

THE PROPHET OF ISLAM

(peace be upon him)

Compiled and Edited

by

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P R E F A C E

Muslims today suffer from a crisis of the soul. Although they are emerging on the world map as a political force, which cannot be neglected, they lack that self-confidence and that sense of direction, dedication and of world mission which had, in the past, been the main source of their strength. The long years of imperialistic domination have rapped the springs of their ideological strength and moral rank, and the West-oriented educational system has blurred their vision and distorted their value-pattern. That is why despite political independence, they have not been able to confidently and fearlessly chart out a new destiny for themselves. They stand bewildered and aghast. In fact they are faced with one of the most critical periods of their history: *Their very ideological existence is at stake.* The world around them has become an arena for the full pelay of the demonic ideologies of nationalism, materialism, racialism and imperialism. It is a threatening spectacle, when man armed by his own creations, has become a danger to the entire civilisation. The conditions are very similar to the one that prevailed at the advent of Muhammad (peace be upon him). The sensate culture of the West has not only torn the Western society into pieces, it is also threatening the emerging Muslim world with extinction. The forces of Iran, Rome and Arabia posed a similar threat to the nascent Islamic movements at the morrow of the 7th century. But Muhammad (peace be upon him) refused to succumb to the threat; he faced it and turned the tide against his adversaries. Even today the catastrophe can be averted by following the example of the great man who changed the course of history fourteen hundred years ago. It is in this belief that the present compilation is being presented on the occasion of the Annual Seerat Conference of the Jamiyatul Falah, Karachi. What the Muslims need today is a rediscovery of Muhammad (peace be upon him) so that they may recapture a full view of his life and mission and resolve to dedicate themselves to the task which the prophet has placed on their shoulders. This book is being presented to awaken this realisation among the Muslims.

The Prophet of Islam is a compilation and contains selections from the writings of leading Muslim scholars of our times. The editors have made every effort to cover a wide field and present in a short span of hundred pages at least some glimpses of the myriad

personality of the Prophet of Islam ; although they knew that they were engaged in the impossible task of encasing sunshine. If they have succeeded in presenting at least some aspects of the life and mission of the greatest man humanity has produced and if the reader can, even for a few moments feel himself mentally and emotionally in the company of the man who is a blessing unto mankind, they will feel more than rewarded.

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Khurshid Ahmad

Ahmad Anas

June 22: 1966

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Chapter I

The Mission of the Prophet

Muhammad of Arabia ascended the highest Heaven and returned. I swear by God that if I had reached that point, I should never have returned. These are the words of a great Muslim saint, Abdul Quddus of Gangoh. In the whole range of Sufi literature it will be probably difficult to find words which, in a single sentence, disclose such an acute perception of the psychological difference between the prophetic and the mystic types of consciousness. The mystic does not wish to return from the repose of 'unitary experience'; and even when he does return, as he must, his return does not mean much for mankind at large. The prophet's return is creative. He returns to insert himself into the sweep of time with a view to control the forces of history, and thereby to create a fresh world of ideals. For the mystic the repose of 'unitary experience' is something final; for the prophet it is the awakening, within him, of world-shaking psychological forces, calculated to completely transform the human world. The desire to see his religious experience transformed into a living world-force is supreme in the prophet. Thus his return amounts to a kind of pragmatic test of the value of his religious experience. In its creative act the prophet's will judges both itself and the world of concrete fact in which it endeavours to objectify itself. In penetrating the impervious material before him the prophet discovers himself for himself, and unveils himself to the eye of history. Another way of judging the value of a prophet's religious experience, therefore, would be to examine the type of manhood that he has created and the cultural world that has sprung out of the spirit of his message. In this lecture I want to confine myself to the latter alone. The idea is not to give you a description of the achievements of Islam in the domain of knowledge. I want rather to fix your gaze on some of the ruling concepts of the culture of Islam in order to gain an insight into the process of ideation that underlies them, and thus to catch a glimpse of the soul that found expression through them. Before, however, I proceed to do so it is necessary to understand the culture value of a great idea in Islam—I mean the finality of the institution of prophethood.

A prophet may be defined as a type of mystic consciousness in which 'unitary experience' tends to overflow its boundaries and seeks opportunities of redirecting or refashioning the forces of collective life. In his personality the finite centre of life sinks into his own infinite depth only to spring up again, with fresh vigour to destroy the old, and to disclose the new directions of life. This contact with the root of his own being is by no means peculiar to man. Indeed the way in which the word 'wahy' (inspiration) is used in the Quran shows that the Quran regards it as a universal property of life; though its nature and character are different at different stages of the evolution of life. The plant growing freely in space, the animal developing a new organ to suit a new environment, and a human being receiving light from the inner depth of life, are all cases of inspiration varying in character according to the needs of the recipient, or the needs of the species to which the recipient belongs. Now during the minority of mankind psychic energy develops what I call prophetic consciousness a mode of economizing individual thought and choice by providing ready-made judgments, choices and ways of action. With the birth of reason and critical faculty, however, life, in its own interest, inhibits the formation and growth of non-rational modes of consciousness through which psychic energy flowed at an earlier stage of human evolution. Man is primarily governed by passion and instinct. Inductive reason, which alone makes man master of his environment, is an achievement; and when once born it must be reinforced by inhibiting the growth of other modes of knowledge. There is no doubt that the ancient world produced some great systems of philosophy at a time when man was comparatively primitive and government more or less by suggestion. But we must not forget that this system-building in the ancient world was the work of abstract thought which cannot go beyond the systematization of vague religious beliefs and traditions, and gives us no hold on the concrete situations of life.

Looking at the matter from this point of view, then, the Prophet of Islam seems to stand between the ancient and the modern world. In so far as the source of his revelation is concerned he belongs to the ancient world; in so far as the spirit of his revelation is concerned he belongs to the modern world. In him life discovers other sources of knowledge suitable to its new direction. The birth of Islam, as I hope to be able presently to prove to your satisfaction, is the birth of inductive, intellect. In Islam prophecy reaches its perfection in discovering the need of its own abolition. This involves the keen perception that life cannot for ever be kept in leading strings; that in order to achieve full self-consciousness man must finally be thrown back on his own resources. The abolition of priesthood and hereditary kingship in Islam, the constant

appeal to reason and experience in the Quran, and the emphasis that it lays on Nature and History as sources of human knowledge, are all different aspects of the same idea of finality. The idea, however, does not mean that mystic experience, experience, which qualitatively does not differ from the experience of the prophet, has now ceased to exist as a vital fact. Indeed the Quran regards both 'Anfus' (self) and 'Afaq' (world) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience, and it is the duty of man to judge the knowledge-yielding capacity of all aspects of experience. The idea of finality, therefore, should not be taken to suggest that the ultimate fate of life is complete displacement of emotion by reason. Such a thing is neither possible nor desirable. The intellectual value of the idea is that it tends to create an independent critical attitude towards mystic experience by generating the belief that all personal authority, claiming a supernatural origin, has come to an end in the history of man. This kind of belief is a psychological force which inhibits the growth of such authority. The function of the idea is to open up fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of man's inner experience. Just as the first half of the formula of Islam has created and fostered the spirit of a critical observation of man's outer experience divesting the forces of nature of that divine character with which earlier cultures had clothed them. Mystic experience, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded by a Muslim as a perfectly natural experience, open to critical scrutiny like other aspects of human experience. This is clear from the Prophet's own attitude towards Ibn-i-Sayyad's psychic experiences. The function of Sufism in Islam has been to systematize mystic experience; though it must be admitted that Ibn-i-Khaldun was the only Muslim who approached it in a thoroughly scientific spirit.

But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. According to the Quran there are two other sources of knowledge—Nature and History; and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that the spirit of Islam is seen at its best. The Quran sees signs of the Ultimate Reality in the 'sun', the 'moon', 'the lengthening out of shadows', 'the alternation of day and night', 'variety of human colour and tongues', 'the alternation of the days of success and reverse among peoples',—in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense—perception of man. And the Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them 'as if he is deaf and blind', for he 'who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come'. This appeal to the concrete combined with the slow realization that, according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite and capable of increase, eventually brought Muslim

thinkers into conflict with Greek thought which, in the beginning of their intellectual career, they had studied with so much enthusiasm. Not realizing that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical, and putting full confidence in Greek thinkers, their first impulse was to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy. In view of the concrete spirit of the Quran, and the speculative nature of Greek philosophy which enjoyed theory and was neglectful of fact, this attempt was foredoomed to failure. And it is what follows their failure that brings out the real spirit of the culture of Islam, and lays the foundation of modern culture in some of its most important aspects.

— Dr, Sir Mohammad Iqbal

—: 0 :—

“ If my daughter

Fatima had been guilty.....”

Once a woman belonging to a very important tribe was found guilty of theft, and was sentenced with the same severity as an ordinary criminal. This upset some notables of the Quraysh who were anxious to save the woman. They tried to find some influential person to intercede on her behalf and at last requested Muhammad's favourite, Usama, the son of Zayd, to do so. When he spoke on her behalf, his master's face was flushed with anger, "O' Usama," he said, "would you interfere with the law of God?" Then he rose and spoke to his people, "O' men, other people have been destroyed before you because they everlooked the crimes of the powerful but punished the weak for lesser faults. God is my witness that if my daughter Fatima had been guilty of this offence I would have ordered her right hand to be cut off".

Chapter II

The Prophet of Islam

If one were to close his eyes and imagine himself in the world of 1400 years ago, he would find that it was a world completely different from ours, having not even the least semblance with the rough and tumble that we find around ourselves. How few and far between were the opportunities for the exchange of ideas! How limited and undeveloped were the means of communication! How little and meagre was man's knowledge! How narrow was his outlook! How enveloped was he in superstition and wild and sophisticated ideas!

Darkness held the sway. There was only a faint glimmer of learning which could hardly illumine the horizon of human knowledge. Neither was there wireless nor telephone, neither television nor Cinematograph. Railways and motor-cars and aeroplanes were undreamt of, and printing presses and publishing concerns were unknown. Hand written books or copyists alone supplied whatever scanty literary material was there to be transmitted from generation to generation. Education was a luxury, meant only for the most fortunate, and educational institutions were very few and far between.

The store of human knowledge was scanty, man's outlook was narrow, and his ideas of men and things were confined to his limited surroundings. Even a scholar of that age lacked in certain respects the knowledge possessed by a lay-man of today, and the most cultured person was less refined than our own man in the street.

Indeed, humanity was steeped in ignorance and superstition. Whatever light of learning there was, seemed to be fighting a losing battle against the darkness prevailing all around. What are considered to be matters of common knowledge today could hardly be acquired in those days even after years of calculated thought and patient research. People used to undertake hazardous journeys and spend a whole life-time in acquiring that modest information

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which is everybody's heritage in the present age of learning. Things which are classed as 'myth' and 'superstition' today were the unquestionable truths of that age. Acts which we now regard as heinous and barbarous were the order of the day in that era. Methods which appear obnoxious to our moral sense today constituted the very soul of morality, and one could hardly imagine on those days that there could be a different way of life also. Incredulity has assumed such mighty proportions and has become so wide-spread that people refused to consider anything as lofty and sublime unless it appeared in the garb of the supernatural, the extraordinary, the uncanny and even the untenable. They had developed such an inferiority complex that they could never imagine a human being to possess a goodly soul and a saint to be human.

ARABIA—the Abyss of Darkness

In that benighted era, there was a territory where darkness lay heavier and thicker. The neighbouring countries of Persia, Byzantium and Egypt possessed a glimmer of civilization and faint light of learning. But Arabia could receive no share from their cultural influences. It stood isolated, cut off by vast oceans of sand. Arab traders, plodding great distances which took them months, carried their wares to and from these countries, but they could hardly acquire and gain of knowledge on their journeys. In their own country, they did not have a single educational institution or library. None seemed to be interested in the cultivation and advancement of knowledge. The few who were literate were not educated enough to have anything to do with the existing arts and sciences. They did possess a highly developed language capable of expressing the fine shades of human thought in a remarkable manner. They also possessed a literary taste of a high order. But the study of the remnants of their literature reveals how limited was their knowledge, how low was their standard of culture and civilization, how saturated were their minds with superstitions, how barbarous and ferocious were their thoughts and customs, and how uncouth and degraded were their moral standards and conceptions.

It was a country without a government. Every tribe claimed sovereignty and considered itself to be an independent unit. There was no law except the law of jungle. Loot, arson and murder of innocent and weak people had become the order of the day. Life, property and honour were constantly at stake. Different tribes were always at daggers drawn with one another. Any trivial incident was enough to cause a war to blaze out in ferocious fury, which sometimes even developed into a country-wide conflagration ceaselessly continuing for several decades. Indeed, a Bedouin

could not understand why he should let off a person of another tribe, whom, he thought, he had every right to kill and plunder.

Whatever notions they had of morals, culture and civilization, were primitive and uncouth. They could hardly discriminate between pure and impure, lawful and unlawful, civil and uncivil. Their life was wild. Their methods were barbaric. They revelled in adultery, gambling and drinking. Loot and plunder was their motto, murder and rapine their very habits. They would stand stark naked before each other without any qualms of conscience. Even their women-folk would become nude at the ceremony of circumambulating the Ka'ba. Out of sheer foolish notions of prestige, they would bury their daughters alive lest anyone should become their son-in-law. They would marry their step-mothers after the death of their fathers. They were ignorant of even the rudiments of everyday routine of eating, dressing and washing.

As regards their religious beliefs, they suffered from the same evils which were playing havoc with the rest of the world.

They worshipped stones, trees, idols, stars and spirits : in short everything conceivable except God. They did not know anything about the teachings of the Prophets of old, They had an idea that Abraham and Ismael were their fore-fathers, but they knew next to nothing about their religious preachings and about the God whom they worshipped. The stories of 'Ad and Thamud were to be found in their folklore, but they contained no traces of the teachings of Prophet Hud and Salih. The Jews and the Christians had transmitted to them certain legendary folk-tales relating to the Israelite Prophets. They presented a harrowing picture of those noble souls. Their teachings were adulterated with the figments of their own imagination and their lives were tarred black. Even today, an idea can be had of the religious conceptions of those people by casting a cursory glance at those Israelite traditions which Muslim commentators of the Qur'an have conveyed to us. Indeed, the picture which has been presented there of the institution of prophethood and of the character of the Israelite Prophets is the very antithesis of all that those noble followers of truth had stood for.

The Saviour is Born

In such a dark age and in such a benighted country a man is born. In his very childhood his parents die and, a few years later, the sad demise of his grandfather also occurs. Consequently, he is deprived even of that scant training and upbringing which an Arab child of his time could get. In his boyhood he tends the flock of sheep and goats in the company of Bedouin boys. When of age, he

takes to commerce. All his associations and all his dealings were with the Arabs alone, whose condition has been just described. Education has not even touched him; he is completely unlettered and unschooled. He never gets a chance to sit in the company of learned men, for such men were totally non-existent in Arabia. He did have a few opportunities to go out of his country, but those journeys were confined to Syria and were nothing more than the usual business trips undertaken by the Arab trade caravans. If he met any learned men there or had the occasion to observe any aspects of culture and civilization, those random meetings and stray observations cannot be given any place in the making of his personality. For, such things can never have that profound influence on anyone which might fit him totally out of his environment, transform him completely and raise him to such heights of originality and glory that there remains no affinity between him and the society in which he is born. Nor can they be the means of the acquisition of that profound and vast knowledge which might transform an unlettered Bedouin into a leader not only of his own country and age but of the world at large and of all ages to come. Indeed, whatever the measure of the intellectual and cultural influence of those journeys one might suppose, the fact remains that they could in no case impart to him those conceptions and principles of religion, ethics, culture and civilization which were totally non-existent in the world of those days and they could in no way create that sublime and perfect pattern of human character which was nowhere to be found in those days.

Diamond in a Heap of Stones

We may now look at the life and work of this noble man in the context not only of the Arabian society but also of the entire world as it stood in that period.

He is totally different from the people among whom he is born and with whom he passes his youth and early manhood, attaining finally his full stature. He never tells a lie. His whole nation is unanimous in testifying to his truthfulness. Even his worst enemies never accused him of telling a lie on any occasion whatsoever during his entire life. He talks politely, and never uses obscene and abusive language. He has a charming personality and winsome manners with which he captivates the hearts of those who come into contact with him. In his dealings with the people he always follows the principles of justice and fairplay. He remains engaged in trade and commerce for years, but he never enters into any dishonest transaction. Those who deal with him in business have full confidence in his integrity. The entire nation calls him "Al Ameen" (The Truthful and the Trustworthy). Even his enemies

deposit their costly belongings with him for safe custody and he scrupulously fulfils their trust. He is the very embodiment of modesty in the midst of a society which is immodest to the core. Born and bred among a people who regard drunkenness and gambling as virtues, he never touches alcohol and never indulges in gambling. His people are uncouth, uncultured and unclean, but he personifies in himself the highest culture and the most refined aesthetic outlook. Surrounded on all sides by heartless people he himself has a heart overflowing with the milk of human kindness. He helps the orphans and the widows. He is hospitable to travellers. He harms no one ; rather, he goes all out to suffer hardships for others sake. Living among those for whom war is bread and butter, he is such a lover of peace that his heart melts for them when they take up arms and cut each other's throats. He keeps aloof from feuds of his tribe, and is foremost in bringing about reconciliation. Bred up in an idolatrous race, he is so clear-minded and possesses such a pure soul that he regards nothing in the heavens and the earth worth worshipping except the One True God. He does not bow before any created thing and does not partake of the offerings made to idols, even in his childhood. Instinctively he hates all kinds of worship of all creatures and beings besides God, In brief the towering and radiant personality of this man, in the midst of such a benighted and dark environment, may be likened to a beacon-light illumining a pitch-dark night or to a diamond shining in a heap of dead stones.

A Revolution Comes

After spending a great part of his life in such a chaste, pure and civilized manner there comes a revolution in his being. He feels fed up with the darkness and ignorance massed around him. He wants to swim clear of the horrible sea of ignorance, corruption, immorality, idolatry and disorder which surrounds him on all sides. He finds everything around him out of harmony with his soul. He retires to the hills, away from the hum and drum of habitation. He spends days and nights in perfect seclusion and meditation. He fasts so that his soul and his heart may become pure and nobler still.

He muses and ponders deep. He is in search of such a light which might melt away the encompassing darkness. He wants to get hold of that power with which he might bring about the downfall of the corrupt and disorderly world of his day and lay the foundations of a new and better world.

Lo! a remarkable revolution comes over his person. All of a sudden his heart is illuminated with the Divine Light, giving to him the Power he had yearned for. He comes out of the confinement

of his cave, goes to the people, and addresses them in the following strain :

The idols which you worship are a mere sham. Cease to worship them from now onward. No mortal being, no star, no tree, no stone, no spirit is worthy of human worship. Therefore, bow not your heads in worship before them. The entire universe with everything that it contains belongs to God Almighty alone. He alone is the Creator, the Nourisher, the Sustainer, and, consequently, the real Sovereign before Whom all should bow down and to Whom all should pray and render obedience. Thus worship Him alone and obey His commands only. Loot and plunder, murder and rapine, injustice and cruelty—all the vices in which you indulge are crimes in the eyes of God. Leave your evil ways. He hates them all. Speak the truth. Be Just. Do not kill anyone. Do not rob anyone. Take your lawful share. Give that which is due to others in a just manner. You are human beings and all human beings are equal in the eyes of God. None is born with the slur of shame on his face, nor anyone has come into world with the mantle of honour hung around his neck. He alone is high and honoured who is God-fearing and pious, true in words and deeds. Distinctions of birth and glory of race are no criteria of greatness and honour. One who fears God and does good deeds is the noblest of human beings. One who is shorn of the love of God and is steeped in bad manners is doomed. There is an appointed day after your death when you shall have to appear before your Lord. You shall be called to account for all your deeds—good or bad, and you shall not be able then to hide anything. The whole record of your life shall be an open book to Him. Your fate shall be determined by your good or bad actions. In the court of the True Judge—the Omniscient God—the question of unfair recommendation and favouritism does not arise. You shall not be able to bribe Him. No consideration will be given to your pedigree or parentage. **True faith and good deeds alone will stand you in good stead at that time.** He who will be fully equipped with them shall take his abode in Heaven of eternal happiness, while he who will be devoid of them shall be cast in the fire of Hell.

