

A Brief Biography of Prophet Muhammad

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We have sent thee not except as a mercy to all the Worlds [The Holy Qur'an, The Prophets (21): 107]

We have sent thee not except as a giver of glad-tidings and a warner to all the peoples [The Holy Qur'an, Sheba (34): 28]

The Prophet Muhammad was the son of Abdullah, who was the son of Abdul-Muttalib, who was the son of Hashim; whose ancestry reaches the Prophet Ismael son of the Prophet Abraham, peace be upon them.

Muhammad was born in the city of Mecca , in Arabia , on a Friday, the 17th day of the lunar month of Rabi'-I, in the year 570CE into a noble family whose fathers and ancestors were amongst the chiefs of the Quraysh tribe, and the Bani-Hashim clan.

His Prophetic mission began in the year 610CE on the 27th day of the month of Rajab, when he first received the divine revelation. Then the Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet progressively according to the circumstances of the time over a period of 23 years.

The Prophet Muhammad was killed by poisoning on the 28th day of the month of Safar in the 11th year of the Hijrah^[1], 630CE.

His Childhood

Muhammad's father Abdullah son of Abdul-Muttalib was the best and most pious among the sons of Abdul-Muttalib and his most beloved. Abdullah died while Muhammad was still in his mother's womb. All that he left behind were five camels and a servant girl named Barakah, also known as Omm Ayman, who was Muhammad's nanny. Abdullah was a true believer and a monotheist.

After Abdullah's death, Muhammad's grandfather, Abdul-Muttalib, became his guardian. Abdul-Muttalib was one of the chieftains of the tribe of Quraysh, and a believer in Allah [in the way of Prophet Abraham], as was Abu Talib, a brother of Abdullah. Abdul-Muttalib always respected and honoured treaties and adopted the finest of morals. He loved the poor and helped pilgrims. He would even feed the wild beasts and the birds of the mountaintops. He would feed people in times of famine and would restrain wrongdoers.

Muhammad's mother was Aamenah daughter of Wahab son of Abd Manaf son of Kilab. She was also a believer in Allah.

When Muhammad was born his mother said: 'As soon as I put my child on the ground he leaned with his hands on the ground, raised his head to the skies and looked at the horizons all the while speaking in phrases of monotheism. Then a voice called out to me saying: 'The best of mankind has been born so name him Muhammad.'

Then Aamenah sent for Abdul-Muttalib. He came to her and she said: 'A wondrous boy has been born to you.' Then she brought baby Muhammad to him. Abdul-Muttalib looked at him then took him and entered the Ka'bah[2] and prayed to Allah. Then he left the Ka'bah and returned him to his mother and named him Muhammad.

Muhammad was not yet seven years old when his mother died. After his mother's death, his grandfather Abdul-Muttalib assumed guardianship of him. Because of his knowledge of the status of the child and his faith in him he treated Muhammad with more care and attention than his other children. A group of the Medlaj Clan came to Mecca and when they saw Muhammad they said to his grandfather: 'Take good care of him for we have never seen another of his station.'

Abdul-Muttalib said to Abu Talib in his will to heed what they say and take care of him. Muhammad was eight when his grandfather died, and he was taken into the care of his uncle Abu Talib.

Abu Talib, chief of the Bani-Hashim clan within the Quraysh[3], then became the guardian of Muhammad from his eighth year. Abu Talib went on to protect and serve the Messenger of Allah, defending him and honouring him throughout the testing times of his Prophethood, until the last breath of his life.

His Adulthood

Muhammad grew up to become a fine young man. He became known for his excellent manners, and because of the honesty in his conduct and dealings he was referred to as al-Saadiq (The Truthful One) and al-Amin (The Trustworthy One).

As a youngster Muhammad used to accompany his uncle on his business trips to Syria . When the Messenger of Allah reached the age of twelve he journeyed with his uncle Abu Talib as far as Busra. There he was seen by a Christian monk named Georges who recognised him by his description. He took his hand and said: 'This is the chief of the Worlds, God will send him as a mercy to the Worlds.' Abu Talib said: 'How do you know this?' He said: 'We find mention of him in our books.' He asked Abu Talib to take him back fearing for his safety.

As an adult, Muhammad worked as a trader between the cities of Mecca and Damascus , and earned a great reputation in the process. Having heard of the reputation of Muhammad, Lady

Khadijah, one of the noblest of the Quraysh, on one occasion commissioned him to take charge of some of her trading business between the two cities. Lady Khadijah sent one of her servants, Maysarah, along with him to keep an eye on him and report back to her. Having seen his performance in the business, and the returns he had produced as well as his honesty, Lady Khadijah put Muhammad in charge of her business. Although she had many proposals of marriage from various dignitaries of the Quraysh, Lady Khadijah declined them all. It is reported that it was Lady Khadijah who, albeit indirectly and discreetly, made the marriage proposal to Muhammad. Some historians have reported that when they married in 595CE they were both 25.

