

“Call to the path of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation,  
and argue with people in the best manner.” (Holy Quran, 16:125)

# *The Light*

AND

## **ISLAMIC REVIEW**

Exponent of Islam and the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement  
for over ninety years

July – September 2015

In the spirit of the above-cited verse, this periodical attempts to dispel  
misunderstandings about the religion of Islam and endeavors to  
facilitate inter-faith dialogue based on reason and rationality.

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احمدیہ انجمن اشاعت اسلام لاہور

◆ Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha‘at Islam Lahore Inc., U.S.A. ◆

**The Light** was founded in 1921 as the organ of the AHMADIYYA ANJUMAN ISHA'AT ISLAM (Ahmadiyya Association for the Propagation of Islam) of Lahore, Pakistan. **The Islamic Review** was published in England from 1913 for over 50 years, and in the U.S.A. from 1980 to 1991. The present periodical represents the beliefs of the worldwide branches of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam, Lahore.

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The main objective of the A.A.I.L. is to present the true, original message of Islam to the whole world — Islam as it is found in the Holy Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, obscured today by grave misconceptions and wrong popular notions.

Islam seeks to attract the **hearts and minds** of people towards the truth, by means of reasoning and the natural beauty of its principles.

**Hazrat** Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908), our Founder, arose to remind the world that Islam is:

**International:** It recognizes prophets being raised among all nations and requires Muslims to believe in them all. Truth and goodness can be found in all religions. God treats all human beings equally, regardless of race, nationality or religion.

**Peaceful:** Allows use of force only in unavoidable self-defence. Teaches Muslims to live peacefully under any rule which accords them freedom of religion.

**Tolerant:** Gives full freedom to everyone to hold and practise any creed or religion. Requires us to tolerate differences of belief and opinion.

**Rational:** In all matters, it urges use of human reason and knowledge. Blind following is condemned and independence of thought is granted.

**Inspiring:** Worship is not a ritual, but provides living contact with a Living God, Who answers prayers and speaks to His righteous servants even today as in the past.

**Non-sectarian:** Every person professing Islam by the words **La ilaha ill-Allah, Muhammad-ur rasul-ullah** (There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah) is a Muslim. A Muslim cannot be expelled from Islam by anyone.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad taught that **no** prophet, old or new, is to arise after the Holy Prophet Muhammad. However, **Mujaddids** will be raised by God to revive and rekindle the light of Islam.

#### About ourselves

Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore has branches in many countries including:

<b>U.S.A.</b>	<b>Australia</b>
<b>U.K.</b>	<b>Canada</b>
<b>Holland</b>	<b>Fiji</b>
<b>Indonesia</b>	<b>Germany</b>
<b>Suriname</b>	<b>India</b>
<b>Trinidad</b>	<b>South Africa</b>
<b>Guyana</b>	<b>Philippines</b>

#### Achievements:

The Anjuman has produced extensive literature on Islam, originally in English and Urdu, including translations of the Holy Quran with commentaries. These books are being translated into other languages, including French, German, Spanish, Dutch, Russian, Chinese, and Arabic. The Anjuman has run several Muslim missions around the world, including the first ever in Western Europe.

#### History:

**1889:** **Hazrat** Mirza Ghulam Ahmad founds the Ahmadiyya Movement.

**1901:** Movement given name **Ahmadiyya** after Holy Prophet Muhammad's other famous name **Ahmad**.

**1905:** Hazrat Mirza appoints central body (Anjuman) to manage the Movement.

**1908:** Death of Hazrat Mirza. Succeeded by Maulana Nur-ud-Din as Head.

**1914:** Death of Maulana Nur-ud-Din. Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam founded at Lahore as continuation of the original Anjuman. Maulana Muhammad Ali elected as Head.

**1951:** Death of Maulana Muhammad Ali after fifty years of glorious service to the cause of Islam. Maulana Sadr-ud-Din (d. 1981) becomes Head.

**1981–1996:** Dr Saeed Ahmad Khan, an eminent medical doctor and religious scholar, led the Movement, at a time of intense persecution.

**1996–2002:** Prof. Dr Asghar Hameed, a distinguished retired University Professor of Mathematics, and learned Islamic scholar, served as Head.

**2002:** Prof. Dr Abdul Karim Saeed Pasha elected Head.

# Muhammad, the Final Prophet

**An introduction to Prophet Muhammad  
from a Muslim perspective, and a review  
of how others viewed him through the ages.**

**By Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.**

*[The theme of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society's annual symposium this year – held in Columbus, Ohio on August 15, 2015 – was titled "The True Portrait of Prophet Muhammad". With the recent controversies concerning the Charlie Hebdo cartoons of Prophet Muhammad and the subsequent "Draw Muhammad" contests emerging in the United States, this particular theme provided an opportunity to dispel the misinformation about Prophet Muhammad upon which many of these depictions are based, and practically demonstrate Prophet Muhammad's lessons on responding to abuse and ridicule with peaceful dialogue. This article was presented by the Editor as the introductory presentation to the symposium this year. In this article, the Editor explains the significance of the term "the last prophet" that Muslims attribute to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, and reviews how many influential historical figures who had the opportunity to study his life viewed him through the ages.]*

## Introduction

I'd like to begin with a short story about a man who fell in the ocean and he couldn't swim. When a boat came by, the captain yelled: "Do you need help, sir?" The man replied: "No, God will save me". A little later, another boat came by and a fisherman asked: "Hey, do you need help?" The man again replied: "No, God will save me." Well, eventually the man drowned. He ended up in heaven and asked an angel why God didn't save him. The angel replied: "You fool, he sent you two boats."

The Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society (which is the U.S. branch of the international Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement) views controversies about Islam as opportunities (boats, if you will) to educate people about Islam and also to reclaim our religion from those who espouse extremist views and propaganda. And, although our work is multi-faceted and international in scope, one way in which we do this locally is by hosting an annual symposium devoted to a topic about Islam that is relevant to some contemporary issue.

A few years ago, when a Florida-based pastor received national (even international) attention for staging a "Burn the Quran" day, we focused our symposium on discussing what is actually contained in this holy scripture of Islam. When certain political groups

engaged in concerted campaigns to push what was referred to as "Anti-Sharia" legislation in various states, we focused our symposium on addressing what the concept of sharia actually entails. When a popular topic in public discourse revolved around the "science vs. religion" debate, we held a symposium titled "The Story of Adam: A Discussion on Evolution and Revelation", and we addressed, from an Islamic perspective, whether science and religion are inherently incompatible. This year, with the widespread attention drawn (no pun intended) by the publishing of the controversial cartoons of Prophet Muhammad by Charlie Hebdo, and the subsequent provocative "Draw Muhammad" contests emerging here in the United States (recently in Texas and Arizona), we felt it would be timely to focus our symposium on discussing the person of Prophet Muhammad. Who was Prophet Muhammad? What was his character? And how did he live his life?

Far from the views upon which much of these caricatures are based, a review of Prophet Muhammad's life from authentic records reveals a much different narrative. And our keynote address later this morning by Dr. Noman Malik will provide such a narrative and also address some of the common allegations made against him. And by responding to such criticisms made against Prophet Muhammad through peaceful dialogue, we hope to show by example what Prophet Muhammad's lessons actually were on how to respond to abuse and ridicule. And this really is of primary importance, as the violent reactions by some claiming to defend the honor of the Prophet were immeasurably more insulting to his image than any cartoon or slur, no matter how vile.

And later this afternoon, we will have a presentation on the specific topic of "Freedom of Opinion" according to Islam by our learned member from Australia, Prosecutor Sadar-ud-Din Sahukhan. But first I will be providing a brief introduction on what Muslims actually believe about Prophet Muhammad, and what conclusions about him were reached by very well-respected individuals throughout history who had the opportunity to study his life.

## Concept of God in Islam

So, to start, according to Islam, there is only *One God*, Who has no associate or companion. This monotheistic belief is the very foundation of the Islamic faith. And the Quran views Abraham as the archetype of this monotheistic faith. Prophet Abraham is repeatedly pointed out as comprehending that the True, Supreme, All-Powerful, Perfect God is One, and that it is to this One God that mankind is to submit itself completely. And it is this Abrahamic model of faith that Islam endeavors to reestablish (as is shown in these verses):

God speaks the truth; **so follow the religion of Abraham**, the upright one. And he (Abraham) was not one of the polytheists (3:95).

And who is better in religion than he who submits himself entirely to God while doing good (to others) and **follows the faith of Abraham**, the upright one? And God took Abraham for a friend (4:125).

As for me, my Lord has guided me to the right path — **a right religion, the faith of Abraham**, the upright one, and he (Abraham) was not of the polytheists (6:161).

So, the God of Islam is the God of Abraham, the same God Jews and Christians worship.

