



PROPHET MUHAMMAD

The Prophet of Peace

Prof. Farida Khanam

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e-mail: info@goodwordbooks.com

CPS International

Centre for Peace and Spirituality International

1, Nizamuddin West Market, New Delhi-110013

e-mail: info@cpsglobal.org

www.cpsglobal.org

Goodword Books

A-21, Sector 4, Noida-201301

Delhi NCR, India

e-mail: info@goodwordbooks.com

www.goodwordbooks.com

Center for Peace and Spirituality USA

2665 Byberry Road, Bensalem, PA 19020

e-mail: kkaleemuddin@gmail.com

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PROPHET MUHAMMAD

The Prophet of Peace

In 570 AD, Prophet Muhammad was born in the desert land of Arabia. At that time, there were three major towns, Yathrib, a large oasis now called Madinah; Taif, a cool refuge in the mountains famous for its grapes; and Makkah, which by contrast lay in a barren valley. It was here, in this town, that Prophet Muhammad was born. Makkah was important for two reasons: first, the Kabah was located there, and secondly, it was a great trading centre, with people coming from far and wide to worship and sell their wares. The original Kabah was built by the prophets Abraham and Ishmael, who were the ancestors of Prophet Muhammad.

Prophet Muhammad's father died two months before he was born. Shortly after his birth, his mother, Aminah, sent him to Abdul Muttalib, his grandfather who was sitting near the Kabah at that time. Abdul Muttalib was the head of the Quraysh tribe, guardian of the Kabah and protector of the pilgrims who visited this holy place. He was respected and admired by all. He was overjoyed at the news of the birth and gave his grandson the name Muhammad, meaning "the praised one".

As was the practice of the Makkan nobility in those days, the newborn babies were sent to the desert to be nursed by paid foster mothers. The desert area was far from the city and was considered healthier. Muhammad was handed over to a wet nurse, Halima Al-Sadiya, who belonged to the Banu Sad tribe. Muhammad remained in charge of Halima until the age of five. He learnt Arabic in its purest form from her tribe. When he returned from this desert life to his mother after five years, she decided to take him to visit his uncles in Yathrib. Yathrib (now known as Madinah), an oasis, was famous for its palm groves. Aminah was accompanied on the trip by Umm Aiman, her servant. After a month's stay in Yathrib, Aminah set out to return to Makkah. However, on her way

back, she fell ill and died. She was buried in Abwa. Muhammad was brought back home by Umm Aiman. Muhammad's grandfather adopted him and took care of him. He looked after him with great affection. However, Abdul Muttalib, too, died when Muhammad was just eight years old. After his death, Muhammad was adopted by his uncle, Abu Talib, who was a merchant. Once, he went along with Abu Talib to Syria on a trading journey. There he met a Christian monk by the name of Bahira, who was living in a monastery. This monk had read a book about the emergence of a prophet and recognised the signs of prophethood in Muhammad. Therefore, he advised Abu Talib to return immediately with his nephew and protect him from enemies.

When Muhammad grew up, he had a reputation for honesty, good morals, a gentle nature, and sincerity. He kept aloof from quarrels and never used foul language or abused anyone. Ali ibn Abi Talib once said: "All those who came close to him loved him." (*Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah* - Ibn Hisham, Vol. 2, p. 35)

He was called Al-Amin (the trustworthy one) and As-Sadiq (the truthful one) by the Makkans.

When Muhammad was twenty-five years old, he had

become so well thought of that he came to the attention of Khadijah, a rich 40-year old widow from a merchant family. She regularly employed men to do her trading and rewarded them with a share of the profits. So, in the same way, she hired Muhammad to take her goods to Syria to trade.

Muhammad handled the trading very well, bringing back greater profits than Khadijah had ever made. Khadijah's servant, Maysarah, who accompanied Muhammad to Syria, had come to admire and respect him greatly and gave a glowing report to her mistress about what a superior person Muhammad was.

She was deeply impressed by his virtues and expressed her desire to marry him. After discussing this over with his uncle, Muhammad accepted her marriage proposal. Khadijah became his first wife and he had no other wife during her lifetime. Except for Ibrahim, who died in infancy, all his children were born to Khadijah. Of the daughters, Ruqaiyyah, Zaynab, Umm Kulthum and Fatimah lived on long enough to accept Islam and migrate to Madinah along with the Prophet.

Prophet Muhammad's marriage with Khadijah gave him every opportunity to lead a comfortable life as a

wealthy and respected noble of Makkah. Muhammad led a calm and quiet life as a merchant for a few years. However, he soon gave up all worldly activities and started his quest for the truth.