Lady Khadijah gave birth to three children. All of the Prophet's children were from Khadijah except Ibrahim who was from Mary the Copt, who was born in Medina and lived for a year and ten months. The male children who were all born in Mecca were; al-Qasim which is where Muhammad's epithet (Abul-Qasim; meaning Qasim's father) comes from, and Abdullah. The boys all died young during the lifetime of the Prophet. His only daughter was Fatimah, who married Imam Ali son of Abu Talib, and bore him Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn, Zaynab and Omm Kolthum, and another son who was named Mohassen by the Prophet before his birth. Fatimah was the only one of the siblings to survive the Messenger of Allah. The Prophet Muhammad used to say Hasan and Husayn are two Imams (leaders) whether they rise up (against tyranny) or not.

Ali was born to Abu Talib and his wife Fatimah bint Assad in 600CE. Ali's birth was associated with a particularly significant phenomenon. When Fatimah bint Assad was in labour she came to the Ka'bah pleading to God for help with her labour. It is reported by various narrators and recorded by many chroniclers that as she was engaged in her prayers by the southern wall of the Ka'bah, the wall split open and she entered the House, whereby the wall returned to its normal state. Having observed this extraordinary phenomenon, people who were present tried to follow her into the House through the opening but did not succeed. They then tried to go inside the House through its door but could not unlock the door. Reports indicate that she was inside the House for three days, and when she left the House with her newborn she did so in the same manner as she entered the House.

The Prophet Muhammad took particular interest in baby Ali, and he played a major role in Ali's upbringing and education. Ali would be the most ardent supporter of the Prophet throughout the difficult years of the Prophet Muhammad's mission to convey the divine message and the teachings of Islam to the masses.

Start of His Mission

The Prophet Muhammad used to spend much time in prayer and worship of the one God. This he used to do in a cave, known as Hira, in the al-Noor mountain near the city of Mecca . In 610CE, at the age of forty, Muhammad received the first of the divine revelations when he was engaged in devotion and prayer inside the cave of Hira :

In the name of Allah the Merciful, the Compassionate;

Read in the name of thy Lord who created,

Created man from a clot,

Read and thy lord is the most noble,

Who taught by pen,

Taught man what he knew not . . . [4]

The Prophet Muhammad conveyed the news and the Message to Ali and Lady Khadijah. Ali and Lady Khadijah both embraced the new revelation instantly and without any hesitation. Khadijah was thus the first woman to believe in the Messenger of Allah and the first woman to pray with him. She supported him wholeheartedly and spent all her wealth in the way of Allah. She was the first woman that the Prophet married and he married no other during her lifetime. She was immensely loyal to the Prophet. The Angel Gabriel ordered him to convey a special greeting and a blessing from God as well as ordering that he give the land of Fadak to Fatimah as an appreciation for what her mother had spent in the way of Allah.

The Prophet Muhammad begins to invite individuals to the new revelation but in secret. There were very few supporters and believers. When the Prophet used to perform a congregational prayer, those who were with him were Lady Khadijah and Ali. This low-key approach continued for three years.

Afterwards, on instructions from the Almighty, the Prophet's invitation to Islam started to become more and more public. The Almighty instructs His messenger to begin with his clan, And warn your nearest kinsmen[5]. For this purpose the Prophet Muhammad prepared a banquet and invited the elders and chiefs of the Bani-Hashim, who totalled forty. After they were served with a good feast, the Prophet invited them to Islam, called upon them to support him in his mission, and promised them that whoever does so would be appointed as his successor, but none took up the offer dismissing the Prophet and his mission as nonsense, with the sole exception of Ali. Ridiculing the whole thing, they turned to Abu Talib saying, "Your son will be your commander, you should obey him!" Nevertheless the mission continues unabated albeit with very few supporters.

Resonance of His Call

The followers of the new religion start to grow, and so does the concern of the Quraysh towards them. The elders of Quraysh send Abu Talib, the trusted uncle of the Prophet to him, asking him to stop his call for this new religion, and in return they would give him whatever he would want. "If you want wealth, we will give you as much as you want, if you want women we will marry you the most beautiful women of Arabia, and if you want position and status we will make you the owner-king over us." When Abu Talib conveys the message of the elders of Quraysh to his nephew-prophet, the Messenger of Allah replies, "I swear by the Almighty that if they put the Sun in my right hand and the Moon in my left on condition that I desist from this affair I would not leave it until Allah causes it to prevail or I die in the process." Then the Messenger of Allah began to weep and rose and made to leave, but Abu Talib called him and said: 'Come back my nephew. Say what you like my nephew, for by Allah I will never hand you over to them ever.'

