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THE BRIEF LIFE OF  
**PROPHET**  
**MUHAMMAD**



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## Arabia and the Prophet's Early Years

Arabia, a peninsula situated in the south western part of Asia, is a desert country which has been inhabited since ancient times. Various tribes lived here in different regions, ruled by their respective chiefs. It was in this country, at Makkah, that four thousand years ago, the Prophet Abraham settled his family, his wife Hajira and his infant son Ishmael. The progeny of Ishmael were known as Mustariba, or naturalized Arabs, and they greatly



multiplied. They were divided into many tribes and clans. The Quraysh, the largest tribe had several clans. Their settlement in Makkah can be traced back to a distinguished ancestor named Qusayy ibn Kilab. The clans who lived in the vicinity of the Kabah were considered most honourable. These were called *Quraysh al-Bitah* (the Quraysh of the Valley).

The location of Makkah on important caravan routes across the Peninsula, and the prestige of the Kabah gave it great advantages as a trading city. This is why the Quraysh became one of the richest and most powerful tribes. The Prophet Muhammad was of the Banu Hashim clan of the Quraysh, who lived in the vicinity of the Kabah and enjoyed great honour and prestige in Arabia. These clans were divided into families. Besides these Arabs there were also Christians and Jews who lived in Arabia. A large number of their population lived in Madinah.

The Prophet Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn Abdul Muttalib was born in Makkah in 570 AD. When Muhammad was born, his father Abdullah had already died. And when he was six years old, his mother Amina, the daughter of Wahb, also passed away. Afterwards, he lived under the guardianship of his grandfather, Abdul Muttalib, and his uncle, Abu Talib.

According to Daud ibn Husayn, as Muhammad grew older he became known as the most chivalrous among his people, tolerant and forbearing, truthful and trustworthy, always the good neighbour. He would stay aloof from all quarrels and quibbles and never indulged in foul utterances, abuse or invective. People even left their valuables in his custody, for they knew that he would never betray them. His unimpeachable trustworthiness

won for him the title of “*Al-Amin*,” a faithful custodian, an unflinching trustee.

## The Search for the Truth

Without doubt the Prophet had every opportunity for worldly advancement. He was born into a noble family of Makkah and his virtues guaranteed his success in life. Although, he had inherited just one camel and one servant from his father, his inborn high qualities had impressed the richest woman in Makkah, Khadijah, a forty-year-old widow belonging to a family of merchants. When the Prophet was twenty-five, she offered herself to him in marriage. Marriage with Khadijah provided the Prophet with wealth and property; it also threw open to him a vast field of business in Arabia and beyond. The



Prophet had every opportunity, then, of leading a successful and comfortable life. But he forsook all these things and chose something quite different for himself. Quite intentionally, he took a road that could lead only to worldly ruin. Before his marriage, the Prophet had earned his living in different ways. Now he relinquished all such activity, and dedicated himself to his lifelong vocation – the pursuit of truth. He used to sit for hours and ponder over the mysteries of creation. Instead of socializing and trying to gain a position for himself among the nobles of Makkah, he would wander in the hills and dales of the desert. Often he used to retire to the loneliness of a cave in Mount Hira – three miles from Makkah – and stay there until his meagre supply of food and water was exhausted. He would return home to replenish his supplies, and then go back to the solitude of nature for prayer and meditation. He would beseech the Maker of the heavens and the earth for answers to the questions surging in his mind. What is our true role in life? What does the Lord require of us, as His servants? Whence do we come and whither will we go after death? Unable to find answers to these questions in the centres of human activity, he betook himself to the stillness of the desert; perhaps, there the answer would be forthcoming.

The Quran tells us about this phase of his life in these words:

“Did He not find you an orphan and give you shelter? Did He not find you wandering and guide you?” (93:6-7)

God, indeed, relieved him of his burden. He turned in mercy to His Prophet, illuminating his path and guiding him on his journey. In 610 AD, the Prophet was sitting alone in the cave

when the angel of the Lord appeared before him in human form and taught him the words, which appear at the beginning of the ninety-sixth chapter of the Quran. The Prophet's quest had finally been rewarded. His restless soul had joined in communion with the Lord. Not only did God grant him guidance; He also chose Muhammad as His Prophet and special envoy to the world. The mission of the Prophet extended over the next twenty-three years. During this period the entire content of the Quran was revealed to him.

