely out of Makkah and on his way to Yathrib. Cautious, not to be overtaken by the conspirators lest they start the chase, the Prophet along with his companion Abu Bakr, took refuge in a cave of a mountain called Thawr, three miles south of Makkah.

The Quraish hastily set out to trace the Prophet, and a party of unbelievers arrived at the very cave of Thawr. Strangely, just as the idolaters neared the place, Abu Bakr, perhaps sensing danger suddenly started crying. His unwarranted cries, had not Almighty Allah descended tranquillity on him that very moment making him tight-lipped, would have been enough to lead the Quraish party to the Prophet's hide-out, periling the whole brave selfless episode.

The polytheists arrived at the cave's mouth with an expert tracker and looked everywhere around, but by Allah's command a spider had spun a cobweb over its entrance and a bird had come and laid eggs, presenting the semblance of an undisturbed virgin spot, where no soul had ventured of late.

Satisfied that no one was in the cave, the unbelievers turned back giving up all hope of finding the Prophet. Thus the Prophet safely proceeded to Madina. The Hijra (Migration) to Madina also marks the start of the Muslim Lunar Calendar and according to historians it took place on the 1st of Rabi-al-Awwal.

Yathrib - A Brief Description

It was an old oasis town with plenty of springs and wells and the brush surroundings abounded with date palms, vineyards and orchards of pomegranates and other fruits. Situated 450 kilometres north of Makkah it was inhabited by the idol worshipping Arab tribes of Aws and Khazraj. Certain Jewish tribes like Bani Quradha, and Bani Mugheer and Bani Qainqa'e also dwelt in Madina and had migrated to the town centuries before, to await the last Messenger of Allah, whom they found foretold in their Scriptures.

Deep enmity and a constant state of internecine warfare had sapped the energies of the two idolatrous Arab tribes, who had devastated each others' wealth and properties, in their blind hatred. In addition there was no love lost between the Arab and Jewish tribes. The Jews flaunting their sacred books used to mock the pagan Arabs, saying that soon a Prophet will emerge in Arabia and come to Yathrib and will put an end to their wicked ways.

But strangely enough when Prophet Muhammad (S) did finally proclaim his Prophethood and emigrate to Yathrib, it were the Arab tribes of Aws and Khazraj who renounced idolatry and accepted Islam, while the chauvinistic Jews, whose forefathers had come to Arabia, for this very occasion, rejected the Prophet. Their pretext was he was an Arab descended from Prophet Abraham's (a) elder son Ishmael (a), rather than Isaac (a) and therefore unacceptable to the racist Jews.

On the other hand, on Prophet Muhammad's (S) historic entrance into Yathrib, the Aws and Khazraj recalling the Jews' prophecy hastened towards him and accepted Islam, burying once and for all the bloody hatchet of tribal rivalry. Almighty Allah filled their hearts with unity, which Arabia had never known before, and gathered them under Islam's majestic banner. The Jews, treacherous as ever, turned away from Prophet Muhammad (S) as they had rejected and betrayed Prophet Jesus (a) 6 centuries ago.

Note

1. Bayt-ul-Muqaddis or simply Al-Quds in today's Zionist occupied Jerusalem.

Important Events of Madina

The Prophet's entry into Madina ushers in a new phase for the divine message. Islam gaining fresh followers began to assert its strength and soon started to spread out over the four corners of the Arabian Peninsula.

In the previous chapters we have already noted that the Prophet was 53 years of age at the time of his auspicious migration. In Madina he spent the remaining 10 years of his life and it was here that other brilliant aspects of his immaculate personality became fully manifest. The divine call now entered a decisive stage and many important events took place in Madina, which eventually laid a firm foundation for the spread of Islam to the furthest reaches of the globe. Here we shall study some of the major landmarks in the life of Prophet Muhammad (S) and Islam at Madina.