The fact that Prophet Muhammad was a well-respected member of the Quraysh can be seen from an incident. The Quraysh decided to rebuild the Kabah after a sudden flood had shaken its foundations and cracked its walls. So, the old structure was pulled down, and the new construction began. When the walls rose from the ground, the time came to put the famous Black Stone (*Hajr-e-Aswad*) in its place on the east wall. *Hajr-e-Aswad* is an oval black stone of about 18 cm in diameter fixed in the wall of the Kabah. This stone was first set there by Prophet Abraham to mark the spot from which to begin the ritual of walking (*tawaf*) around the Kabah. At present, this is the only portion which is left of the original building.

The question then arose about which clan would put the stone back in place. This led to a dispute among the clans since each clan wanted that honour. Since no peaceful solution seemed possible, it almost led to a civil war. Finally, it was agreed that the first man to

enter the courtyard of the Kabah would settle the issue. That man was Muhammad.

Although the problem seemed insoluble, Muhammad's sound judgement saved the honour of everyone concerned. First, he spread a white sheet on the ground and placed the sacred stone at its centre. Then he instructed the elders of each clan to lift a corner of the sheet and carry the stone to its site. Then Muhammad, the peacemaker, fixed the stone in its place with his own hands. This settling of the dispute to everybody's satisfaction prevented a bloody clash.

Peaceful Beginning of The Prophetic Mission

Instead of meeting people in their homes and at gatherings and trying to gain for himself a position among the nobles of Makkah, Muhammad would wander into the barren hills of the desert. He would sit

for hours and ponder over the mysteries of creation. The vast silence of the desert, with endless sand and sky during the days and, equally endless darkness at night, alive only with the twinkling of millions and millions of tiny stars, seemed to bring him very close to the Creator.

Muhammad would often stay alone for days in the Cave of Hira, near the top of Jabal al-Nur, or the Mountain of Light, three miles from Makkah. He would return home only for more supplies of food and water and then go back to the solitude of nature to pray and meditate, asking the Maker of the heavens and the earth for answers to the questions that surged in his mind. What is man's true role in life? What does the Lord require of men as His servants? From where does man come, and where will he go after death?

It was to find answers to these difficult questions that he went off into the stillness of the desert. With all these questions in mind, worldly gain and loss, comfort and distress did not concern him. Instead, he urgently wanted the answers to these important questions about the truth. For nothing less than the truth could satisfy

his soul. This phase of the Prophet's life is referred to in the Quran in this verse:

“Did He not find you wandering, and give you guidance?” (93:7)

He spent the whole month of Ramadan in the Cave of Hira. Finally, after the Prophet had spent six long months in the cave, God turned to him in mercy to guide him to the path of truth. At the age of 40, on 12 February, 610 AD, the Prophet was sitting alone in his cave when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in human form, bringing the first message from God. The Prophet's quest had finally been rewarded. God had granted him guidance and chosen him as His Prophet. The first revelation received by the Prophet forms part of the beginning of the ninety-sixth chapter of the Quran:

“Read! In the name of your Lord, who created: created man from a clot [of blood]. Read! Your Lord is the Most Bountiful One who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know.” (96:1-5)

These were the first words of the Quran. The Prophet felt these lines were written on his heart. However, the experience left him surprised and confused. He even

felt that he might be falling ill. So he rushed back to his wife, Khadijah.

Being very kind and understanding, Khadijah tried her best to reassure him.

She said: “By God, I pray and hope that you will be the Prophet of this nation. By God, He will not let you down. You are kind to your relations. You speak the truth, help the poor bear their burden, honour guests, and help those in distress. Surely, God will never let you fail.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 3)

Khadijah then suggested they go and consult her cousin Waraqa ibn Nawfal, who had become a Christian hermit.

When Waraqa heard the full account from the Prophet, he told him that the revelation he had experienced was from the same source as the messages of the Prophet Moses and Jesus. Then, gradually, he began to understand—his quest had finally been rewarded. His restless soul had been joined with his Lord. The Prophet continued to receive divine revelations from time to time over the next twenty-three years when the Archangel Gabriel would come

to him in different forms. Sometimes he would be huge and fill the whole horizon, and sometimes he would be just a pair of eyes watching him. At other times he remained invisible, and only his voice could be heard. Sometimes the voice was muffled, like a ringing in the Prophet's head. However, the meaning was always clear.

Khadijah was the first to respond to the call of the Prophet. Her cousin, the wise man Waraqah, explained that just as Gabriel had come to Moses earlier on Mount Sinai and told him to guide his people, so would Muhammad become the Prophet of his people. However, Waraqah also warned that not all the people would listen to the Prophet, and some would even try to harm him and his followers. Therefore, the Prophet would need great courage and patience. Khadijah understood and became the strongest help and support to the Prophet in the following trials.