### Institution of Prophethood

Now, Muhammad, on the other hand, is regarded as only one of the prophets of God, a mortal and in no way himself divine. In fact, a Muslim must not only believe in the prophethood of Muhammad, but in all the prophets and messengers of God. See, the institution of prophethood according to Islam is based on the understanding that prophets were sent to all people on earth. So, all people were equally blessed with God's favors and guidance, as is shown in these verses:

“There is not a people but a warner has gone among them” (35:24)

“For every nation there is a messenger” (10:47)

These prophets had two primary functions: 1) to deliver a divine message to the people to which they were sent, and 2) to serve as a role model as to how to live a life in accordance with that divine message. And this concept of the universality of the institution of prophethood is very clearly presented in this verse of the Quran:

“We believe in God and (in) that which has been revealed to us, and (in) that which was revealed to Abraham, and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and (in) that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and (in) that which was given to the prophets from their Lord, we do not make any distinction between any of them and to Him (God) do we submit.” (2:136)

Now, although this verse specifically mentions certain Israelite prophets, we are told in the Quran that God sent prophets to all nations on earth, not to just one people. In one report the Holy Prophet Muhammad is recorded as saying that there have been 124,000 prophets in all. So, just as God is understood as being the Creator and Sustainer of all people, so too is it recognized that *every* people or nation or tribe was provided spiritual blessings equally.

### Distinguishing Characteristic of Prophet Muhammad

What distinguishes Prophet Muhammad from all of the other prophets is that Prophet Muhammad is referred to

in the Quran as “*khatam-an-nabiyeen*”, which means the “seal” or “last” of the prophets. So Muslims believe Prophet Muhammad is the final prophet, to whom was revealed the final message for mankind, a universal message for all people and not any specific nation, as is reflected in these verses:

“Say: O Mankind, surely I am the Messenger of God to **you all**.” (7:158);

“And We have not sent thee but as a bearer of good news and as a warner to **all mankind**.” (34:28).

And just as a prophet serves as a role model in addition to delivering a divine message, Prophet Muhammad is understood as satisfying the role of the “last prophet” due to the diversity of his life experiences and the comprehensive practical examples he provided to all of humanity as to how to live a righteous life in various roles. As the Quran states:

“Certainly you have in the Messenger of God (i.e. Muhammad) an **excellent exemplar**” (33:21).

This is the distinguishing characteristic of Prophet Muhammad. See, from an orphan to a king of a great empire, Prophet Muhammad passed through all phases of life. And his life was so multi-faceted, that he was able to provide a model for people in many different roles.

- If he had not been a **laborer**, he could not have revealed the value and integrity in working with one's own hands and earning an honest living;

- If he had not in his youth **organized grass-roots campaigns** to serve the poor and protect the weaker members of society, he could not have been an inspiration for socially conscious community organizers.

- If he had not **married**, he would have left people unguided in practically half of their daily interactions, and could not have shown how to be a kind and affectionate spouse and a loving parent;

- If he had not served among the ranks of a military, he could not have been an exemplar for a **soldier** laying down his (or her) life in the cause of truth, justice and freedom;

- If he had not been the **head of an armed force**, he could not have served as an example for a responsible general or an accountable commander in chief;

- If he had not formed rules and regulations for his community, he could not have been regarded as an example for a **conscientious legislator**;

- If he had not been in the position to decide disputes among people, he could not have served as a model for an **impartial judge** or **effective mediator**;

- If he had not had life-long friends, he could not have shown the beauty in **true and trusted companionship**;

- And if he had not been persecuted by tyrants, and then overcome his persecuting enemies, and forgiven them without enforcing any punishment against them, he could not have *practically illustrated* the lessons on compassion, mercy and forgiveness that are contained in all revealed scriptures.

See, it is due to the diversity of Prophet Muhammad's life experiences that Muslims understand why he is the final prophet and, accordingly, an excellent exemplar for mankind. It is not through his sermons and teachings only that we can estimate his character, but rather by learning how he actually lived out those principles throughout his life.

### What Others Say About Him

And many renowned persons who were not Muslims, from various spheres of life, who are recognized as leaders in their fields, who studied the life of Prophet Muhammad as a historical figure have come to some fascinating conclusions.

**Rev. Bosworth Smith**, carefully studied the life of Prophet Muhammad, and in his book "*Mohammad and Mohammadism*" published in 1874, writes:

"Head of the State as well as the Church, he was Caesar and Pope in one; but, he was Pope without the Pope's pretensions, and Caesar without the legions of Caesar, without a standing army, without a bodyguard, without a police force, without a fixed revenue. If ever a man had the right to say that he ruled by a right divine, it was Muhammad, for he had all the powers without their supports. He cared not for the dressings of power. The simplicity of his private life was in keeping with his public life."

**Annie Besant**, a prominent British women's rights activist, writer and spokesperson for the National Secular Society, wrote in her book "*The Life and Teachings of Muhammad*" (1932), p.4:

"It is impossible for anyone who studies the life and character of the great Prophet of Arabia, who knew how he taught and how he lived, to feel anything but reverence for that mighty Prophet, one of the great messengers of the Supreme. And although in what I put to you I shall say many things which may be familiar to many, yet I myself feel, whenever I reread them, a new way of admiration, a new sense of reverence for that mighty Arabian teacher."

**Mahatma Gandhi**, the pre-eminent leader of the Indian Independence Movement in British-ruled India, and the person to whom modern day non-violence

movements trace their roots (like that of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s civil rights movement), after studying the life of Prophet Muhammad wrote:

"... I became more than ever convinced that it was not the sword that won a place for Islam in those days in the scheme of life. It was the rigid simplicity, the utter self-effacement of the prophet, the scrupulous regard for his pledges, his intense devotion to his friends and followers, his intrepidity, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in God and his own mission. These, and not the sword, carried everything before them and surmounted every trouble."

**Sir George Bernard Shaw**, well-known Irish dramatist and Nobel Peace Prize recipient for Literature wrote (in 1925):

"I have studied him (Muhammad) - the wonderful man ... He was by far the most remarkable man that ever set foot on this earth. He preached a religion, founded a state, built a nation, laid down a moral code, initiated numerous social and political reforms, established a powerful and dynamic society to practice and represent his teachings and completely revolutionized the worlds of human thought and behavior for all times to come."

**Thomas Carlyle**, famous Scottish philosopher, writer and historian, considered one of the most important social commentators of his time, who produced the famed work "*On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*", after studying the life of Prophet Muhammad wrote:

"The lies (from western critics), which well-meaning zeal has heaped round this man (Muhammad) are disgraceful to ourselves only ... How one man single-handedly could weld warring tribes and Bedouins into a most powerful and civilized nation in less than two decades ... A silent great soul, one of that cannot but be earnest. He was to kindle the world; the world's Maker had ordered so."

More recently, **Dr. Michael Hart**, a scientist by profession, studied important historical figures and ranked the top 100 most influential persons in history. He published his rankings in a book titled: "*The 100*", and number one on his list was "Prophet Muhammad". He writes:

"He [Muhammad] was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the secular and religious level ... It is this unparalleled combination of the secular and religious influence which I feel entitles Muhammad to be considered to be the most influential single figure in human history."

Similarly, the **Encyclopedia Britannica**, after exhaustive research and study concluded:

“Of all religious personalities of the world, Muhammad was the most successful.”

And a narrative of Prophet Muhammad’s life, from his birth to his death, that provides details about significant events that contributed to this most successful life, will be shared in the Keynote address.

Which brings me to the end of my introduction. I thank you very much for your attention. ■

## A Message of Understanding

**The need for mutual respect and understanding in interfaith relations.**

**Prof. Michael Birkel**

*[Each year the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society hosts a symposium devoted to a topic about Islam that is relevant to contemporary issues. And it is customary to include as part of the annual symposium a talk from an interfaith partner. The 2015 annual symposium was titled “The True Portrait of Prophet Muhammad” and Prof. Michael Birkel was our interfaith partner. Prof. Birkel teaches Religious Studies at Earlham College and is widely published, particularly on topics related to Quaker thought. His most recent publication is the book “Quran in Conversation”, of which the Editor is also a contributor. This article is a message of understanding that was presented by Prof. Birkel at the symposium this year.]*

First of all, thank you for the opportunity to be your guest. I want to express my appreciation for the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement and the way that it has been an important source of renewal and inspiration among Muslims worldwide, as well as a center of education for non-Muslims like me. May your work continue to be a source of blessing for you and for all whom you serve.

I have recently returned from a three-week institute in Washington, D. C. , sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The theme of this gathering of university professors was Islam in America. I learned a great deal in this time, including the role of the Ahmadiyya Movement in bringing the message of Islam to this continent. I was particularly moved to learn how Ahmadis, who on the whole tended to be from the well-educated and prosperous segment of society in South Asia, reached out to those in this country who bore the burdens of poverty and racial discrimination. The historical influence of Ahmadiyya among African American Muslims is a story that deserves to be more widely known. I was deeply touched by your community’s commitment to justice and human equality.