1. The Building of the First Mosque

The entry into Madina was followed by the building of the mosque, the first-ever for the Muslims who had just emerged from years of oppression in Makkah. It was one of the most important landmarks for Muslims who now had a centre of their own for open uninhibited gatherings, a school for learning the Qur'an and a headquarters for receiving necessary instructions from their leader.

Gone were the days of secret underground meetings in Makkah, where the fear of persecution had always weighed heavily for the faithful. Yathrib which from now onwards was Madinat-an-Nabi (city of the Prophet) or Al-Madina al Munawara (illuminated city), provided a free open atmosphere for the growth of the true faith.

Makkan immigrants mixed with the local populace, the 'Ansar' (Helpers), and cheerfully started giving shape to Islam's first-ever mosque which would be known as Masjid-an-Nabi (Prophet's Mosque). The building was soon constructed of clay and tree trunks with palm leaves serving as a thatched roof. The Messenger of Allah himself took part in the construction and the following year he enlarged its precincts to cover an area of 2475 square meters.

All Muslims enthusiastically assembled there for the daily prayers, which were led by the Prophet himself. He used to deliver sermons there, teach the Qur'an and the laws of Islam to the faithful, discourse with his companions, prepare them for 'Jihad' (holy struggle) and would look into their problems and other relevant issues. Thus, the Mosque was actually the headquarters of the first-ever Islamic State established by the Messenger. It still stands majestically today, frequently enlarged and beautified throughout the last fourteen centuries. The tomb of Prophet Muhammad (S) is situated within its enclosure, and draws millions of Muslims from all over the world.

2. Fraternalization

The second important step taken by the Prophet in Madina was the fraternizing of 'Muhajireen' (Makkan Immigrants) with the 'Ansar' (Madinite Helpers) in the bonds of Islamic brotherhood. He fraternised each Muhajir with an Ansar, joining them together as brothers in faith. And he himself clasped the hand of his beloved cousin Ali bin Abi Talib (a) as the supreme symbol of brotherhood, fraternity and solidarity in the Islamic society.

Before proceeding further let us say a few words about the Muhajireen and the Ansar, who formed the pillars of the Islamic State. Allah, the Exalted describes them in the Qur'an as follows:

“And as for the first and foremost of the Muhajireen (emigrants) and the Ansar (helpers), and those who followed suit in good deeds; Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him; and He has prepared for them gardens watered by running streams, therein dwelling forever; that is a supreme triumph.” (9:100)

The Muhajireen as the name suggests were the Muslim emigrants from Makkah who had followed the Prophet of Madina to safeguard their faith and to escape persecution from the infidels. They had embraced Islam in its early formative years and most of them had steadfastly endured severe pain and hardship in the way of liberty, truth and justice.

On the other hand, the Ansar were the indigenous inhabitants of Madina, who believed in the Message of Islam and rallied to the help of the Prophet. They welcomed him to their city, and fought alongside him against the pagans of Arabia. It was their faith and selfless devotion which cemented Islamic unity and brought many a glorious victory for Islam.

At the time of the H4ra most of the Muhajireen were poor and possessed nothing, but the Ansar displaying the finest example of Islamic brotherhood, provided them with their needs such as houses, money and food. They lodged them in their own houses, shared their wealth with them and gave their daughters in marriage to the Makkan Muslims.

Such were the Muhajireen and the Ansar - brothers sharing food, clothing and residence, and defending and helping each other as ordered by the Almighty. From them we learn patience, self-sacrifice, fraternity, piety and devoted zeal to spread the call of Islam to less fortunate people around the world.

3. The Islamic State

The other important event after the Hijra was the establishment of the Islamic State and Government by the Prophet, who by applying the gradual unfolding of divine commandments, moulded the hitherto ignorant Arabs into a real Islamic society. Expounding the eternal miracle of the Holy Qur'an and setting his own divinely inspired personality as a practical example, he firmly erected the pillars of justice and virtue. In short, Prophet Muhammad (S) presented to the dark world seething under tyranny and oppression, the most perfect ever constitution - spiritual, social and political and a key to their salvation both in this mortal life and the hereafter.