The next to respond to the Prophet was his cousin, Ali. Zayd, his foster son, was the third. Finally, Abu Bakr, a respected merchant, was the first convert from outside the family who became the Prophet's closest companion. To begin with, the Prophet taught

Khadijah and the small group of friends how to pray, and they would pray together.

This small group of the faithful were the first believers of Islam. In the first stage, the Prophet was asked to spread the message of Islam quietly to avoid arousing any hostility.

Being an influential merchant, Abu Bakr brought some of his friends, also rich merchants, into the fold of Islam. However, most of the conversions occurred among the weak and the poor.

In the second stage, the Prophet received the command from God to spread the message publicly, but first to his kin.

When Prophet Muhammad started communicating his mission to the general public, he met with a strong reaction. The people considered Islam's teachings to insult their forefathers' religion. Some remarked that he had gone mad. Soon they all went away without considering the Prophet's words.

There was one main reason for the Quraysh to oppose the Prophet and keep him from spreading his message. Makkah was a pilgrimage centre because

the Kabah housed 360 idols of the neighbouring tribes and nations. Since Islam believed in only One God, the Quraysh feared that once the concept of One God became popular, the tribes would stop visiting the Kabah to pay homage to the idols. This would deprive them of the respect they commanded as guardians of the Kabah. Besides, the prosperity of Makkah depended mainly on these idols, to whom offerings were made all year round by great numbers of the neighbouring tribespeople. Trade flourished side by side with the pilgrimage, and this was good for Makkah, for the townspeople had no other way of making money; farming or planting orchards in such a desert area was out of the question. The Kabah was their sole asset. However, not all of the Makkans were hostile. Some gave serious thought to the message of the Quran and gradually began to accept Islam. There were about 200 Makkans as well as people from the neighbouring settlements who entered the Islamic fold.

The Quraysh, who enjoyed the Makkan leadership, considered the teachings of the new religion an insult to the religion of their forefathers. In Islam, they saw

a danger to their leadership. Such leaders as Abu Jahl and Abu Lahab were the most hostile to the Prophet. They began to give serious thought to the matter. Islam was fast gaining ground, so they thought they could not afford to postpone taking action. They had to nip this 'menace' in the bud.

The chiefs of different clans gathered to discuss the matter. They all felt that if Abu Talib did not come in their way, they would have no difficulty in finding a solution to this problem. So they all came to Abu Talib to tell him to stop Muhammad from spreading his message.

They warned him, "Tell Muhammad to stop spreading his message, or you will abandon him. If you fail to do so, you should be ready to suffer for the deeds of your nephew."

Abu Talib, an old man, felt that he would not be able to resist their wrath. So he told the Prophet what the Quraysh chiefs had said to him and then added, "My dearest nephew, look to your safety and the safety of your uncle, and do not cause me to carry a burden I cannot bear."

For a while, the Prophet stood motionless. On the one hand, there was his old uncle, weakened by the people's opposition, and on the other hand, he was responsible for proclaiming the truth till his last breath. Moreover, the only source of strength was his faith and conviction in the truth. So he decided to discharge his duty whatever the cost. In a firm and calm voice, and with tears in his eyes, he said:

“O, uncle! By God Almighty, I swear that even if they were to place the sun on my right and the moon on my left, I would not give up my mission. I must go on carrying it out until I die.”

Abu Talib, touched by the sincerity and force of the words uttered by his nephew, remained motionless for a while. Then he turned to the Prophet and said:

“My nephew, go your way. Do your duty. Let my people turn against me. I am with you. No one shall harm you as long as I live.” (*Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah* - Ibn Hisham, Vol. 1, p. 240)

The Opposition Intensifies

When the Quraysh saw that the pressure on Abu Talib had failed, they decided to make life unbearable for the Prophet and his followers. Slaves, the weakest sections of society, were the worst sufferers. Their masters beat them brutally, and some were beaten to death. However, they suffered all this patiently. So Abu Bakr spent much of his wealth on freeing these enslaved people.

Even the wealthy Muslims were not spared. They were also persecuted. Their relatives turned against them. After the death of Abu Talib and Khadijah, the people felt there was nothing left to stop them from persecuting the Prophet. They threw garbage at him as he passed through the streets. They spread thorns in his

path. They made noise when the Prophet stood up at the Kabah to pray.

The Makkans did all they could to turn the people against the Prophet. However, despite all their efforts, Islam continued to spread. Some of the most powerful men of Makkah accepted Islam. Hamzah, the Prophet's uncle, Umar ibn Al-Khattab, famous for his bravery, and Abu Dharr Ghifari were among them.