I became acquainted with your movement through Fazeel Khan. We met by providence at an annual conference of the Islamic Society of North America. I was attending a session and sat down next to Fazeel and his gracious father, Dr. Noman Malik. It was the beginning of a friendship. I learned much on many topics, from the prophethood of Muhammad (may the peace and blessings of God be upon him) to social justice to the hereafter, but the core of his message to me was that the purpose of human life is to identify, understand, and emulate the divine attributes of God—a beautiful description of Islam, and an invitation into the very heart of the spiritual life.

At that time I was working on a project that became a book on the Qur’an as interpreted by Muslims in North America. This project began with my concern that there was a need for non-Muslims like me to know what Muslims truly believed about their faith and their scripture. So I met with some 25 Muslim leaders and scholars. It was an extraordinary experience of Muslim hospitality and generosity as they shared about what is precious to them about the Qur’an. The resulting book shows how the Qur’an gives life to the American *ummah* and how the Qur’an comes to life within the *ummah*. My hope is that the fruits of my labors will be to contribute in some way to promoting interfaith understanding.

This project was labor intensive, but it was so rewarding to me personally that I wondered if there might be more. Just as non-Muslims need to know about the Qur’an and about how it is read and understood by Muslims (since it is a complex text, at least to newcomers), there is a need to understand how Muslims regard the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). In fact, if it were possible, I could imagine a similar project focused on the Prophet, in which I ask Muslims what the Prophet means to them. I am sure that the results would be enlightening. In my visits with Muslims while working on the book, I did of course learn both about the Prophet and about aspects of his life speak powerfully to Muslims today. Jamal Badawi spoke with me about the time that Christian leaders from Najaran in Yemen visited Muhammad in Medina. They discussed religious matters. The Christians declined the invitation to embrace Islam, yet Muhammad still allowed them to offer Christian prayers in his mosque and sent them on their way in peace. This story shows how the Prophet believed in tolerance, respect, and peaceful living together.

Imam Hassan al-Qazwini spoke with me about the hadith in which Aisha said that the Prophet’s lifestyle was the Qur’an: offering forgiveness and kindness to neighbors, repelling evil with good and thereby turning enemies into friends.

Several spoke of Muhammad as a mercy to all the worlds, the means through which divine transcendence comes close to us, so that we can know God.

Fazeel Khan taught me about what it means for Muhammad to be the seal of the prophets, how he exemplifies the divine attributes that humanity is to emulate, how the Prophet was a model of non-violence, as in the treaty of Hudaibiyyah.

Now I am sure that none of this is news to you, but what I find enlightening is how Muslims in this current time and place see your Prophet. In the Christian tradition, Jesus has been seen in many ways across the centuries: a rabbi to his earliest followers, the light of the nations to those who spread Christianity among the gentiles, the king of kings to early martyrs who refused to worship the Roman emperor as a god, the soul's beloved to the mystics, a philosopher to Renaissance thinkers, the bringer of peace to believers in what are called the peace churches, and the liberator to those who suffer injustice.

Similarly, Muhammad has been many things to his followers: businessman, spouse, parent, prophet, statesman, lawgiver and interpreter (perhaps the inspiration for Fazeel's work as a civil rights attorney), general, diplomat, peacemaker, and much more. All these are true, but some speak to the community more at one season than another. The figure of Muhammad responds to the needs of the community. Perhaps it is like the 99 Names of God, as some Muslims have explained it to me. God is all these things, but some believers find in their devotion to God that some names have more meaning at some points in their lives. Perhaps Muhammad is like that for his community.

What has moved me above all is the tremendous love that Muslims have for Muhammad. To an outsider, especially one who is chiefly informed by the limited views in the media, the Prophet may seem frightening. After all, here is someone who is spoken to by God, who leads cities and armies, who has the power to dispense justice. Yet I met no Muslims who fear Muhammad. Instead, there is only warmth and great affection. This may not be part of my tradition as a non-Muslim, but it can still be edifying because it is beautiful. I have been told that there is a hadith that reports that God is beautiful and loves beauty. Those of us outside the community can be moved by the beautiful practices within Islam.

As different communities of faith meet, they can come to appreciate the gifts of one another, gifts that would be erased if the boundaries between our traditions did not serve to preserve them. We encounter some beliefs and practices that are similar and others that differ, but we can meet these differences with deep respect, honesty, appreciation, generosity, and friendship. I am here with you today because my life has been enriched by my friendship with Muslims, and I am grateful for that gift. ■

## The Life of Prophet Muhammad

By Dr. Noman Malik

*[This article represents the Keynote Address at the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society's annual symposium this year titled "The True Portrait of Prophet Muhammad". In this article, Dr. Malik canvasses the life of Prophet Muhammad, and provides a narrative much different from what many non-Muslims are familiar. In doing so, Dr. Malik highlights important events in Prophet Muhammad's life and responds to common criticisms made against Prophet Muhammad.]*

Who then is this man whom the Encyclopedia Britannica calls "the most successful of all religious reformers?"

The Holy Prophet Muhammad was born in 570AD in the town of Mecca situated in the territory known as the Hijaz. The people of this area claimed descent from the Prophet Abraham through his first son Ishmael. In the Old Testament the Arabs are described as being descended from Kedar, a son of Ishmael. Situated in Mecca is a cubic building known as the Kaaba which is closely associated with the Prophet Abraham, Ishmael and Hagar.

The social, moral and ethical conditions prevailing in Arabia at the time of the Holy Prophet's birth were, to put it mildly, terrible. Arabia was divided into warring clans and tribes whose internecine wars were fueled by blood feuds had been ongoing for centuries, and the weaker, smaller tribes were constantly at the mercy of the more populous and stronger tribes. As a measure for survival, tribal pacts were frequently resorted to, but were broken at the first opportunity, if it afforded some advantage to either party.

There was no central authority to dispense justice and maintain law and order, and unless the under privileged such as women, orphans, slaves and the poor were under the protection of some powerful individual or clan, their rights and properties could be usurped at will. The plight of women was especially bad. Female infanticide was resorted to by the upper class in whose twisted view of women, the birth of a daughter was a disgrace. Women had no inheritance rights and in fact were inherited themselves as chattel. Prominent men kept brothels as a business, and there were no limits to polygamy. Sexual relations were loose to the extreme and both men and women boasted openly and shamelessly about their illicit affairs. Among other social ills the Arabs were addicted to alcohol and gambling.

Their religion was steeped in idolatry and superstition. Each home had its idols, and even unhewn stones

were worshipped. Efforts to promote reform in the region by previous religions had been entirely unsuccessful. An indigenous movement to introduce monotheism had been started, but had died out due to lack of support.

These social evils were particularly pronounced in the town of Mecca. It was home to the Quraish — the Holy Prophet's tribe — feared and respected for its military prowess and guardianship of the Holy Kabaa. The Quraish had benefitted greatly by trade with the Roman Empire and with tribes that gathered at Mecca for the annual pilgrimage. This trade had produced an oligarchy fond of pomp and show. As a consequence, the old tribal customs which previously had provided some protection to the lesser members of the tribe had completely broken down with resulting class differences and increasing mistreatment of the poor and slaves. The Holy Quran, which is the written record of that time, depicts the situation tersely in 3:103 as:

“... And you were on the brink of a pit of fire, then He saved you from it...”

### **Birth of the Holy Prophet and Early Life**

It was among these people that the Holy Prophet Muhammad was born in 570 AD. He was orphaned at the tender age of six, and was raised first by his dotting grandfather, Abu Muttalib, who died three years later, and then by his paternal uncle Abu Talib who succeeded Abu Muttalib as the head of the prophet's clan, the Banu Hashim.

As he grew up, he acquired a reputation for being honest, just, truthful and faithful to his promises. He was known for helping the poor and disadvantaged — such as slaves, orphans and widows. When he was 20 years old he played a major role in forming an alliance of like-minded people to defend the poor and injured called *Half-ul-Fadl*. Because of these commendable qualities he became known as *Al-Amin* (the Righteous) and his advice was sought in many matters. He believed strongly in monotheism, and never bowed his head before any idol.

Drinking orgies, gambling and illicit social relations were widespread and carried no social stigma, but he abstained from such activities, and remained celibate until his marriage to Hazrat Khadija.

Although fighting among tribes was common, as a young man the prophet did not take part in any battle except for the battle *Harb-ul-Fijar* in which his only role was to gather the arrows which came from the opposite side and hand them over to his uncles.

He was not acquisitive of wealth, but when he attained to maturity he was asked by his uncle to help him in the caravan trade with Syria, and he cheerfully acceded to this request.

### **Marriage to Hazrat Khadija**

At the age of twenty five he married Hazrat Khadija, a well-to-do widow who was fifteen years his senior and was known for her righteousness and virtue. Hearing about the prophet Muhammad's integrity and honesty she entrusted her business to him and soon much profit accrued to her. Impressed by his honest dealings and diligence, she proposed marriage to him, and he accepted.