4. Jihad

The next stage was Jihad or holy struggle, a thing not known in Makkah. It was the natural consequence to the setting up of a state. Unbelievers, ever-intent to stamp out the divine call but seeing Islam finely knit unto a secure state, resorted to arms, and the Muslims had to follow suit to defend their faith, and according to Allah's injunctions went out to do battle with the aggressors.

The first ever battle between Islam and blasphemy occurred in the second year of the Hijra at a place called 'Badr' in which the new-found Islamic

State, assembling a modest force of only 313 Muslims defeated a vastly outnumbering army of disbelievers. The victory led to many other battles and skirmishes with the Makkan infidels, who each time came out in larger numbers to avenge their previous setbacks, but by Allah's Grace suffered defeat after defeat at the hands of the faithful.

The victories brought strength and courage to the Muslims and helped facilitate the spread of Islam and monotheism to the farthest reaches of polytheist Arabia.

5. End of Jewish Plots and Treacheries

Ever since the Prophet's entry into Madina, the treacherous Jews had vehemently opposed him and his Islamic call, evoking memories of their hostility to the previous Prophet, Jesus Christ (a), half a millennium ago. The crafty Jews entered into an alliance with the polytheist Quraish in a bid to stamp out Islam. They conspired to kill Prophet Muhammad (S) despite the fact that he was lenient towards them and had treated them kindly, hoping to convince them of Islam's truth. But eventually as Jewish plots and aggressions increased, he had no choice other than to take up arms against them, in order to protect Islam and the Muslims. At the battle of Khaiber which is famous for Imam Ali's (a) heroic exploits, the Prophet defeated them ending Jewish intrigues and conspiracies in Arabia.

6. The Treaty of Hudaibiyah

Another important landmark in the Prophet's life and progress of the Islamic call was the treaty of Hudaibiyah.

One night Prophet Muhammad (S) had a dream in which he saw that he and his companions were entering the precincts of the Holy Ka'aba in Makkah to perform the 'Tawaf' (circumambulation), but the infidel Arabs were trying to obstruct their entrance. Following the dream, he decided to go to Makkah with some 1,500 Muslims to perform the pilgrimage. It was in the sixth year of the Hijra, and when the party arrived at a place called Hudaibiyah, the infidels confronted them and blocked all routes to Makkah. After some deliberations the infidels and the Prophet concluded a treaty, stipulating that the Muslim party would for the moment go back to Madina, but would return the next year for performing the pilgrimage. There were some other terms too.

As per the treaty the Messenger and his companions turned back to Madina, but the next year the Prophet along with a group of Muslims entered Makkah - 7 years after his historical migration - to perform the Umrah ritual (the lesser pilgrimage). Thus, his dream came true, and it was another undeniable proof of his Prophethood.

7. The Conquest of Makkah

Next followed the great event in the history of Islam, that was the conquest of Makkah, the then bastion of ignorance and disbelief. With it, idolatry was purged from the greater part of Arabia once and for all, and Allah's Sacred House the Ka'aba was cleansed of the filth of man-made objects. The event took place during the month of Ramadhan, in the year 8 A.H. and Makkah was liberated without a fight. Almighty Allah instilled the

hearts of the idolaters with such fear that when Abu Sufyan, the leader of the infidels, and his men, saw the Muslim forces they were struck with awe and meekly surrendered. Thus the Messenger and his companions entered Makkah triumphantly, smashed the idols, performed the Tawaf, and returned to Madina.

The conquest of Makkah and the purging of idols from Holy Ka'aba proved a great victory for Islam. Following the event which is famous for Muhammad's (S) magnanimity towards his archenemies, the Makkan pagans, who all accepted Islam, people started embracing the true faith in multitudes.