## God-Oriented Life

The meaning that life took on for the Prophet after the Truth came to him can be ascertained from these words: "Nine things the Lord has commanded me. Fear of God in private and in public; Justness, whether in anger or in calmness; Moderation in





both poverty and affluence; That I should join hands with those who break away from me; and give to those who deprive me; and forgive those who wrong me; and that my silence should be meditation; and my words remembrance of God; and my vision keen observation.” (*Jami‘ al-Usul*, Ibn al-Athir al-Jazari, hadith no. 9317)

These were not just glib words; they were a reflection of the Prophet’s very life. Poignant and wondrously effective words of this nature could not emanate from an empty soul; they themselves indicate the status of the speaker; they were an outpouring of his inner being, an unquenchable spirit revealed in verbal form.

The Prophet once said: “A discerning person should have some special moments: a moment of communion with God; a moment of self-examination; a moment of reflection over the mysteries of creation; and a moment which he puts aside for eating and drinking.” (*Sahih Ibn Hibban*, hadith no. 361)

In other words, this is how a spiritually awakened person passes the day. Sometimes the yearning of his soul brings him so close to God that he finds himself in communion with the Lord. Sometimes fear of the day when he will be brought before the Lord for reckoning makes him reckon with himself. Sometimes he is so overawed by the marvels of God’s creation that he starts seeing the splendours of the Creator reflected therein. Thus he spends his time in profound contemplation of the Lord and the world around him while also finding time to cater for his physical needs.

These words are not a description of some remote being; they are a reflection of the Prophet’s own personality, a flash from the

Say, "My prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are all for God, the Lord of the worlds.

The Quran, 6:162

light of faith that illuminated his own heart. These "moments" were an integral part of the Prophet's life. One who has not experienced these states can never describe them in such a lofty manner. The soul from which these words emanated was itself in the state that they describe; that state of spiritual perfection was communicated to others through words.

When the Prophet Muhammad discovered the reality of the world Hereafter, it came to dominate his whole being. He himself became most desirous of the heaven of which he gave tidings to others, and he himself was most fearful of the hell of which he warned others. Deep concern for the life to come was always welling up inside him. Sometimes it would surge to his lips in the form of supplication, and sometimes in the form of heartfelt contrition. He lived on a completely different plane from that of ordinary human beings, as evidenced by numerous incidents from his life.

## **Development of One's Personality**

The men taken prisoner in the Battle of Badr were the Prophet's bitterest enemies, but still his treatment of them was impeccable. One of these prisoners was a man by the name of Suhayl ibn Amr. A fiery speaker, he used to denounce the Prophet virulently in public to incite people against him and his mission. Umar ibn al-Khattab suggested that two of his lower teeth be pulled out to



dampen his oratorical zeal. The Prophet was shocked by Umar's suggestion. "God would disfigure me for this on the Day of Judgment, even though I am His messenger," he said to Umar. (*Sirat Ibn Hisham*, vol. 1, p. 649)

This is what is meant by the world being a planting-ground for the Hereafter. One who realizes this fact lives a life oriented towards the Hereafter – a life in which all efforts are aimed at achieving success in the next, eternal world; a life in which real value is attached – not to this ephemeral world – but to the life beyond death. One becomes aware that this world is not the final destination; it is only a road towards the destination, a starting-point of preparation for the future life. Just as every action of a worldly person is performed with worldly interests in mind, so every action of God's faithful servant is focused on the Hereafter. Their reactions to every situation in life reflect this

attitude of looking at every matter in the perspective of the life after death, and of how it will affect their interests in the next world. Whether it be an occasion of happiness or sorrow, success or failure, domination or depression, praise or condemnation, love or anger – in every state they are guided by accountability to God and thoughts of the Hereafter.

The goal that Islam gives to a person is to develop his or her personality in such a way that he or she can find entry to the eternal noble world of Paradise in the Hereafter. The present world is temporary and meant as a test. Every situation, experience and circumstance comes to test our response to it. Our positive response elevates our character, while a negative response debases our character. This process is known as purification of the soul. According to the Quran, it is a purified and positively-developed soul that will be competent for being settled in the sublime society of Paradise. (20:76)

## The Character of the Prophet

### Humility

Narrated by Anas ibn Malik: A man once said, “O Muhammad, our master, the son of our master, the best of us, and the son

Say, 'I am only a human being like yourselves. It is revealed to me that your God is One God. So let him who hopes to meet his Lord do good deeds and let him associate no one else in the worship of his Lord.'