It is remarkable that although the Holy Prophet lived in a polygamous society, he not take any other wife besides Hazrat Khadija while she was alive. His high regard and affection for Hazrat Khadija is demonstrated in his response to a rather pert question put to him by Hazrat Ayesha whom he married after Hazrat Khadija's death, that hadn't God given him a better substitute in herself than Hazrat Khadija. His eyes welled up with tears and he said “No. She believed in me when other's rejected me, and she spent all she had in my cause.”

### **Prophetic Mission**

Although the Prophet was doing well financially after his marriage to Hazrat Khadija, the plight of the poor and weak — such as slaves, widows and orphans — their exploitation and persecution by the rich and powerful and the idolatrous practices and gross immorality of society weighed heavily on the prophet's heart. He always helped the poor and disadvantaged and he never kept a slave. When any slave was presented to him he immediately set him free. One of these young slaves, Hazrat Zaid, whom he liberated, became so attached to him due to his kind and loving nature that he stayed on with him as a member of his household.

Saddened and grieved by these inequities he would regularly retire to the mountains surrounding Mecca where he would tearfully pray to God and plead with Him to guide the Meccans to abandon their evil ways and lead righteous lives.

It was during one of these sessions of prayer and fasting in the last days of the month of Ramadan in the cave of Hira that he received the revelation that initiated his prophetic mission.

“Read in the Name of thy Lord who creates  
Creates man from a clot/attachment/love  
Read and thy Lord is most Generous,  
Who taught by the pen,  
Taught man what he knew not.” (96:1-5)

His wife Hazrat Khadija was the first to accept him as Prophet followed by Hazrat Ali and his closest friend Hazrat Abu Bakr. This acceptance by his wife and closest relations and friends and their fidelity to him in all circumstances is strong evidence of his sincerity and the truth of his mission.

The Holy Quran would be revealed over the next twenty three years of the prophet's life. The teachings of the Quran and the personification of these teachings through the conduct of the Holy Prophet would in that space of twenty three years completely transform Arabian society. Never before in history have so many people been reformed so thoroughly, on so large a scale and in so short a time as that by the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

The importance of the Holy Quran as a documentary source of the Holy Prophet's conduct and character cannot be overestimated. First, Muslims believe it is the Word of God, and secondly, it is the only written record of the time. The Holy Prophet always had ink, writing material and a scribe with him and the Quranic verses were written as soon as they were revealed. Their accuracy was not only preserved by writing them immediately at the time of revelation, but they were also memorized at the same time by hundreds of companions of the Holy Prophet and frequently recited in congregational prayers thus ensuring their accuracy. Furthermore it was revealed over a period of twenty three years concerning matters which the Holy Prophet was facing in specific situations. Thus the Holy Prophet himself demonstrated the manner and spirit in which the Quranic guidance was to be followed. There is not a single commandment of the Holy Quran which he failed to follow.

### The Stormy Opposition

His early revelations of the Holy Quran stressed the Unity, the great power and majesty of the Divine Being and the inevitability of the judgment. The Quraish mocked him at first, treated him contemptuously and called him a madman. In spite of this opposition, he went on gaining adherents slowly, and the persecution grew bitter. At first the slaves were tortured as in the case of Hazrat Bilal, who, when made to lie on the burning sands under the Arabian midday sun with heavy stones on his chest continued to cry, "One, One" (in reference to the belief in One God), to the bewilderment of his persecutors. Later, the torture and mistreatment increased in severity with some of the humbler converts being put to death in a most brutal manner; their limbs were tied to camels which were then made to run in opposite directions — tearing the victims apart. They were given the choice to avoid the punishment by recanting Islam, but they refused to do so.

This brutal and cruel treatment of his innocent and helpless followers greatly distressed the Prophet, and he advised them to seek shelter in Abyssinia, a Christian country, in spite of the fact that he would be left alone amongst his exasperated opponents. The infuriated Meccans sent a deputation to the Negus, ruler of Abyssinia, requesting that he extradite the Muslims to Mecca. But the Negus was so moved after listening to an explanation of Islam by the leader of the Muslims

and by a recitation from the Holy Quran, that he refused to deliver the Muslims to their enemies.

The Quraish tried their utmost to check this tide of emigration, but in vain. Soon they became exasperated beyond all measure with the Prophet and the little band of Muslims that remained with him at Mecca. They approached Abu Talib, the head of the Hashimites (the Prophet's family), to hand the Prophet over to them so they could kill him. But Abu Talib refused, and praised the Prophet as a defender of widows and orphans. This attempt was abandoned when Abu Talib conveyed the Prophet's reply to them: "Even if they put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left, I will never give it up until it pleases God to make it triumph or I perish in my attempt."

Failing that, they decided on a different tactic and tried to tempt the Prophet with offers of wealth, power and beautiful women to abandon his faith. These attempts however ceased when they received this answer:

"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 in this life as well as in the life to come; should you reject the Word of God, surely God will decide between you and me."

The Meccans made life as miserable for the Holy Prophet as they could. Sometimes they would throw refuse on him from above as he walked in the streets below; other times thorny bushes would be strewn in his path at night so he might become entangled in them. Once a whole placenta of a camel was placed on his back while he was in prostration in prayer. At another time he was being strangled by his cloak when Hazrat Abu Bakr intervened and saved him.

The main source of income and wealth for the Meccans was by trading with the Bedouin tribes who came to Mecca during the time of the Pilgrimage. Each tribe had its own idols placed in the Kabah. The message of Islam called for a strict monotheism and eradication of these idolatrous practices. Fearing the loss of this livelihood, the Meccans redoubled their efforts to eradicate Islam.

At this point, they resorted to force and formed a league and confined the Hashimites and the Muslims in a small quarter of the valley, where they suffered the utmost privations for three long years, being allowed liberty of action only during the time of pilgrimage. These three years were those of the hardest suffering for the Muslims, and Islam itself made little progress during this time.

Released at last from this imprisonment, the Prophet faced more tragedy. Hazrat Khadija his dear wife for twenty five years and his beloved Uncle Abu Talib both

died, weakened no doubt by the long periods of starvation and exposure suffered during the confinement. Though facing disappointment on all sides, the Prophet still had as much faith in the triumph of the truth as ever. If Mecca was now quite deaf to his preaching, he would turn elsewhere. He went to Ta'if a nearby town, but after ten days was unsuccessful in convincing the people of Taif. As he walked back to Mecca he was set upon by the town's urchins who pelted him with stones. Dripping with blood and not even being allowed to rest by his persecutors, he found refuge in a garden. But if men did not listen to him, yet would he open his heart to God who was always ready to listen, and he prayed to Him thus:

“O my God! To Thee I complain of the feebleness of my strength and of my lack of resourcefulness and of my insignificance in the eyes of people. Thou art the most Merciful of the merciful, Thou art the Lord of the weak. To whom wilt Thou entrust me, to an unsympathetic foe who would sullenly frown at me, or to a close friend to whom Thou has given control over my affair? Not in the least do I care for anything except that I may have Thy protection. In the light of Thy face do I seek shelter, in the light which illumines the heaven and dispels all sorts of darkness, and which controls all affairs in this world as well as in the Hereafter. May it never be that I should incur Thy wrath, or that Thou shouldst be displeased with me. There is no strength, nor power, but in Thee.”

He feels that no man lends his ear to his message, yet his faith in the goodness of God and in the ultimate triumph of his cause is as unshaken as ever. With marvelous calmness he undergoes the severest hardships which he has to suffer for working for the good of the very people who take pleasure in inflicting on him the cruelest tortures. All these, he says, are insignificant so long as he enjoys the pleasure of God. What a firm faith in God, and what a cheerful resignation to His supreme Will.

Three more years passed at Mecca amidst the most trying circumstances. Meanwhile, Islam took root in Medina and spread fast. As the 13th year of the Call drew to a close, a very important event occurred. Seventy five Muslims (including two women) from Medina (Yathrib) came to perform a pilgrimage and swore allegiance to the Prophet, affirming that if he chose to go to Medina, they would defend him against his enemies just as they defended their own families. It was then that the Muslim exodus to Medina commenced. The Prophet chose to remain alone amidst an enemy that was growing more and more exasperated, to ensure that his followers reached Medina safely.

A final plan to kill the Prophet was devised in which a youth would be chosen from each clan and they would kill him by simultaneously thrusting their swords in

him. This would force the Prophet's clan to accept blood money as they could not fight the united clans of the Quraish. The Prophet's house was besieged by these bloodthirsty youth as soon as it was dark, but, undaunted and having his faith in Divine protection, the Prophet passed through them unnoticed. In the dark of the night, with only one companion, he made his way through the streets of Mecca to the bare and rugged hills outside, and a hiding-place was ultimately found in a cave known as Thaur. When morning appeared, the enemy saw the failure of their plan and the whole countryside was scoured. One party reached the very mouth of the cave. Through a crevice, Abu Bakr saw the enemy at the mouth and grieved. “Do not grieve, for God is with us,” said the Prophet. The more helpless he became, the stronger grew his faith in God. And surely some invisible power saved him throughout his life every time that the enemy's hand was on him. After three days the Prophet and his companion resumed their journey and reached Medina on June 22nd, 622AD. The Muslim calendar begins with this date.