The Quraysh realised that it is dealing with a true and determined prophet. From then on, open hostility towards this new religion, its prophet, and its followers started to increase. Lady Khadijah dedicates all her wealth and resources for the cause of her prophet-husband's mission. The extent of this hostility reaches blatant persecution of the followers of the new religion and its prophet.

'Neutralise the Messenger and his Message'

Then the Quraysh plotted amongst themselves about the companions of the Messenger of Allah who had entered Islam with him from amongst the tribes. Each tribe pounced upon any of its own who were Muslims by tormenting them and forcing them from their religion. Abu Talib protected the Messenger of Allah, and seeing what the Quraysh were doing to the sons of Hashim and Abdul-Muttalib, he called for them to protect the Messenger of Allah just as he was protecting him. So they gathered with him and stood up with him, except for Abu Talib's brother Abu Lahab and his sons who had assisted the Quraysh against the Prophet. Then the Quraysh openly decided to kill the Messenger of Allah. When this news reached Abu Talib he gathered the sons of Hashim and Abdul-Muttalib and took the Messenger of Allah to his quarter and protected him from those who sought to kill him.

The Quraysh imposes total and complete embargo against the Prophet and his followers in all its forms; social, economic, political, etc. No citizen of Mecca is allowed to buy from or sell to them, no one is allowed to marry anyone of them, or even befriend or socialise with them, not even help them. Nor should a peace settlement be accepted from them ever, nor should they

be shown mercy until they hand over the Messenger of Allah to be killed. The Quraysh agreed to draw up a document to this effect, and one of them wrote this document in his own hand, which subsequently was afflicted by paralysis, and then they hung the document inside the Ka'bah.

The Prophet and many of his followers, and members of the Hashim clan withdrew to Abu Talib and entered the Abu Talib Quarter known as She'b Abu Talib, which had become their virtual open-top prison. Their condition deteriorated as time went by, and although some friends of sympathisers managed to smuggle in some help to the Muslims, but this was few and far between. There they remained in the quarter for three years until they were exhausted. The voices of the children could be heard from the quarter crying of hunger. They also increased the pressure on those who had entered Islam but had not entered the quarter. The trials became grave and the Muslims were severely shaken. It is reported that Ali son of Abu Talib used to secretly leave the quarter in disguise and fetch foodstuff to the besieged, carrying it on his back, into the quarter.

On one of the divine revelations made to him, the Messenger of Allah informed his uncle Abu Talib that Allah had sent woodworms to their document that had eaten every word except the name of Allah. Having heard this Abu Talib said: 'No by the falling stars, you have not lied to me.'

Abu Talib set out with a group of the clan of Abdul-Muttalib until he reached the vicinity of the Ka'bah, which was full of the people of Quraysh. He spoke and said to them: 'Something has occurred which may be a cause for a settlement between you and us so bring out your document.'

They said: 'The time has come for you to accept and recant. Only one man has caused the split between us and you, and you have put your people in jeopardy because of him.'

Abu Talib said: 'I propose a matter for you in which there is fairness. My nephew has told me and he has not lied to me, that Allah distances Himself from this document and has erased all your treachery and enmity and all that remains written is His name. If it is as he has said then by Allah, we will never hand him over to you until the last of us dies. If what he has said is false then we will hand him over to you so that you may kill him or spare him as you wish.'

They said: 'We agree.' Then they opened the document and found it as they had been told but some of them clung to their falsehood and obstinacy and said: 'This is sorcery from your companion.'

Then some of those who had made the pact spoke and tore up the document.

Facing the Torments

The clan of Hashim then felt safe enough to emerge from their quarter and once more mingle with the people. This was in the tenth year of the noble prophethood, circa 620CE. It was less than six months after the end of this trial when Abu Talib passed away. Then the Prophet's wife Lady Khadijah also died only three days after Abu Talib according to some accounts. The Messenger of Allah was very saddened and named this year the 'Year of Sorrow'.

The loss of Abu Talib and Lady Khadijah dealt a severe blow to the Prophet at a time when he needed these two most. The death of Abu Talib cleared the last hurdle for the Quraysh, and if the presence of Abu Talib imposed certain limits and drew some red lines for the Quraysh that they could not cross, now his death leaves them free to do what was the unthinkable to the Prophet while Abu Talib was alive.

With the death of Abu Talib, the trials meted out by his tribe to the Messenger of Allah grew more naked and audacious.

When the Prophet was praying by the Ka'bah, one of the idolaters approached and violently tried to strangle him.