This is the message with which he comes. The ignorant nation turns against him. Abuses and stones are showered at his august person. Every conceivable torture and cruelty is perpetrated on him. And this continues not for a day or two but uninterruptedly for thirteen long troublesome years. At last he is exiled. But he is not given respite even there. He is tormented in various ways in his abode of refuge. The whole of Arabia is incited against him. He is persecuted and hounded down continuously for full eight years there. He suffers it all, but does not budge an inch from

the stand he has taken. He is resolute, firm and inflexible in his purpose and stand.

Why all that Enmity ?

One might enquire : how is it that his nation became his sworn enemy? Was there any dispute about gold and silver or other worldly possessions? Was it due to any blood feud? Did he ask for anything from them? No! The whole enmity was based on the fact that he had asked them to worship the One True God and lead a life of righteousness, piety and goodness. He had preached against idolatry and the worship of other beings besides God and had denounced their wrong way of life. He had cut at the roots of priestcraft. He had inveighed against all distinctions of high and low between human beings, and had condemned the prejudices of clan and race as sheer ignorance. And he wanted to change the whole structure of society which had been handed down to them from time immemorial. In their turn, his countrymen told him that the principles of his mission were hostile to their ancestral traditions and asked him either to give them up or to bear the worst consequences.

One might ask : for what did he suffer all those hardships? His nation offered to accept him as its king and to lay all the riches of the land at his feet if only he would leave preaching his religion and spreading his message. ¹ But he chose to refuse the tempting

1. Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) had to face tempests of adversity in the way of truth. He braced all the opposition and oppression with a smile on his lips. He stood firm, undeterred by criticism and coercion. When the natives felt that the threats failed to frighten this man and the severest tribulations at his and his followers' person not even made them move an inch, they played the other trick—but that too was destined to doom !

A deputation of the leading Quraish called upon the Holy Prophet and tried to bribe him by offering all the worldly glory they could imagine. They said :

"If you want to possess wealth, we will amass for you as much as you wish; if you aspire to win honour and power, we are prepared to swear allegiance to you as our overlord and king; if you have a fancy for beauty, you shall have the hand of the most beautiful maiden of your own choice."

But they wanted that he should abandon his mission. The terms were extremely tempting for any human mortal. But they had no significance in the eyes of the Great Prophet. His answer fell like a bomb-shell upon the deputation of the leaders of Arabia. They thought they had played the triumph. But they were disappointed. The Holy Prophet said :

"Pray! I want neither wealth nor power. I have been commissioned by God as a warner to mankind. I deliver His message to you. Should you accept it, you shall have felicity and joy in this life, and eternal bliss in the life hereafter; should you reject the Word of God, surely God will decide between you and me."

On another occasion he said to his uncle, who on the pressure from the leaders of Arabia, was trying to persuade him to abandon his mission :

"O Uncle! Should they place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left, in order to make me renounce this mission, IT SHALL NOT BE. I will never give it up till it should please God to make it a triumph or I perish in the attempt."

This was the character of the Prophet of Islam !

offers and to suffer for his cause, instead. Why? Was he to gain in any way if those people became pious and righteous?

Why was it that he cared not a jot for riches and luxury, kingship and glory and ease and plenty? Was he playing for some higher material gains so that these blessings sank into insignificance in comparison with them? Were those gains so tempting that he could elect to go through fire and sword and bear tortures of the soul and torments of the body with equanimity for years? One has to ponder over it deeply to find an answer.

Can anyone ever imagine a higher example of self-sacrifice, fellow-felling and kind-heartendness towards his fellow-beings than that a man may ruin his own happiness for the good of others while those very people for whose betterment he is striving his utmost should stone him, abuse him, banish him and give him no quarter even in his exile, and that, in spite of it all, he should refuse to refrain from striving for their well-being?

Can any insincere person undergo so much suffering for a false cause? Can any dishonest speculator and visionary exhibit such firmness and determination for his ideal as to stick to his guns to the very last and remain unruffled and unperturbed in the face of dangers and tortures of every conceivable description when a whole country rises up in arms against him?

This faith, this perseverance and this resolution, with which he led his movement to ultimate success is, therefore, an eloquent proof of the supreme truth of his cause. Had there been the slightest touch of doubt and uncertainty in his heart, he could never have been able to brave the storm which continued in all its fury for twenty-one long years.

This is one side of the revolution wrought in his being. The other is even more wonderful and remarkable.

A Changed Man at Forty—Why ?

For forty years he lived as an Arab among Arabs. In that long period he was not known as a statesman, a preacher or an orator. None had heard him imparting gems of wisdom and knowledge as he began to do hereafter. He was never seen discoursing upon the principles of Metaphysics, Ethics, Law, Politics, and Sociology. Not to speak of being a great General he was not even known as an ordinary soldier. He had uttered no word about God, the Angels, the Revealed Books, the early Prophets, the by-gone Nations, the Day of Judgement, the Life after Death, Hell and Heaven. No doubt he possessed an excellent character and charming manners, and was highly cultured, yet there was nothing so

deeply striking and so radically extraordinary in him which could make men expect something great and revolutionary from him in future. He was known among his acquaintances as a sober, calm, gentle, law-abiding citizen of good nature. But when he came out of the cave with a new message he was completely transformed.

When he began preaching his Message the whole of Arabia stood in awe and wonder and was bewitched by his wonderful eloquence and oratory. It was so impressive and captivating that his worst enemies were afraid of hearing, lest it should penetrate deep into the recesses of their hearts or the very marrow of their beings and carry them off their feet and make them bid goodbye to their old religion and culture. It was so matchless that the whole Arab legion of poets, preachers and orators of the highest calibre failed to bring forth its equivalent in beauty of language and splendour of diction when he threw the challenge to his opponents to put their heads together and produce even a single line like the one he recited.

His All-Embracing Message

Along with this, he now appeared before his people as a unique philosopher, a wonderful reformer, a renowned moulder of culture and civilization, an illustrious politician, a great leader, a judge of the highest eminence and an incomparable general. This unlettered Bedouin, this dweller of the desert, spoke with such learning and wisdom the like of which none had said before and none could say after him. He expounded the intricate problems of metaphysics and theology. He delivered speeches on the principles of the decline and fall of nations and empires, supporting his thesis by the historical data of the past. He reviewed the achievements of the old reformers, passed judgment on the various religions of the world, and gave verdicts on differences and the disputes between nations. He taught ethical canons and principles of culture. He formulated such laws of social, culture, economic organization, group conduct and international relations that even eminent thinkers and scholars can grasp their true wisdom only after life-long research and vast experience of men and things. Indeed, as man advances in theoretical knowledge and practical experience, so would their beauties progressively unfold themselves.

This silent and peace loving trader who had never handled a sword before, who had had no military training, who had but once participated in a battle and that also just as a spectator, turned suddenly into such a brave soldier that he did not even once retreat in the fiercest battles. He became such a great general that he

conquered the whole country of Arabia in nine years, in the days when the weapons of war were primitive and the means of communication poorest. His military acumen and efficiency developed to such a high pitch and the military spirit which he infused and the military training which he imparted to a motley crowd of Arabs (who had no equipment worth the name) wrought such a miracle that within a few years they overthrew the two most formidable military powers of the day and became the masters of the greater part of the then known world.

This reserved and quiet man who, for full forty years, never gave proof of any political interest or activity, appeared suddenly on the stage of the world as such a great political reformer and statesman that without the aid of radio and wireless and press he brought together the scattered inhabitants of a desert of twelve hundred thousand square miles,—a people who were warlike, ignorant, unruly, uncultured and plunged in internecine tribal warfare—under one banner, one law, one religion, one culture, one civilization and one form of government.¹

He changed their modes of thought, their vey habits and their morals. He turned the uncouth into the cultured, the barbarous into the civilized, the evil-doers and bad characters into pious, God fearing and righteous persons. Their unruly, and stiff necked natures were transformed into models of obedience and submission to law and order. A nation which had not produced a single great man worth the name for centuries gave birth, under his influence and guidance, to thousands of noble souls who went forth to far off corners of the world to preach and teach the principles of religion, morals and civilizations.²

1. Sir William Muir, a staunch adverse critic of Islam, admits in his book, *Life of Muhammad* :

"The first peculiarity, then, which attracts our attention is the subdivision of the Arabs into innumerable bodies...each independent of the others ; restless and often at war amongst themselves ; and even when united by blood or by interest, ever ready on some insignificant cause to separate and give way to an implacable hostility. Thus at the era of Islam the retrospect of Arabian history exhibits, as in the Kaleidoscope, an ever-varying state of combination and repulsion, such as had hitherto rendered abortive any attempt at a general union.....The problem had yet to be solved, by what force these tribes could be subdued or drawn to one common centre ; AND IT WAS SOLVED BY MUHAMMAD."

2. It would be instructive to refer here to an important speech Jafar Ibn-Abi-Talib. When the oppression upon the Muslims of Mecca reached its limits, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) asked some of them to migrate to the adjoining State of Abyssinia. A group of Muslims migrated to that country. But the Quraish who were perpetrating every conceivable oppression upon the Muslims did not sit idle. They pursued the emigrants, asked King Negus of Abyssinia to forcefully return his immigrants. In the Court of King Negus, Jafar, made a speech and threw light on the revolution that the Holy Prophet had brought about. An extract from his speech is given below :

"O King ! We were an ignorant people, given to idolatry. We were used to eat corpses even of dead animals, and to do all kinds of disgraceful things.

He accomplished this feat not through any worldly lure of oppression or cruelty, but by his captivating manners, his endearing moral personality and his convincing teaching. With his noble and gentle behaviour he befriended even his enemies. He captured the hearts of the people with his unbounded sympathy and the milk of human kindness. He ruled justly. He did not swerve from truth and righteousness. He did not oppress even his deadly enemies who were after his life, who had pelted him with stones, who had turned him out of his native place, who had pitched the whole of Arabia against him—nay, not even those who had chewed raw the liver of his dead uncle in a frenzy of vengeance.¹ He forgave them all when he triumphed over them. He never took revenge from anyone for his personal grievances or the wrongs perpetrated on his person.

In spite of the fact that he became the ruler of his country he was so selfless and modest that he remained very simple and sparing in his habits. He lived poorly, as before, in his humble thatched mud cottage. He slept on a mattress, wore coarse, clothes, ate the simplest food of the poor, and sometimes went without any food at all. He used to spend whole nights standing in prayer before his Lord. He came to the rescue of the destitute and the penniless.² He felt not the least insult in working like a labourer. Till his last moments there was not the slightest tinge of royal pomp and show or hauteur of the high and the rich in him. Like an ordinary man he would sit and walk with people and share their joys and sorrows. He would so mix up and mingle with crowd that a stranger, an outsider, would find it difficult to single out the leader of the people and the ruler of the nation from the rest of the company.

In spite of his greatness his behaviour with the humblest person was that of an ordinary human being. In the struggles and endeavours of his whole life he did not seek any reward or profit for his own person, or did he leave any property for his heirs. He dedicated

We did not make good our obligations to our relations, and ill-treated our neighbours. The strong among us would thrive at the expense of the weak, till, at last, God raised a Prophet for our reformation. His descent, his righteousness, his integrity and his piety are well-known to us all. He called us to the worship of God, and exhorted us to give up idolatry and stone-worship. He enjoined us to speak the truth, to make good our trusts, to respect ties of kinship, and to do good to our neighbours. He taught us to shun everything foul and to avoid bloodshed. He forbade all manner of indecent things: telling lies, misappropriating orphans' belongings, and bringing false accusations against the chastity of women. So we believed in him, followed him, and acted upon his teaching....."

1. On the occasion of the Battle of Uhud, Hind, the wife of Chief of the Pagan Arabs, actually chewed the raw liver of the Prophet's uncle, Hamza.

2. The Prophet said: "If anyone dies in debt and leaves behind dependants who are in danger of becoming destitutes, they should come to me because I am their guardian." His whole life bears ample testimony to this.

his all to his Millat. He did not ask his adherents to earmark anything for him or his descendants, so much so that he forbade his progeny from receiving the benefit of Zakat (or poortax), lest his followers at any future time may dole out the whole share of Zakat to them.

His Contribution to Human Thought

The achievements of this great man do not end here. In order to arrive at a correct appraisal of his true worth one has to view it, in the background of the history of the world as a whole. That would reveal that this unlettered dweller of the desert of Arabia, who was born in the "dark ages" some 1400 years ago, was the real pioneer of the Modern Age and the true leader of humanity. He is not only the Leader of those who accept his leadership but of those also who do not acclaim him as such: even of those who denounce him! The only difference being that the latter are unaware of the fact that his guidance is still imperceptibly influencing their thoughts and their actions and is the governing principle of their lives and the very spirit of the modern times.¹

It was he who turned the course of human thought from superstition-mongering, love for the unnatural and the inexplicable and monasticism towards rational approach, love for reality and a pious, balanced worldly life. It was he who, in a world which

1. Arthur Leonard says: Islam, in fact, has done a work. She has left a mark on the pages of human history, which is so indelible that it can never be effaced..... that only when the world grows will be acknowledged in full."

John Davenport, a leading scientist, observed: It must be owned that all the knowledge whether of physics, astronomy, philosophy or mathematics, which flourished in Europe from the 10th century, was originally derived from the Arabian schools, and the Spanish Saracen may be looked upon as the father of European philosophy."—Quoted by A Karim in Islam's Contribution to Science and Civilization.

Bertrand Russell the famous British philosopher, writes: "The supremacy of the East was not only military. Science, philosophy, poetry, and the arts, all flourished..... in the Muhammedan world at a time when Europe was sunk in barbarism. Europeans, with unpardonable insularity, call this period "The Dark Ages"; but it was only in Europe that it was dark—indeed only in Christian Europe, for Spain, which was Muhammedan, had a brilliant culture."

(Pakistan Quarterly, Vol. IV. No 3)

Robert Briffault, the renowned historian, acknowledges in his book "The Making of Humanity": "It is highly probable that but for the Arabs, modern European Civilization would never have assumed that character which has enabled it to transcend all previous phases of evolution. For although there is not a single aspect of human growth in which the decisive influence of Islamic culture is not traceable nowhere is it so clear and momentous as in the genesis of that power which constitutes the paramount distinctive force of the modern world and the supreme source of its victory—natural science and the scientific spirit.....What we call science arose in Europe as result of a new spirit of enquiry: of new methods of investigation, of the method of experiment, observation, measurement, of the development of mathematics in a form unknown to the Greeks. That spirit and those methods were introduced into the European world by the Arabs."

Stanwood Cobb, founder of the Progressive Education Association says:

"Islam..... was the virtual creator of the Renaissance in Europe,"—Quoted by Robert L. Gullick Jr. in Muhammad the Educator.

regarded only supernatural happenings as miracles and demanded them for the verification of the truth of a religious mission, inspired the urge for rational proof and faith in them as the criterion of truth. It was he who, opened the eyes of those who had been accustomed till then to look for the signs of God in the natural phenomena. It was he who, in place of baseless speculation, led human beings to the path of rational understanding and sound reasoning on the basis of observation, experiment and research. It was he who clearly defined the limits and functions of sense-perception, reason and intuition. It was he who brought about a rapprochement between the spiritual and the material values. It was he who harmonized Faith with Knowledge and Action. It was he who created the scientific spirit the power of religion and who evolved true religiosity on the basis of the scientific spirit.

It was he who eradicated idolatry, man-worship and polytheism in all forms so thoroughly and created such a firm faith in the Unity of God that even those religions which were based entirely on superstitions and idolatry were compelled to adopt a monotheistic theme. It was he who changed the basic concepts of ethics and spirituality. To those who believed that asceticism and self-annihilation alone formed the standard of moral and spiritual purity—that purity could not be achieved except by running away from worldly life, disregarding all the urges of the flesh and subjecting the body to all type of tortures—it was he who showed the path of spiritual evolution, moral emancipation and attainment of salvation through active participation in the practical affairs of the world around them.

It was he who brought home to man his true worth and position; those who acknowledged only a God in-carnate or a son of God as their moral preceptor or spiritual guide were told that a human being like them having pretension to Godhead could become the vicegerent of God on earth, those proclaimed and worshipped powerful personages as their gods were made to understand that their false lords were mere ordinary human beings and nothing more. It was he who stressed the point that no person could claim holiness, authority and overlordship as his birthright and that none was born with the stigma of untouchability, slavery or serfdom on his person. It was he and his teaching which inspired the thoughts of the unity of mankind, equality of human beings, true democracy and real freedom in the world.

Leaving aside his realm of thought and moving a bit further one will find countless practical results of the leadership of this unlettered person firmly impressed on the laws and ways of the world, So many principles of good behaviour, culture and civilization, purity of thought and deed, which are prevalent in the world today, owe

their origin to him. The social laws which he gave have infiltrated deep into the structure of human social life and this process continues up to this day. The basic principles of economics which he taught have ushered in many a movement in world's history and hold out the same promise for the future. The laws of government which he formulated brought about many an upheaval in the political notions and theories of the world and continue to assert their influence even today. The fundamental principles of law and justice which bear the stamp of his genius have influenced to a remarkable degree the administration of justice in the courts of nations, and form a perpetual source of guidance for all legists to come. This unlettered Arab was the first person who set on foot for the first time practically the whole framework, of international relation, and regulated the laws of war and peace. For no one had previously even the remotest idea that there could be an ethical code of war also and that relations between different nations could be regulated on the ground of common humanity-1

The Greatest Revolutionary

In the cavalcade of world history the sublime figure of this wonderful person towers so high above all the great men of all times who are famous as heroes of nations, that they appear to be dwarfs when contrasted with him. None of them possessed a genius capable of making any deep impression on more than one or two aspects of human life. Some are the exponents of theories and ideas but are deficient in practical action. Some others are men of action but suffer from paucity of knowledge. Some are renowned as statesmen only, others are masters of strategy and manoeuvring. Some have concentrated on one aspect of social life in a manner that other aspects have been overlooked. Some others have devoted their energies to ethical and spiritual verities but have ignored economics and politics. Some others have taken to economics and politics, neglected morals and the spiritual side of life. In short, one comes across heroes who are adepts and experts in one walk of life only. His is the only example where all the excellences have been blended into one personality. He is a philosopher and a seer and also a living embodiment of his own teachings. He is a great statesman as well as a military genius. He is a legislator and also a teacher of morals. He is a spiritual luminary as well as religious guide. His vision penetrates every aspect of life and there is nothing which he touches and does not adorn. His orders and commandments cover a vast field from the regulation of international relations down to the habits of everyday life like eating, drinking and cleanliness of

I. For a detailed discussion see Abdul A'la Maududi's *Al-Jihad fil-Islam*. and Dr. Hamidullah's *The Muslim Conduct of State*.

the body. On the foundations of his theories, he established a civilization and a culture and produced such a fine equilibrium in the conflicting aspects of life that there is to be found not even the slightest trace of any flaw, deficiency, or incompleteness. Can anyone point out any other example of such a perfect and all-round personality?

Most of the famous personalities of the world are said to be the products of their environment. But his case is unique. His environment seems to have no part in the making of his personality. It also cannot be proved that historically his birth synchronised with the order of things in Arabia at the time. What one can say at the most is that the circumstances in Arabia cried aloud for the appearance of such a person who could weld together the warring tribes into one nation and could lay the foundation of their economic solidarity and well-being by bringing other countries under their sway—in short, national leader who would have had all the traits of an Arab of those days and though cruelty, oppression bloodshed, deceit and hypocrisy, or by any other fair or foul means, could have enriched his own people, and left a kingdom as a heritage for his successors. One cannot prove any other crying need of the history of Arabia of that time.

What one can say at the most in the light of Hegel's philosophy of history or Marx's historical materialism is that the time and the environment demanded the emergence of a leader who could create a nation and build up an empire. But the Hegelian or Marxian philosophy cannot explain how such an environment could produce a man whose mission was to teach the best morals, to purify humanity of all dross and to wipe out the prejudices and superstitions of the days of ignorance and darkness, who looked beyond the watertight compartments of race, nation and country, who laid the foundations of a moral, spiritual cultural and political superstructure for the good of the world and not for his country alone, who practically and not theoretically place business transactions, civics, politics and international relations on moral grounds and produced such a balanced and temperate synthesis between the worldly life and spiritual advancement that even to this day it is considered a masterpiece of wisdom and foresight exactly in the same way as it was considered in his life-time? Can anyone honestly call such a person as the product of the all-pervading darkness of Arabia.