For thirteen years the Prophet and his followers had been subjected to the severest tortures and all sorts of cruelties and abuse — both physical and mental. But these cruelties did not embitter the prophet or his companions or result in any hatred for their oppressors. The Holy Prophet and his companions bore this persecution with exemplary patience. He never cursed his oppressors or asked God to punish them. Instead he was always praying to God to forgive them and guide them on the right path. No acts of violence or revenge were directed against their persecutors. One small but significant incident reveals the mindset of the Prophet. There was one old woman who would regularly throw trash on him when he walked in the street below. One day when no trash was thrown on him, he straightaway went upstairs to inquire about the woman. He found her ill in bed without food and drink and unable to move. He visited her daily and nursed her back to health. Impressed by his kindness she subsequently accepted Islam.

All the properties left behind by the fleeing Muslims were expropriated by the Quraish, but no attempt to retrieve them were made by the Muslims.

This struggle — to control one's lower desires and anger and to cultivate high morals such as forgiveness, mercy and patience — is called the “greater Jihad” in the prophet's own words. Contrary to popular understanding, the word Jihad does not mean *fighting* or *war*. It means *to exert oneself to the utmost to counter some object of disapprobation*. The word for *fighting* or *war* is *quital*. The word Jihad is frequently present in Quranic verses revealed during the Meccan period where it denotes a spiritual striving only as there was no fighting during the time the Holy Prophet was in Mecca. The following Meccan verses in the Holy Quran illustrate this point:

“...those who strive hard (jahadu) for Us, We shall certainly guide them in Our ways. And Allah is surely with the doers of good” [29:69].

In this verse it means a spiritual struggle for self-purification. And again

“Obey not the unbelievers, and strive against them a mighty striving (jihad) with it.” [i.e., the Quran] [25:52].

Here it means preaching with the Quran to guide them to the right path.

Thus for the greater part of the Prophet’s mission, i.e., the thirteen years he spent in Mecca, “*Jihad*” meant only spiritual struggle for self-purification, or preaching with the Holy Quran. Later on, fighting in self-defense would be included in this category of struggle in the eight years in Medina but only in certain special circumstances — but the original significance as a spiritual struggle would be applicable at all times.

### The Madina Period

Despite migrating away from Mecca and leaving all their property behind simply to be safe from persecution, the growing jealousy and the threatening attitude of the Meccans continued to be a serious problem. Immediately after the migration of the Holy Prophet to Madina, the Quraish chiefs wrote to Abdullah ibn Ubbay the leading person in Madina, before the Holy Prophet was acclaimed as the leader, threatening him with dire consequences if he did not hand over Muhammad to them. Marauding parties of the Quraish used to come to the outskirts of Madina and once even made off with the state camels.

Reconnaissance parties were sent out by the Prophet to monitor the enemy’s movements and certain tribes were approached to secure their alliance or neutrality. One such party sent out with express orders to gather information about the Quraish without engaging them in battle, movements killed a man. The Holy Prophet severely reprimanded the reconnaissance party’s leader and offered compensation for the killing which was customary in such situations. However the Meccans rejected his offer and made preparations for war.

The Prophet was now in a position in which he would have to carry on a war against a powerful and implacable enemy to save the small Muslim community and Islam from utter annihilation. Temperamentally the Prophet was not inclined to war; he had not once handled the sword in actual fighting up to this, his 55th year, and this in a country where, owing to constant internecine warfare, fighting had become a vocation of the people. The religion which he preached, Islam, (lit. peace or submission), was a religion of peace, laying stress on prayer to God and the service of humanity, and he was required to

preach this religion; to deliver the message, not to enforce it on others as it states in the Holy Quran.

“The truth is from your Lord, so, whoever will, let him believe, and whoever will, let him disbelieve.” [18:29]

“We have shown man the way, he may be thankful or he may be unthankful.” [76:3]

And in still plainer words, it was laid down:

“There is no compulsion in religion”. [2:256]

But war was being forced on him and it was his duty, he was told, to defend his oppressed community who had twice fled their homes from the persecutions of a cruel enemy to a distant place and permission to fight was given in the Holy Quran:

“Permission to fight is given to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed, and God is well able to help them”. [22:39]

“Those who have been expelled from their homes without a just cause, except that they say,” Our Lord is God.” [22:40]

To worship God, to say that God is our Lord, to bow before Him, was an offence in this land, the punishment for which was that the men who worshipped God, and the places where He was worshipped, should be destroyed. So the Muslims were required to defend all houses of worship, whether they belonged to the Jews or the Christians or their own community as it states in the Holy Quran:

“And had there not been God’s repelling some people by means of others, cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques in which God’s name is much remembered, would certainly have been pulled down.” [22:40]

That war can only be only in self-defense is stressed again in a Quranic verse:

“And fight in the way of God with those who fight with you, and do not be aggressive, for God does not love the aggressors.” [2:190]

There was no question of converting anyone to Islam by force; it was the enemy that wanted to turn back the Muslims by force from Islam:

“And they will not cease fighting with you until they turn you back from your religion if they can.” [2:217]

Religion was a matter between God and His servants and no one had a right to compel anyone to adopt a particular religion, and the Prophet had thus to fight for the noble cause of the liberty of man:

“And fight with them until there is no persecution and religion is held for God only. But if they give

up persecution, then there should be no hostility except against the oppressors.” [2:193]

If the Prophet was required to cease fighting when the enemy ceased to persecute on account of religion, he was also required to cease fighting if the enemy offered peace, even though the enemy might be gaining time only to renew its attack:

“And if they incline to peace, do thou also incline to it and trust in God; He is the Hearing, the Knowing. And if they intend to deceive thee, then surely God is sufficient for thee.” [8:61, 62]

It was in these circumstances and on these conditions that the Prophet was allowed to fight. He had not up to this time trained a single man for fighting; he had no army at all. He had a small community of followers trained only in praying to God, and even they could not be forced to fight.

### Battles

Three battles would be fought in the second, third and fifth year of the migration to Madina, and in all three the Muslims were defending themselves from Meccan attacks.

The first battle would be the Battle of Badr: in which three hundred and thirteen poorly equipped Muslims including old men and boys as young as fourteen, faced one thousand fully armed and equipped battle-hardened Meccan warriors. Badr is a seven day march from Mecca and a three day march from Madina. Showing that the Prophet moved only when the Meccan army was closing in on Madina. With the help of God the Meccans were *defeated* and some were taken prisoners.

The second battle, the Battle of Uhud took place a year later when the Meccans attacked Madina with a force of three thousand veteran soldiers and two hundred cavalry to avenge their defeat at Badr. The Muslims could muster only seven hundred men and two horses. Although not defeated, the Muslims did suffer increased casualties due to some Muslim archers leaving their positions to join the Muslims on the battle field contrary to instructions. Seventy Muslims were killed and the Prophet was badly wounded. At this very critical moment, a companion asked the Prophet to invoke the curse of God on the enemy, but his response was to pray “O my Lord forgive them for they do not know what they do.” Meccans mutilated the dead in terrible ways. Hind, the wife of Abu Sufyan the Meccan leader, tore out the liver of the Holy Prophet’s beloved uncle Hamza and chewed it in front of the Muslim army.

Two years later, in a final determined bid to crush the Muslims, the Meccans roused the surrounding Arabian tribes to join them and launched an attack on Madina with a combined force of twenty five men. This sight of

twenty five iron-clad men and cavalry was a time of great consternation for the two thousand Muslims defending Madina as described by the Holy Quran.

“When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when the eyes turned dull and the hearts rose up to the throats, and some of you began to entertain diverse thoughts about God. There the believers were sorely tried and shaken with a severe shaking.” [33:10, 11]

However, even amid this seeming scene of dread and terror, the hearts of the Muslims were full of faith:

“And when the believers saw the Allies, they said: This is what God and His Messenger promised us, and God and His Messenger spoke the truth: and it only increased them in faith and submission.” [33:22]

The Muslims had dug a deep ditch in the area which was most vulnerable to attack, and that effectively neutralized the Meccan cavalry. The siege continued for a month with numerous attacks being made and repulsed. Finally a violent storm blew down the tents of the now dispirited allied force and the attack was abandoned.

The next year a very important event took place — the Prophet signed a peace pact in accordance with the Quranic injunction:

“And if they incline to peace, do thou also incline to it and trust in God Allāh; He is the Hearing, the Knowing. And if they intend to deceive thee, then surely God Allāh is sufficient for thee.” [8:61, 62]

This pact, signed with the Meccans at a place called Hudaibiya, contained some very humiliating terms for the Muslims, but it had that most important clause that fighting would cease for ten years.

In the Holy Quran this humiliating truce is called a great victory. And a victory it was. Muslims were now able to practice their religion freely and share their faith with others. And, tribal delegations could come to Madina and see for themselves the spiritual greatness of the Prophet, and the change for good that Islam and his personal example had produced among the Muslims who not too long ago were immersed in error and sin just as they were.