8. Monarchs, Heads of State and Tribal Chiefs Invited to Islam

Allah bestowed victory upon His Prophet in his many battles, and the Muslims were now strong. Since the light of Islam had expelled ignorance from the greater part of the Arabian Peninsula, the Messenger of Allah now felt it his duty to enlighten neighbouring people about the truth of Islam. Accordingly he sent envoys to the Emperors of Persia, Byzantine and Abyssinia (Ethiopia) and to other heads of state and tribes inviting them towards guidance and reform. Some accepted, some gave polite 'diplomatic replies', while some others such as Chosroes of Persia were arrogant enough to betray their ignorance, by haughtily tearing the letters from the 'Mercy to the Worlds'.

9. Event of Mubahala

Among the messages which the Prophet (S) sent to kings and heads of state inviting them to Islam, was the one addressed to the Christians of Najran in Yemen. On receiving the letter the Christians refused to accept Islam but however decided to come to Madina to challenge the Prophet and to defend their deviated belief in the divinity and purification of Prophet Jesus (a).

In Madina, the Prophet presented them with proof and facts about Islam's eternal truth, citing references from the previously revealed Scriptures, but the Christians' irrational obstinacy prevented them from seeing the manifest truth. In the end the two parties decided to meet at an open place and invoke divine curse and punishment upon the lying side. Allah thereby ordered His Prophet to take along with him his immediate family to the meeting ground for the Mubahala¹.

“And whosoever disputes with you concerning this after the knowledge that has come to you, say: 'Come now, let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves, then let us earnestly pray for Allah's curse upon the ones who lie.'” (3:61)

The Christian elders came to the venue with their whole flock, and the Prophet as ordered by Allah came with his immediate family members, namely: daughter Fatimah, son-in-law Ali and their two children, Hasan and Husayn. Never had the Christians seen such enlightened visages before. The moment the Chief Priest beheld Prophet Muhammad (S) and his noble family, he was filled with awe.

He realised that without doubt truth was with this blessed group of five and most surely Allah will respond to Muhammad (S) and his family's invocation if they choose to curse and destroy the Christians of Najran. Thus the Christians backed away from the challenge of Mubahala, and wisely came to terms with the Prophet, pledging to pay an annual tribute to the Muslims.

10. The Farewell Pilgrimage

In the tenth year of the Hijra, the Messenger of Allah (S) performed the Hajj (pilgrimage), with all his wives and a fairly large number of his Companions.

He reached Makkah on the 4th of Dhul Hijja and was soon joined by Ali (a), who hastened back from his successful missionary deputation to Yemen. During the Hajj ceremonies, the Prophet addressed a great multitude from Mount Arafat, in words which are eternal to this day in the hearts of believers. After praising the Almighty, he expounded the laws and tenets of Islam and abolished all existing practices of the days of Jahiliyah, charging the gathering to inform those not present and also to convey to posterity his eternal message.

The famous tradition called 'Thaqalain' was part of this sermon and we reproduce it below from 'Sahih Tirmidhi' for the benefit of our readers.

“I have been summoned (by Allah) and the moment is near for me to answer (to die). I leave among you the 'Thaqalain' (two precious things): the Book of Allah and my progeny; Allah's Book is like a rope extending from heaven to earth, and my progeny are the Ahlul-Bayt. The Merciful informed me that the two will not part with each other until they meet me at the pool (of Kawther in Paradise). I warn you against deserting them.”

11. Ghadir Khum

After performing the Hajj, he bade farewell to his native Makkah and set out for Madina. When the great procession reached the place from where the routes of the different caravans coming from various points of Arabia normally parted, suddenly the signs of divine revelation appeared and he stopped at a place called al-Juhfa near the spring (ghadir) of Khum. The Archangel Gabriel came with the following verse in order to impress the urgency of the divine command:

“O Prophet proclaim what has been revealed to you from your Lord, for if you do it not, you have not conveyed His message; and Allah will protect you from the (evil designs of) people...” Holy Qur'an (5: 67)

At once the Prophet ordered the whole party to be assembled, even summoning back those who had already left, for he had an important message to be delivered.