He does not only appear to be independent of his environment. Rather, when we look at his achievements we are irresistibly drawn to the conclusion that he actually transcends all limitations of time and space. His vision breaks through all temporal and physical barriers, passes beyond centuries and millenniums and comprehends

within itself the entirety of human activity and the whole of human history.

He is not one of those whom history has cast into oblivion, and he is not praised only because he was just a good leader in his time. He is that unique and incomparable leader of humanity who marches with the time, who is modern in every age and in every era, as he was in his own age of history. Truly, his teachings are as modern as tomorrow morn.

Those whom people style as "makers of history" are only "creatures of history". In fact, in the whole history of mankind, he is the unique example of a "maker of history". One may scan the lives and circumstances of the great leaders of the world who brought about revolutions and he will find that on each such occasion the forces of revolution were gathering momentum for the destined upheaval, were taking their course in certain directions and were only waiting for a propitious moment to burst out. In harnessing these forces in time for action the revolutionary leader played the part of an actor for whom the stage and the role is set beforehand. On the other hand, amidst all "makers of history" and revolutionary figures of all times, he is the only person who had to find ways and means to bring together the where-withal of revolution, who had to mould and produce the kind of men he wanted for his purpose, because the very spirit of revolution and its requisite paraphernalia were non-existent in those people among whom his lot was cast.

He made an indelible impression on the hearts of thousands of his disciples by his forceful personality and moulded them according to his liking. By his iron-will he prepared the ground for revolution, moulded its shape and features, and directed the currents of events into a channel as he wished and desired. Can anyone cite another example of a maker of history of such distinction, another revolutionary of such brilliance and splendour?

The Final Testimony

One may ponder over this matter and wonder how, in the Dark Ages 1400 years back in a benighted region of the earth like Arabia, an unlettered Arab trader and herdsman came to possess such light, such knowledge, such power, such capabilities and such finely-developed moral virtues?

One may say that there is nothing peculiar about this Message. It is the product of his own mind. If it is so, then he should have proclaimed himself as God, and if he had made such an assertion at that time, the peoples of the earth who did not hesitate in calling Krishana and Buddha as gods and Jesus as the Son of God, just out

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of their own fancy, and who could, without compunction, worship even the forces of nature like fire, water and air—would have readily acknowledged such a wonderful person as the Lord God Himself.

But lo! His assertion is just to the contrary. For he proclaimed that: I am a human being like yourselves. I have not brought anything to you of my own accord. It has been all revealed to me by God. Whatever I possess belongs to Him. This message, the like of which the whole humanity is not able to produce, is the message of God. It is not the product of my own mind. Every word of it has been sent down by Him, and all glory to Him whose Message it is. All the wonderful achievements which stand to my credit in your eyes, all the laws which I have given, all the principle which I have enunciated and taught none of them is from me. I find myself thoroughly incompetent in producing such things out of my sheer personal ability and capabilities. I look to Divine Guidance in the matters. Whatever He wills I do, what He directs I proclaim.

Hearken! what a wonderful and inspiring example of honesty, integrity, truth and honour it is! A liar and hypocrite generally tries to ascribe to himself all the credit for the deeds of others also, even when the falsehood of his statement can be easily proved. But this great man does not appropriate the credit of any of these achievements to his own person even when none could contradict him, as there was no method of finding out the source of his inspiration.

What more proof of perfect honesty of purpose, uprightness of character and sublimity of soul can there be? Who else can be a more truthful person than he who received such unique gifts and embellishments through a secret channel and still he outrightly pointed out the source of all his enlightenment and inspiration? All these factors lead to the irresistible conclusion that such a man was the true Messenger of God.

Such was our holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). He was a prodigy of extraordinary merits, a paragon of virtue and goodness, a symbol of truth and veracity, a great apostle of God, His Messenger to the entire world. His life and thought, his truth and straightforwardness, his piety and goodness, his character and morals, his ideology and achievement—all stand as unimpeachable proof of his prophethood. Any human being, who studies without bias his life and teachings will testify that verily he was the true Prophet of God and the Qur'an—the Book he gave to mankind,—the true Book of God. No unbiased and serious seeker after truth can escape this conclusion.

Furthermore, this must also be clearly understood that, now, through Muhammad (Peace be upon him) alone can we know the straight path of Islam. The Qur'an and the life-example of Muhammad (peace be upon him) are the only reliable sources that are available to mankind to learn God's Will in its totality, Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the Messenger of God for the whole of mankind and the long chain of prophets has come to an end with him. He was the last of the prophets and all the instructions which it was God's will to impart to mankind through direct revelation were sent by Him through Muhammad (peace be upon him) and are enshrined in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Now, whoever be a seeker of truth and anxious to become an honest Muslim, a sincere follower of the way of God, it is incumbent upon him to have faith in God's last Prophet, accept his teachings and follow the way he has pointed out to man. This is the real road to success and salvation.

— Maulana Saiyyid Abul Ala Maududi

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“ You are the best Community that has been sent forth into mankind :

You enjoin the Rights and forbid the wrong ; and you have faith in God ”.

— a'al-e-Imran, 110.

Chapter III

Muhammad (Peace be on him) the Greatest Hero of all times

Life and Background :

Muhammad (peace be on him) was born in the noblest family of Arabia, the Quraish, in 570 A.C. and his grandfather held the most important position as the custodian of Ka'aba. Despite this glorious background, Muhammad (peace be on him) was a posthumous child, i.e., he lost his father Abdullah when he was not yet born. According to the custom of the Quraish he was entrusted to a wet-nurse, named Halima, from his birth for a period of four years. Thus he was even deprived of the loving care of his own parents, and soon after his return he lost his mother. The care of the orphan was then taken over by his grandfather, Abdul Muttalib, whom, too, he lost at the age of eight. The death of the old man was a severe blow to the whole family of Banu Hashim. None of his sons was in a position to take his father's place. Abu Talib, the Prophet's uncle, could only retain the duties of *siqaya*, i.e., supplying water to the pilgrims, *rifada*, the feeding of the pilgrims, and other more important offices of the chiefs of Mecca, passed to Abu Sufyan, the Umayyad, who became the bitterest enemy of the Prophet in later years.

Under such circumstances Muhammad (peace be upon him) came under the guardianship of his uncle, Abu Talib, whom he assisted in his duties. Since Abu Talib was not placed in easy circumstances, Muhammad (peace be upon him) could not be given any schooling or specialised training except that of looking after the herds of his uncle. He had only acquired a little experience of the outside world by accompanying his uncle to Syria on a trade journey. Obviously he was not equipped with any training or material resources for tackling the problems of his people who were steeped in all kinds of vices.

As regards the actual social and moral condition in Arabia on the eve of the advent of Islam, one can safely say that the pre-Islamic Arabs of the desert, like people in other parts of the world, were

steeped in all the grossest vices. They were caught in perpetual warfare ; even minor quarrels developed into inter-tribal wars ; trivial local feuds often continued for centuries ; plunder and robbery were regarded as honourable and normal economic pursuits ; drinking and gambling were regarded as noble traits ; sexual indulgence and unlimited polygamy were universal ; women did not enjoy any respectable status in society ; and young girls were buried alive even in respectable families. In short, the Arabs had no conception of a decent, refined and cultured social life. Similarly, they had no standards of ethics and morality. Moral vices of the worst order were rampant. The nation was sunk in ignorance, obscenity and superstition. There was no central authority, no national sovereign, no law and no police. There was no clear-cut religious ideology. The idea of one God or Creator was obscured by *shirk* (Polytheism) with the result that man worshipped a multitude of idols. It were these conditions that gave this epoch the name of the Period of ignorance.

The leading historian Denison describes this situation as follow :—

“It seemed then that the great civilization that it had taken four thousand years to construct was on the verge of disintegration, and that mankind was likely to return to that condition of barbarism where every tribe and sect was against the next, and law and order were unknown. The older tribal sanctions had lost their power. Hence the old imperial methods would no longer operate. The new sanctions created by Christianity were working division and destruction instead of unity and order. It was a time fraught with tragedy. Civilization, like a gigantic tree whose foliage had overarched the world and whose branches had borne the golden fruits of art and science and literature, stood tottering, its trunk no longer alive with the flowering sap of devotion and reverence, but rotted to the core, driven by the storms of war, and held together only by the cords of ancient customs and laws, that might snap at any moment. Was there any emotional culture that could be brought in to gather mankind once more into unity and to save civilization ? This culture must be something of a new type, for the old sanctions and ceremonials were dead, and to build up others of the same kind would be the work of centuries.”

The life and character of Muhammad (peace be upon him) is to be understood and appreciated with this background.

A Diamond among Stones :

Muhammad (peace be upon him) was from the very beginning totally different in behaviour and character from other children of his age. He never indulged in frivolities that were prevalent in the society. On the other hand, he never told a lie even before he became a prophet. He never betrayed a trust laid in him and thus earned the title of *Al-amin*—the Trusted—from of his own people. He was contemplative by nature and used to meditate deeply over the condition of his own people and to devise ways and means for the amelioration of their lot. But he was helpless and could do little to improve things. Despite these limitations and difficulties he never missed an opportunity. For instance, he was instrumental in bringing about a Society known as *Halful Fuzul* in order to redress the grievances of the weak against the strong. He was also responsible in avoiding bloodshed between the various tribes of Mecca over the question of replacement of the Black Stone in its position by asking the four important representatives of various tribes to hold the four corners of the sheet in which he had put the Black Stone.

On account of his reputation as an honest man and also for possessing some experience of carrying on trade in foreign lands, he was entrusted with the management of the business of a rich widow, named Khadija, whom he married at her own request at the age of twentyfive, while she was of forty years of age. His marriage to Khadija, a comparatively old lady, shows his attitude towards a comfortably settled homely life and not indulgence in sexual activity. He lead a monogamous life so long as Lady Khadija was alive.

No doubt his marriage with Khadija gave him some stability in his domestic life and provided him with some material comforts, yet he had no means to bring about a moral regeneration among his people. It was at the age of forty that he was appointed as Prophet to preach the creed of the unity of God to his people steeped in the worst types of polytheistic practices. The degradation of man reached such an abyss that he became a suppliant of his own creation.

Although Muhammad (peace be upon him) was born in the noblest and the influential family of the Quraish, yet dynastic support did not avail him in the least in achieving his object, because the most vehement opposition came from the very people, the Quraish. It was the Quraish who were the custodians of the Ka'aba, where 365 idols were placed and where people from all parts of Arabia flocked on the occasion of the annual pilgrimage to present their offerings. This annual gathering was a source of livelihood to the Quraish. Any preaching in favour of the Unity of God meant the displacement of these idols from the sacred house of Ka'aba, where even human sacrifices were made at the altar of these stone-made.

idols. It thus constituted a blow to the economy of the ruling tribe of the Quraish. Hence the vehement opposition of the whole tribe, who were most influential not only in Mecca but throughout Arabia. Therefore, the task before Muhammad (peace be upon him) was an uphill one so far as reforms of any kind were concerned. The preaching of the message of *Tauheed*—Unity of God—affected every aspect of Arab life and was meant to bring about the greatest revolution in the history of mankind. On account of this opposition by the Quraish, the mission of Holy Prophet gained support, only very slowly and gradually. The first fruits of his labour included his own wife, Khadija, his cousin Hazrat Ali, who was living with him, his own slave Hazrat Zaid and his bosom friend Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddiq. As Muhammad (peace be upon him) was intimately known to these people, they had no hesitation in believing what he preached. Gradually others also came to his fold; but untold and unbearable persecutions were heaped on all these new converts. Some of them were allowed to migrate to Abyssinia where they were provided protection by the Abyssinian king, Negus, who was a just ruler and was favourably inclined towards the teachings of Islam.

Those who stayed at home, including the Holy Prophet himself, were persecuted beyond description by the Quraish at Mecca. So much so, when the Holy Prophet did not cease preaching, he and the whole family of Banu Hashim were besieged in a cave; and economic boycott was launched against them to such extremes that they had to suffer the utmost severities, which lasted for three years. But then, the Holy Prophet had to sustain two great shocks of his life—the death of his only protector against the Quraish, *i.e.*, his uncle Abu Talib and his dear and influential wife, Khadija. When there was no hope left at Mecca for further preaching, Muhammad (peace be upon him) set out for Taif, but there, too, he met with utmost opposition. He was not allowed to preach, and was pelted and jeered at by the rabble of the town. He returned to Mecca disappointed, but continued his mission with increased dedication.

When the Holy Prophet became certain that the deep-rooted antagonism of the pagans of Mecca would not allow his mission to flourish there, he made up his mind to migrate to Yathrab, later called Medina. About two years before his migration, the Holy Prophet had obtained an oath of loyalty from the few Medinite converts to Islam who pledged to assist and protect the Holy Prophet. A few months before the actual migration, the believers of Medina (and by now their number had risen to seventy-two) pledged to assist him, lend a helping hand in the cause of Islam, and follow the teachings of the Holy Prophet.

This was the first significant political success of the Holy Prophet against his foes. The Holy Prophet knew very well that the pagans of Mecca were not only hostile to Islam but had become the deadliest enemies of his person as well, and he was well aware that even if he succeeded in migrating from Mecca unhurt, they would spare no pains to exterminate him and his followers. He knew that they would follow him, fight with him in Medina and would not rest content until they succeeded in putting an end to his life and that of his followers. In this perspective it becomes clear that a pledge like the one contracted at 'Aqaba was a must for the Holy Prophet before he could say good-bye to Mecca, the city of his birth. It testifies to the political wisdom of the Holy Prophet that he realized the situation clearly and discovered the right course that he should follow.

Although the Holy Prophet left Mecca under the most perilous circumstances and his life was faced with imminent danger from his enemies, his conduct bears witness to the depth of his moral sensitivity and his love of righteousness. Before departure he instructed his cousin, Ali, to spend the night in his bed and to return all the things which had been entrusted to this Trustworthy (Al-Amin) son of the Quraish to the depositors, the members of a community which now thirsted for his blood. Ali did accordingly and even this paramount act of honesty did not quite mollify their anger. It was naturally assumed that as long as the Holy Prophet himself was alive, the message of Islam, which appeared to them as menacing, would continue to spread. Therefore, they began to chase the Holy Prophet and fixed a high prize on his capture or assassination. Protected by Allah, the Holy Prophet succeeded in reaching Medina safe and unhurt.

The tasks that awaited the Holy Prophet in Medina were indeed of colossal magnitude. The first of these was to integrate and consolidate the Muslim community. Then there was the task of contracting pacts of amity and friendship and treaties of mutual security with the Jews of Medina and other non-Muslim communities. All this was essential for the protection of the nascent Muslim community and for the propagation of Islam throughout the world. This was an uphill task, because of the anarchic conditions of the Medinite Arab society. Aws and Khazraj were divided into some twelve tribes, and the Jews into ten clans, all of them overwhelmed with centuries-old traditions of unending tribal feuds. This continuous internecine bloodshed had made people weary of the situation and they longed for a change. Shortly before the arrival of the Holy Prophet, a large section of the Medinites had decided to crown Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul as their ruler. No it is true that on

the occasion of the Pledge of 'Aqaba' the Holy Prophet had nominated twelve leaders (*naqebbs*) for the twelve Arab clans of Medina and had thus made an attempt to unify them. Nevertheless, each tribe was fully autonomous and sovereign in respect of its internal affairs and there was no administrative machinery binding all these tribes together. As a result of the efforts of trained Muslim preachers a considerable number of Medinites had embraced Islam. But Islam as yet had not assumed any political significance.

Career at Medina.

The Holy Prophet started his career in Medina at a time when the following matters required his immediate attention :

- (1) Constitutional provision as to the rights and duties of the Muhajireen (Emigrants) and the local population ;
- (2) The rehabilitation of the *Muhajireen* in Medina ;
- (3) Agreement with the non-Muslims, particularly with the Jews of Medina ;
- (4) Arrangement for the administration and defence of Medina ;
- (5) Compensation to the Emigrants for their losses.

It was in view of these problems that a few months after his arrival in Medina the Holy Prophet drew up a charter which meant in effect that Medina had now acquired the status of a full fledged city-state for which a constitution had to be framed.

The Holy Prophet made tremendous efforts to bring about unity and integration among the disorganized and disunited Arabs in general and the Medinites in particular, who were averse to submitting to any central authority, by giving them one Law, one Ruler, belief in one God, and praying in one and the same direction. The Charter of Medina was a revolutionary step in so far as securing one's right ceased to be the concern of an individual or of his clan. It became a common public concern. This brought tribal anarchy to an end and gave birth to a state in the right sense of the term.

According to the provisions of this Charter, the paramount judicial, legislative, military and executive power was vested in the Prophet. There was, however, a big difference between the Holy Prophet and other rulers. The former had no material interest whatsoever. On the contrary, his politics was animated with the loftiest moral idealism. In the structure of the polity erected by the Prophet, sovereignty vested in God, and the Holy Prophet was merely

His Viceroy, who had to enforce the Law of God on himself as much as on others.

The Charter may be divided into two parts. The first part comprising twenty-three clauses, is related to matters concerning the Muslims comprising the *Muhajireen* and the *Ansar* (Helpers). The other part deals with the rights and duties of the Non-Muslims, particularly Jews of Medina. The Charter clearly laid down that the Holy Prophet would be the final authority and the last court of appeal. So far as the Muhajireen and the Ansar were concerned, they naturally could have no objection to such a provision. But to have the Jews, who were culturally superior to the Arabs, accept this provision was a masterpiece of the Holy Prophet's political acumen and statesmanship.

The defence and security of Medina required that apart from inner consolidation, there should also develop friendship among the neighbouring tribes. Hence, we find the Holy Prophet frequently visiting the western regions bordering the coastal area and contracting treaties with tribes who became allies for purposes of mutual defence. In certain treaties the other party agreed not to have friendship with the enemies of the Holy Prophet. In short, no efforts were spared to minimise the hostility and maximise the friendship of the tribes surrounding Medina.

The persecution and tortures suffered by the Holy Prophet and his companions at the hands of the Quraish, who compelled them to migrate from Mecca, are well known. It is also known on all hands that after driving the believers away from their homeland, the Quraish also forfeited the property they had left behind in Mecca. It is also an accepted fact that commerce and trade were the main source of income of the Quraish. They used to lead trade caravans to Yemen in the South during the winter and to Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Mesopotamia (situated in the north) during the summer. The trade route to the North passed close to Medina. We have already seen that soon after Hijrat the Holy Prophet contracted alliances with the tribes of this region. When this policy of alliance had succeeded to some extent, the Holy Prophet closed the trade route of the Quraishite caravans with the result that the Quraish had to give up the use of the coastal trade route and had to go to Mesopotamia through the deserts. But soon the Holy Prophet's influence spread up to Nejd and this deprived the Quraish of that route as well.

The Quraish used to import food stuffs from Bahrein and Yemen. When these areas came under the predominant influence of Islam, the export of food stuffs from there to the Quraish was stopped. The economic blockade proved one of the most power-

ful weapons in breaking down the resistance of the Quraish to the Holy Prophet.

Another important measure that was adopted by the Holy Prophet was to alienate the tribes friendly to the Quraish and to persuade them to contract friendship and alliance with Muslims. The process, though slow, also proved effective.

After making these arrangements for the internal pacification of Medina, the Holy Prophet succeeded in securing a great and decisive victory over the Quraish in the battle of Badr. This almost broke their backbone. Although after the initial victory, Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his followers got a reverse at Uhud, yet the latter succeeded in warding off all subsequent attacks upon Medina by the Quraish.

In this connection the most outstanding achievement is the Treaty of Hudaibiyah (6. A.H.). In Medina, Muslims were facing dangers from two sources : from Khaybar in the north and Mecca in the south. The Muslims could not fight on two fronts at the same time. It was essential, therefore, that the Quraish of Mecca and the Jews of Khaybar be prevented from developing friendly relations and their common animosity towards the Holy Prophet should not be allowed to emerge in a united front. It was also feared that if the Muslims attacked Khaybar, the Quraish might utilize this opportunity for attacking Mecca. Likewise, if the Muslims attacked Mecca, there was the danger that the Jews of Khaybar might attack Medina.

It was indeed creditable that by means of the treaty of Hudaibiyah, the Holy Prophet persuaded the Quraish to remain neutral in wars between the Muslims and others in lieu of the latter opening the trade route of the Quraish. Moreover, the treaty envisaged peaceful relations between the Muslims and the Quraish for the next ten years. This was a big political victory for the Muslims in so far as the only power that could have possibly assisted the Quraish against the Muslims were the Jews of Khaybar who had now been alienated from them. This had isolated the Quraish and had rendered them friendless.