The Quraysh encouraged the foolish ones to throw dirt on the Prophet's face and head. They used to throw filth and blood and thorns at his door. Ommayah ibn Khalaf used to insult the Prophet until his face became red but still the Prophet would not say anything to him.

When a fool threw the dirt in the face of the Messenger of Allah, he entered his house with the dirt still on his head. Fatimah began to clean the dirt from his head and crying and the Messenger of Allah saying: 'Do not cry my daughter, for Allah will protect your father.'

He also said: 'The Quraysh could not harm me until Abu Talib died.'

It is related from Khabab who said: 'I approached the Prophet when he was reclining in the shade of the Ka'bah. This when we had received some harm from the Polytheists. I said to him: 'O Messenger of Allah, will you not invoke Allah?' He sat up red of face and said: 'Among those who came before you there were those whose skins would be scraped off with combs of iron down to the bone and this did not divert them from their religion. Allah will complete this matter until a rider may travel from San'a to Hadramaut with nothing to fear but the wolf getting to his sheep.'

Migration of the Messenger of Allah

The Quraysh and their allies make the decision that Muhammad must be physically eliminated in order to finish with him and his religion once and for all. But whoever does this would have

to deal with the consequences and face the wrath of the respectable Bani-Hashim clan. In order to divide the guilt between as many clans and tribes as possible, forty clans are made to be involved in the task. The best warrior from each clan is chosen for the task. They are instructed to storm the house of Muhammad and every single one of them is to ensure to strike Muhammad with his sword at least once. This is so that if Bani-Hashim, Muhammad's clan, were to seek revenge for his blood, they would be confronted with forty clans, and thus making it impossible for them to seek any retribution.

The Almighty instructs the Prophet Muhammad to leave for the city of Yathreb, which later became known as Medinat al-Rasul or the City of the Messenger, or Medina for short. In 622CE, after some thirteen years of calling the people to Islam, the Messenger of Allah left Mecca for Medina. The Prophet Muhammad asked Ali son of Abu Talib to stay behind to deal with a number of issues, and Ali volunteered to sleep in the Prophet's bed acting as a decoy. The Messenger of Allah manages to slip through those who were surrounding his house just before they stormed it. When they stormed the house to kill him they found Ali instead in the Prophet's bed with no sign of their target.

On his way out of Mecca, Abu Bakr came across the Prophet as he was leaving the city, and asked the Prophet where he was going at that time. The Prophet Muhammad could not tell him other than the truth, and thereafter the Messenger of Allah asked him to join him on his migration to Medina, in order to keep the news of this mission secret until he is out of danger. With first daylight, the forty brave warriors set off in pursuit of the Prophet by following his track. They used an expert guide to help them track him, and the guide led the warriors to the cave of Thawr, some five miles outside Mecca, where the Prophet Muhammad and his companion were actually inside, but the pursuers did not enter the cave. It is reported that the pursuers did not enter the cave since by the time they had arrived, through divine intervention, a spider had spun its web across the opening of the cave, and a pigeon had placed its nest near there, after the two had entered the cave. The chasers did not attempt to enter the cave on the presumption that had anyone entered the cave, the spider web and the pigeon nest would have been disturbed.

Having failed to capture the Prophet, the Quraysh announced a reward of 100 camels for anyone capturing him or giving information leading to his capture. The Prophet Muhammad left Mecca on the eve of the first day of the lunar month of Rabi'-I, and arrived at the outskirts of Medina, some 400 km north of the city of Mecca, on Monday the 12th day of the same month.

Another task that Ali ibn Abu Talib had to do when the Prophet had left Mecca was to return

any goods and valuables that people had given to the Prophet for safekeeping. Many of those who were the Prophet opponents also used to give their valuables to the Prophet for safekeeping every time they went on a long journey and such like. This is because the Prophet was recognised for his trustworthiness even towards his foes; they could not trust their best friends for safekeeping of their valuables, but they trusted Muhammad al-Amin (the trustworthy one). Ali returned all the goods and valuables that were given to the Prophet for safekeeping, including those of the Prophet's foes.

When Ali had returned all the goods he was given by the Prophet Muhammad to their rightful owners, he went to the roof of the Ka'bah and yelled at the top of his voice, "if anyone has any claim against Muhammad, or had entrusted him with anything that he has not got back yet, then they should come forward." It is reported that nobody did.

Having discharged all his tasks in Mecca, Ali set off for Yathreb together with the 'Fatimahs', namely: his mother Fatimah bint Assad, Fatimah the daughter of the Prophet, Fatimah the daughter of Zubair ibn Abdul-Muttalib, and Fatimah daughter of Hamzah.