A pulpit made of camel saddles was hastily set-up. Ascending it, he delivered a sermon asking the people to be witness that he had faithfully performed the task of Prophethood entrusted to him by the Almighty.

The multitude cried in one: “We bear witness O Messenger of Allah.”

He asked, who in their opinion was more worthy of obedience than their souls, to which they replied that Allah and His Prophet know better.

Then he said: “O people! Allah is my Maula (Master) and I am the Maula (master) of believers.”

“Verily O Prophet of Allah”, came the unanimous reply.

Prophet Muhammad (S) then bent down and lifting up Ali bin Abi Talib (a) in his hands, showed him to the vast crowd and proclaimed those famous words, which guaranteed the continuation of divine leadership:

“For whomsoever I am Maula (master), this Ali is his Maula (master)...”

Thrice he proclaimed these words before descending the pulpit, relieved by having performed the great task which would save the Ummah from going astray.

The great multitude of Muslims surged towards Ali bin Abi Talib (a), felicitating him on his divine appointment. According to such famous scholars as Zamakhshari and Nasai, the first one to congratulate and swear allegiance (bai'ah) to Imam Ali (a) was Umar bin Khattab, who later became the second Caliph.

Gabriel descended again with another revelation, showing that the Almighty was pleased with His Prophet for having excellently performed the great final mission to mankind.

“...Today have I perfected unto you your religion and completed upon you My blessings and approved for you Islam as your religion...”Holy Qur'an (5:3)

This most important task ensured the continuity of divine guidance. Since the Prophets were divinely appointed, so should be the successors or trustees of the Prophets, especially so in the case of Islam, which is the final message to the human race.

All scholars and historians have testified that the event of Ghadir Khum² did take place, and moreover books of Hadith are witness that on many and occasion, the Prophet had emphasised his cousin's pre-eminence, over all other Muslims.

12. The Prophet's Death

Two months after his return to Madina, the Messenger of Allah fell ill, Madina wore a look of gloom, because for a fortnight, the Prophet of Islam was confined in bed. The dawning of 28th of the lunar month of Safar proved to be fateful, for on that day the 'Mercy to the worlds' although weak with fever made his way to the mosque to lead the prayers, which also proved to be for the last time. Following a brief speech he returned to the house and after giving necessary instructions to his divinely ordained successor Imam Ali (a), he breathed no more. The sad day marked the end of final Prophethood.

Allah, through His last and greatest Messenger has revealed the perfect and the most comprehensive set of laws for the entire human race, a constitution, which is capable of catering to the needs of all generations till doomsday. Now the need for further revelations will no more arise, for the Almighty in His Eternal Wisdom has embodied each and everything in the Holy Qur'an and taken upon Himself the responsibility of guarding it from interpolation. Moreover the Prophet practically showed the implementation of divine laws.

The Qur'an together with the Prophet's Sunnah (traditions) is to remain a guiding light for all mankind, and to ensure their correct meaning and application, Allah granted the leadership of the Ummah to the Prophet's infallible household, the Ahlul-Bayt, who are the torch bearers of guidance for all Muslims.

Prophet Muhammad (S) was laid to rest in his mosque, and an aggrieved Imam Ali (a) performed the last rites of his noble cousin and father-in-law. He was survived by his daughter Fatimah and her two sons.

Today the grave of the Prophet is the site of pilgrimage and veneration for Muslims from all over the globe.

Notes

1. Mubahala means to invoke Allah's curse upon the lying side when two parties are contesting for truth.
2. For more details on the historic event of Ghadir Khum refer to such famous books as: Musnad Ahmad bin Hanbal, Part 1, page 118 & 119, part 4, page 281-370-372-373, part 5, page 347-370. Sunan bin Maja, Chapter 'Merits of Ali'. Mustadrik al-Hakim, part 3, page 109. Bin Kathir's History, part 5, page 210.