It were these considerations which had obliged the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to sign an overtly humiliating treaty with the Quraish, which was objected to even by the great companion Umar bin al-Khattab. But the true significance of the treaty of Hudaibiyah was known to the Prophet and his God, who immediately after that revealed a Quranic verse, describing the treaty as a 'Manifest Victory.' On account of this treaty, peace was established and an atmosphere of cordiality and amity prevailed throughout Arabia. This peaceful atmosphere and the close contact between

the Muslims and the Quraish gave an opportunity to the Prophet to strive for the rapid spread of Islam.

The net result of all these measures was not only that the Holy Prophet succeeded in isolating the Quraish but also that he put an end to the machinations of the Jews by the conquest of Khaybar. And when the Quraish violated one of the clauses of the treaty of Hudaibiyah and paid no heed to the demands made by the Holy Prophet according to the treaty itself, he renounced the treaty for the Quraish's violation of it, and was successful in the conquest of Mecca and the kingdom of God was established over almost the whole of the Arabian peninsula. At the time of the conquest of Mecca, the Holy Prophet was in a position to plunder and destroy the city, if he wanted to do so, and to avenge himself the Quraish for the losses that had been sustained by himself and his Companions. At least he could easily have restored to the Muhajirs their properties which had been confiscated by the Quraish. But the Prophet of Islam refrained from all such acts. On the contrary, he pardoned even his worst enemies. This unparalleled magnanimity had such a tremendous impact on the Quraish that they embraced Islam, *en masse*.

The Greatest Revolutions

Beginning as a preacher of the religion of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) brought about the greatest revolution in the history of mankind. And this was so, because he did not merely preach, he established an ideal Islamic State and translated the ideal into the real. He not only succeeded in warding off all attacks upon Medina from the hostile tribes of Quraish, but ultimately succeeded in conquering the whole of Arabia. Almost all the Arabs embraced Islam; and thus the Holy Prophet succeeded in accomplishing his mission in his own lifetime. Not only did he accomplish this unparalleled success but trained thousands of his Companions for continuing his mission after him throughout the Universe. An idea of his impact on history can be had from the evidence given by even non-Muslim historians and thinkers.

As prophet and reformer of his people the Prophet, Muhammad could not be otherwise than revolutionary in the fullest sense of the word; for his religious teaching introduced not only a complete change in the political situation but also had an equally important bearing on the social conditions. During the ten years the Holy Prophet Muhammad presided over the commonwealth of Islam at Medina, a great change had come over the character of the Arab people—a congeries of warring tribes and clans were rapidly consolidated into a nation under the influence of one ideology.

On the emergence of Islam the tribal organization of the Arabs, the decentralized rule of the Shaikhs in the desert regions and that of small princes and chieftains in the more fertile areas gave place to a powerful central government with a single legal, moral and religious brotherhood, which transcended geographical boundaries and racial or linguistic differences.

In a nutshell, the picture of Arabia at the death of the Prophet is the picture of a land greatly convulsed by the flux of tremendous new ideas. These ideas brought about profound changes in the immediate period in his companions.

None of the earlier prophets had met such bitter and concerted opposition in his mission, as did Muhammad (peace be upon him), and yet come out victorious and see the fruitage of his labour ripening in his own lifetime. It is not the miracles and the like that convince people, but the personal integrity and character of the leader himself—his day-to-day life, both public and private; fidelity to pledges and undertakings; sympathy, charity, benevolence, forgiveness towards friends and the foes alike; love and compassion for the lowly, down-trodden, bereaved, and the lonely; unification of men into one integral whole by obliterating all distinctions of caste and colour, religion and nationality, poverty and wealth—for the establishment of a real Kingdom of God of which Jesus Christ (peace be upon him) dreamed but could not materialize. Look at his behaviour at the conquest of Mecca, when the haughty city lay at his feet—the city that not only persecuted him and his followers, but drove them out of her doors in an utterly helpless condition, and not satisfied with that, threatened and menaced their very existence in the far-off town of Medina. What did he do? Did he punish his enemies, forfeit their lives and property, let his troops loots on the unarmed men and women to loot and commit all sins and crimes, or set the town on flames? Not the least. Quite the contrary, he extended a complete, universal amnesty, even to Hinda, the wife of Abu Sufyan his implacable enemy—the violator of the corpse of his uncle Hazrat Hamza. The prostrate foe of yesterday lay at his mercy, apprehending the deserving punishment. But the magnanimity of Muhammad's heart could not do otherwise than to forget and forgive all that they did and, he and his followers suffered. Not to talk of bloodshed, even a finger of the enemy was not pricked. Look, re-read his sermon on the occasion of the Last Pilgrimage. No prophet of yore, no conqueror, however great, no administrator however wise and just, could grant such a Charter of Human Rights, that humanity is yearning to enjoy and the U.N.O. is vicariously trying to implement it today. It was this character, the noblest one that humanity could ever produce, that made Muhamad

mad (peace be upon him), for veritable and undoubted benefactor of the human race, a reader *par excellence*, who, from a fatherless orphan, a persecuted refugee, a reviled prophet, rose to the highest pinnacle of human perfection as a leader, a builder of a nation that not only laid the foundations of our modern civilization, but created the empires like of which is yet unknown. He converted brutes into men and made men divine. It is this benevolence of that illustrious hero who commands respect from friend and foe alike, and it is that hero at whose august feet humanity is obliged to lay the wreath of gratitude for making this earth a veritable Abode of Bliss for the persecuted, exploited, suffering, and enslaved children of Adam for the untold centuries.

— Dr. Amir Hasan Siddiqi

“YOU TAKE WITH YOU, ME, MUHAMMAD...”

When the spoils of war were being distributed among the Muslim warriors, some of the Medinite Ansar felt that the Meccan Muhajirs and their Bedouin allies had been more generously treated. There were whispers of dissatisfaction. These were eventually carried to Muhammad. He assembled the Medinites together and spoke, “O’ men of Ansar, is it not true that you were in dark and through me God guided you towards light?” The Ansar replied, “Verily, God and His Prophet did us a great favour”. Then he said, “Were you not torn by enmities and hostilities among yourselves and did I not give you unity and peace?” They said, “Verily, we are indebted to you for many favours”. Then he said, “Were you not poor and God through me made you rich?” They said, “Verily, God and His Prophet have been kind to us”. Then he said, “You can say to me in reply, ‘We accepted your word when all others rejected it, we gave you shelter when there was none to stand by you ; we gave you aid when you were helpless ; and, if you say this to me, O’ men of Ansar, I shall add my affirmation to your words and testify to their truth. So, O’ men of Ansar, make your choice. Would not you prefer that the others take with them the goats and the camels and whatever else has fallen to our lot in this battle and you take with you instead, me, Muhammad to be with you for the rest of my days”.

On hearing his words, it is related, the Ansar wept and their beards were drenched in tears.

Chapter IV

Chronology of Events

From Birth to the Days of Hira

22nd April, 571 A.D.	Birth of Muhammad.
A week later	Entrusted to nurse Halima.
Five years later	Returned to his mother, Amina.
Six years later	Death of Amina.
Eight years later	Death of Abdul Muttalib, Grandfather.
Twelve years later	First journey to Syria.
Twenty-five years later	Marriage with Khadija
Thirty years later	Given the title of "Tursted One".
Thirty five years later	Made arbitrator by the Tribes.
Thirty-seven years later	Meditation in the cave of Hira.

Prophet Hood

At the age of forty	Revelation.
Three years later	Forty men and women embrace Islam.
Five years later	Muslims' migration to Abyssinia.
Six years later	Hamza and Umar embrace Islam.
Seven years later	Social boycott by the Quraysh and enforced stay in Shib-Abi-Talib.
Ten years later	End of social boycott.
	Death of Abu Talib.
	Death of Khadija.
	Journey to Taif.
	Marriage with Aisha.
Eleven years later	Six Medinites embrace Islam.
Twelve years later	Twelve more Medinites embrace Islam.
Thirteen years later	Seventytwo Medinites embrace Islam.

From Hijra to Death

At the age of fifty-three years	Hijra (Migration) to Medina
One year later	Organization of civic life of Medina and the promulgation of the constitution of the city State.
Two years later	The encounter at Badr.
Three years later	The encounter of Uhud.
Four years later	The treason of Bani Amr and the assassination of Muslim Missionaries.
Five years later	The encounter at the Trench or Khandaq.
Six years later	The Treaty of Hudaibiyya.
Seven years later	Messages to Kings and chiefs. The expedition to Khaybar
Eight years later	The expedition to Muta. The entry into Mecca and the episode at Hunayn.
Nine years later	March towards Tabuk. Tribal deputations. Muslims perform Hajj.
Ten years later	The last pilgrimage and the last sermon.
Eleven years later	Sickness and death (peace be on him)

— From the Benefactor

Chapter V

The Years of Strife and Strain

A Resume of Muhammad in Mecca

The holy month of Ramadan was drawing to a close. One day Muhammad came home from the Hira, strangely troubled, his great eyes dilated in wonder. "Cover me up, Khadija cover me up!" he said, in feverish agitation, as he lay prostrate on the floor.

After a while, he became calmer and spoke thus, "A strange vision appeared to me in the cave of Hira tonight. The vision said, 'I am the angel Gabriel, sent by God'. Then he ordered me to read. 'I am unlettered', I said. Upon this he clasped me to his bosom and held me firmly. Then he let me go and again asked me to read. I gave the same answer. He clasped me once again, and once again he asked me to read. And embracing me the third time, he chanted, 'Read in the name of the Lord, the Creator of all things. He created man from a clot of blood. Read: Full of magnificence is thy Lord who made the pen the vehicle of knowledge and taught man what he knew not'. Suddenly the words came alive to me; my limbs were all a-tremble and I feared for my life.

Khadija was sorely worried at first, seeing him in this state, but soon regained her composure and comforted him. 'Fear not, my noble one', she said, "...but rejoice. God will not forsake you in this affair nor expose you to shame. For you are good and kind and truthful. You are hospitable to the passing stranger, you aid and comfort the poor and the lowly, and support the virtuous in righteous deeds".

For many, many days after this, Muhammad secluded himself in the cave, thirsting after the glorious vision he had seen, a changed man after the wondrous experience he had known. After much waiting the Angel appeared again and spoke, "O, thou wrapped up in thy mantle! Arise, and warn the people of God's punishment in store".

This time the message did not trouble Muhammad's heart. He was now serene in the knowledge of his mission, the new responsibility laid upon him.

So he came home and told Khadija of the divine commandments revealed to him.

Khadija, without a moment's hesitation, accepted the truth of his words and the message he now proclaimed. She thus became the first follower of Muhammad. Thus began the new religion which latter came to be known as Islam. Muhammad's friend Abu Bakr, his cousin Ali, and his freed man, Zayd, were the next to vow allegiance to his words. These three had known him intimately and for a long time. His life and character were to them an open book without any secrets or ambiguities. Because of this intimacy they had implicit faith in his honesty and truthfulness. He had merely to say the word and they forsook the religion of their ancestors and bade ungrudging farewell to their beloved gods.

After this, quietly and unobtrusively, Muhammad went round preaching, relating to whomsoever would listen or seemed likely to accept, the message and the commandments he had received. Thus three years passed. These three years produced only forty followers for his faith. These forty are known as "the First and Foremost".

The Clarion Call

Then one day the message came, "Whatever is commanded and ordained, proclaim it openly. Let truth be known from falsehood. Pay no heed to those who revile and reject. Be gentle to those who believe and proclaim to all, 'verily I, (Muhammad) have been sent to warn you of the retribution in store'".

So Muhammad climbed the hill of Safa and called out to the people of Mecca. When a goodly crowd had collected, he first of all swore to his own truthfulness and good faith. Then he asked them to abjure false gods, to worship no one except the One true God, to abstain from promiscuity and lewdness, to live in purity and virtue, to treat one another with kindness and consideration, to forsake all superstitions and all pagan practices.

The people of Mecca listened to him with growing anger; they shouted abuses at him when he insulted their gods. Muhammad's uncle Abu Lahab was particularly harsh in his words. By and large the Quraysh paid little heed to his words, nor did they give them two much importance. They dismissed his sermon as the passing whim of a man temporarily obsessed.

It was now the fortieth year of Muhammad's life. Apart from the years of infancy, he had spent the rest of his time in great mental agony searching and groping for the truth which eluded his people, for the path that would lead to their salvation. The truth had come to him at last and the path was revealed. Henceforth he devoted

every moment of the years left to him to ceaseless sacrifice and endeavour in the cause of his new-found truth.

His Preaching at Ukkaz

Every year in the suburbs of Mecca, a great fair was held and all the Arab clans gathered for the occasion. This was the celebrated fair of Ukkaz. There was much buying and selling during the fair, a great display of martial sports, of horsemanship, swordsmanship, wrestling and other feats. Eloquent orators and famous bards entertained rapturous audiences with tales of prowess in prose and verse, stirring tales of bloodshed and war, licentious tales of wine and women and song. The fair was in fact an occasion for boisterous revelry and un-restrained orgies. After the revelries were over and the fair ended, the Arabs would come to the Ka'ba and walk round the holy edifice ceremonially. Before the message was revealed to him, Muhammad had studiously kept away from this fair. But now that he was commanded to proclaim his new creed he went to the fair, stood wherever people collected and preached. The crowd laughed at him, mocked and jeered. He bore it all patiently and without anger and whenever he could obtain a little respite, he would begin his preaching all over again. He did the same during the day of the great annual pilgrimage to Mecca—the Hajj, as it is called, to a similar gathering of clans.

Trial and Tribulation

Muhammad's uncles, Abu Lahab and Abu Jahl, and other chiefs of the Quraysh were now getting a little tired of his persistence. They would incite crowds of little urchins to follow at his heels, to laugh and shout and tease and make a din to drown his words. Abu Lahab would go round telling people, "This poor nephew of mine has gone off his head. Don't listen to his fantasies". And other people would go round whispering, "This man who goes about calling himself a prophet of God must verily be a mad-man because his own uncle says so".

In spite of the mockings and jeers and slanders of the leaders of Mecca, Muhammad's mission prospered, and more and more people entered into the fold. This really infuriated Abu Lahab and his friends and from mere insulting words, they now descended to active mischief. They would throw dirt on Muhammad's meek head as he passed, strew thorns in his path under his naked feet, bespatter him with offal and excrement. One day, one of his persecutors threw a sheet round his neck and twisted it so hard that Muhammad was nearly strangled to death. His friend, Abu Bakr, who happened to be passing by rescued him with great difficulty saying, "What is the crime of this good man that you should want to

kill him? His only crime is that he enjoins you to worship one God and to abjure false gods". At this the crowd let Muhammad go but fell on Abu Bakr and belaboured him so hard that he lost consciousness.

As the number of Muhammad's followers increased so did the malice and the cruelty of their persecutors. They would drag a victim out into the scorching heat of the mid-day sun, lay him down on the burning sand and then pile heavy stones on his chest or back and keep him prostrate. They would sew up a man inside the raw skin of a newly-killed animal and throw him out to rote in the sun. Or they would put chains or ropes round the necks or feet of others and drag them through the streets. But all these atrocities proved of no avail. None of the believers either renounced his creed or foreswore his oath; not one of them wavered or faltered.

And then the Quraysh realised that Muhammad's movement was not a passing disturbance or a trivial upheaval but the beginning of a tremendous revolution—a revolution which seemed to hold dire prospects for these men of privilege, and the ways to which they were accustomed. This movement proclaimed, they said to themselves, that there is only one God, supreme and omnipotent, the sole Judge and Arbiter of all human destinies. If our people accept this, it will be the end of our ancestral privileges, our tribal deities, our wealth and influence which these things bring. This movement proclaims that all men are equal and all men are brothers. If our people accept this, they thought to themselves, this will be the end of the distinction of birth and blood, of our tribal sagas, the end of the very hallmark of Arabhood, namely, tribal pride. This movement proclaims that there should be no untrammelled indulgence of the flesh, no licentious pleasures, no orgies, and no revelries. This would be the end, they thought to themselves, of every thing which makes life colourful and desirable. What joy would life hold without the pleasures that Muhammad abhors? A life tasteless, cheerless and barren! What a multiplicity of losses and deprivations was here, thought the Quraysh, the loss of our gods, the loss of our tribal relationships, the loss of our wealth, the loss of our pleasures. The danger, they realised, was too serious to be ignored. They finally resolved, therefore, to crush and snuff out the movement Muhammad had begun.

They had already tried threats and persecution without success. Now they planned to murder Muhammad. This plan, too, ran into difficulties. According to the unwritten code of the Arabs a clansman's life was sacred to the whole clan and no one would deliberately stain his hands with the blood of a kinsman,

The unflinching faith

So they decided to appeal to Abu Talib, who still professed their religion, and was greatly respected in the community, to restrain his nephew. They came to Abu Talib in a deputation and pleaded with him. Abu Talib listened to them politely and promised to convey their message to his nephew. Then he sent for Muhammad and told him gently and affectionately what he had heard. The man of God made no reply but continued with his work and his preaching as zealously and persistently as before. The chiefs of Mecca met again and sent another deputation to Abu Talib. They said, "The cup of our patience is filled to overflowing. Your nephew continues to revile our ancestors, to insult our gods, and to incite the people against us. We have borne it long enough but we shall bear it no longer. Either you restrain him or we are resolved that his side or our side will perish". Abu Talib was greatly worried by this threat. He knew that the Quraysh were true to their word and once they resolved on something, however rash, there was no holdings them back. So he sent for Muhammad and said to him in a sad voice, "O, beloved of thine uncle, don't put upon me a burden which I may not be able to bear". Muhammad understood at once. He realised that his uncle was unable to help and protect him any longer and wanted to be absolved of his responsibility. Gently but firmly he answered, "mine uncle, if these people bring me the sun and place it in my right hand and bring me the moon and place it in my left, it would not step me from my mission until God fulfils it for me or destorys me in the process". As he said this, his eyes were filled with tears and he got up to go. But Abu Talib called him back and said, "Don't be grieved, my nephew. Do as you think best and I shall not forsake you".

When it became clear to the Quraysh that Abu Talib would not forsake his nephew, because he was much attached to him, they decided to find someone equally deserving to replace Muhammad in his affections. So they chose Ammara son of Mughira, one of the best-looking and most accomplished youths in Mecca, and took him to Abu Talib. "We present you with this goodly youth, Abu Talib," they said, "take him for your son and give us your nephew Muhammad". "I give you my nephew," said Abu Talib, "and you will him. And you bring me your relative and I rear him and bring up! What sort of a bargain is this, my kinsmen"? The Quraysh had no answer to this and came away discomfited.

To Abyssinia

Muhammad observed daily the cruelties and hardships visited on his followers and his heart was sorely troubled. At last he advised them to leave their homes and migrate to Abyssinia. With

his permission a caravan of eleven men and four women was formed and left for Abyssinia in secret. When the Quraysh learned of this move, they sent their men in pursuit, but the Muslims had a long start and could not be overtaken. This infuriated the malicious ones among the Quraysh. They collected gifts for the king of Abyssinia, formed a deputation and sent it to the king to persuade him to deliver the emigrants into their hands.

In due course this deputation stood in the presence of the king and addressed him thus, "O' king, the misled and the mischievous from our people have set their faces against the religion of their ancestors and come to your kingdom for refuge. If they had accepted your religion we should have let them be. But they have not done even that. They have invented a new religion of their own which neither you nor we can comprehend. O' mighty king, the chiefs and elders of the Meccan Quraysh have sent us to you with the prayer that you hand these people back to us".