The Makkan chiefs were more enraged than before. They made life so difficult for the Muslims that many migrated to nearby Abyssinia with the Prophet's permission. At first, fifteen men and women migrated to Abyssinia. Slowly, the number reached eighty-three.

With time, the Makkan chiefs became more and more bitter. They felt that the Prophet's clan, the Banu Hashim, headed by Abu Talib, was responsible for all this misery and that if they had given up Muhammad, all his activities could have been stopped without delay. So they made it known to the Banu Hashim that they would have to suffer the consequences if they did not surrender Muhammad.

The tribes of Makkah agreed. They agreed to cut off all dealings with the Banu Hashim. No one was to sell

anything to them. The agreement was signed and hung up in the sacred Kabah. This was the seventh year of prophethood.

This boycott period was one of great hardship for the Banu Hashim and the Muslims. While this ban was in force, Abu Talib, the chief of the Banu Hashim, had to take refuge in a narrow valley, which came to be known as Abu Talib's Pass. The Prophet and his relatives lived in this valley for three years. After that, many of the Muslims joined them. All supplies to the valley were cut off. The Banu Hashim had to live on the leaves and roots of trees.

Finally, certain kind-hearted Makkan leaders took pity on them. They tore the agreement hanging in the Kabah to pieces so the Banu Hashim could return to their homes. However, Abu Talib, the Prophet's uncle, died soon after this. His health had suffered during the three years of hardship. Nevertheless, although Abu Talib had not accepted Islam as head of his clan, he protected the Prophet from his opponents.

After his death, Abu Lahab, another uncle of the Prophet, became head of the Banu Hashim. He was the bitterest enemy of Islam and Muslims. He made

it clear to the Quraysh that Muhammad no longer had the protection of his clan. Moreover, in those days, no one could survive without such protection.

Khadijah, the faithful wife of the Prophet, also died soon after the ban was lifted. Both these deaths took place in the tenth year of prophethood.

The loss of Abu Talib and Khadijah saddened the Prophet, for they had been great sources of strength to him. It was their deaths that made the enemy bold enough to persecute him. One day when the Prophet was praying in the Kabah, Abu Jahl put a piece of cloth around his neck and twisted it hard. He would have strangled the Prophet had not Abu Bakr rushed to his help in time.

Day by day, the situation worsened. So the Prophet decided to go to Taif, a neighbouring town, about 40 miles from Makkah, to spread God's word. He was accompanied only by his servant, Zayd. He spoke to the leaders of Taif and invited them to accept Islam. They paid no heed to his message. They were such evil people that they did not stop at that. When the Prophet left the town in a sad state, these chiefs sent street urchins to chase him. They abused him and threw stones at him

as he walked out of the town. They continued to pelt stones at him until it became too dark for them to see him. He stopped on the way in an orchard to rest. He was badly hurt, bleeding profusely. However, he only prayed for the guidance of his foes. He did not curse them. In all humility, he simply said thus:

“I rather hope that God will raise from among their descendants people who will worship God the One, and will not ascribe partners to Him.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 3231, *Mustakbraj Abi ‘Awanah*, Hadith No. 7341)

Islam Spreads to Yathrib (Madinah)

The Prophet regularly conveyed the message of Islam to people from outside Makkah. In the eleventh year of his prophethood, in 620 AD, six men from the tribe of Khazraj of Yathrib (which later came to be known as Madinatun-Nabi, The Prophet’s City) accepted Islam

during their pilgrimage to Makkah. The following year twelve more men from Yathrib accepted Islam. This time they took an oath pledging allegiance to the Prophet. This oath is known as the First Pledge of Aqabah, named after the Aqabah pass, at Mina, near Makkah, where they had sworn to accept Islam. They requested the Prophet to send Musab bin Umayr, a companion of the Prophet, to Yathrib to convey the message of Islam to the inhabitants. There the divine message was immediately well-received, and within a year, many people accepted Islam due to the preaching of Musab ibn Umayr.

In the thirteenth year of prophethood, seventy-two Muslims from Yathrib came for the Hajj. On behalf of their people, they invited the Prophet to make Yathrib his home. During the pilgrimage, they also took the oath which is known as the Second Pledge of Aqabah. These men from Yathrib, of the tribes of Aws and Khazraj, pledged to protect the Prophet from his enemies. However, for all this sacrifice on their part, they wanted the Prophet to promise them only one thing: that when he had gained power, he would

not leave them and return to Makkah. The Prophet replied:

“You have that assurance. I am yours, and you are mine.” (*Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah* - Ibn Hisham, Vol. I, p. 442)

Then the Muslims began to emigrate to Yathrib in large numbers to escape persecution at the hands of the Quraysh. Only the Prophet, Abu Bakr and a few Muslims were left in Makkah.