Glimpses of the Prophet's Conduct

Prophet Muhammad (S) is the finest example of a perfect man in every sense of the term. He was a paragon of virtue and is the best exemplar for the human race. The Almighty distinguished him from all and sundry by instilling in his sublime personality such fine qualities as modesty, truthfulness, kindness, patience, loyalty, honesty, courage, bravery, generosity, magnanimity, wisdom and the like. By studying his lofty character and the amazingly simple life he led with his household, companions, wives and others, we are apt to learn valuable lessons from his conduct and accordingly mould our own lifestyle.

Our society could never be an Islamic one unless we sincerely tread the footsteps of Allah's final Messenger to mankind, heed his sayings, observe his glorious actions and attitudes, and most important of all follow them, as the faithful among his companions did.

In short, Allah the most Glorious enjoins upon us to take the Prophet's behaviour as an example, because he guides us to virtue and righteousness:

“Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allah and the latter day and remembers Allah much.” Holy Qur'an (33:21)

Now, we shall study some aspects of his admirable character:

Contemplation and Wisdom

Prophet Muhammad (S) always used to contemplate the Greatness and Majesty of Allah, the Glorious and the welfare of the human race. He closely followed the affairs of his people and the spreading of the light of Islam. He talked only when necessary and when he did, his speech was devoid of any rhetoric and unnecessary words. It was precise, to the point and full of great meanings.

Punctuality and Daily Schedule

He was punctual, active and energetic, and led an orderly life in the strict sense of the word. His day was divided into four periods:

1. A time for worship.
2. A time for his household (Ahlul-Bayt) and wives, during which he behaved like any ordinary family-man giving the finest example of social behaviour.
3. A time for rest and contemplation.
4. A time for public affairs such as receiving Muslims, looking into their needs and requirements, answering their questions, teaching them the tenets of Islam and expounding to them the glorious verses of the Holy Qur'an.

Following are some of his wise sayings on the importance of time:

Blessed be my people for their early rising up.

Too much sleep does away with both religion and the world.

O People, you have certain (special) characteristics, so get to (emphasise) them and you have an end, so get to (be prepared for) it..., a servant of Allah should take (make provisions) for himself from his self: from his world (life) for his hereafter, during his youth before his old age, and in life before death. By the One in whose hand is Muhammad's soul, after death there will be no blaming and after this world there is nothing except Paradise or Hell.¹

Modesty and Simplicity

He was the finest embodiment of modesty, and deeply abhorred arrogance and haughtiness. Almost all of his companions in the early days were poor and oppressed people, as he was the champion of the downtrodden and the defender of the deprived masses.

His house was simple and modest, built of clay bricks, palm leaves and trunks. His food was simple like that of the poor, consisting mostly of barley bread. There were occasions when he might skip that meagre meal too. He socialised with his companions as one of them: talking, listening, smiling and displaying a sense of humour. Sometimes he might join in their laughter to cheer their spirits up. He would visit them when they fell sick or accept an invitation for a meal irrespective of whether the person concerned was poor, a slave or any other. In case a companion of his died, he used to participate in the funeral procession, walking alongside the bier.

Owing to his great modesty, he normally preferred riding a mule while moving around, using a saddle made of date-palm fibre. Sometimes he also rode his she-camel. If he was riding and somebody wished to accompany him on foot, he would ask him either to mount behind, and if the man declined out of respect, he would ask him to go ahead and await him at the fixed place, because he did not like the sight of people following him on foot, while he himself was mounted.

So modest was he that he hated to see people rising to their feet when he entered an assembly. And on entering he used to sit at the nearest vacant spot, so that his companions might not think that he was sporting an air of superiority over them. His magnetic personality drew love and respect from all. He used to sit on the ground, even while eating, and slept on the ground with a simple mat serving as his bed. He greeted even small boys, as well as women. If some man shook hands with him, he would not unclasp his hand till the other did it first.