Messenger of Allah Arrives at Medina

When the news of the Messenger's exodus from Mecca to Medina reached the Muslims in Medina, they began to go every morning to the lava fields and wait there until the heat of noon drove them back. Many days they waited until one day when they had returned to their houses it so happened that a Jewish man was looking out from his fortress when he saw the Prophet shimmering in the haze. No sooner had he sighted him than he hailed the Muslims at the top of his voice saying: 'O Muslims, here is your Master whom you await!'

The Muslims immediately rushed to meet the Messenger of Allah on the crest of the lava fields. He then kept going until they had reached Qubaa where he stopped with the clan of Amr ibn Awf. The Muslims hailed 'Allahu Akbar' (God is Greatest) with joy at his arrival. The Prophet stopped at Qubaa for three days awaiting the arrival of Ali. He did not want to enter the Medina without Ali.

The Prophet remained with Ali with the clan of Amr ibn Awf for a day or two. During his stay in Qubaa he established the mosque of Qubaa, and thus it was the first ever established in Muslim era.

And on the Friday, the Prophet entered the Qubaa mosque and led the Muslims in the Friday prayers and gave a sermon. And this was the first Friday sermon ever given. The Prophet prayed in the direction of Jerusalem and one hundred men prayed behind him. After performing the prayers, the Prophet mounted his camel, along with Ali who never left his side,

and the rest of Muslims and headed towards Medina.

Once in Medina, Muslim families invited the Messenger of Allah to stay with them. In order not to turn down the request of any one of them, the Prophet decided that he would stay with the family that his she-camel would stop by their house. He said: 'Let her be for she is being ordered.' The camel kept on walking until she reached the door of the house of Abu Ayyub, who happened to be amongst the poorest in Medina. Then Abu Ayyub hurried to the Prophet's baggage and took it into his house.

Abu Ayyub's mother, who was blind, said: 'O if only I had sight so that I could see my master the Messenger of Allah!' The Prophet Muhammad then called to Allah for her and her eyes opened. This was the first of his miracles in Medina.

It is said that when the Messenger of Allah entered Medina, it was the most joyous occasion ever witnessed by the people. One eyewitness said: 'I saw the day when he entered Medina and I have never seen a brighter or better day than that day. And I saw the day he died and I have never seen a worse or darker day than the day on which he died.'

First Muslim Community

With a significant number of those who embraced Islam migrating from Mecca to Medina, as well as the majority of the native Medinans, it could be said that the first Muslim community began to take shape in the city of Medina, under the guidance of the Prophet. Through his teachings, the Messenger of Allah brought about harmony and peace between the different rivalries and warring groups and tribes of the city and its surroundings. Whereas prior to his arrival, greed, enmity and wars prevailed between the inhabitants, in a short space of time the Prophet managed to sow the seeds of a peaceful cohesive order to the extent that they shared everything they had amongst themselves and with the Muslim migrants from Mecca despite their poverty. With the city of Medina being some 400 km north of Mecca, some of the Muslims considered it to be a reasonably safe distance from the Quraysh who were mostly in Mecca.

However, the Quraysh and their allies did not relent, and they forced the Muslims of Medina into a number of battles and skirmishes. These were usually unequal, especially at the early days, with the Quraysh and their allies being superior in number and armour. For example at the battle of Badr, which was one of the early clashes between the two sides, the Muslims combatants were 313 men, who had seventy camels and two horses, while their opponents were about one thousand, had seven hundred camels and one hundred horses.

Peace between the two sides was eventually brought about through the peace treaty of

Hodaybiyah – signed in the eleventh month of the sixth year after Hijrah – which was highly biased in favour of the Quraysh and their allies, to the extent that some of the companions of the Prophet protested to him for agreeing and signing a treaty that was 'unfair and unacceptable'. However, subsequent events after the Hodaybiyah were pointedly in the interest of the Muslims, which in turn exonerated the Prophet's judgement and decision, and proved his wisdom and farsightedness.

Mecca Liberated

Less than two years after the treaty of Hodaybiyah, Quraysh grew impatient with the environment of peace and security that reigned in the land. Muslim losses in the battle of Mu'tah in north Arabia – in today's Jordan – encouraged the Quraysh to stir up unrest in the land and break the treaty that they had signed with the Messenger of Allah at Hodaybiyah. They began to distribute weapons to their allies and urged them to attack the allies of the Muslims at night, in breach of the peace treaty they had with the Muslims. The Messenger of Allah left Medina on a Friday in the month of Ramadan in the eighth year of the Hijrah. He took with him all the Muslim troops which numbered ten thousand and nearly four hundred horsemen.

Then the Messenger of Allah proceeded until he arrived at Marr al-Dhahran, the heights of Mecca, in the evening. He ordered his companions to light more than ten thousand fires. News of his progress had been kept hidden from the Quraysh who were concerned and feared that he might attack them.