This enraged the Quraysh, for Islam was now strengthening its roots in Yathrib. They were greatly alarmed that their enemies were gaining a firm foothold. There was nothing more dangerous than that. So they resolved to remove the danger once and for all. They said:

“Kill Muhammad and Islam will die with him.”
(*Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah* - Ibn Hisham, Vol. I, p. 482)

The Makkans then plotted against the Prophet's life, and the young men with whom the Quraysh had planned to carry out the murder collected on that fateful night to put their plan into action. However, God had another plan—and who can overrule the plan

of God? And that was to command the Prophet to leave for Yathrib. So the Prophet first called Ali, gave him the people's deposits, and asked him to return them to the depositors. Then he made Ali lie in his bed while he left the house at midnight.

The Prophet had already informed Abu Bakr, his closest friend, of the plan to emigrate, to be conducted in total secrecy. So they left Makkah before dawn, riding on two camels which Abu Bakr had kept ready to carry them across the desert. About five miles from the city, they took shelter in a cave called Thawr.

When the Makkans learnt of the Prophet's escape, they were enraged. They offered a prize of one hundred camels to anyone who captured Muhammad. So several horse riders raced out into the desert. One of them even managed to reach the very mouth of the cave of Thawr. Abu Bakr was stricken with fear lest they harm the Prophet. However, the Prophet reassured him, saying:

“Fear not. We are not just two in this cave. There is a third—God.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 4663)

The Prophet and Abu Bakr lay hidden in this cave for three days and nights. Finally, on the fourth day, they came out and continued the journey along with Abdullah ibn Urayqit, their guide.

The Prophet Arrives at Madinah

After six days, the Prophet reached Quba, a village three miles from Madinah. At that time, the people of Madinah had been waiting impatiently for his arrival. The Prophet stayed for two weeks in Quba, where he built the first mosque of Islam.

People came out of the city each morning and watched the road from Quba. Then, at last, the great day arrived. He set off for Madinah on a Friday morning. When he entered the town, he found that all the people, men, women and children, had turned out to receive him. The women stood on the house-tops and sang songs of joy.

They had all lined both sides of the street to receive him. Everybody wanted him to be his guest when the Prophet entered the city. The more zealous held the reins of the camel and wanted the Prophet to dismount in front of their doors and enter their houses. However, the Prophet refused politely and said:

“Leave my camel alone. She is under the command of God; she will stop where God wants her to stop.” It finally stopped at a site that belonged to two orphans, Sahal and Suhail, of the Banu Najjar tribe. The Prophet dismounted, saying: “It seems that this is where God wants us to stop.” (*Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah* - Ibn Hisham, Vol. 1, p. 494)

The Prophet bought that land to build a mosque and some rooms for his wives. After settling this matter, the Prophet asked who lived nearest the site. Abu Ayyub Ansari said that his house was the nearest and requested the Prophet to be his guest. So the Prophet stayed in his house for about seven months. In the meantime, his house was built.

From the day the Prophet came to Yathrib, it came to be called Madinatun-Nabi or “The City of the Prophet”.

The Prophet entered Yathrib on 17 September, 622 AD. This year was later designated by Caliph Umar as the first year of the Islamic era, for this event was considered the most important in the history of Islam.

The Brotherhood of Islam

The first problem faced by the Prophet was that of the Makkan refugees. They had neither homes nor money. Most of them had been well-to-do in Makkah, but they had left everything behind. So the first important thing the Prophet had to do was settle them in their new surroundings.

The solution to this problem was found in the concept of brotherhood in Islam. The Prophet collected the Muslims and suggested that one Ansari Madinan Muslim and one refugee Makkan Muslim should become linked together as two brothers.

They immediately accepted the suggestion of the Prophet. Each Ansari took one Makkan Muslim as his brother. This bond between the two became even more powerful than a blood relationship. The Ansari gave his Makkan brother half of everything he possessed—house, land, money and other belongings.

The Prophet's Mosque

The next most important task for the Prophet was to build a mosque. This mosque was built on the land he had bought from the orphans. It had mud walls and a roof of palm leaves. Huts were built right next to the mosque for the Prophet's family.

A platform with a thatched roof was built in one corner of the mosque. Poor people who had no home or family lived here. They spent their time in worship and prayer. They were fed by those Muslims who could afford to do so. They also sometimes earned their living by collecting wood from the jungle and selling it in the market. These people came to be known as

Ashab-e-Suffa, the people of the bench. Abu Hurayrah, also one of the *Ashab-e-Suffa*, was the most constant attendant of the Prophet. He related more traditions of the sayings and doings of the Prophet than any other companion.