Hardly two years had passed when the Meccans broke the truce by killing some men of a tribe allied with the Muslims. The Prophet offered them the option of paying compensation to the aggrieved tribe, thereby avoiding war, but the Meccans refused and revoked the truce. The Prophet then had no option but to take action to support the ally tribe. This time he was the one who marched on Mecca with ten thousand soldiers. A scant two years ago the Muslim army numbered two thousand

men. Where had the additional eight thousand come from? These were the people who had converted to Islam peacefully during the two years of the truce. The Meccans surrendered before this overwhelming force.

The Prophet's example of forgiveness and tolerance after the fall of Mecca has no parallel in history. The murderers, tormentors and persecutors of his beloved Muslims — for more than twenty years — stood helpless and penitent before him. A lesser man would have yielded to the desire for revenge. But they were standing before one who had in the Holy Quran been called a "Mercy to the nations". The Prophet declared to the Meccans in the words of the prophet Joseph to his brothers: "This day there is no reproof against you." [12:92].

The man who had caused the death of the Prophet's daughter and her unborn child by ramming her with the blunt end of his spear was forgiven. Hind, who had targeted his beloved uncle Hazrat Hamza and mutilated his body and chewed his liver was forgiven, as were many others such as the Meccan chief Abu Sufyan who had led the opposition to the Muslims for two decades and had caused so much loss of life and property to the Muslims.

They had not accepted Islam, but mark the magnanimity of that great soul who would not even reproach them for their evil deeds, who let them go without even taking a pledge from them for the future. Here was a practical proof of that laudable precept, *Love thine enemy*. Not only was Mecca conquered, but with it were conquered also the hearts of the bitterest foes of Islam. They now saw with their own eyes how the combined forces of opposition offered by the whole country had proved an utter failure against the mighty truth which came from the lips of a man who had stood alone in the midst of all opposition. The righteousness of the cause was now only too clear to them and men and women came forward spontaneously to embrace the faith. There was not a single instance of forced conversion.

The only one action the Prophet undertook was to clear the Kabah of idols, as a symbolic gesture of the confirmation of true monotheism. Although, each Meccan house had idols in them, these were left untouched. Nor was any attempt by the Muslims to retrieve their property left behind at the time of migration.

Those that still adhered to the old religion were treated in the same spirit of friendliness as the members of the Muslim brotherhood. Even a hostile critic has to admit:

"Although the city had cheerfully accepted his authority, all its inhabitants had not yet embraced the new religion nor formally acknowledged his prophetic claim. Perhaps he intended to follow the course he had pursued at Madina and leave the conversion of the people to be gradually accom-

plished without compulsion". (Life of Mohamat by Sir William Muir)

The Prophet's conduct during the entire period of fighting was exemplary. Here is but one example of the orders issued by the prophet to the Muslim army:

"...molest not the harmless occupants of houses nor the females; injure not the infant at the breast or those who are ill in bed. Abstain from demolishing the dwellings of the unresisting inhabitants; destroy not the means of their subsistence, nor their fruit trees, and touch not the palms."

It was forbidden to kill non-fighting personnel such as laborers working on the battlefield or women.

Prisoners of war were not to be killed or harmed in anyway. Prisoners taken at the battle of Badr who were literate were freed on the condition that each would teach 10 Muslim children to read and write. This showed the Prophet's high regard for knowledge.

The prisoners were housed in the houses of Muslims who gave them food but went hungry themselves. Later when these Meccans became Muslims they would cite these instances as the reason for their converting to Islam.

The treaty with the Christian tribes of Najran is again an example of what religious tolerance should be like. This treaty was made with people who had rejected The Prophet Muhammad:

"To the Christians of Najran and the surrounding territories, the security of God and the pledge of His Prophet are extended for their lives, their religion and their property — to the present as well as the absent and others besides — there shall be no interference with the practice or their observances; nor any change in their rights or privileges; No bishop shall be removed from his bishopric, nor any monk from his monastery, nor any priest from his priesthood, and they shall continue to enjoy everything, great and small as heretofore; No image or cross shall be destroyed. They shall not oppress or be oppressed; they shall not practise the rights of blood vengeance as in the days of ignorance; No tithes shall be levied from them nor shall they be required to furnish provisions for the troops."

With the fall of Mecca, war with non-Muslims came to an end except for isolated actions against some marauding tribes who would repeatedly break treaties and conduct raids on a peaceful population. The Holy Quran clearly states their repeated violations of the truces and committing crimes as the reason for fighting them and that punishment should be directed towards the leaders.

Arabia was now free from trouble within, but the Roman Empire to the north was alarmed at the rise of Islam and had begun to help their vassal tribes on the northern frontier of Arabia.

When intelligence reports reached the Prophet that the Romans were preparing to attack from the north, He marched to Tabuk on the northern frontier at the head of 30,000 men. But on not finding any opposing army he turned back — observing the Quranic injunction of fighting only in self-defense. This conclusively proves that the Prophet's wars were defensive. Attacking the undefended territories would have been very tempting for someone fighting for territorial expansion and material gain.

### The Prophet's Marriages

The Prophet is sometimes called sinful because at a certain stage in his life he had more wives than one. This is also cited as proof that he had no regard for women's rights. Whatever may be the views of the modern world on polygamy, there is not the least doubt that plurality of wives is met with in the lives of the great religious personages who by a consensus of opinion led lives of transcendent purity such as Abraham, Moses and revered Hindu sages. The details of the lives of these personages are sketchy, but the life of the Prophet can be viewed in the full light of history and we will take his case in detail.

Probably no single person has done more for alleviating the lot of women and granting them basic rights than the Holy Prophet. In the years before he was made a prophet, he championed the cause of widows, orphans, slaves and the poor for which he won the title *Al-Amin* (The faithful one).

After he was appointed Prophet, he abolished female infanticide and raised women to complete equality with men through the teachings of the Holy Quran.

“Surely the men who submit and the women who submit, and the believing men and the believing women, and the obeying men and the obeying women, and the truthful men and the truthful women, and the patient men and the patient women, and the humble men and the humble women, and the charitable men and the charitable women, and the fasting men and the fasting women, and the men who guard their chastity and the women who guard, and the men who remember Allah much and women who remember — Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a mighty reward.” [33:35]

In the Holy Quran both Adam and Eve are described as having an equal propensity to sin. The relationship between women and men is portrayed beautifully as garments which protect and beautify each other. God is described as having placed love and compassion

between them so they find peace and quiet of mind in each other. Women are granted inheritance rights in a society which said “only he can inherit who can smite with the sword and spear”. They cannot be married without their consent, and they have the right of divorce. Women are allowed to work with equal pay for equal work, and they have exclusive rights to their earnings and investments. Both men and women have mutual rights and duties. Men are taught to serve their mothers more than their fathers, and paradise is described as being under the feet of a mother.

This change was brought about in a span of twenty three years in a society which practiced female infanticide and regarded women as chattel that could be inherited. Muslim women have had these rights since the seventh century which we see coming to fruition in modern society only a scant hundred year ago. The granting of these rights to women speaks volumes about the high regard the man who implemented these changes had for women.

Let us now consider the circumstances in which the Prophet married more than one wife. The Prophet led a celibate life until the age of twenty five. Then he married a widow fifteen years his senior and remained faithful to her in a monogamous relationship — in a polygamous society — until her death twenty five years later when he was fifty years old. Surely such a man cannot be said to have sensual nature. The model for a Muslim man therefore is celibacy before marriage and then monogamy with faithfulness during marriage.

The multiple marriages were contracted during the period of wars which followed in Madina when he was fifty five years old. In the battles a large number of men were killed and many families were left without a bread earner. But bread and butter were not the only provision needed in such cases. Physical and emotional needs have to be met, and children need a father figure in the family for proper development. A reformer with whom morals were all important could not content himself with making provision merely for the maintenance of the widows. The other needs also needed to be met. Men were reluctant to marry widows as that entailed responsibilities in the form of having to take care of the widow's children. Permission was then given to marry up-to four wives provided one could maintain justice among them. All but one of the women that the Prophet married were older women, either widowed or divorced. Some of these marriages brought about peace with an enemy tribe. After the war stopped in the eighth year he did not contract any additional marriages. So the additional marriages were not for satisfaction of low desires but rather for the care and protection of women and orphans.

As Bosworth Smith notes:

“It would be remembered, however, that most of Muḥammad’s marriages may be explained at least as much by his pity for the forlorn condition of the persons concerned, as by other motives. They were almost all of them widows who were not remarkable either for their beauty or their wealth, but quite the reverse.”