It is reported that Abu Sufyan, the Prophet's archenemy, was saying: 'I have never seen such fires as last night nor such a camp.' He said: 'What is the news and what are all these fires?' The narrator responded to him: 'The news is that the Messenger of Allah has arrived here. He has come with a force you cannot resist; with ten thousand of the Muslims.'

Abu Sufyan said: 'What is to be done?'

I said: 'By Allah, if he defeats you he will surely strike your head off so ride this donkey with me so that I can take you to the Messenger of Allah and I will ask him for an amnesty for you.' So he rode behind me.

It is related that Ali ibn Abu Talib said to Abu Sufyan ibn al-Harith: 'Go to the Messenger of Allah and say to him what Joseph's brothers said to Joseph: By Allah, Allah has preferred you over us and we have certainly been sinful [6] Then the Messenger of Allah said in answer to him and seeking to best him in speech: He said: Let there be no reproach upon you this day. Allah will forgive you and he is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy [7].

The banner of the Muslims was with Sa'ad ibn 'Ibadah and when he passed by Abu Sufyan he said to him: 'Today is the day of slaughter, today the women will be captured'. Abu Sufyan heard him and kept it to himself until the Messenger of Allah passed by him when he said: 'Do you know what Sa'ad ibn 'Ibadah has said?'

The Messenger of Allah said: 'What he has said is of no consequence.' Then he sent someone to Sa'ad and took the banner from him and passed it to Ali and said: 'Enter with kindness.' Ali took the banner and began to proclaim: 'Today is the day of mercy, today honour will be protected.'

Then the Messenger of Allah turned to Abu Sufyan and said to him: 'O Abu Sufyan, proceed to Mecca and let them know of the sanctuary.'

When the Messenger of Allah entered Mecca, a tent was pitched for him by the grave of his uncle Abu Talib. He refused to enter his house or the houses of his companions in Mecca that had been confiscated by the Polytheists.

Then the Messenger of Allah, after having rested a little in his tent, bathed and mounted his camel and set out for the sacred mosque. The Muslims were before him and behind him and all around him and they were repeating along with the Messenger of Allah the words of Allah Almighty: The truth has come and falsehood has perished, indeed falsehood is (by nature) perishing[8].

Mecca resounded with the sound of their voices until he entered the sacred mosque and approached the black stone at the corner of the Ka'bah, and kissed it. Then he circled the House upon his camel and with a bow in his hand. Around the House there were some three-hundred and sixty idols and he began to stab at them with his bow saying: The truth has come and falsehood has perished, indeed falsehood is perishing and The truth has come and falsehood will not revive again and will not return[9] while the idols fell upon their faces. Then he raised Ali upon his shoulders so that he could bring down the rest of the idols which were upon the Ka'bah.

And thus a whole era of idol worshipping in Arabia was brought to an irreversible end, and Mecca was liberated. The conquest of the Capital City of the idolaters and the liberation of the holy city of Mecca at the hands of Prophet Muhammad took place without bloodshed. But the Prophet never again took his birth city, Mecca, as his abode. The Prophet only stayed in the city for fifteen days to manage its affairs. When he left the city of Mecca for Medina, he appointed Etab ibn Osayd, 21 years of age, as the city's governor.

From early days, the Prophet gradually established an Islamic system of governance and a way of life. In its first years, the nascent Muslim community in Medina had to contend with a number of attacks and onslaughts by the Quraysh and their allies. The Prophet used every opportunity to teach the Muslims the right code of conduct for a Muslim in times of war and peace; from personal and ethical qualities they must aspire to, to social, political and fiscal policies.

On the political front, the Prophet enjoined the community to avoid wars and violence as far as possible, and it should only be the absolute last resort, when all other avenues have been exhausted. The Prophet Muhammad went out of his way to avoid conflict and violence, and it is recorded that in the ten years that the Prophet was in Medina and despite the many battles that the Muslims were drawn into, a total of some 800 were killed on both sides throughout the period. The Prophet instructed his army against destroying houses or pillaging or cutting down fruiting trees. He ordered them not to draw their swords except in dire need. He used to rebuke some of his generals and physically put right their mistakes.

Another social-political principle instilled by the Prophet Muhammad was that "Land belongs to Allah and whoever develops it"[10]. This had a very significant impact on the development of the country both socially and politically, not to mention the economic progress and revival it entailed.

Another socio-economic policy was established by the Prophet's declaration "I am responsible for them"[11]. He who dies and leaves family who do not have enough to make ends meet, then the Prophet would be responsible for them and they should go to him. On the other hand, "he who dies and leaves a wealth behind, it is for his heirs"[12]. All that wealth is for the family he leaves behind, i.e. no inheritance tax in Islam. But this policy did not stop there, and it went further when the Prophet announced that if a person dies and leaves a debt behind, then he [Muhammad, and subsequently the leader of the Islamic state in general] is responsible for paying it[13].