Yathrib was inhabited mostly by the tribes of Aws and Khazraj. Both tribes rapidly entered the fold of Islam. Some Jewish tribes also lived in the city. They were rich, owned orchards and were very powerful.

Now the Prophet turned his attention to the important task of establishing friendly relations with various tribes. The Banu Qaynuqa, Banu Nadir, and Banu Qurayza were the Jewish tribes that were neither friendly nor hostile towards the Aws and Khazraj. However, now that the Aws and Khazraj had accepted Islam, it was necessary to make a new treaty to determine each other's rights and duties in the new scheme of things, with the Prophet as their leader.

This pact dictated by the Prophet granted full religious freedom to the Jews. The Muslims and the Jews had to live in peace and amity together as brothers, helping one another in times of need.

After the conclusion of this treaty, Islam found a safe home in Yathrib.

The Prophet's Family

The Prophet had a large family. Most of his wives were widows. Two of his wives were Jewish, and one was Christian.

In those days, men could have several wives, but Islam restricted the number of wives to four. In that period, when men were often killed in battle, the women who were left behind had to be looked after. So taking several wives was like taking helpless refugees into one's home. They were treated kindly and generously. Muslim men were encouraged to look after the widows of friends who had died in battle, give them separate homes, and treat them equally in every respect.

The Prophet's wives shared his pious way of life. They made great personal sacrifices, bearing patiently with all kinds of hardships in the path of God. So they came to be known as the mothers of the faithful. All

the Prophet's sons had died in infancy. However, four daughters borne by Khadijah survived infancy, grew to adulthood, married and bore children. They were Fatimah, Umm Kulthum, Ruqayyah and Zaynab.

The Prophet was a man of peace. His main task was to tell the people about the divine message; he needed an atmosphere of peace and goodwill in which to do so. So he urged his companions to ask God for peace. However, the Quraysh did not allow him to work in peaceful conditions. When they saw the Muslims becoming more powerful, they resolved to wage war and crush them altogether.

The Battle of Badr

The Quraysh marched to Madinah with a thousand-strong army. They camped at Badr, about eighty miles from Madinah. It was the month of Ramadan, 2 AH. On hearing the news of the enemy camping at Badr, the Prophet marched out of Madinah at the head of an army of 313 Muslims. There were few horses, and the

Muslims had no armour. The Makkans, on the other hand, were well-armed and had 300 horses and 700 camels.

The battle, in which the Makkans were seriously outnumbered, began on Friday, the 17th of Ramadan. The fighting lasted only a few hours, during which the Prophet prayed all the time for divine help. God then sent angels to help the Muslims. The Muslims won the battle, and the Quraysh suffered a total rout.

The Battle of Uhud

The defeat, however, did not teach the Quraysh a lesson. On the contrary, it only made them angrier. Bent on wiping out the shame of their defeat, they began to prepare for a second attack on a much larger scale. They raised an army of more than 3000 warriors and, mad with revenge, marched to Madinah, led by Abu Sufyan.

The Battle of Uhud took place in 624 AD. The enemy numbered 3000, while the Prophet's men numbered only 700. However, the Muslims successfully drove

back their attackers with God on their side. The enemy started retreating, leaving behind large quantities of booty. The Muslims were about to win the battle when forty archers, whom the Prophet had sent to the hillside to guard the pass, saw the retreating army and thought that if they remained on the hill, they would lose their share of the booty. So most of them ran away from their posts. This left the way open for a counter-attack.

When Khalid bin Walid, still a non-Muslim, saw the pass undefended, he led his men behind the hill and killed the few archers who still stood guard. Then he fell upon the Muslims from the rear. Seeing this, the fleeing Quraysh leaders turned back. The Muslims were thrown into utter confusion. The Prophet himself was wounded. However, the Muslims stood like a solid stone wall around the Prophet and beat back all attacks with superhuman courage. Many fell dead, and several were wounded. They had gone to the extent of sacrificing their lives to save the Prophet from the enemy onslaught. Slowly the enemy was beaten back.

The Quraysh lost 14 men, while the Muslims lost 70. Among the dead was Hamzah, the Prophet's uncle. First, the Prophet grieved over the loss of this brave

soul. Then, the martyrs were buried with deep sorrow, and the Muslims returned to Madinah.

The Quraysh knew at heart that the Muslims would have won the battle had not the fateful mistake of a few Muslims turned their victory into defeat. So for two years, they did not attempt to invade Makkah.