Jaffar Addresses

The king listened to this representation. Then he sent for the refugees from Mecca and asked them what they had to say. Jaffar the son of Abu Talib and the brother of Ali stood forth and made reply, "O' king, we belong to a people steeped in ignorance. Our fathers and grandfathers worshipped idols. They ate carrion and other things unclean. They gambled and fornicated and indulged in other sins. They knew no pity, nor compassion nor human sympathy. They oppressed and persecuted the weak and the helpless. They robbed and killed without compunction. For centuries our people lived thus and then God in his mercy sent us the light. From among these cruel and headstrong people, He deputed a man to be His prophet and His messenger. This man was already known to his people as the 'Trusted One' and everyone bore testimony to the purity of his conduct, the goodness of his ways and the nobility of his birth. This man spoke to us of One God and appealed to us to worship no one but Him. We listened to his appeal and accepted it. We vowed that we would renounce all false deities and idols and worship the One True God. He taught us to be honest, kind, compassionate and just, and we obeyed his teachings. He said, 'Kill no one without cause, rob no one of his belongings, hurt no one nor humiliate him', and we acted accordingly. He said, 'Falsehood, cheating, deceitfulness and double dealing are sins', and we abstained from these sins. 'Do not slander innocent women,' he said, and we sealed our lips. 'Do not steal', he said, 'nor deprive the orphans of their property,' and we renounced these ill-gotten gains. He told us to be righteous, to fear God and to obey God's commandments. So

Jaffar, nick-named Taiyar, paused for a few seconds and then continued, "O' king, we affirmed our loyalty to this apostle, we believed in him and carried out his commands. Our lives were completely and miraculously changed. We repented of all our vices and our sins and began a life of righteousness and piety. This so angered our countrymen that they persecuted and tortured us in many fearful ways. They made our lives a burden merely because we chose the right path and refused to go along with them in their ignorance. These people demanded that we should renounce our new faith and once again revert to idolatry. They insisted that we should forswear our new-found goodness, purity, truthfulness and honesty and resume once again our old sinful ways. We refused. We refused to give up our faith and our enemies refused to give up their persecution. When their brutalities exceeded all limits and our lives were in peril, reluctantly we bade farewell to our dear land, and decided to emigrate. We looked around for an hospitable land that would accept us as refugees and for a humane and just king who would give us shelter. Our hearts chose you, O' king, and we have come to your kingdom for refuge. We are certain that you will extend to us the mercy for which you are known, save us from unmerited oppression and give us justice".

Thus an illiterate follower of an unlettered leader, who had never attended school, who had read no book nor seen a king, stood in front of a mighty emperor and addressed him in words so well reasoned, so eloquent and so moving that the king was greatly impressed. He returned the gifts brought by the leaders of Mecca and said to them, "I did not bribe God to obtain this kingdom and I will take no bribes to do his creatures injustice. I will not hand over to you these innocent men and women who have come to me for shelter".

Empty-handed and humbled the deputation from Mecca returned home and the leaders of Quraysh grashed their teeth in anger. When the Muslims heard of what had transpired, many more of them prepared to leave and the following year more than one hundred families went to settle in Abyssinia. This was the sixth year of Muhammad's apostolic career. During the same year two notable chiefs of the Quraysh, Hamza and Umar, embraced Islam. The day they did so, the Muslims felt so elated that they offered their prayers openly and in congregation.

Temptations offered

The Meccans, having failed to obtain redress from Abu Talib and other quarters, now decided to make a direct effort of their own. The most eminent amongst them gathered together and sent

for Muhammad. Their spokesman said "O" Muhammad, we want to talk to you. Listen to what we have to say, for, by all the gods, we know of no other Arab who has brought so much affliction to his people. You have sown dissensions among us, disrupted our unity and brought sorrow to us all. If you have created this upheaval because you want wealth and riches, say so, and we shall make you the richest man in the land. If you want power and authority, tell us and we shall make you our ruler. If there is a beautiful woman who has touched your heart, name her and she shall be yours. And if the angel or messenger that you say comes to you is a 'Jinn', or a spirit, let us know and we shall collect the best sorcerers and medicine men from the length and breadth of Arabia to cure you and to rid you of this evil"

Thus they offered to a poor humble man the best of every thing in their land, but Muhammad calmly replied ; "I want no wealth nor riches. I have no desire to be crowned a king, and no woman has touched my heart. I am not sick nor possessed by an evil spirit. All these things you have talked of concern me not. I am humble servant of God. He has sent me to you as His Apostle. He has revealed to me His Book and He has commanded that I warn you against His wrath if you reject Him, and to bring you against His blessings, if you believe. So I have given you His message and no power on earth will stop me from propagating it. If you listen to me and accept the message, there will be a goodly reward for you in this world and the next. If you reject me I shall be patient and wait for the day when God Himself will settle this dispute between us".

This answer greatly amazed the gathering. All the tribal leaders were sure that all men's labours, all their endeavours must be directed towards some desirable end - wealth, power, or pleasure, but here was this strange man who rejected all this for some unknown goal they could not comprehend.

S o c i a l b y c o t t

The leaders of the Quraysh were now beginning to feel really desperate. They had tried one stratagem after another and none seemed to work. This time they decided upon a scheme which looked almost decisive. They drew up a joint proclamation and hung it upon the walls of the Ka'ba. It read, "It has been agreed that henceforth no one in Mecca shall have any dealings or transact any business with Muhammad Ibn-Abdullah, his family or his followers. No one shall sell food to them nor visit them, nor converse with them. This ban will continue until Muhammad's people hand him over to us to be treated as he deserves".

This social boycott was so rigidly enforced that Muhammad and his followers were forced to leave the town and find shelter in a nearby valley called Shib Abi Talib. It was a period of severe hardship for the Muslims. For days they went without food; water was scarce; infants and children almost died of hunger. The sick and the infirm breathed their last painful breath without succour or sustenance. There was much weeping and wailing in the Muslim camp but there were no betrayers. When the time of the Hajj came round, Muhammad ventured forth into Mecca again and preached to the gathered tribes as before. This went on for three years. And then some of the less stone-hearted among the Quraysh relented and persuaded their fellows to let the Muslims return.

It would be wrong, perhaps, to criticise too harshly these doings of the Meccan leaders. They were, in fact, doing no more than follow the compulsions which beset all individuals or groups in power, the compulsions to resist any threat to their vested interest, their hegemony, their offices, their influence and their wealth, with whatever means they may command and with whatever weapons that come to hand. This threat invariably takes the form of taking away something from the few for the benefit of the many, to restrict the rights of the powerful in order to restore the rights of the powerless. The strife in Mecca, between the leaders of the Quraysh and the followers of Muhammad, was thus the time-honoured struggle between the privileged upholders of the Status quo and the revolutionary advocates of progressive humanism. And the leaders of the Quraysh persisted in their course despite the repeated reverses they met. Since force and temptation had failed, they now attempted diplomacy and conciliation. They went to Abu Talib, Muhammad's benefactor, who was now on his death-bed, worn out with his uneven fight against innumerable odds, and said, "We have brought you one final request. Please, while you are still alive, persuade your nephew to give us but one pledge—that he will not meddle with our faith. In return we pledge that we shall not meddle with his". Abu Talib sent for his nephew and put the proposition before him. Muhammad replied, "I shall agree to anything they say provided they accept but one condition". He had not finished speaking when Abu Jahl loudly intervened, "Yes, yes. We shall accept not one but ten of your conditions provided you agree to what we say". Muhammad said, "My condition is simply this: that you give up the worship of your deities and your idols, that you sincerely accept that there is not god but God. If you do this, you will be the masters of all the Arab lands and the foreigners will bow down before you in humility".

The Quraysh rejected this, of course, and walked away in anger. This was in the tenth year of Muhammad's apostlehood. A

few days after the assembly described above, Muhammad's loving and beloved uncle died. In the same year, a few weeks latter, his wife Khadija also passed away after a tender and faithful association of twenty-five years. Thus Muhammad lost two of his best beloved and nearest ones within the space of a few days. So this year came to be known as the "Year of Sorrow".

Sixty miles from Mecca there is a well-known town called Taif. One day Muhammad want to speak in this town together with his freed slave Zayd. The people of Taif treated him even more brutally than did the men of Mecca. They set their bullies and street urchins after him, who abused and mocked him and pelted him with stones. Wounded and hurt, his hose filled with the blood dripping from his clothes, Muhammad took shelter in an orchard and sitting under the shade of a grape-vine, spoke to his God, "O, God I bring to you my plaint because of my frailty, my helplessness and lack of strength against the persecution of men more powerful than I. O' Merciful God, You are the only Protector of the weak and the helpless. I have no other resort, no other helper but You. Will You hand me over to those who are cruel and unmerciful to me? If I find favour with You, these men and their curelties will not trouble me, Your bounteousness is vast. In the name of the light with which You dispel the darkness of this earth I implore You to bestow upon me Your mercy and to spare me from Your wrath because without Your aid all my efforts will be in vain".

Then he returned to Mecca and continued with his missionary work. His enemies, stung by the obstinate resistance of the Muslims to the frightful pressure put upon them, became harsher and more implacable than ever. And yet the popularity of the new faith steadily grew and in spite of the perils surrounding him, Muhammad continued to visit all the tribes who gathered yearly for the Hajj and to preach more eloquently than ever.

The Light Reaches Madina

In the eleventh year of the Prophet's mission, six pilgrims from a prominent tribe of Yathrib (Madina) the Khazraj, came to Mecca. Meeting them perchance, Muhammad led them to a declivity and there recited to them verses from the Quran, enumerated the blessings of a good and pious life and beckoned them to the fold. It so happened that all of them embraced Islam and when they returned to their native Yathrib, they related their tale, and purveyed the Word to their friends, relatives and fellow citizens. The town was soon agog with stories of the new faith and its wonderful leader. So the ensuing year another twelve pilgrims came to Mecca and made their vows—to abstain from idol-worship, to abstain from curelty.

falsehood and deceit, from promiscuity and lewdness, to lead a righteous life and to believe in One God. This time Muhammad deputed one of his Companions to accompany them to Yathrib and guide the Yathribites to the Path.

This mission succeeded well and the next year a party of seventy-two new Muslim converts from Yathrib came for Hajj. They learnt from Abbas, Muhammad's uncle, who had not yet forsaken the inimical Quraysh, that their Prophet was thinking of leaving Mecca. They immediately presented themselves before him and said, "O' Messenger of God, we are here to listen to whatever you pronounce and to obey whatever you command. We shall give you any pledge you desire to stand by you for ever". On this, Muhammad recited to them some verses from the Quran, spoke to them of God and then said, "Will you give me a pledge that you will always stand by me as you would stand by your own children?" The leader of the Yathribites grasped his hand and said, "We pledge that we shall stand by you as we would stand by our own children". Then Muhammad spoke, "And I pledge that I shall make war on whoever is at war with you and make peace with whoever you make peace with. Your burden shall be my burden and your honour shall be my honour. I pledge that I shall stand by you in life and in death".

The men of Yathrib then went on their way, happy at the pledges thus exchanged.

—Fakir Syed Waheed-ud-din

If Greatness Consists In.....

—*Muhammad is Great*

If, greatness consists in the reformation of a degraded people, who can have a greater claim to greatness than the man who uplifted an entire nation, sunk low as the Arabs were, and made them the torch bearers of civilization and learning? If greatness lies in unifying the discordant elements of society into a harmonious whole, who can have a better title to the distinction than the man who welded together a people like the Arabs, rent into warring tribes with blood feuds extending over generations? Like the sands of the desert, the Arabs lay scattered when the Prophet appeared, and he cemented them into a solid whole. If greatness consists in wiping out superstitious beliefs, evil usage and vice of every sort, the Prophet stands unrivalled for wiping out all these things from Arabia. If it lies in displaying high morals who can be match for one admitted by friend and foe as Al-Amin? If a conqueror is a great man, history cannot point to the like of the Prophet, who rose from a helpless orphan to be a mighty conqueror and king; nay, who founded a great empire that has withstood all these thirteen centuries the united world attempts at its destruction. If the living driving force that a leader commands is the criterion of greatness, the Prophet's name even today exerts a magic charm over four hundred million souls spread all over the world, when it binds together in a strong chord of fraternity, irrespective of caste, colour or country.

— Maulana Mohammad Ali

Chapter VI

LIFE AT MADINAH

- Significance of Hijrah
- When the forces of Islam and Kufr clashed
- The Battle of Uhud
- Encounter at the Trench
- Conquest of Mecca
- Hajjat-ul-wida
- The Last Moments

(1)

The Significance of Hijrah

The Hijrah of the Prophet and his Companions to Madinah heralded an entirely new era in the history not only of Islam but of the world. Thanks to the support offered by the Ansar, the Prophet was able to realise the aim for which he had hitherto striven in vain : the establishment of a theocratic polity, the first of its kind in the world. All organisations on a theocratic or semitheocratic basis before Islam had been limited by narrow conceptions of tribal homogeneity ; thus, in the early theocratic state of the Jews, when God was supposed to rule, it was necessarily the God of the Children of Israel alone. In the structure of Islamic thought, considerations of descent or tribal adherence never had any room ; but the true significance of this attitude was not fully realised until the Hijrah. While the muslims were still in Mecca, Islam affected mostly Quraysh, their slaves or freedmen, and a few individuals from other tribes. To many of the non-Muslim Quraysh it appeared to be no more than a local extravagance, albeit very unpleasant to the conservative mind of the Meccans. But the Hijrah changed everything.

Suddenly it became clear both to Muslims and non-Muslims that Islam aimed at much more than a mere moral re-orientation of man, as was the case with Christianity, or the fulfilment of a national destiny with the help of the moral imperative, as was the case with Judaism : with the migration of the Prophet and his Companions to Hathrib it became clear that Islam aspired, among other things to the establishment of a self contained political community which cut across the conventional divisions of tribe and race. The fire of persecution, endured for more than a decade, had purified and steeled the minds of the Muslims. But more than this : It had helped them to realise that ties of tribal kinship were of no importance as compared with the higher loyalty towards an idea. The new conception of a brotherhood of men united not by bonds of blood relationship but by their consciousness of common outlook on life and common aspirations, found its expression in the Islamic principle of Ummah—an organisation open to every one—of whatever race or colour he be, who stands for the common ideal, and closed to every one, even one's nearest kinsman, in case he refused to accept the same. And more than thirteen centuries before this century of ours, which has elevated the conception of 'Nationality' to the status of godhead, Islam, unfolded before the world the dazzling spectacle of an idealistic—but none the less severely practical—commonwealth which has spiritual as far ahead of any society conceived on 'national' lines as a motorcar is ahead of an oxcart. The Hijrah of the Holy Prophet and his Companions to Madina became the living symbol of this development.

—Muhammad Asad

(2)

When the Forces of Islam and Kufr Clashed

The battle of Badr, when a small army of three hundred scantily armed and ill equipped soldiers of Islam clashed with a horde of one thousand Power drunk, boastful, heavily armed, iron clad Quraish warriors and inflicted on them a crushing defeat is an unforgettable even in our history. Badr ushered in a new era in the history of Islam. It ushered in a period when Islam began to consolidate itself as an ideology, when its feet became firm, and the forces of evil began to realise that they were fighting a losing battle. This battle rather sounded the death knell of the old social order and heralded the birth of a new one promising enlightenment, progress, prosperity and justice.

Badr is also memorable in our history as it vindicated the superiority of spirit over matter and of moral over material strength.

It proved the strength of ideology against brute force. It demonstrated that falsehood can flourish only so long as the devotees of truth remain idle and do not plunge in the field, prepared to stake their all in their crusade to exterminate evil. And above all, it imparted to Muslims the supreme lesson of reliance on the strength of God instead of their own physical prowess or military strength.

The Background

To understand the full significance of the great event, let us recall that the battle took place in the second year of Hijrat (Migration) when Islam had only begun to take its roots as a system of life regulating all departments of human activity: a new Islamic society was just springing up from Medina under the leadership of the greatest son of Adam (peace be on him). The Prophet, hitherto living in Mecca under extremely perilous conditions, hunted everywhere as a fugitive, had now the opportunity to direct the affairs of the small Islamic city state of Medina.

The threat of Islam was therefore becoming more serious and formidable as days and weeks wore off. The threat was now a two fold one, firstly by the rise of a new ideological force, and the other by the strategic importance of Medina, lying as it did on the trade route to Syria and Yemen. In case of hostilities the Muslims had the power to strangle the Meccans economically by blockading their trade, the commercial transactions through which amounted to 2-1/2 lakh guineas annually.

The Quraish were seen with rage against the Prophet. Not only did he preach an ideology alien to the creed of their forefathers and always remained undaunted by all the odds arrayed against him and not only did he 'disrupt' their tribal unity by converting their kith and kin to Islam but he had also given them a severe shock by escaping their well calculated, intelligently hatched plot on his life. Their attempt to excite Abdullah bin Ubi, a chief of Medina to drive these apostates out of their asylum too had been successfully countered by the statesmanship of the Prophet (peace be on him). A Plan was therefore being worked out to wage a war of extermination against Islam. Every effort was being made to vex the Muslims. Only some time before Badr, Kurz bin Jabir, a chief of Quraish had the audacity to rob the Muslims of Medina of their camels from a pasture adjoining to Medina.

Muslim Strategy :

This increasing hostility of the Quraish compelled the Muslims to prepare for the defence of a state wherein the word of God was to reign supreme. The prophet therefore on the one hand entered

into pacts of neutrality with the Jewish tribes living near about the trade route and on the other hand sent small groups of Muhajireen (Refugees), to sound a note of warning to the Quraish. It may however be noted that these batches were never sent with the intention of loot or murder. They were sent simply to indicate how formidable the Muslims could prove if the Quraish dared to attack them.

Preceding Incident :

It was in the 2nd year of Hijrat that a big caravan of Quraish was coming back from Syria, loaded with riches. Abu Sufyan, afraid of being attacked by Muslims, sent words to the Meccan that he and the caravan were under imminent danger of attack from Muhammad and his men. This enraged the whole of Meccans and an army of one thousand strong men with more than six hundred horsemen, burning with the desire to "punish" the Prophet (Peace be on him) started for Medina.

With great pomp and ceremony, they marched towards Medina. And when they halted at Badr they had become aware of the fact that no incident had taken place, and that the Muslim did not molest the caravan. But the haughty Abu Jahl insisted :

"By God we will not return. We will camp at Badr and stay there for three days. We will slaughter camels, feast and drink and musicians will sing to us. And all the Arabs will hear of our exploits, our great gathering and they will never be afraid of us".

The Prophet (peace be on him) therefore felt the necessity of a bold and courageous step to meet the challenge and to submit the dispute of Islam and Kufr to be the arbitration of the sword. He therefore consulted his companions whether they should fight against the army or attack the trade caravan. On this occasion Miqdad bin Amr on behalf of the Muhajireen delivered the following speech :

"O Prophet of God march on as God guideth thee, for we are with thee. By God, we will not say to thee as the Israelities said : 'God thou and thy Lord and fight them and we sit here. But we are with thee and thy Lord. Fight them, we will fight with thee and thy Lord, until even one eyelid of ours is moving'".

But the Prophet continued to ask the same question. Hazrat Sa'd, on behalf of the Ansars assured the Prophet.

"We have believed to thee and confirmed thy truth and we bear witness that what thou hast given (the Quran) is the Truth."

And on this we have given thee our binding promise to hear and to obey. March on as thou intendest for we are with thee. By Him Who has sent thee with the Truth, if thou asketh us to wade through the sea we shall wade through with thee, and not one man of us will remain behind, and we are agreeable to whatever may happen to us on the narrow at the hands of our enemies, for we are patient in war and truthful in our company. Perhaps God will show thee from us what will please thee. By the grace of God, march on with us”.

The inspiring words brightened the Prophet's face, and the Muslim army started its march and after a few days tiresome journey halted at Badr.

The Battle :

The armies were encamped at Badr, a place about 8 miles from Medina. The Prophet had asked his followers not to take the initiative in attack. On the one hand were one thousand Quraysh warriors, equipped with the best arms available in those days, and more than six hundred of whom were horsemen. On the other hand were three hundred Muslims, with only two horses and seventy camels, and almost no armoury.

At such a critical moment the Prophet (Peace be on him) was praying most restlessly, praying from the depths of his heart, with his forehead on the sand.

“O’ God these Quraysh have come with their friends to belie Thy Messenger. O God, we need Thy help which Thou has promised. O’ God, should this small band of ours perish there would be none left to worship Thee”.

The Outcome :

With the help of God, the Muslims vanquished the haughty Quraysh, seventy of whom were slain and seventy other made prisoners of war. The number of Muslim martyre was only 14. Many leaders of the Quraysh Army were put to death. Eleven out of these fourteen Quraysh chiefs who had deliberated to murder the Prophet lay dead in Badr, and the strength of Quraysh brought to the knees. The right of Islam to live in Arabia was established for ever. The backbone of the KUFER was broken and Islam emerged as the triumphant ideology. The battle of Badr not only resulted in the ideological victory of Islam but further gave Muslims the opportunity to demonstrate the blessings of Islam as a culture and a progressive social order.

—Zafar Ishaq Ansari

haste a Muslim party set out in pursuit. The Meccans abandoned their plan and hastened away with the remainder of their men.