There is a great misconception about Hazrat Ayesha’s age at the time of her marriage to the Holy Prophet. She is described in some hadith reports as being nine years old when she married the Holy Prophet Muhammad. However a careful analysis of the Holy Quran, the Hadith (Sayings and doings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad) and historical incidents all establish that she was 19 years old at the time of her marriage to the Holy Prophet. She was extremely intelligent and had a very retentive memory. Both Hazrat Abu Bakr and the Holy Prophet recognized her potential for transmitting first-hand the knowledge of the Holy Prophet’s life. She was able to learn directly from the Holy Prophet and transmit these details of his life to others for many years after his death. The importance of this knowledge can be gauged by the fact that a large portion of the Shariah of Islam is derived from hadith transmitted by Hazrat Ayesha.

### Simple life

From the cradle to the grave the Prophet passed through a diversity of circumstances — diversity which can hardly be met with in the life of a single man. Orphan hood is the extreme of helplessness, while kingship is the height of power. From being an orphan he climbed to the summit of royal glory, but that did not bring about the slightest change in his way of living. He lived on exactly the same kind of humble food, wore the same simple dress, and in all particulars lived the same simple life as he lived as when he was an orphan. It is hard to give up the kingly throne and lead the life of a hermit, but it is harder still that one should wield the royal scepter yet at the same time lead a hermit’s life, that one should possess power and wealth yet spend it solely to promote the welfare of others, that one should always have the most alluring attractions before one’s eyes yet should never for one moment be captivated by them. When the Prophet actually became the ruler of a state, the furniture of his house was composed of a coarse matting of palm leaves for his bed and an earthen jug for water. For days no fire would be lighted in his house to prepare food, the whole family living on mere dates. There was no lack of means to live a life of ease and comfort. The public treasury was at his disposal. The well-to-do among his followers, who did not shrink from sacrificing their lives for his sake, would have been only too glad to provide him with every comfort of life, should he choose to avail himself of it. But worldly things carried little weight in his estimation. No mun-

dane craving could ever prevail over him, neither in times of indigence nor of plenty. Just as he spurned wealth, power and beauty which the Quraiṣh offered him when he was yet in a state of utmost helplessness, so did he remain indifferent to them when God granted him all these things out of His grace. As Bosworth Smith says:

“In the shepherd of the desert, in the Syrian trader, in the solitary of Mount Hira, in the reformer in the minority of one, in the exile of Madina, in the acknowledged conqueror, in the equal of the Persian Chosroes and the Greek Heraclius, we can still trace a substantial unity. I doubt whether any other man, whose external conditions changed so much, ever himself changed less to meet them: the accidents are changed, the essence seems to me to be the same in all.”

### Charity

He was the most generous of men. He gave freely to the poor, so much so that provisions would run out and his family had no food left in the house. On a national level he instituted the *zakat* (poor rate) as enjoined by the Holy Quran thus effectively ending hunger and starvation in society.

### Prayer

Prayer to God was the love of his life, and he would spend half or two thirds of the night in prayer.

He disliked pretensions. Visitors had to ask which person was Muhammad when he was seated among his companions. Truthfulness was his hallmark. He disliked superstitions. When a solar eclipse occurred when his infant son died, rumors spread that the eclipse was due to the son’s death. He at once came out of his house and said “eclipses of the sun and the moon are not due to anyone’s birth or death. They are one of the signs of God”.

“When asked to perform physical miracles he was instructed by the Holy Quran to say “I am only a mortal messenger...”

The Holy Quran is the only Miracle he claimed. And a Miracle indeed it was for the change it produced in men.

Words alone are not enough to bring about a change in the character of people on so large a scale. A role model or exemplar is needed who can transform the words into deeds, because people are motivated to change for good by the deeds of others. For example, it was not only the Prophet who forgave the Meccans at the time of the conquest of Mecca, but his companions and followers also forgave — as their relations and those close to them had also been persecuted and killed by the Meccans. They forgave because the Prophet forgave. Similarly people will heed advice to be truthful

only if the person who gives them that advice is himself truthful. This is true for every virtue.

No faith ever imparted such a new life to its votaries on such a wide scale — a life affecting all branches of human activity; a transformation of the individual, of the family, of the society, of the nation, of the country; an awakening material as well as moral, intellectual as well as spiritual. The Quran effected a transformation of humanity from the lowest depths of degradation to the highest pinnacle of civilization within an incredibly short time where centuries of reformation work had proved fruitless.

This achievement would not be possible without the person of the Prophet, as the historian Bosworth Smith, referring to the central role of the Holy Prophet says:

“He was Caesar and Pope in one ... Caesar without the legions of Caesar: without a standing army, without a bodyguard, without a palace, without a fixed revenue; if ever any man had the right to say that he ruled by the right divine, it was Mohammed, for he had all the power without its instruments and without its supports. He cared not for the dressings of power. The simplicity of his private life was in keeping with his public life.”

Hence the verses of the Holy Quran:

“Certainly you have in the Messenger of God an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in God and the latter day, and remembers God much “. [33:21]

“And We have not sent thee but as a mercy to the nations.” [21: 107]

On his final pilgrimage the prophet received the revelation “...This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favour to you and chosen for you Islam as a religion...” The Prophet knew that his mission was complete and his time was near. After his return from the pilgrimage, the Prophet fell ill and passed away on June 8, 632 AD at the age of 63 years. His last words were:

“Blessed companionship on High.”

This is a true portrait of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. And it is the emulation of this example which Muslims believe will benefit mankind and bring about peace in the world. And when the deeds of Muslims show the impression of this portrait of Muhammad, only then can they claim to be truly honoring the Prophet. ■

## Significance of the Name “Ahmadiyya”

By Dr. Mohammed Ahmad

[This article by Dr. Mohammed Ahmad was the concluding presentation at the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society's annual symposium this year, titled “The True Portrait of Prophet Muhammad”. In this article, Dr. Ahmad explains that the name “Ahmadiyya” given to the Islamic Movement formed by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is based on Prophet Muhammad's other name “Ahmad”, and that those who join this Movement strive to present the true, peaceful and beautiful character of Prophet Muhammad to the world through education and by personal conduct.]

Ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for sharing your time with us, today. I begin in the name of Allah, the Beneficent the Merciful. In order to understand the meaning of the name “Ahmadiyya” and the purpose of our organization, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, I would like to draw your attention to this verse of the Holy Quran.

“And when Jesus, son of Mary, said: O children of Israel, surely I am the messenger of God to you, verifying that which is before me of the Torah and giving the good news of a Messenger who will come after me, his name being Ahmad. But when he came to them with clear arguments, they said: This is clear enchantment.” (61:6)

In this verse, Prophet Jesus gives the good news of the advent of a prophet after him, whose name would be “Ahmad”.

It is a well-known fact of history, that the Holy Prophet Muhammad was known by two names, Muhammad and Ahmad. The famous Arabian poet Hassan-ibn-Thabit mentions the Prophet in one of his verses by the name “Ahmad”: “*Sall Allāhu wa man yahuffu bi-‘arsh-hi wa-l-Tayyibuna ‘ala-mubāraki Ahmad*”, meaning Allah blesses the blessed Ahmad and so do those who go round about His Throne of Majesty and all pure ones.

These names and the various prophecies about the Holy Prophet refer to the different phases of his life. The two aspects of the life of the Holy Prophet are *jalal* and *jamal*, i.e., an aspect of glory and an aspect of beauty, the first finding its manifestation in the name Muhammad and the second in Ahmad. Both of the great prophets Moses and Jesus prophesied about the Holy Prophet Muhammad using words that were in consonance with unique aspects of each one's life. Glory finding greater expression in Moses, who was prophet, lawgiver and king at the same time, and beauty in Jesus,

on account of the beauty of his moral teachings. Both these elements were combined in the person of the Holy Prophet.

The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (whose name incidentally means the “servant of Ahmad”), gave the organization he founded the name “Muslims of the Ahmadiyya Section”, and in a publication dated November 4, 1900 he explained the significance for this name. He first explained that the name “Ahmad” was one of the two names of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (the other name, of course, being Muhammad) and that the names “Ahmad” and “Muhammad” also stood for the qualities of the Holy Prophet which he displayed in his life at Makkah and Madinah respectively. The name “Ahmad” symbolized the inner beauty of Islam, and the name “Muhammad” its outward glory. While at Makkah, Islam was devoid of any power or material support, and was accepted by people purely through preaching. At Madinah, Muslims governed and were able to physically overcome attacks by enemies. The condition of the Muslims in the present age, he explained, corresponds with the Holy Prophet’s life at Makkah and, therefore, it is appropriate for this Movement which strives to show the beauty of Islam through gentle preaching be named after the Holy Prophet’s name “Ahmad”.

We observe that the world today has once again reverted to the dark ages. The fires of war driven by greed, lust and power are raging on all sides, while tribal and sectarian rivalries are consuming the followers of Islam. Islam, the religion of peace, is under attack by forces of darkness, internally and externally. Muslims have lost their hold on the covenant of God, which is the Holy Quran, and are once more standing upon the brink of a pit of fire. The true message of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, who Muslims believe is that “Prophet like unto Moses” mentioned in the Book of Deuteronomy and the “Comforter” referred to by Jesus in the Gospels, remains maligned and hidden from the world at large. The “Light Giving Sun”, mentioned in the Holy Quran as *Siraj um Muneera* in reference to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, has to rise from the West. In other words, the true portrait of the Holy Prophet Muhammad has to be presented to the West.