The Battle of the Trench

The enemies and hypocrites had been plotting all this while. Finally, they managed to bring together all the opponents of Islam. They were able to assemble a mighty force of 24,000. In the fifth year of Hijrah, this large army started marching towards Madinah. The Prophet consulted his companions. One of them, Salman Farsi, a Persian, suggested that a trench be dug around Madinah to stop the enemy's advance. The Sassanids had already used this strategy on similar occasions. It took three thousand men working for

twenty days to dig the trench.

The allied forces of 10,000 marched to Madinah under the command of Abu Sufyan. The Madinans numbered only 3,000. The trench stopped the Makkan cavalry. However, they had plenty of food supplies, so they decided to lay siege to the city.

On the 27th day of the siege, a cyclone hit Madinah. The storm continued for three days and nights, bringing very heavy rain. All the tents were blown away, and the provisions became unusable due to the rain.

The soldiers began to voice their grievances. Discouraged, the Quraysh abandoned the siege.

Treaty of Hudaibiyyah

The Prophet felt that war was not the solution. Therefore, he adopted another strategy. Guided by a dream, he left for Makkah to perform Umrah accompanied by 1,400 companions. He camped at Hudaibiyyah, a short way from Makkah. It was a completely peaceful march. However, the Makkan

leaders objected to it. They felt that they were being made to look very small by the fact that the people they had forced out of Makkah were coming to the city again to perform the rites of Umrah openly and in such large numbers.

The Prophet halted at Hudaibiyyah and began peace talks with the Makkan leaders. The Quraysh finally agreed to sign a peace treaty. However, at the Prophet's suggestion, a clause was included which said that, for the next ten years, no war would occur between the Muslims and the Makkans. By the terms of this treaty, the Muslims were to go back without visiting the Kabah. They were to come again the following year and stay in Makkah for just three days.

The treaty appeared to be a victory for the Quraysh, for the Prophet had accepted all their conditions without demur. However, it soon proved to be otherwise. There was no war danger; people could mix freely with any tribe they liked. This allowed the non-Muslims to have a closer look at Islam. During this period of free mixing, Islam became a subject for everyone to discuss. As a result, the call for Islam spread rapidly. The Arabs,

impressed by the virtues of Islam, began to enter its fold in large numbers. Within the next two years, the number of Muslims increased greatly.

Call to the World

Now that there was peace, the Prophet took full advantage of the opportunities it gave him. He sent his companions with letters to the rulers and kings of countries right next to or very close to Arabia. The companions delivered these letters to the rulers of Iran, Byzantium, Abyssinia, Egypt and Syria, amongst others. These letters contained the basic teachings of Islam, and the rulers were invited to accept Islam.

Some of them, like Negus, the ruler of Abyssinia, accepted Islam, while others rejected it, but they accepted the letters graciously and sent presents to the Prophet. Only the Emperor of Iran, Khusro Parvez, tore up the Prophet's message in his arrogance. He considered it below his dignity to accept such a letter. When the Prophet received this news, he said: "The

Emperor of Persia has himself torn his Kingdom into pieces.” (*Al-Bidāya wan Nihāya*, Vol. 6, p. 485) This prediction was fulfilled during the rule of Caliph Umar when Iran came under Muslim rule.

The Fall of Makkah

Two years after the signing of this treaty, the Quraysh broke their word. The Prophet then announced that the peace agreement was no longer in force. Later, on the 10th day of Ramadan, he left for Makkah accompanied by 10,000 companions. This march was conducted in complete secrecy. Only when they encamped a few miles from the city, did the Makkans come to know of their arrival. The Makkans were completely taken by surprise. Faced with this numerical strength, the Makkans found themselves helpless. Therefore, they conceded their defeat without any resistance. Makkah was thus conquered without any armed encounter. The Muslims had strict orders to shed no blood. The Makkans were told that they would be safe if they kept

indoors or took refuge in the Kabah or Abu Sufyan's house.

After the fall of Makkah, the Kabah was purified of all the idols placed in it. Then Bilal, the black companion of the Prophet, went up onto the roof of the Kabah and gave the call to prayer (*Azan*). Then the companions said the thanksgiving prayer, led by the Prophet.

Pardon for All

The Makkan leaders sat in the compound of the Kabah. They were, without exception, the worst types of criminals. Therefore, even if all of them were to be put to death, the punishment would have been fully justified. However, the Prophet, being of a noble character, did not act against them. On the contrary, he pardoned them all, saying: "Go, you are all free." (*Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah* - Ibn Hisham, Vol. 2, p. 412)

The Makkan idolaters could hardly believe their ears. This great treatment of the fallen foe won all hearts,

including those of the most bitter enemies of Islam. After their hearts were conquered, the Makkan idolaters had no choice but to embrace Islam. All the insolent Makkans surrendered and joined the Prophet in his mission as companions. All opposition had just vanished.