Once, a Christian chieftain named Adi bin Hatim al-Ta'i, came for an audience with the Prophet of Islam, who happened to be sitting on a cushion. On seeing the visitor he took the cushion from underneath and offered it to his Christian guest, himself preferring to sit on the ground. This admirable display of modesty by the great Prophet so deeply affected Adi bin Hatim al-Ta'i, that the Christian chief immediately embraced Islam.

This is how Prophet Muhammad (S) taught us best of morals and excellent manners. By living a simple and ordinary life and treating everybody alike with courtesy and respect, he was able to spread the light of Islam. His immaculate personality and lofty character, coupled with his honesty and wisdom, attracted multitudes of people towards truth and justice.

Kindness and Generosity

The Messenger's social ties with his companions portrays the most wonderful picture of Islamic brotherhood ever heard of. The following narratives give us a glimpse of his firm ties with the society in which he lived:

Anas bin Malik, who used to frequent the Prophet's assembly, says that whenever the Prophet missed any one of his companions for a period of three days, he used to inquire about that person, would pray for him and if he happened to be ill, would pay him a visit.

Another companion Jarir bin Abdullah, says that once the Prophet entered a house, and soon it was full of people. When Jarir went in, he found no vacant spot and therefore sat outside. The Prophet observing Jarir took a piece of his clothing, rolled it up and threw it, indicating him to spread it underneath him. Jarir says he caught hold of the clothing, put it on his face and kissed it.

The above actions of the Prophet provide us the finest example of a leader unaffected by power and position whereas when we look at the lives of despots and other petty potentates, we see them sporting arrogant airs, trying to humiliate people, and always keeping a distance from the oppressed and the downtrodden.

It will not be out of context here to cite another example from the Prophet's life. Once a man came to the Messenger of Allah but on entering his presence, started trembling with fear. Prophet Muhammad (S) seeing the visitor terribly shaken and nervous, smiled and comforted him with utmost tenderness, saying: "Be at ease. I am no king but the son of a Qurayshite woman who used to eat dried meat"

How wonderfully he comforts a frightened Arab nomad, who accustomed to the days of Jahiliyah was scared to death on entering the Prophet's presence. This is one of the many instances which prove that he is the Mercy for the human race and not one of those power-drunk despots who kill and terrorise Allah's creatures.

Such supreme examples of kindness and generosity helped build a strong and coherent society and spread love and affection among the believers. Therefore it is obligatory for Muslims to learn a lesson from these admirable manners and tread the brilliant path blazed by Prophet Muhammad (S). All Muslims should endeavour to acquire these lofty morals; especially those invested with power and authority, so that peace, love and harmony may prevail all around. If it is a real Islamic society, it will naturally be just and free, where everyone can defend their right and even advise those in authority if they happen to err.

Courage and Valour

Prophet Muhammad (S) was second to none in Allah's creation, beginning from Adam till eternity. He was an excellent exemplar of the noblest manners and merits including courage and bravery. His valour was a byword among his contemporaries, for he stood up gallantly against the heaviest odds, endured pain and injuries and victoriously fought, overcame and showed mercy to the stone-hearted infidels of ignorant Arabia. Magnanimity is the finest form of valour and the Prophet excelled in this particular field, forgiving enemies and freeing multitudes from injustice, oppression, servitude and ignorance.

Following are some of the glimpses of his many gallant deeds:

He endured pain and sufferings for thirteen long years in Makkah, inviting people to Islam, without once being over-awed by the sheer force

and numbers of arrogant Jahiliyah. And all these single-handedly without any group or supporters except his few weak but devoted followers.

After migrating to Madina he organised an army to defend against the idolaters and he himself led the faithful in many a battle against overwhelming odds, always coming out victorious. The Battles of Badr, Khandaq, Uhud, Khaibar, Hunayn and the conquest of Makkah were some of the epoch-making events.