—Fakir Syed Wahid-ud-din

(4)

Encounter at the Trench

It was now the fifth year of the Hijra. The Muslims of Medina were still beleaguered on all sides by their enemies - the Jews, the Bedouin tribes and the traitors from Medina. They kept nagging the Muslims with constant raids which were stoutly repelled and petty machinations which were effectively countered.

The Jewish tribes who had been expelled from Medina because of their hostile and treacherous behaviour entrenched themselves in a place called Khaybar and from this strong hold prepared for a decisive battle against the Medinites in collaboration with the Quraysh of Mecca. Two years after the battle of Uhud, they collected a very large army and marched on Medina.

The number of this invading force is variously estimated at something between ten and twentyfour thousand, perhaps the largest single army ever mustered on Arabian soil. When the news reached Medina, Muhammad conferred with his companions once again. One of them, Salman the Persian, proposed that a large trench should be dug around Medina and the Muslims should dig themselves in behind it. This was accepted and Muhammad laboured shoulder to shoulder with the rest of his community, digging and fetching and carrying. Thus this encounter came to be called the Battle of the Trench.

The invading force descended on Medina like an avalanche but failed to subdue the besieged. The Muslims, after transferring their women and children to secure places, manned their fortifications so well that the siege continued for over a month. Food ran out, essential supplies were exhausted, and when the pangs of hunger became unbearable the besieged warriors stilled them by tying stones to their empty stomachs. The armies were effectively separated by the trench around Medina but known champions in arms occasionally challenged each other to single combat. One of them was a famous Arab wrestler named A-bduwudd, reputed to possess the strength of a thousand men. He strutted forth haughtily and dared the Muslims to send a man against him. Ali rode out at once and laid him low with a single stroke.

Mad with anger the invaders launched another furious attack to storm the trench but were thrown back as before. Winter was

approaching; the supplies of the besiegers were also running short and murmurs of discontent arose among their hordes. One night the wind rose and soon gathered into a storm. It uprooted their tents, scattered their provisions, scared their mounts, and, what with the dark and the unusual cold, spread so much terror and confusion in the camp that when the day dawned the siege had been lifted and the invaders dispersed and gone.

For full five years, Muhammad's followers, a mere handful till then, practically lived on the barricades ringed round by enemies. The fortitude with which they withstood it all can only be ascribed to the strength of their conviction.

The encounter at the Trench was the last time that the town of Medina ever faced an invader. After this battle the strength of her enemies was for ever broken.

—Fakir Syed Waheed-ud-din

(5)

Conquest of Mecca

All these eight years Mecca had been the hotbed of intrigues and conspiracies against the Muslims. From whichever quarter in the Peninsula trouble or mischief came, it was aided, abetted, inspired or encouraged by the hard core of Muhammad's Meccan enemies. So the Muslims, their patience worn out at last, decided to pull out this thorn from their side. A large force was accordingly assembled and it marched towards Mecca.

In earlier years when odds against the Muslims community were too overwhelming, they would not willingly venture out from their sanctuary without trepidation. It was different now. Their name and power were already great, so none interfered with them on their march nor tried to bar their way. When they approached the end of their journey and Mecca was a few miles away, they halted and encamped for the night. Muhammad commanded that each group should light a bright fire to give the Meccans an idea of their strength. The Meccans, he hoped, would not give battle once they knew that resistance was hopeless. As always he was anxious to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, and so no blood was shed. The Quraysh gave in. Their redoubtable leader, Abu Sufyan, presented himself before Muhammad as their envoy, and accepted Islam.

When Abu Sufyan returned to Mecca, he made the following proclamation on behalf of the Prophet :

“Whoever takes refuge in the house of Abu Sufyan shall be forgiven”.

haste a Muslim party set out in pursuit. The Meccans abandoned their plan and hastened away with the remainder of their men.

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Conquest of Mecca

All these eight years Mecca had been the hotbed of intrigues and conspiracies against the Muslims. From whichever quarter in the Peninsula trouble or mischief came, it was aided, abetted, inspired or encouraged by the hard core of Muhammad's Meccan enemies. So the Muslims, their patience worn out at last, decided to pull out this thorn from their side. A large force was accordingly assembled and it marched towards Mecca.

In earlier years when odds against the Muslims community were too overwhelming, they would not willingly venture out from their sanctuary without trepidation. It was different now. Their name and power were already great, so none interfered with them on their march nor tried to bar their way. When they approached the end of their journey and Mecca was a few miles away, they halted and encamped for the night. Muhammad commanded that each group should light a bright fire to give the Meccans an idea of their strength. The Meccans, he hoped, would not give battle once they knew that resistance was hopeless. As always he was anxious to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, and so no blood was shed. The Quraysh gave in. Their redoubtable leader, Abu Sufyan, presented himself before Muhammad as their envoy, and accepted Islam.

When Abu Sufyan returned to Mecca, he made the following proclamation on behalf of the Prophet :

“Whoever takes refuge in the house of Abu Sufyan shall be forgiven”.

“Whoever remains indoors and keeps his doors shut shall be forgiven”.

“Whoever enters the Ka’ba shall be forgiven”.

“Whoever goes about his business unarmed shall go in peace”.

No one was forced to change his faith, or made to accept the faith of the conquerors as a precondition for personal security. Everyone was given quarter on one simple condition - peaceful submission.

Then in small groups and from various directions, the triumphant Muslims entered their native city after a banishment lasting for years. Many had lost their nearest and dearest at the hands of the people now completely at their mercy. All of them carried in their hearts bitter memories of cruelty, persecution and pain inflicted by their now humbled enemies. Yet none thought of vengeance or retribution, and none raised his arm against a defenceless foe.

Only in one quarter of Mecca the Quraysh resisted, and the party led by Khalid Ibn Walid was greeted with a shower of arrows. The resistance was soon overcome, and it is said that fifteen to eighteen men of the Quraysh fell in the encounter. When the news was brought to Muhammad, he was grieved. “I wish this had not happened,” he said, “I had strictly forbidden all bloodshed.”

Then he entered the Ka’ba at the head of his people, and with his own hands removed from the house of God, the idols and deities which had long polluted its sanctity. The custody of the keys of the Ka’ba was an office carrying high honour and many prominent Muslims secretly aspired to it. But Muhammad returned the keys to the same man who had them in custody and said, “These keys will stay with your household until the end of time”. The same family has custody of these keys upto the present day.

Then Muhammad rose and spoke :

“There is only One God; He has no equal and no compare. Today, He has fulfilled His promise. He aided His servants and made them triumph over all His enemies.

“It is not lawful for any man who believes in God and His Prophet to shed human blood want only.

“I have today abolished all customs and all rituals of the days of the Jahiliya’ except that arrangements for the distribution of water to the pilgrims from the holy well of Zamzam will continue as before.

"O' men of Quraysh, take heed! God has destroyed your factionalism of the days of 'Jahiliya' and your pride in blood and line age. All men are equal. All are descended from the same ancestor, Adam. And Adam was nothing but dust".

The Holy city of Mecca was no Muhammad's undisputed domain, and the arrogant Quraysh were completely at his mercy. Among them were many who had thirsted after his blood; many who had persecuted him and his companions and subjected them to brutal tortur and indignities. There were many men who had slandered and abused him in public; intriguers who had conspired against him, traitors who had repeatedly betrayed him by professing friendships, inveterate enemies who had incited tribes against him or sought to discredit him in the courts of kings, who had pursued him wherever he sought refuge and tried to destroy whatever sanctuary gave him shelter, including the city of Medina. In Arabia of those days, the rules of warfare, when men or tribes went to war, knew neither mercy nor forgiveness. The combatants neither gave nor expected quarter. The price of defeat was slavery or death. The least that a humbled enemy could expect from his conqueror would be exile and imprisonment or public whiping, at least some ring leaders would be put to death to make an example. None of these things happened in Mecca. No heads rolled, no women were enslaved, no punishment meted out, not even a word of rebuke or recrimination was uttered. "We throw ourselves upon your mercy", the Prophet's enemies said, knowing his goodness, "you are a merciful man, the son of a merciful father". And Muhammad replied, "Go in peace; you are free, no one will demand retribution". He bound them to no pledges and presented no demands. Even the properties of Muslims usurped by their enemies after the Hijrah were left with the usurpers and Muslims were persuaded to forgo their rights.

A man named Akram, son of Abu Jehl, murdered two Muslims and fled from the city. His wife pleaded for him and sought forgiveness. He was forgiven and allowed to return. Hind, the blood-thirsty wife of Abu Sufyan, who chewed up the liver of Hamza after he fell in the battle of Uhud, was also pardoned, as was the savage slayer. Another man, Habbar, who had brutally murdered Muhammad's daughter, Zaynab, while the Muslim caravan was on its way to Medina, was also pardoned. The conquest of Mecca provided once again an example of generosity and forbearance unparalleled in the history of warfare anywhere at any time.

Nor was this all. The conqueror of Mecca ordered no celebrations to mark his glorious victory. There was no coronation;

no bands played; there was no fanfare and no merriments. Instead, the Muslims bowed themselves in prayer and gave thanks to God.

—Fakir Syed Waheed-ud-din

(6)

Hajjat-ul-Wida

In the month of Dhul-Qada, according to the Arab Calendar, in the tenth year of the Hijra, when peace and order had been restored throughout the Muslim realm, the Prophet set forth with a large concourse to perform the Hajj himself. On the fourth day of the following month they entered Mecca. After teaching them the various rites pertaining to the pilgrimage, Muhammad mounted his camel to deliver his last sermon to a sea of followers, numbering over a hundred and twenty thousand, who had gathered in the plain of Arafat to listen to him. As he spoke his words were taken up by listeners and relayed to the assembly from end to end.

After giving praise to God, he said,

“O’ people, listen carefully to my words for I may not be among you next year, nor ever address you again from this spot. O’ people, just as you regard this month as hallowed, so regard the life and property of every Muslim as a sacred trust. Return the goods entrusted to you to their rightful owners. Hurt no one so that no one may hurt you. Usury is forbidden. Satan has despaired of leading you astray in big thing, so beware of obeying him in small thing. O’ people, women have rights over you just as you have rights over them. Be good to them.

“You may soon have to appear before God and answer for your deeds. So, beware! Do not go astray after I am gone. O’ people, no prophet or apostle will come after me and no new faith will be born.

“Listen to me in earnest! Worship your God, say your prayers, fast during the month of Ramdan; and give of your wealth in charity. All Muslims, free or enslaved, have the same rights and the same responsibilities. None is higher than the other unless he is higher in virtue.

“Feed your slaves as you feed yourselves; clothe them as you cloth yourselves. Do not oppress them nor usurp their rights”.

Having spoken thus he turned his face to heaven and said, “Be my witness, O’ God, that I have conveyed Your message to Your people.”

And the assembly responded with one voice "Yes, you have conveyed to us the message of God".

—Fakir Syed Waheed-ud-din

(7)

The Last Moments

Hazrat Ayisha, the wife of the Prophet, narrates his last moments as under :

Momentarily invigorated, Mohammed went out through Aysisha's door which gave on to the Mosque; and again supported by his cousin Ali and Al Fadl, he had great trouble in mounting the steps of the pulpit, from which he made the following declaration to the faithful assembled; 'O Believers, if among you there be one whose back I have beaten, here is my back so that he may do himself justice. If there be one whose honour I may have wounded, here is my honour, let him be avenged. If there be one whose property I may have seized, here is my property, let him satisfy his claim. Let no one hesitate in fear of my resentment, for resentment formeth no part of my disposition. After having stepped down to give out the noonday prayer, he went up in the pulpit again and repeated the same declaration.

A man arose and claimed payment of a debt amounting to three drahms. The Prophet (Peace be on him) handed them over to him at once, adding. "It is easier to put up with shame in this world than in the other".

Says Ayisha: After this last effort, the Prophet (Peace be on him) was again overtaken by greater pain than ever, and covered his face with a black garment, which he threw off again, as it stifled him.

Just then, Abdur Rahman, son of Abu Bakar, came in holding in his hand a small twig of green "araq", with which he was picking his teeth. The Prophet (Peace be on him) stared at the little stick and I made out that he would have liked it. So I took it out of Abdur Rahman's hand. Cutting off the end of the toothpick, I shook it, cleaned it and gave it to Allah's messenger who immediately made use of it, picking his teeth more carefully than ever before. When he had finished, he let the little stick drop from between his faltering fingers. He raised his eyes to heaven repeating three times : (O Allah, with the Compassionate, the High). And I felt his head, resting between my chain and shoulder, grow heavy on my arm.

I guessed that the Prophet (Peace be on him) had chosen the eternal dwelling and that his noble soul had just been taken by the Angel of Death. I placed my head on the pillow and uttered a great cry of distress. His wives came running in; and all together, we went down on our knees and tore our face with our nails”.

On hearing these lamentations, the Believers filled the Mosque. They were dazed, like sheep straying on a dark, wintry night; but not one of the faithful would admit that the Prophet (Peace be on him) was dead. The disappearance of the man who led them in every way seemed an impossibility.

How can he be dead? They cried. Did we not count upon him to be our witness on the Day of Resurrection? He is not dead; he had been carried up to Heaven, as was Isa (Jesus). And through the door they cried: ‘Beware, lest ye bury him’.

This met with Umar’s approval. No, verily, the Prophet (Peace be on him) is not dead. He had gone to visit the Lord, ever as Moses did, when after an absence of forty days, he reappeared to us. Those who say he is dead are traitors to the cause of Islam. Let their hands and feet be cut off.

At that juncture, Abu Bakr, who had been fetched from the As-Sunah quarter where he lived, arrived on horseback, galloping as fast as possible. He alighted and making his way through the crowd in consternation, he went into the Mosque without speaking to a soul and from there, passed into the room of his daughter Ayisha in order to see Allah’s Messenger. A piece of striped stuff was thrown over the body; Abu Bakr uncovered the Prophet’s (peace be on him) face, kissed him, wept and then broke down under the weight of his great grief ‘O Thou for whose ransom I would have offered both father and mother, he cried, ‘thy task is well accomplished’.

Tearing himself away from his sorrowful contemplation, he covered up Mohammad’s face again and went out, going straight up to Umar who refused to obey him. In the meantime, the majority of the Faithful left him by himself, and gathered round Abu Bakr who told them: ‘O Believers, if ye adore Mohammad, know that Mohammad is dead; but if ye adore, Allah, know that Allah is alive, for Allah cannot die’. Ye must have forgotten these verses of the Quran ‘Mohammed is no more than a Apostle; other Apostles have already passed away before him; if then he die, or be slain, will ye turn upon your heel? Thou truly art mortal O (Mohammad), and they truly are mortals.’ The Quran, III, 138, and xxxix, 31).

The room was at once filled with as many Believers as it would hold, and after they had said: 'Peace be with thee, O Prophet, and also the Mercy and Blessing of Allah', they got ready to pray without an Imam to lead them, for the real "Imam" was present, although his soul had been called back to the side of the Almighty.

Abu Bakr and Umar were in the front rank of the worshippers, and they concluded the prayer by these words: "O Allah! we bear witness that he hath accomplished the Mission Thou didst entrust to him. O Allah! grant peace to those among us who follow faithfully the orders Thou hast revealed to him and hasten to reunite us with him. Amin".

And the people, stirred to the innermost depths of their being, repeated: "Amin". Amin."

The Prophet (Peace be on him) was buried in the middle of the night between Tuesday and Wednesday. On the morrow, at dawn, in his call to prayer, Bilal, the "Muzzain", proclaimed: 'There is no God but Allah, and Mohammad is the Prophet (Peace be on him) of Allah,, he could only shout the name of Muhammad through his sobs. The whole town replied to him, as by an echo, in a long moan of despair which rose to heaven, from every doof and window of the houses.

"When Muhammad Breathed his Last....."

On hearing the news that Mohmmad (peace be on him) breathed his last Abu Baker, who had been deputizing for the Prophet in religious and secular duties under his last instructions, hastened to the house of sorrow.

"How blessed was your life and how beatific is your death," he whispered as he uncovered the face of his departed leader and kissed his sacred cheek.

As he emerged from the apartment and broke the news, consternation and dismay gripped the community in Medina. In this welter of grief, Abu Baker, calmly ascended the steps of the 'minbar' in the Prophet's mosque and addressed the people.

"O people, verily, whoever worshipped Muhammad, behold! Muhammad is indeed dead. But whosoever worshipped Allah, behold! Allah is alive and will never die.

"And Muhammad was no more than an Apostle and many apostles have already died before him; if then he dies or is killed, will you turn back upon your heels, will do no harm to Allah, and Allah will reward the grateful." (Holy Quran, iii : 143)

The magic of these words gripped the audience. The atmosphere changed. Consternation and gloom gave place to self-confidence and tranquillity.

Chapter VII

Pen Portrait

"He was of the Middle height, rather thin but broad of shoulders, wide of chest, strong of bone and muscle. His head was massive, strongly developed. Dark hair, slightly curled, flowed in a dense mass down almost to his shoulders. Even in advanced age it was sprinkled by only about twenty grey hairs.....His face was oval-shaped.....Fine, long, arched eyebrows were divided by a vein which throbbed visibly in moments of passion. Great black restless, eyes shone out from under long, arched eyebrows were divided by a vein slightly aquiline. His teeth upon which he bestowed great care were well set, dazzling white.....A full beard framed his manly face. His skin was clear soft, his complexion red and white, his hands were as silk and satin.....His step was quick and elastic, yet firm, and as that of one who steps from a high to a low place. In turning his face he would also turn his full body. His whole gait countenance was mild and pensive. His laugh was rarely more than a smile.

— Quoted by Lane Poole

“Those who imitate other...”

The Prophet (peace be on him) said :

“Who so imitates other people becomes one of them”

There can be no greater mistake than to suppose that dress, for example, is something purely “external” and thus of no consequence to the intellectual and spiritual Self of man. Dress is generally the outcome of an age-long development of a people’s taste in a particular direction. Its fashion corresponds to the aesthetic conceptions of that people and so to its inclinations. It has been shaped and is being constantly reshaped according to the changes through which the character and the inclinations of its people are passing. European fashion of today, for instance, thoroughly corresponds to the intellectual and moral character of Europe. While wearing European dress, the Muslim unconsciously adapts his taste to that of Europe and twists his own intellectual and moral Self in such a way that ultimately fits the new dress. And in doing so he renounces the cultural possibilities of his own people ; he renounces their traditional taste, their aesthetic valuations, their likes and dislikes, and accepts the livery of intellectual and moral serfdom which a foreign civilization has conferred upon him.

Chapter VIII

This is Muhammad

—The man who Changed History

Tidings of the new faith had been carried to all corners of the Arab Peninsula and the Word which Muhammad brought was no longer a cry in the wilderness. From near and far, from big tribes and small, people came to see the newly-risen leader for themselves. Chiefs and nobles, widows and orphans, old men and little children, all came in a constant stream. They came and stayed in Medina, saw Muhammad and listened to his sermons. And many of them who looked at his face for the first time would exclaim, "This is the face of a man of truth, not that a man of falsehood". And vowed their allegiance there and then. The others took back his words in their hearts and returned to join him later.

They saw that the man they had come to visit, now the most powerful among the Arabs, with the biggest domain and the most disciplined armies ever known in their land, still had a mat on the floor for his throne and a torn piece of cloth for his crown.

He greeted everyone who came to him, whatever his tribe, race or status, with equal courtesy and uniform kindness. They saw that even though he was perpetually surrounded by a large band of devotees, ever prepared to do their utmost at his behest, he mended his own shoes, patched his own threadbare clothes, milked his own goats and performed all household chores with his own slender, delicately-formed hands. Here was a unique sovereign whose household furniture consisted of but one bare cot with woven ropes which laced his flesh with their markings. For his bedding there was but one mattress filled with date-leaves. For days the hearth lay cold in his meagre household when stocks of their staple food, dates and oatmeal, ran out. There were no servants to attend on him, no retainers to bear his train, no courtiers to wait his pleasure, not a vestige of the pomp and splendour common to regal establishments. He lived as simply and austere in the days of his greatest glory as he did in the days of his worst adversity. But his

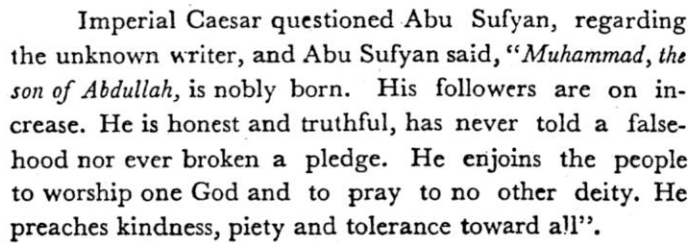
bounty was "boundless like the sea". If any beggar knocked at the door and there was nothing but a handful of dates in the house he would give it to the beggar and the Prophet's family would go hungry. A man once came begging for money. There was not a penny in the house of Muhammad. "Go to any affluent man in the town," he said, "and borrow what you like in my name". Nor was his graciousness confined to the human species alone. He would interrupt important business to open the door for a cat looking for shelter. He rubbed and massaged the back of his camel with his own hands. Once he saw a sparrow frenziedly flying in and out of its nest and discovered that some one had stolen its eggs. The guilty man admitted his misdemeanour and was ordered to put the eggs back, "Beware of God's displeasure if you injure these dumb helpless creatures", the master said. Once he heard a camel in pain and severely admonished its Bedouin owner.