Battle of Hunayn

The fall of Makkah was not taken kindly by all the tribes. The Banu Thaqif and the Hawazin, who lived between Makkah and Taif, were greatly upset by the developments in Makkah. Sensing the danger to their freedom to act as they pleased and to their position as the most important tribes of the region, they turned hostile and collected a huge army. This army was encamped in the valley of Hunayn, to which a narrow pass was the only entrance.

Expert archers hid behind rocky crags. The Prophet arrived with an army of 12,000. The Muslims, filling

between the narrow rocky walls of the pass, panicked under the sudden heavy rain of arrows from the hidden archers. About 11,000 of the 12,000-strong Muslim army turned and fled, unprepared for this sudden attack. However, the Prophet and some of his close companions showed no signs of panic, putting their entire trust in God. God sent His help as promised. Thus, despite this first setback, the course of the battle was altered. The Muslims won an extraordinary victory. 6,000 members of the Hawazin tribe were taken prisoner. They were proven war criminals and, according to the prevailing custom, they should all have been put to death. But the Prophet pardoned them all and set them free without setting any conditions.

This extraordinary and unexpected pardon impressed these insolent people so much that they all entered the fold of Islam. After the conversion of the Hawazin tribe, the rebel Thaqif tribe of Taif lost courage. Within one month, they all surrendered and embraced Islam.

The First Hajj Under Islam

The first Hajj under Islam took place in the 9th year of Hijrah. The Prophet did not lead it but sent Abu Bakr in his place. The 9th year of Hijrah witnessed a rapid spread of Islam. Representatives of tribes inhabiting far-off parts of Arabia poured into Madinah. They had a two-fold purpose—to convert to Islam and to establish relations with the newly formed Islamic state. These delegations came in such large numbers that the year became known as the year of delegations. In this way, one after another, all the tribes of Arabia entered the fold of Islam.

The Farewell Pilgrimage

After stabilising the situation in Arabia, the Prophet set out to perform *Hajjatul Wida*, his Farewell Pilgrimage. It was the last year of his life. He left Madinah for Makkah accompanied by Madinan Muslims. When the news spread that the Prophet would perform the pilgrimage, various tribes living in Arabia began pouring into Makkah.

Therefore, when the Prophet of Islam performed his first as well as his last pilgrimage, he was joined by 1,25,000 Muslims. During this pilgrimage, the revelations about the rules of the Hajj were given to him. All Muslims follow them to this day. When the Prophet arrived at Mount Arafat, he gave his words of

wisdom to the people present on that occasion. These teachings are preserved in the form of the ‘Farewell Sermon’.

During the Sermon of Arafat, the last passage of the Quran was revealed:

“Today I have completed your religion for you and completed My blessing upon you. I have chosen for you Islam as your religion.” (5:3)

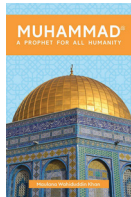
This proved to be the Prophet’s last visit. That is why it came to be called the “Farewell Pilgrimage”. Only three months after his return to Madinah, he fell ill and stayed in Aishah’s house with all of his wives’ consent. He had a fever and headache. He remained ill for about two weeks and breathed his last on 12 Rabiul Awwal 10 AH. He continued leading prayers till he became too weak to go to the mosque. However, before his death, he said his last prayer in the Masjid-e-Nabawi and made Abu Bakr, his closest companion, the Imam of this prayer. This was a clear sign that he wanted Abu Bakr to succeed him as the leader of the believers.

The Prophet Muhammad became ill in the 11th year after the hijra and died several days later (on 8 June, 632 AD). He was 63-years old when he died. Prophet Muhammad did not leave anything for his family. What he left was his seerah, his noble character, called *Khuluqin Azim* (Sublime Character) in the Quran (68:4). These are invaluable sources of knowledge and wisdom for the believers.

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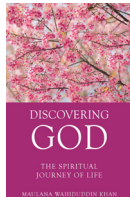
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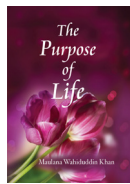
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Michael H. Hart (b. 1932), an American author, wrote in his book, titled, *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*, “Muhammad was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels.” (*The 100*, New York, 1978)

Michael Hart has chosen Prophet Mohammad as the most influential person in human history. He is a Prophet of Peace and beacon of light for seekers of truth.



Prof. Farida Khanam (b. 1952), Chairperson of Centre for Peace and Spirituality (CPS) International, is an Islamic scholar, author and translator. She retired as Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. She has translated the Quran in English with her father, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, a world-renowned Islamic scholar.

CPSInternational
centre for peace and spirituality

www.cpsglobal.org
info@cpsglobal.org

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