The Quran, 18:110

of the best of us.” The Messenger of God replied, “O people, adhere to piety (taqwa), and do not let Satan lead you astray. I am Muhammad, the son of Abdullah, the servant of God and His Messenger. By God, I do not wish for you to elevate me above the position that God has assigned to me.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, hadith no. 12551)

Narrated by Abu Mas’ud: A man approached the Prophet and began speaking to him, trembling with fear. The Prophet said to him, “Calm down, for I am not a king; I am merely the son of a woman who lived a humble life.” (*Sunan Ibn Majah*, hadith no. 3312)

One day, Abu Dharr al-Ghifari was sitting next to a black Muslim. Abu Dharr addressed him as ‘son of a black woman.’ When the Prophet (peace be upon him) heard this, he was very displeased and said to Abu Dharr, ‘I did not think that there remained any trace of the arrogance of ignorance (Jahiliyyah) in your heart.’ As soon as the Prophet admonished him, Abu Dharr realized his error. Filled with remorse, he prostrated himself on the ground and said to the person he had offended, ‘Stand up and rub your feet on my face.’” (*Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*, Ibn Battal, vol. 1, p. 87-88)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) delivered a sermon during his final Hajj, in which he said: “O people, indeed, your Lord is one, and your father (Adam) is one. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have superiority over an Arab; neither does a white person have superiority over a black person nor does a black person have superiority over a white person—except through piety (taqwa).” (*Musnad Ahmad*, hadith no. 23489)

When Abu Talib died, and the Prophet's affliction became more intense, he betook himself to Taif, a town situated at a distance of 75 kilometers from Makkah and seek refuge from the chiefs of the town and in the hope that they would grant him asylum and support. According to Arab custom, this was nothing new. But the leaders were not ready to give refuge to a prophet who believed in the One God. Instead of giving him refuge, they incited the urchins to chase him away from the town by pelting stones at him. One can tell what savage treatment the Prophet received at their hands from this prayer that he made on his return to Makkah: "Lord, I complain to you of my weakness and helplessness. How vulnerable I am among men, most Merciful one!" (*Al-Mu'jam al-Kabir*, al-Tabrani, hadith no. 14764)

The Prophet took refuge in an orchard on the outskirts of Taif where he spent the night. According to a tradition, on that occasion God sent the angel of the Mount to him. The Angel said to him: "God has seen the treatment meted out to you by the people of Taif. Now, if you give me permission, I can join the two mounts in order that all these people should be crushed to death." The Prophet replied: "No, although the present generation of Taif has refused to listen to me, I still hope that the next generation of Taif will listen to me and will follow the path of God." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, hadith no. 3231)

## **Forbearance**

Once the Prophet had to borrow some money from a Jew by the name of Zayd ibn Sa'nah. A few days before the date fixed for the repayment of the debt, the Jew came to demand his money back. He went up to the Prophet, caught hold of his clothes,

and said to him harshly: “Muhammad, why don’t you pay me my due? From what I know of the descendants of Muttalib, they all put off paying their debts.” Umar ibn al-Khattab was with the Prophet at the time. He became very angry, scolded the Jew and was on the point of beating him up. But the Prophet just kept smiling. All he said to the Jew was: “There are still three days left for me to fulfil my promise.” Then he addressed Umar: “Zayd and I deserved better treatment from you,” he said. “You should have told me to be better at paying my debts, and him to be better at demanding them. Take him with you, Umar, and pay him his due; in fact, give him 20 sa’ahs (about forty kilos) of dates extra because you have alarmed him with your threats.” (*Mustadrak al-Hakim*, hadith no. 6547) The most remarkable thing about this episode is that the Prophet could still behave with such forbearance and humility even after being established as head of the Muslim state of Madinah.



Have patience [O Muhammad]! God's promise is true; let not those who will not be convinced make you discouraged.

The Quran, 30:60

The Prophet lived among his companions as an equal. No bitter criticism or provocation would make him lose his composure. Once a desert-dweller came up to him and pulled so hard at the sheet he was wearing that it left a mark on his neck. "Muhammad!" he said. "Give me two camel-loads of goods, for the money in your possession is not yours, nor was it your father's." "Everything belongs to God," the Prophet said, "and I am His servant." He then asked the desert-dweller, "hasn't it made you afraid, the way you treated me?" He said not. The Prophet asked him why. "Because I know that you do not requite evil with evil," the man answered. The Prophet smiled on hearing this, and had one camel-load of barley and another of dates given to him. (*Kitab al-Shifa*, Qadhi Iyadh, vol. 1, p. 225)

### **Patience and Cool-headedness**

The emigration from Makkah to Madinah was an example of the Prophet's patience. When the Quraysh had decided to kill the Prophet, the latter had two options before him: either he could take up his sword in self-defence, or he could leave Makkah for some safer abode. The Prophet adopted the second course of action. He coolly thought the situation over and decided on emigration to Madinah, where he would be able to continue the same work, only in a different place.