Accordingly, this organization’s name of ‘Ahmadiyya’ signifies its objective to reveal the true character of the Holy Prophet Muhammad to the world by presenting his peaceful teachings to others and by living a peaceful life in accordance with his righteous example. In the words of Lady Ayesha, the noble wife of the Holy Prophet, The Holy Prophet’s character was the Holy Quran. The true portrait of the Holy Prophet is therefore reflected by the Holy Quran. The Holy Quran tells the Muslims:

“Certainly you have in the Messenger of God an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in God and the Latter Day, and remembers God much.” (33:21).

This verse points to a most significant truth and a distinguishing characteristic of the Holy Prophet, being the best exemplar and the highest model of virtue for the faithful, under all circumstances. Indeed, it is the distinguishing characteristic of his life that he not only gave practical rules of guidance in all walks of life, but gave by his life a practical illustration of all those rules. Two points are worth noting here. First, the fact that the Prophet practically demonstrated the lessons he taught is a sufficient answer to all those who carp at him, because the very necessity of guiding men under varying mundane circumstances and conditions led him through all those circumstances. Second the moral qualities which are latent within man remain in a dormant condition unless they are called into action. Hence no one can claim the possession of a high moral quality unless he has had occasion to display it.

Please allow me to share a few verses of the Holy Quran that reflect the character of Holy Prophet Muhammad, the mercy to all nations:

“Say: I am only a mortal like you — it is revealed to me that your God is one God. So whoever hopes to meet his Lord, he should do good deeds, and join no one in the service of his Lord.” (18:110)

“Mankind is a single nation. So Allah raised prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He revealed with them the Book with truth, that it might judge between people concerning that in which they differed. And none but the very people who were given it differed about it after clear arguments had come to them, envying one another...” (2:213)

“The truth is from your Lord; so let him who please believe and let him who please disbelieve” (18:29)

“Surely Allah commands you to make over trusts to those worthy of them, and that when you judge between people, you judge with justice. Surely Allah admonishes you with what is excellent. Surely Allah is ever Hearing, Seeing.” (4:58)

“And women have rights similar to those against them in a just manner.” (2:228)

“Hast thou seen him who belies religion?  
That is the one who is rough to the orphan  
And urges not the feeding of the needy.  
So woe to the praying ones,  
Who are unmindful of their prayer!  
Who do (good) to be seen,  
And refrain from acts of kindness!” (107:1-7)

The Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement has been striving

to convey the message of the Holy Quran through its publications and other activities for over a hundred years. The first Islamic periodical in the English language, titled “The Review of Religions”, started at the behest of the founder of the Ahmadiya Movement Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in early 1900 and answered many of the criticisms made against Islam. This periodical later morphed into the periodicals *The Light* and *The Islamic Review*. I would like to share with you here a quotation from the pages of *The Light* from 1934:

“In its issue of February 10, 1934, the Pearson’s Weekly of London, in the course of an article on ‘Mahomet: Prophet of Allah’ has given a most distorted pen-picture of the Holy Prophet of Islam. Besides the outrageous illustrations of the Holy Prophet, Hazrat Ayesha and Hazrat Bilal, the entire article is extremely offensive in tone and absolutely unfounded in fact. It has naturally sent a wave of indignation throughout Muslim India and the Punjab Government has by a special notification proscribed the said number of the Weekly. That, however, is not where the true remedy of such effusions lies. The root cause lies in the mentality of these Western writers. It is idle for us Muslims to be satisfied with indignation or proscription. So long as the mentality is there, similar writings are bound to appear from time to time. If the Muslims really wish to put an end to this sort of offensive literature, they must change the mentality which is responsible for it. And that can only be done by extensive dissemination of a true picture of the Holy Prophet and by dispelling all false notions about him.”

In response, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement’s English language weekly organ, *The Light of Lahore*, published a special issue on 24 March 1934, consisting of nine articles by Lahore Ahmadiyya scholars, each refuting a different allegation against the Holy Prophet made in the Pearson’s Weekly article. This special issue was announced in preceding issue of *The Light* (16 March 1934) on its front pages.

Similarly, in 2002, shortly after 9/11, a collective response by members of the U.S. based Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society to the scurrilous book “Unveiling Islam” by Caner and Caner was serialized in the *Light and Islamic Review* published right here in Columbus Ohio. Also a website, [unveilingislam.org](http://unveilingislam.org) was set up to answer the false allegations of these authors against Islam and the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Interestingly in 2010 the lead author of this book, Ergun Caner, who was a Dean at Liberty University was identified for making false statements in an article published by the Washington Post. He subsequently lost his star status at Liberty University.

In this incidence we witnessed the prophetic words of

the Holy Quran regarding the Holy Prophet come true:

“Surely We have granted thee a clear victory. That God may cover for thee thy (alleged) shortcomings in the past and those to come, and complete His favor to thee and guide thee on a right path, And that God might help thee with a mighty help.” (48:1-3)

Today, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society continues this great legacy of presenting the true picture of the Holy Prophet Muhammad and the religion of Islam to the world. And this is being done in a multi-faceted way:

**Publication:** The Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society publishes the Movement’s literary treasures and makes them available here in America and throughout the world. These publications are standard in the largest retail outlets and are used as text books by many universities. In this way, we maintain a significant influence on the development of Islamic education. E books and dispersal of literature through the internet is also rapidly advancing.

**Translation:** We have a thriving translation venture. We translate Maulana Muhammad Ali’s Holy Quran translation and commentary and a host of our other publications into numerous languages, including French, Spanish, Dutch, Italian, German, Russian, Turkish, Albanian, Arabic, Hindi, Chinese, Indonesian, Tagalo, Basayan, etc. The vast majority of these translated works are shipped to foreign countries and placed into the hands of the local populations for free distribution. Recently, 70,000 copies of our Russian translation/commentary of the Holy Quran was distributed free, throughout Russia and neighboring Central Asian countries. Those of you who attended our symposium, last year saw the great striving Mrs. Samina Malik is doing in this regard.

**Education:** We create Centers in foreign countries so that local populations may have a forum from which they can learn about Islam for themselves in their own language (rather than, what is unfortunately sometimes the case, rely on a politically motivated cleric telling them what their religions is). We believe such accessibility of authentic Islamic material is essential to achieve the goal of eradicating extremist ideologies from the Muslim world. Our literature has been translated into the Arabic language and approved by the world renowned, Al- Azhar University in Cairo Egypt.

Let us all work together through interfaith dialogue against all forms of extremism. Let us demonstrate by our actions the righteousness of Abraham, the gentleness of Jesus and the peaceful message of the Arabian Prophet, Muhammad. We pray that our humble efforts will paint the true portrait of the Holy Prophet Muhammad for all willing to see the beauty of his name “Ahmad”. Thank you, may God bless you and may Almighty God, the Author of Peace, be with you! ■

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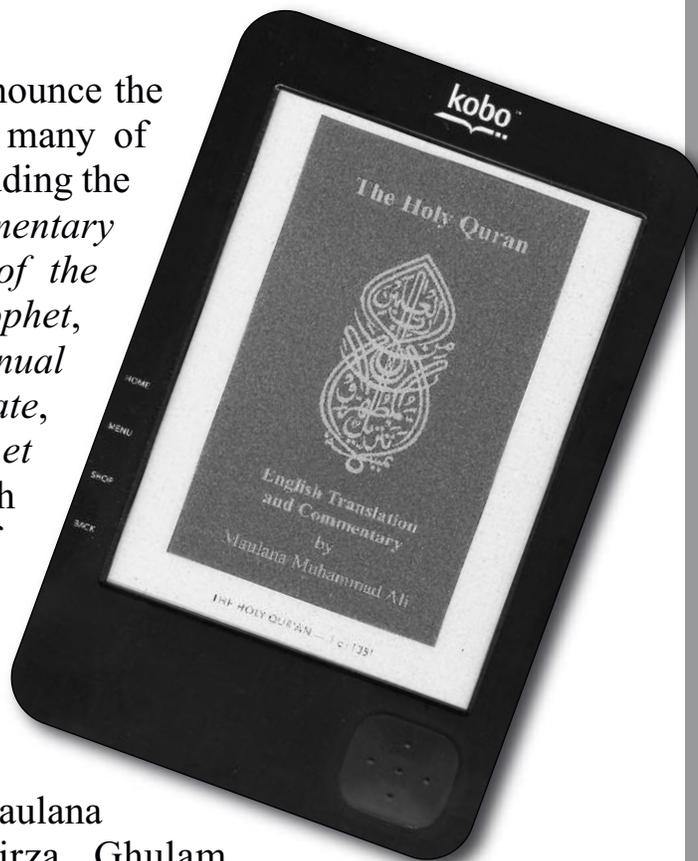
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