The Prophetic legislation also addressed the interest of the non-Muslims living under the Islamic state, referred to as dhimmi; literally means "the responsibility of" [the Islamic state]:

"He who hurts a dhimmi, then indeed he has hurt me"[14].

Such laws, and the peaceful liberation of Mecca, encouraged many to come and live under the Islamic State, for there was at least economic and security guarantees for them and their families, present and future. People started to embrace Islam as a way of life en masse. Thus came the divine revelation:

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful,

When came Allah's succour and the conquest,
And thou saw the peoples entering into the religion of Allah in troops -
So glorify the praise of thy Lord and seek His forgiveness, indeed He is relenting.[15]

The Two Momentous Things

In the holy city of Medina, Messenger of Allah ensured that he addresses the two most vital issues during his lifetime, for these should be the sanctuary, guide and leader for the Muslims after his departure from this life. These were the compilation of the Holy Qur'an as a bound copy, and the appointment of his successors to lead the nation after him, both of which he did on direct instructions from the Almighty.

The Holy Qur'an

The Prophet ensured arrangements be made to compile a 'bound' copy of the Holy Qur'an – known at the time of the holy Prophet, and also today, as the mushaf. The Messenger of Allah commissioned Ali son of Abu-Talib to gather and compile the entire Qur'an, which Imam Ali did during the lifetime of the holy Prophet and under his supervision[16]. The Messenger of Allah validated and authenticated the end result – the mushaf – even verifying the order and position of the individual verses within a given chapter or surah, as instructed by the Almighty. According to traditions, when archangel Gabriel used to reveal a particular ayah or verse to the Prophet, the former would also indicate its position within the surah or chapter of the Qur'an and the surah it belonged to.[17]

Reports state that during the lifetime of the Prophet, when the entire text of the Holy Qur'an was committed to writing and it had been compiled as mushaf, people used to come to the mosque of the Prophet, where the compiled Qur'an – the mushaf – was kept by the pulpit, to make their copies of the Holy Scripture.[18]

It is sometimes stated, through a minor misunderstanding, that the Holy Qur'an was first compiled during the reign of the third ruler Othman ibn Affaan, some twenty years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. The root of this misunderstanding stems from the incorrect assumption of the meaning of the Arabic word jamc that means 'to collect', but instead it is taken to mean 'to compile'. What was in fact commissioned at that time was to collect the incomplete documents holding some verses or chapters of the Holy Qur'an and to complete them as copies of the entire Qur'an. Any compilation that took place during this time was to reproduce the authentic copy of the Holy Qur'an as per the version compiled by Imam Ali during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad and under his supervision.

The Ahl al-Bayt

The other fundamental and vital task that the Prophet had to secure during his lifetime was to address the question of his successorship. On instructions from the Almighty, the Messenger of Allah named and appointed the successors who must lead the Muslim community after him according to the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the Messenger of Allah. The Prophet Muhammad used numerous occasions to instruct the people to follow and adhere to his twelve appointed successors, 'Caliphs' or 'Imams', the first of whom was Imam Ali son of Abu Talib, and the twelfth is the living Imam Mahdi, who is hidden from public view^[19] until such a time when the Almighty instructs him to reappear in public "to lead the nations of this world from tyranny and oppression to tranquillity and bliss". [The Prophet Muhammad, his daughter Fatimah, his cousin and son-in-law Imam Ali and the eleven impeccable Imams descendents of Ali and Fatimah form Ahl al-Bayt as referred to in the holy Qur'an 33:33.]

In 630CE, seventy days before his death, and just after performing the farewell Hajj pilgrimage, on instructions from the Almighty, at the location of Ghadir Khum, the Prophet appointed Ali as his successor and ordered the Muslims who were present there to pay Ali homage of allegiance as The Commander of the Faithful, and their leader after the Prophet. The

revelation from the Almighty on this day in this particular respect was:
O Messenger! Convey that that has been revealed to thee from thy Lord, and if thee do not, then thee would have not conveyed His Message; and Allah will protect thee from the people.

Surely Allah guides not the disbelieving people.^[20]

After the revelation of the above instruction, the Messenger of Allah declared:
"Whoever I am his master and leader, then Ali is his master and leader too. O Lord support whoever supports Ali, and oppose whoever opposes him."^[21]

"Ali is my caliph and successor upon ye after me."^[22]

Some chroniclers put the number of those present at Ghadir Khum who gave the homage of allegiance to Imam Ali as the Commander of the Faithful and the successor of the Prophet Muhammad at up to 120,000 men and women.