He was a one-man court, always in session, always open to anyone who sought redress and in this court all were equal. His heart was full of tenderness, and he loved children. He would be frequently seen with his grandson Hasan (which means "beautiful", for so he was) on one shoulder and on the other Usama, the child of a negro slave. He was at this time ruler, commander-in-chief, chief judge, apostle, law-giver and chief citizen, all in one, but his life was in no way distinguishable from that of any other commoner in the town. His house was for ever open to every caller, rich or poor, aristocrat or peasant, the ignorant or the scholarly, man or woman, master or slave. They brought to him their problems, their worries, their doubts, and he would listen to each, talk patiently to one and all and send them back content. For his companions, every word he uttered, every gesture he made, every smile and every frown was an inspired manifestation which they observed, took note of and recorded with far more care than votaries of other religions have bestowed even upon their original gospels.

Deputations of men who came from near and far to observe the new faith in practice, observed, primarily, its simplicity and directness, unencumbered by elaborate ritual or abtuse theology. Faith in One God and belief in His Prophecy was all that was required to be admitted into this community. Every conscious act was a part of worship so long as it was righteous and God-fearing. The daily prayers prescribed for the community were equally simple and their ethical and social significance equally clear to all. First, the ablutions for personal cleanliness and hygiene, symbolical of both physical and subjective purity. Second, a unity of direction of the 'Kaba' - the House of God, which was neither idolized nor worshipped, but merely provided the focal point for all believers to

turn to symbolizing their ideological unity. Third, the composition of the congregation in orderly rows and their synchronized words and gestures to symbolize both discipline and equality. The same discipline and equalitarianism were even more emphatically expressed in the ritual of the 'Hajj' or the annual pilgrimage to Mecca when everyone shed his or her normal accoutrements and all of them, high or low, had to wrap themselves alike in simple, unsewn sheets of cloth and perform the rites *en masse* without regard for rank or precedence.

— Fakir Syed Waheed-ud-Din



Imperial Caesar questioned Abu Sufyan, regarding the unknown writer, and Abu Sufyan said, "*Muhammad, the son of Abdullah, is nobly born. His followers are on increase. He is honest and truthful, has never told a falsehood nor ever broken a pledge. He enjoins the people to worship one God and to pray to no other deity. He preaches kindness, piety and tolerance toward all*".

Sayings of the Prophet

Prophet Muhammad said, "The greatest crimes are to associate another with God, to vex your father and mother, to murder your own species, to commit suicide, and to swear to a lie."

I asked Prophet Muhammad of the most excellent Iman, and he said, "To love him who loveth God, and hate him who hateth God, and keep your tongue employed in repeating the name of God." What else? He said, "To do unto all men as you would wish to have done unto you, and to reject for others what you would reject for yourself."

What is Islam? I asked Prophet Muhammad. He said, "Abstinence and Obedience." And then I asked him what was the most excellent Iman. He said, "An amiable disposition." Which is the most excellent Hijrah? He said, "Abandoning that which God disapproveth of."

What is Islam? I asked Prophet Muhammad. He said, "Purity of speech and charity."

Chapter IX

Message of Muhammad

We are living in an age of restlessness and crisis. Never in the long range of history has man's soul been more desperate, his spirits more bitter and his outlook more bewildered than it is today. Man has lost confidence in himself and his institutions. After having reached the zenith of scientific achievements and after having brought the defiant forces of nature under his control he feels as desperate and as gloomy as in the Dark Ages. Dr. ALBERT SCHEWEITZER has summed up the contemporary situation in one sentence: "We have entered at dark journey in a time of darkness". T. S. ELIOT, another brilliant thinker of the modern age says :

All our knowledge brings us nearer to our ignorance.
All our ignorance brings us nearer to death.
But nearness to death groups nearer to God.
Where is the life we have lost in living?
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?
The cycle of Heaven in twenty centuries'
Brings us farther from God and nearer to the Dust.

Our century is in fact, witnessing a wide-spread disillusionment, a gradual melting of old institutions and the disintegration of cultural values. A new and better order rise to take the place of the dying old order. If man is to be freed from his oppressing doubts, if his soul is to be liberated from the shackles of materialistic prejudices and if he is to be inspired with new confidence and new hopes, twentieth century renaissance must occur. It was, perhaps, in view of this crying need that George Bernard Shaw once said :

"I have always held the religion of Muhammad in high estimation because of its wonderful vitality. It is the only religion which appears to me to possess that assimilating capability to the changing phase of existence which can make itself appeal to every

age. I have studied him—the wonderful man, and in my opinion, far from being an anti-christ, he must be called the Saviour of Humanity. I believe that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring it the much needed peace and happiness: I have prophesied about the faith of Muhammad that it would be acceptable to the Europe of tomorrow as it is beginning to be accepted to the Europe of today”.

Although Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is not amongst us today, his teaching are there. If they are adopted in right earnest, they can bring about the much convetted renaissance.

II

The Life of Muhammad

Muhammad (peace be upon him) was born in Arabia in the year 571 A.C. In that hour of human history Arabia was steeped in ignorance and barbarity. The condition of the world in general too bordered on chaos and crisis. Need for a new order was writ large on the horizen. Only a new cultural upsurge could arrest the world's tragic drift towards disintegration and death. Muhammad was the man who changed the course of history. His birth marked the dawn of a new era.

Born in a respectable middle-class family of the most important tribe of Arabia—the Quraish—providence deprived him of his parents in his very infancy. He was bred up by his grand-father and after his death by his uncle Abu Talib, who loved him immensely and stood by him in thick and thin. After coming to age, he adopted trade and commerce as his profession and worked diligently and honestly. Very soon he earned a name for himself. Everybody respected him and reposed faith in integrity of character and sea-green incorruptibility. Everybody called him *Ameen* i.e., one who can be trusted absolutely. At the age of twenty-five he married Khadija, a respectable widow who was forty at the time of this marriage. He lived a very simple and unassuming life and years were off, he devoted more and more of his time to prayers, meditation and search for truth. He received his first revelation when he was forty. The angel of God appeared before him and he asked him thus :

“Read thou, in the name of thy Lord who had made;

He has made man from a clot of blood.

Recite ; for thy Lord is the most honourable.

He taught man what he did not know.

After three years he was instructed to preach the mission publicly and convert the people to his creed. From that moment to his creed. From that moment to his last breath he harnessed his entire energies to the noble mission of spreading the Word of God and thus kindling the lamp of light for the mankind which was helplessly groping in darkness.

Slowly but steadily his message began to spread. As it gained strength, the defenders of the old order grew restless. They were eager to crush this new movement and employed all the instruments of oppression and persecution. But he and his followers stood fast and firm like a rock. They braced all the tempests of adversity and did not budge an inch from the path of righteousness. Indeed, they set up new examples of firmness in the path of truth and proved the sincerity of their faith and the veracity of their conviction. Even non-muslim historians have admitted this. Dr. Marcus Wodds in his book "*Muhammad, Budha and Christ*" writes :

"For the truth's sake he risked his life, he suffered daily persecution for years and eventually banishment, the loss of the property, the good-will of his fellow citizens and the confidence of his friends ; he suffered as much as any man can suffer short of death, which he only escaped by (hijrat) the flight and yet he unflinchingly proclaimed his message. No bribe, no threat, no inducement could silence (him)".

When the persecution reached its limits, God asked him to migrate from Mecca to Medina. This migration marks a new chapter in the life of the Prophet and the history of Islam, for in its wake was established an Islamic State in Medina and the prospects of Islamic glory were unfolded. This came about in 622 A.C. and it is from this date that the muslims start their calender.

The ensuing years were full of activity. The Quraish again and again invaded the city-state of Medina, but were always defeated. The Holy Prophet established a new society on the basis of the teachings of Islam and ushered in a new age in the life of world civilization. He reformed the social order, banished all the evil practices of the past tempered the principles of Politics with moral values and ethical tenets and established a New Order which transformed Arabia beyond any semblance of the past and influenced the entire course of human history and all the strands of human thought, be they philosophic or religious, political or economical, social or cultural.

Bertrand Russell, the famous British Philosopher writes, The supremacy of the East was not only military. Science, philosophy, poetry and the arts, all flourished in the Muhammeden World at a

This is the basic tenet to which Muhammed asks the humanity to adhere.

It is an important metaphysical concept and answers the riddles of the universe. It points to the supremacy of the law in the cosmos, the all pervading unity behind the manifest diversity. It presents a unified view of the world and offers the vision of an integrated universe. It is a mighty improvement upon the piece-meal views of the scientists and philosophers and unveils the truth before the human eye. After centuries of groping in the dark man is now coming to realise the truth of this concept and modern scientific thought is moving in this direction.

But it is not a mere metaphysical concept or a mere jumble of barren words. It is a dynamic belief, a revolutionary doctrine, a historic force and a communion with destiny.

It means that all men are the creatures of one God—they are all equal. Distinctions of colour, class, race or territory are sheer illusions. They are the remnants of the days of ignorance which had chained men down to servitude. Humanity is one single family of God and there can be no sanction for these barriers. Men are one and not Bourgeois or Proletariat, White or Black, Aryan or non-Aryan, Western or Eastern. Islam gives the revolutionary concept of the unity of mankind. The Prophet came to unite the humanity on the word of God and make the dead live again. Allah says:

“ Hold right to the rope of God, all together and never again fall out. Remember God’s gifts and blessings unto you all. When you were enemies ; remember how He forged your hearts together in love, and, by His grace, you became brethren at last.

(Al-Quran Surah 3: 102)

This concept also enunciates the true position of man in the universe. It says that God is the creator, the Sovereign and man is his vicegerent on earth. This exalts man to the noble and dignified position of being God’s deputy on earth and endowes his life with a lofty purpose, to fulfill the will of God on earth. This will solve all the perplexing problems of human society and establish a new order, wherein equity and justice and peace and prosperity will reign supreme.

This also means that man is not living an unbridled life. He will have to render accounts before his Lord for all that he does. This makes the human life a responsible venture and also provides the real sanction for morality.

Muhammad (peace be upon him) called the humanity towards this principle of *Tawheed*. It brought out a revolution in human thought and action and man soared to the highest pinnacles of glory. And even today it can transform the human society and enrich it with all the blessings of the heavens and the earth only if it is honestly adhered to and lived. The world has also suffered at the hands of the brilliant onesidedness of innumerable reformers. Some have laid emphasis at the spiritual side of life but have ignored the material and the mundane side. They have looked upon this world as an illusion, a deception, a trap and a trash. On the other hand the materialists have totally ignored the spiritual and moral side of life and have dubbed it as a fiction and a figment of imagination. Both these attitudes have spelled disaster. They have robbed mankind of peace, contentment and tranquillity. Even today this lack of balance and pose is manifest. It is being widely recognised that if humanity does not pause to set its house in order and re-establish the equilibrium, the march of man may turn out to be a tragic march towards death. French scientist Dr. DE BROGUE rightly says :

“The danger inherent in too intense a material civilization, to sum up, is to that civilization itself ; it is the disequilibrium which would result if a parallel development of the spiritual life were to fail to provide the needed balance”.

LORD SNELL is more outspoken when he says, “We have built up a nobly proportioned outer structure, but we have neglected the essential requirements of an inner order ; we have carefully designed, decorated and made clean the outside of the cup, but the inside was full of extortion and excess ; we used our increased knowledge and power to administer to the comforts of the body, but we left the spirit impoverished”.—(*The New World*).

The message of the Holy Prophet aims at establishing an equilibrium and a balance between these two aspects of human life. He said that everything in the world is for you—but your mission in life is to fulfil the Will of God. His teachings catered to the spiritual as well as the temporal needs of men. He taught man how to purify his soul and be in communion with the Reality and also to reform the mundane life—individual and collective both—and establish right over might and virtue over vice. He said that spiritual purity can be achieved only through submission to the Divine Will and in fashioning your life in such a way that it comes in accord with the Commandments of God. He ordered his followers to pray to God with complete submission, to observe fasts and give alms with sincerest devotion, to mediate and love God with every fibre of

their being. But he also said that all this would be of no avail if one is not kind to his children and fellow-beings, dutiful and honest in his work, gentle in his behaviour, clean in his dealings, respectful to his elders, helpful to his neighbours and straight-forward in his personal, social, political and other spheres of life.

This is the message of Muhammad and what a unique and life-giving message it is? A message which today the entire humanity needs today.

IV

Distinctive Characteristics of Muhammad's Life and Teaching

1. History is replete with the extraordinary achievements of the great men. But it is most conspicuous that although man had believed in God from time immemorial, he was unaware of the moral and practical consequences of this faith in one God. Although he had divined and discovered some noble principles of ethics, he did not know how to translate them into practice and form a socio-cultural order which may embody them. Faith in God, principles of morality and altruism and the every day practices of life were there water-tight compartments and it was Islam which showed their mutual relationship, wedded them into one organic whole and established a living and prosperous civilization on their foundation. He said that faith is not a mere profession of belief; it is the very mainspring of life. Practice must become in tune with the belief. Faith in God, by its very nature, calls for certain kind of morals which are not the objects of share lip-service, but must be laid and adopted. There should be no chasm between belief and action—both must go hand in hand. The Holy Prophet explained in detail what moral qualities must spring spontaneously from faith in God, and his own life presented the best example of it. Through his personal example, he vindicated the truth, wisdom and practicability of all that he preached to the people.

Thus Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was not only a great thinker, he was a practical man and a true leader of mankind.

2. When one studies the life of Muhammad (Peace be upon him), he is convinced beyond any shadow of doubt that he was above all racial or nationalistic prejudices. He was a true and sincere lover and benefactor of humanity. The Holy Qur'an calls him as a messenger for the entire mankind. It says, "O people I am the messenger of God to you all". (7:158) "A warner to all the nations" (25:1); "We have not sent thee but as a mercy for all the nations". (21: 102); "It is not but a reminder to all the nations".

To him all men were equal, whatever be their colour, language or nationality. He addressed himself to the conscience of humanity and banished all the barriers of race, status or wealth. There can be no denying the fact that such barriers existed always and exist even today in this so-called enlightened age and these have always checked the progress of mankind in one way or the other. Muhammad removed these impediments and cleared the way for human progress along the revolutionary principles of equality, fraternity and brother-hood. The world may not acknowledge it due to prejudices of various kinds, but everyone knows it. He introduced man to the concept of world brother-hood and mankind as the family of God. That is why his message was universally accepted by the peoples inhabiting the four corners of this globe. Peoples of different lands, nationalities and races acknowledge him as their saviour. Really he was a "blessing unto mankind".

His message is the message of God and hence universal. It admits of no unnatural divisions and barriers. It aims at the betterment of the entire humanity and ensures its unhampered progress. It is not wedded to the peculiar exigencies of a particular period. It is true for all times and climes.

3. Muhammad's method of reform has been unique. He started with the individual and first purified his soul. He purified his thoughts and the purification of acts followed automatically. He filled their hearts with very noble and sublime thoughts and when they translated their thoughts into actions, this world became worth-living. Then he prepared a group of devoted muslims who were the living emblems of Islamic tenets. He organised them into a brother-hood and made them a dynamic force for the purposes of carrying on social reforms. Unity gave them power and when the circumstances grew favourable, he established a social order, an ideological state with an economic system of its own. He reared an entire civilization and tempered power with virtue. During his time it was not the case of administering law only, he administered justice. The social order gave cardinal importance to the individual, did not shun collective life and devoted his energies towards the establishment of a just, equitable and progressive culture. In short, he produced a New Man and a New Society. And in that New Society, the criterion for greatness was neither wealth, nor ancestry or power, but PIETY and Piety alone. The Holy Qur'an says, 'O' ye people, surely We have created you of a male and a female; and made you tribes and families so that you may identify each other; surely the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the one among you who is most pious, most mindful of his duty. Allah is knowing, fully aware".

4. Muhammad's life offers a perfect model of the noblest life. He was a paragon of virtue. He did all that he preached. He was a practical and true embodiment of the Qur'an. That is why Qur'an offers the unblemished life of the Holy Prophet in support of the veracity of message.

Then he had to pass through every kind of trial, and tribulations, terror and persecution, allurements and temptation; but he always remained steadfast, firm and unmoved. His character remained spotless. The odds were many and mighty. He fought them with the strength of his conviction and ultimately conquered them. Even as a victor and as a ruler, he set the best example. When he had conquered Mecca he proclaimed general amnesty for his erst-while persecutors. He declared :

“No blame or retribution on you this day”.

His life is a model of perfection and there is nothing mysterious or supernatural about it. He was human being. What he achieved was through the integrity of character, piety and virtue.

5. Detailed accounts of his life and his teachings are available in their original form. There has been not an iota of change in this unique historic record. Qur'an is the revealed book of God which has been in existence for the last thirteen hundred years as the beacon of light. The sayings (Ahadith) and the entire record of the life of the Holy Prophet have been handed down to us with unprecedented precision and authenticity. Even non-muslim critics admit this eloquent fact. Professor Reynold A. Nicholson in his “Literary History of the Arabs” says :

“We shall see, moreover, that the Qur'an is an exceedingly human document, reflecting every phase of Muhammad's personality and standing in close relationship to the outward events of his life; so that here we have materials of unique and incontestable authority for tracing the origin and early development of Islam as do not exist in the case of Buddhism or Christianity or any other ancient religion”.

This is an incontestable and unique feature of Muhammad's prophethood.

V

The Last Word

The world today has become an arena of competing barbarisms. The finer values of life have lost all their glory. Human feelings are conspicuous by their absence. Utilitarian tendencies

hold the away. Worship of the demons of wealth, worldly power and pleasures is the order of the day. Peace and contentment have lost their meanings and have become a forlorn hope. The ominous shadows of war are hovering over our heads. Economic exploitation, moral laxity, colour discrimination, class conflict and national and various kinds of rivalries have torn life asunder. The greatest achievements of our age are gloom and frustration.

Man's control over nature has enabled him to forge new and novel instruments of destruction—destruction of largest possible number in smallest possible time. Technological advancement has annihilated time and space. Now we are faced with the prospects of our own annihilation, through the deadliest weapons we have made.

The greatest need of our times is moral and spiritual renaissance. This renaissance can be brought about and man saved from the impending disaster only if the teachings of Muhammad are sincerely adopted. It is upto us what we choose—life or death?

Muslims who believe in the Holy Prophet and have faith in the truth and efficacy of his teachings have to shoulder a mighty responsibility. They must become, by word and action, true missionaries of this gospel of *Tawheed*, peace and brotherhood without any mental reservations whatsoever. This is the crying need of the hour.

—Khurshid Ahmad

“Islam is Superior.....”

We regard Islam as superior to all other religious systems because it embraces life in its totality. It takes World and Hereafter, soul and body, individual and society, equally into consideration. It takes into consideration not only the lofty possibilities of the human nature, but also its inherent limitations and weaknesses. It does not impose the impossible upon us, but directs as how to make the best use of our possibilities and to reach a higher plane of reality where there is no cleavage and no antagonism between Idea and Action. It is not a way among, others, but *the* way ; and the Man who gave us this teaching is not just one guide among others, but *the* guide. To follow all he did and ordered is to follow Islam ; to discard his Sunnah is to discard the reality of Islam.

Chapter X

The Sunnah of the Prophet

Many reform proposals have been advanced during the last decades, and many spiritual doctors have tried to devise a patent medicine for the sick body of Islam. But, until now, all was in vain because all those clever doctors—at least those who get a hearing to-day—invariably forgot to prescribe, along with their medicines, tonics and elixirs, the natural diet on which the early development of the patient had been based. This diet, the only one which the body of Islam, sound or sick, can positively accept and assimilate, is the Sunnah of our Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him). The Sunnah is the key to the understanding of the Islamic rise more than thirteen centuries ago: and why should it not be a key to the understanding of our present degeneration? Observance of the Sunnah is synonymous with Islamic existence and progress. Neglect of the Sunnah is synonymous with decomposition and decay of Islam. The Sunnah was the iron framework of the House of Islam; and if you remove the framework from a building can you be surprised if it breaks down like a house of cards?