His faithful and equally brave cousin Imam Ali (a), who was the standard bearer in several decisive battles and who while defending Islam and the Prophet, sent many obstinate bullies of ignorant Arabia to the eternal fire, describes the Messenger's bravery as follows:

“You have beheld me on the day of Badr, all of us took refuge with the Prophet (S), and he was the nearest one to the enemy ranks. He was on that day, the bravest of us all.”

Anas bin Malik, a companion, describes the Prophet as the bravest and the most generous of all men. Anas citing an example says that one night Muslims heard loud noises coming from outside the town. Thinking it to be enemy forces they rushed out to the place from where the noises were coming but to their surprise found the Prophet of Islam at the spot well ahead of them. The incident indicates Prophet Muhammad's (S) valour and courage; how he sallied forth in the dark night alone to trace the source of those strange sounds, without once being scared of the enemy or whatever that lurked around.

A Perfect Family-Man

Prophet Muhammad (S) is the supreme example of a family man. He was a loving husband, an affectionate father and a doting grandfather. As long as the faithful Khadija was alive, he never took another wife. Even later on in life, when he had married several women, he used to cherish the loving memory of the faithful Khadija.

His marriages were not for pleasure, but were a humanitarian means to further the cause of Islam, as is evident from the women he married. In the case of Sawda, Umm Salama and Zainab bint Khuzaima, it was to take care of poor and helpless widows well in their middle-ages, while the marriage to Juwairiyah was to grant her freedom from captivity.

Still others such as those to Umm Habiba, Safiya, A'isha, Hafsa and Maimoona were meant for uniting some prominent Arab tribes, who were often at loggerheads with each other, and also to safeguard the internal political status of the new-found Islamic State. And the marriage to Zainab bint Jahsh was for the sake of enacting a new law, because she was the divorcee of his adopted son Zaid bin Hareth.

As the Holy Qur'an testifies, the Prophet married her in order to put an end to the then prevalent belief that adopted sons were like real sons and that wives or widows of adopted sons were like daughter-in-laws. In short, the philosophy behind his marriages was entirely revolutionary and ushered in positive changes in ignorant Arabia.

He was an affectionate father and his only surviving child, daughter Fatimah (a), was dearer to him than life. His famous Hadith: “Fatimah is a part of me, and whoever annoys her (in fact) annoys me,”² stands as a firm

testimony to this fact. History is a witness that he used to stand up to greet his daughter. Many prominent and wealthy Arabs had approached him for Fatimah's hand, but he politely refused them, and according to divine commandment married her to his faithful cousin, Ali (a).

Hence Fatimah and Ali were the parents of his two grandsons Hasan and Husayn; through whom the continuity of the Prophet's noble progeny has been ensured. Hasan and Husain were the apple of his eyes and he affectionately doted on them. They used to play with him and accompany him to the mosque. Once when the two grandsons were seated on his shoulders, a companion remarked: "What an excellent mount." to which the Prophet retorted: "What excellent riders too."³

Thus, Prophet Muhammad's (S) behaviour with his illustrious Ahlul Bayt (household) is a lesson for us. It was not blind love of a doting father or grandfather as some may misinterpret but was something divinely ordained as is clear from several verses of the Holy Qur'an. Therefore, it is obligatory for all Muslims to love and respect his chosen family, and adhere to their radiant path, which is the only way to save the Ummah from pitfalls.

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.

Notes

1. Refer to our booklet 'Do not Waste Time', for the importance of time in Islam.
2. Refer to: Sahih Bukhari: Fadha'il as-Sahaba; vol. 5. Sahih Muslim: Fadha'il as-Sahaba. Sunan Abu Daud: Kitab-an-Nikah.
3. Refer to Mustadrak as-Sahihayn, Dhakha'ir al-Uqba etc.

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