To confirm and conclude this momentous event, the Almighty then revealed:
Today I have perfected your religion for ye, completed My favour upon ye and have sanctioned Islam for ye as a religion.^[23]

In order to reveal the station of his successors present and future, the Prophet frequently used to refer the Muslims to the Ahl al-Bayt – at the time notably Ali – for they were the most knowledgeable about the teachings of the Qur'an and the Prophet himself. To clarify any possible doubt about his immediate successor, in the famous tradition of "City of Knowledge",

the final Messenger of Allah states:

"I am the City of Knowledge and Ali is its Gate, so whosoever wishes to access this City, then let him do so through its Gate."^[24]

According to many Prophetic teachings and traditions the Holy Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt are considered as the two inseparable and complementary components of the divine message.

Towards the end of his life, the Messenger of Allah often used to say: "I leave with ye the two momentous things – the book of Allah and my kin the people of my Ahl al-Bayt. As long as ye adhere to them both ye will never go astray after me."^[25]

However, after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, the people did not honour their pledge of allegiance that they had given at the time of the Prophet to the successor he appointed on instructions from the Almighty.

After several failed attempts on his life, and by various means, the culprits eventually succeeded in assassinating the Prophet Muhammad – this time through poisoning. The final Messenger of Allah to humanity died on the 28th day of the lunar month of Safar in the 11th year of the Hijrah, circa 630CE.

The Prophet Muhammad brought about a nation and a civilisation that in a relatively very short space of time won the prime position amongst all other nations. The Muslims attained such achievement so long as they adhered to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. Today although the Muslims are numerous, they do not occupy the eminent station amongst the nations anymore, for they did not adhere to "the two momentous things" that the Prophet Muhammad left behind for them. The Muslim nation may still be a candidate to lead mankind to bliss and prosperity if they ensure to adhere to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad and his appointed successors.

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[1] The occasion of the Hijrah (literally migration, and by extension the migration of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina to thwart those from the Quraysh who had plotted to assassinate him) marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar. The Hijrah took place around 622CE.

[2] The Ka'bah is a cubical structure symbolising the House of God that was built by the Prophet Adam on instructions from the Almighty God in an uninhabited valley, which in turn brought about the creation of the holy city of Mecca around it.

[3] The Quraysh is a collection of clans and tribes all of whom are blood related.

[4] The Holy Qur'an, The Clot (96): 1-5

[5] The Holy Qur'an, The Poets (26): 214

[6] The Holy Qur'an: Joseph (12): 91.

[7] The Holy Qur'an: Joseph (12): 92.

[8] The Holy Qur'an: The Tribe of Israel (17): 81.

[9] The Holy Qur'an: Sheba (34): 49.

[10] al-Kafi, by al-Kulayni, vol. 5, p279

[11] Wasa'el al-Shica, by Muhammad Hasan al-Hurr al-cA

[12] al-Kafi, by al-Kulayni, vol. 7, p 167.

[13] al-Kafi, by al-Kulayni, vol. 1, p 407.

[14] Bihar al-Anwar, by al-Majlesi, vol. 22, p 486.

[15] The Holy Qur'an: The Succour (110)

[16] Bihar al-Anwar, by al-Majlesi, vol. 89, p 48, Beirut ed.

See also "The Qur'an: When was it compiled?" by the author.

[17] ibid

[18] ibid

[19] Imam Mahdi lives amongst the public but without being recognised by them. However, as and when required, he would make himself recognisable to those who are sincerely pious and devout.

[20] The Holy Qur'an, The Table Spread (5): 67.

[21] Mustadrak al-Sahihayn, vol. 3, pp 118, 126, 613. Dar al-Kotob al-Elmiyah, Beirut; Musnad Ahmad, vol. 1, pp 84, 88, 118, 152, vol. 4, pp 378, 370, pub. Cordoba Foundation, Cairo;

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[22] Bihar al-Anwar, by al-Majlesi, vol. 5, p69. Tohaf al-cOquol, p458.

[23] The Holy Qur'an, The Table Spread (5): 3.

[24] al-Mustadrak cala al-Sahihayn, by al-Hakim al-Naysabouri, vol. 3, pp 137-138, pub. Dar al-Kutub al-cElmiyyah, Beirut; Majmac al-Zawa'id, by Nur-ed-Din Ali ibn Abu Bakr al-Haythami, vol. 9, p114, pub. Dar al-

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Elmiyyah, Beirut, and also vol.4, p348, and vol.7, p172, and vol.11, p49-50
[25] Sahih al-Tirmidhi, vol. 5, p328, hadith 3874 & 3876, pub. Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, and vol. 13,
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Jamic al-Osul, by Ibn Athir, vol. 1, p 187, hadith 65-66, pub. Egypt;
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