This simple truth, almost unanimously accepted by all learned men throughout Islamic history, is—we know it well—most unpopular today for reasons connected with the ever-growing influence of western civilization. But it is truth none the less, and in fact, the only truth which can save us from the chaos and the shame of our present decay.

The word Sunnah is used here in its widest meaning, namely, the example the Prophet has set before us in his actions and sayings. His wonderful life was a living illustration and explanation of the Qur'an, and we can do no greater justice to the Holy Book than by following him who was the means of its revelation.

We have seen that one of the main achievements of Islam, the one which distinguishes it from all other transcendental systems, is the complete reconciliation between the moral and the material sides of human life. This was one of the reasons why Islam in its prime

had such a triumphant success wherever it appeared. It brought to mankind the new message that the earth need not be despised in order that heaven be gained. This prominent feature of Islam explains why our Prophet, in his mission as an apostolic guide of humanity was so deeply concerned with human life in its polarity both as a spiritual and a material phenomenon. It does not, therefore, show a very deep understanding of Islam if one discriminates between such orders of the Prophet as deal with purely devotional and spiritual matters, and others which have to do with questions of our society and our daily life. The contention that we are obliged to follow the commands belonging to the first group, but not obliged to follow those of the second, is as superficial and, in its spirit, as anti-Islamic as the idea that certain general injunctions of the Qur'an were meant only for the ignorant Arabs at the time of the revelation, and not for the refined gentlemen of the twentieth century. At its root lies a strange under-estimation of the prophetic role of Mustafa.

As the life of a Muslim must be directed upon a full and unreserved co-operation between his spiritual and his bodily Self, so the leadership of our Prophet embraces life as a compound entity, a sum total of moral and practical, individual and social manifestations. This is the deepest meaning of Sunnah.

ما اناكم الرسول فخذوه وكانها كم عنه فانتهوا -

“Whatever the Prophet enjoins you, accept ; and whatever he forbids you, avoid” (Surah 59 : 7). And the Prophet said :

“ The Jews have been split up into seventy-one sects, the Christians into seventy-two sects, and the Muslims will be split into seventy-three sects,, (Sunnā Abi Da'ud, Jami, at-Tirmidhi, Sunan ad-Darimi, Musnad Ibn Hanbal). In this connection it may be mentioned that in Arabian usage the number 70 very often stands for “many,” and does not necessarily denote the actual arithmetical figure. So the Prophet obviously intended to say that the sects and divisions among the Muslims would be very many, even more than those among the Jews and Christians. And he added:

“all of them are destined for the Fire with the exception of one”, when the Companions asked, “which one would be the one, the right-guided group,” he answered :

“ That which is based on my and my Companions' principles”. Certain verses of the Qur'an make this point clear beyond any possibility of misunderstanding:

لَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَّا بِمَا نَحْنُ بِهَا مُؤْمِنُونَ وَلَا يَجِدُوا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيَسْلَمُوْا تَسْلِيمًا -

“Nay, by the Sustainer : they do not attain to faith until they make thee (O Muhammad) a judge of what is in dispute between them and find in themselves no dislike of what thou decidest, and submit with (full) submission ,, (Surah 4 : 65). And :

قل ان كنتم تحبون الله فاتبعوني يحببكم الله و يغفر لكم ذنوبكم و الله غفور الرحيم -
 قل اطعوا الله و الرسول فان تولوا فان الله يحب الكافرين -

“Say (O Muhammad) : If you love God, follow me: God will love you and forgive you your sins ; and God is Forgiving, a Dispenser of Grace. Say ; Obey God and the Apostle : But if they turn away, behold, God loveth not the Unbelievers. (Surah 3: 31, 32).

The Sunnah of the Prophet is, therefore, next to the Qur'an, the second source of Islamic law of social and personal behaviour. In fact, we must regard the Sunnah as the only valid explanation of the Qur'anic teachings, the only means to avoid dissensions concerning their interpretation and adaptation to practical use. Many verses of the Holy Qur'an have an allegorical meaning and could be understood in different ways unless there was some definite system of interpretation. And there are, furthermore, many items of practical importance not explicitly dealt with in the Qur'an. The spirit prevailing in the Holy Book is, to be sure, uniform throughout ; but to deduce from it the practical attitude which we have to adopt is not in every case an easy matter. So long as we believe that this Book is the Word of God, perfect in form and purpose, the only logical conclusion is that it never was intended to be used independently of the personal guidance of the Prophet which is embodied in the system of Sunnah. In the next chapter an attempt will be made to explain the ultimate reasons for the linking up of the Qur'an, for all times, with the inspiring and directing personality of the Prophet. For the purposes of this chapter the following reflection should be sufficient. Our reasoning tells us that there could not possibly be a better interpreter of the Qur'anic teachings than he through whom they were revealed to humanity.

The slogan we so often hear in our days, “Let us go back to the Qur'an, but let us not be slavish followers of the Sunnah”, merely betrays an ignorance of Islam. Those who speak so resemble a man who wishes to enter a palace but does not wish to employ the genuine key which alone is fit to open the door.

And so we come to the very important question as to the authenticity of the sources which reveal the life and the sayings of the Prophet to us. These sources are the *ahadith*, the Traditions of the sayings and actions of the Prophet reported and transmitted by his Companions and critically collected in the first few centuries of

Islam. Many modern Muslims profess that they would be ready to follow the Sunnah ; but they think they cannot rely upon the body of the *ahadith* on which it rests. It has become a matter of fashion in our days to deny, in principle, the authenticity of *ahadith* and, therefore, of the whole structure of the Sunnah.

Is there any scientific warrant for this attitude ? Is there any scientific justification for the rejection of *ahadith* as a dependable source of Islamic Law ?

We should think that the opponents of orthodox thought would be able to bring forward really convincing arguments which would establish, once for all, the unreliability of the Traditions ascribed to the Prophet. But this is not the case. In spite of all the efforts which have been employed to challenge the authenticity of *hadith* as a body, those modern critics, both Eastern and Western, have not been able to back their purely temperamental criticism with results of scientific research. It would be rather difficult to do so, as the compilers of the early *hadith*-collections, and particularly the Imams Bukhari and Muslim, have done whatever was humanly possible to put the authenticity of every Tradition to a very rigorous test—a far more rigorous test than European historians usually apply to any historical documents.

It would go far beyond the limits of this book to dwell here in detail on the scrupulous method by which the reliability of Traditions was investigated by the early *muhaddithun*, the learned men devoted to the study of *hadith*. For our purpose it may suffice to say that a complete science has been evolved, the only object of which is the research as to the meaning, the form and the way of transmission of the Prophet's *ahadith*. An historical branch of this science succeeded in establishing an unbroken chain of detailed biographies of all those personalities who have even been mentioned as narrators of Traditions. The lives of those men and women have been thoroughly investigated from every point of view, and only those have been accepted as reliable whose way of life and of transmitting a *hadith* perfectly responds to the standard stipulated by the great *muhaddithun* and believed to be the most exacting that could be conceived. If, therefore, anyone wishes to contest today the authenticity of a particular *hadith* or of the system as a whole, the burden of proving its inaccuracy falls upon him alone. It is scientifically not in the least justifiable to contest the veracity of an historical source unless one is prepared to prove that this source is defective. If no reasonable, that is, scientific, argument can be found against the veracity of the source itself or against one or more of its later transmitters, and, if, on the other hand, no other contradictory report about the same matter exists, then we are bound to accept the Tradition as true.

Suppose, for example, when someone speaks about the Indian wars of Mahmud of Ghazna, you suddenly get up and say : "I don't believe that Mahmud ever came to India. It is a legend without historical foundation". What would happen in such a case? At once some person well-versed in history would try to correct your mistake and would quote chronicles and histories, based on reports of contemporaries of that famous Sultan, as a definite proof of the fact that Mahmud had been in India. In that case you would have to accept the proof—or you would be regarded as a crank who for no obvious reason denies solid historical facts. If this is so, one must ask oneself why our modern critics do not extend the same logical fairmindedness to the problem of *ahadith* as well?

The primary ground for a *hadith* being false would be a wilful lie on the part of the first source, the Companion concerned, or of the later transmitters. As to the Companions, such a possibility can be ruled out *a priori*. It requires only some insight into the psychological side of the problem in order to relegate such assumptions into the sphere of pure fancy. The tremendous impression which the personality of the Prophet has made on these men and women is an outstanding fact of human history; and, moreover, it is extremely well documented by history. Is it conceivable that people who were ready to sacrifice themselves and all they possessed at the bidding of the Apostle of God would play tricks with his words? The Prophet had said : "Whoever intentionally lies about me will take his place in the Fire" (Sahih al-Bukhari, Sunan Abi Da'ud, Jami at-Tirmidhi, Sunan Ibn Majah, Sunan ad-Darimi, Musnad Ibn Hanbal). This the Companions knew; they believed implicitly in the words of the Prophet whom they regarded as the Speaker of God; and is it probable, from the psychological point of view, that they disregarded this very definite injunction?

In criminal court proceedings the first question facing the judge is *cui bono*—for whose benefit—the crime could have been committed. This judicial principal can be applied to the problem of *hadith* as well. With the exception of Traditions which directly concern the status of certain individuals or groups, for example, the decidedly spurious—and by most of the *muhaddithun* rejected—Traditions connected with the political claims of the different parties in the first century after the Prophet's death, there could have been no "profitable" reason for any individual to falsify sayings of the Prophet. It was in a just appreciation of the possibility of *ahadith* being invented for some personal ends that the two foremost authorities among the Traditionists, the Imams Bukhari and Muslim, have rigorously excluded all Traditions relating to party politics from their compilations. What remained

was fairly beyond the suspicion of giving personal advantages to anyone.

There is one argument more on which the authenticity of a *hadith* could be challenged. It is conceivable that either the Companion who heard it from the lips of the Prophet or one or another of the later narrators has committed—while being subjectively truthful—a mistake due to a misunderstanding of the Prophet's words, or a lapse of memory, or some other psychological reason. But the internal, that is, psychological, evidence speaks against any great possibility of such mistakes, at least on the part of the Companions. To the people who lived with the Prophet, everyone of his sayings and actions was of utmost significance, due not only to the fascination which his personality exerted on them, but also to their firm belief that it was God's will that they should regulate their life, even in its minute details, according to the direction and the example of the Prophet. Therefore they could not take the question of his sayings off-hand, but tried to preserve them in their memory even at the cost of great personal discomforts. It is related that the Companions who were immediately associated with the Prophet made among themselves groups of two men each, one of whom was to be alternately in the vicinity of the Prophet while the other was busy with the pursuit of his livelihood or other matters; and whatever they heard or saw of their Master they communicated to each other: so anxious were they lest some saying or doing of the Prophet should escape their notice. It is not very probable that, with such an attitude, they should have been negligent as to the exact wording of a *hadith*. And if it was possible for hundreds to preserve the wording of the whole Qur'an, down to the smallest details of spelling, in their memory, then it was, no doubt, equally possible for them and for those who immediately followed them to keep single sayings of the Prophet in their memory without adding to them or omitting anything from them.

Moreover, the Traditionists ascribe perfect authenticity to those *ahadith* only which are reported in the same form through different, independent chains of narrators. Nor is this all. In order to be *sahih* (sound), *hadith* must be corroborated at every stage of transmission by the independent evidence of at least two, and possibly more, transmitters—so that at no stage the report should hinge on the authority of one person only. This demand of corroboration is so exacting that in a *hadith* reported through, say, three "generations" of transmitters between the Companion concerned and the final compiler, actually a score or more of transmitters, distributed over those three "generations", are involved.

With all this, no Muslim has ever believed that Traditions of the Prophet could have the status, or even the undisputed authenticity, of the Qur'an. At no time the critical investigation of *hadith* has stopped. The fact that there are numberless spurious *ahadith* did not in the least escape the attention of the *muhaddithun*, as European critics naively seem to suppose. On the contrary, the critical science of *hadith* was initiated by the necessity of discerning between authentic and spurious, and the very Imams Bukhari and Muslim, not to mention the lesser Traditionists, are direct products of this critical attitude. The existence, therefore, of false *ahadith* does not prove anything against the system of *hadith* as a whole—no more than a fanciful tale from the Arabian Nights could be regarded as an argument against the authenticity of any historical report of the corresponding period.

Until now no critic has been able to prove in a systematic way that the body of a *hadith* regarded as authentic according to the test-standard of the foremost Traditionists is inaccurate. The rejection of authentic Traditions, either as a whole or in parts, is so far a purely temperamental matter, and has failed to establish itself as the result of unprejudiced, scientific investigation. But the motive for such an oppositional attitude among many Muslims of our time can easily be traced. This motive lies in the impossibility of bringing our present, degenerate ways of living and thinking into line with the true spirit of Islam as reflected in the Sunnah of our Prophet. In order to justify their own shortcomings and the shortcomings of their environment, those pseudocritics of *hadith* try to remove the necessity of following the Sunnah; because, if this were done, they would be able to interpret the Qur'anic teachings just as they like, on the lines of superficial "rationalism"—that is, every one according to his own inclination and turn of mind. And in this way the exceptional positiveness of Islam as a moral and practical, as an individual and social code, would be shattered to pieces.

In these days, when the influence of Western civilization makes itself more and more felt in Muslim countries, one motive more is added to the strange attitude of the so-called "Muslim Intelligentsia" in this matter. It is impossible to live according to the Sunnah of our Prophet and to follow the Western mode of life at one and the same time. But the present generation of Muslims is ready to adore everything that is Western, to worship the foreign civilization because it is foreign, powerful and materially brilliant. This "Westernisation" is the strongest reason why the Traditions of our Prophet and, along with them, the whole structure of the Sunnah have become so unpopular today. The Sunnah is so obviously opposed to the fundamental ideas underlying Western civilization that those who are fascinated by the latter see no way out of

the tangle but to describe the Sunnah as an irrelevant, and therefore not compulsory, aspect of Islam—because it is “based unreliable Traditions”. After that, it become easier to twist the teachings of the Qur’an in such a way that they appear to suit the spirit of Western civilization.

Almost as important as the formal, so to say, legal justification of the Sunnah through the establishment of the historical dependability of a *hadith* is the question as to its inner, spiritual justification. Why should an observance of the Sunnah be regarded as indispensable for a life in the true sense of Islam? Is there no other way to the reality of Islam than through that large system of actions and customs, of orders and prohibitions, some of them of an obviously trivial nature, but all of them derived from the life-example of the Prophet? No doubt, he was the greatest of men; but is not the necessity to imitate his life in all its formal details an infringement on the individual freedom of human personality? It is an old objection which unfriendly critics of Islam usually put forward; that the necessity of strictly following the Sunnah was one of the main causes of the subsequent decay of the Islamic world, for such an attitude is supposed to encroach, in the long run, on the liberty of human action and the natural development of society. It is of the greatest importance for the future of Islam, whether we are able to meet this objection or not. Our attitude towards the problem of the Sunnah will determine our future attitude towards Islam.

We are proud, and justly proud, of the fact that Islam, as a religion, is not based on mystic dogmatism but is always open to the critical inquiry of reason. We have, therefore, the right not only to know that the observance of the Sunnah has been imposed upon us, but also to understand the inherent reason of its imposition.

Islam leads man to a unification of all aspects of life. Being a means to that goal, this religion represents in itself a totality of conceptions to which nothing can be added and from which nothing can be subtracted. There is no room for eclecticism in Islam. Whenever its teachings are recognized as really pronounced by the Qur’an or the Prophet we must accept them in their completeness; otherwise they lose their value. It is a fundamental misunderstanding of Islam to think that being a religion of reason, it leaves its teachings open to individual selection—a claim made possible by a popular misconception of “rationalism”. There is a wide—and by the philosophy of all ages sufficiently recognized—gulf between reason and “rationalism” as it is commonly understood today. The function of reason in religious teachings is of a controlling character; its duty is to watch that nothing is imposed on the human mind which it cannot bear easily, that is, without the aid of philosophical

juggleries. So far as Islam is concerned, unprejudiced reason has, time and again, given it its unreserved vote of confidence. That does not mean that every one who gets in touch with Islam will necessarily accept its teachings as obliging for himself; this is a matter of temperament and—last, but not least—of spiritual illumination. But surely and certainly no unbiased person would contend that there is anything in Islam contrary to reason. No doubt, there are things in it beyond the limits of human understanding; but nothing which is contrary to it.

The role of reason in religious matters is, as we have seen, in the nature of a control—a registration apparatus saying “yes” or “no”, as the case may be. But this is not the case with so-called “rationalism”. It does not content itself with registration and control, but jumps into the field of speculation; it is not receptive and detached like pure reason, but extremely subjective and temperamental. Reason knows its own limits; but ‘rationalism’ is preposterous in its claim to encompass the world and all mysteries within its own individual circle. In religious matters it hardly even concedes the possibility of certain things being, temporarily or permanently, beyond human understanding; but it is, at the same time, illogical enough to concede this possibility to science—and so to itself.

The over-estimation of this unimaginative rationalism is one of the causes why so many modern Muslims refuse to surrender themselves to the guidance of the Prophet. But it does not need a Kant today to prove that human understanding is strictly limited in its possibilities. Our mind is unable by virtue of its nature, to understand the idea of *totality*: we can grasp, of all things, their details only. We do not know what infinity or eternity is; we do not even know what life is. In problems of a religion on transcendental foundations we, therefore, need a guide whose mind possesses something more than the normal reasoning qualities and the subjective rationalism common to all of us: we need someone who is inspired—in one word, a Prophet. If we believe that the Qur’an is the Word of God, and that Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) was God’s Apostle, we are not only morally but also intellectually bound to follow his guidance blindly. The expression “blindly” does not mean that we should exclude our powers of reasoning. On the contrary, we have to make use of those powers to the best of our ability and knowledge; we have to try to discover the inherent meaning and purpose of the commands transmitted to us by the Prophet. But in any case—whether we are able to understand its ultimate purpose or not—we must obey the order. I should like to illustrate this by the example of a soldier who has been ordered by his general to occupy a certain strategic position.

In this system many details of our daily life we based on the example set by the Prophet. Whatever we do, we are premanently compelled to think of a corresponding doing or saying of the Prophet. Thus the personality of the Greatest Man becomes deeply embodied in the very routine of our daily life, and his spiritual influence is made a real, ever-recurring factor in our existence. Consciously and subconsciously we are led to study the Prophet's attitude in this or that matter; we learn to regard him not only as the bearer of a moral revelation but also as the guide towards a perfect life. It is here that we must decide whether we wish to regard the Prophet as a mere wise man among many other wise men, or as the supreme Messenger of God always acting under Divine inspiration. The view-point of the Holly Qur'an in this matter is clear beyond any possibility of misunderstanding. A man who is desinged as the Last of the Prophets and a "Mercy to the Worlds" cannot be but permanently inspired. To reject his guidance, or certain elements of it, would mean nothing less than to reject or under-estimate God's own guidance. It would mean further, in the logical continuation of this thought, that the entire message of Islam was not intended to be a final, but only an alternative solution of man's problems, and that it is left to our discretion to choose this or some other, perhaps equally true and useful, solution. This is easy—because morally and pratically not in least obliging—principle might lead us anywhere, but surely not to the spirit of Islam of which it is said in the Qur'an:

اليوم اكملت لكم دينكم و اتممت عليكم نعمتى و رضيت لكم الاسلام ديننا -

"Today I have made perfect for you your religion, and fulfilled My favour unto you, and chosen Islam as your religion" (Surah 5 : 3).

We regard Islam as superior to all other religious systems because it embraces life in its totality. It takes World and Hereafter, soul and body, individual and society, equally into consideration. It takes into consideration not only the lofty possibilities of the human nature, but also its inherent limitations and weaknesses. It does not impose the impossible upon us, but directs us how to make the best use of our possibilites and to reach a higher plane of reality where there is no cleavage and no antagonism between Idea and Action. It is not away among others, but *the way*; and the Man who gave us this teaching is not just one guide among others, but *the guide*. To follow all he did and ordered is to follow Islam; to discard his Sunnah is to discard the reality of Islam,

—Muhammad Asad