From the point of view of a zealous Muslim political leader of the modern age, the emigration would appear as a flight, for what he would advocate in a similar situation would be a fight to the death; he would be looking no further ahead than making a martyr of himself. But if one looks at the results of the emigration of the Prophet, one can see that it was clearly the greatest watershed in Islamic history.

When faced with enemy onslaughts people usually take retaliatory measures of their own: People are generally used to retaliating when they face any unpleasant treatment by others. *Sabr*, on the other hand, means to bear patiently whatever is meted out by the enemy. For instance, if people in a certain country find themselves up against economic bias, the way of *sabr* is not to start demanding equal treatment, but is rather to make extra efforts oneself to excel over others. Prejudice can only have an adverse effect when people of equal ability are competing for one job. If one of the contestants clearly excels the others in ability, then not even prejudice can deny him his rightful place.

## **Events from the Prophet's Life in Makkah and Madinah**

The Prophet's wife Khadijah, his freed slave Zayd, his cousin Ali, and his childhood friend Abu Bakr were the first converts to Islam. In the first stage, the Prophet was asked to spread the message of Islam quietly to avoid arousing any hostility. Abu Bakr, being an influential merchant, was able to bring some of

“It is by God’s grace that you were gentle with them—for if you had been harsh and hard-hearted, they would surely have deserted you—so bear with them and pray for forgiveness for them.”

The Quran, 3:159

his friends, also rich merchants, into the fold of Islam. In the second stage the Prophet received the command from God to spread the message publicly.

There was one main reason for the Quraysh to oppose the Prophet, and to keep him from spreading his message. Makkah was a centre of pilgrimage because of the Kabah, which housed 360 idols of the neighbouring tribes and nations. Since Islam believed in 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, for trade flourished side by side with the pilgrimage.

But all the Makkans were not hostile. There were people who gave serious thought to the message of the Quran and gradually began to accept Islam. About 200 people from Makkah as well as the neighbouring settlements entered the fold of Islam. As many more members joined the nascent Islamic community, the opposition of the chieftains of Quraysh intensified. They created an environment of hostility for the Muslims, persecuting the slaves or those from weaker sections and threatening the rich of boycott of their business or creating hurdles in their trade.



There has come to you a Messenger of your own. Your suffering distresses him: he is deeply concerned for your welfare and full of kindness and mercy towards the believers.

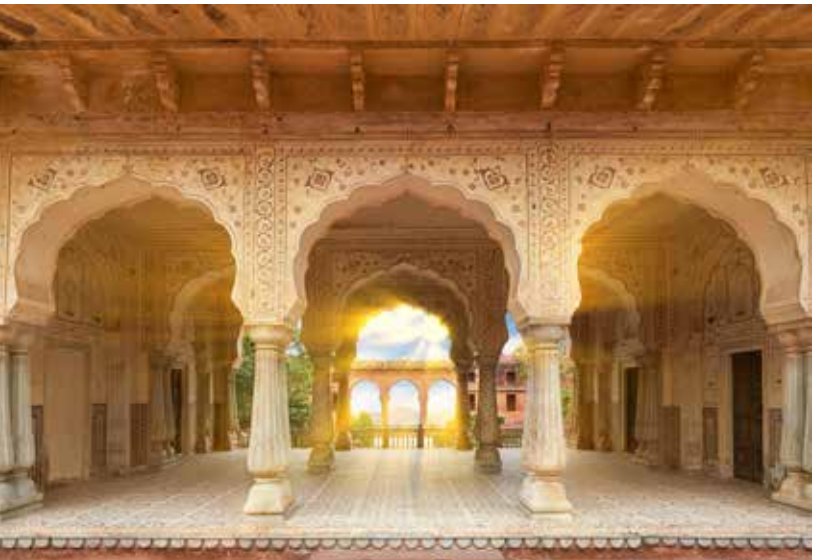
The Quran, 9:128

The Prophet continued to convey the message of Islam to the people coming from outside Makkah. During the years 620-621 AD, several men from the tribe of Khazraj of Yathrib (later came to be known as Madinah) accepted Islam during their pilgrimage to Makkah. They requested the Prophet to send Musab ibn 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, a number of people converted to Islam as a result of Musab's preaching. Now the Muslims began to emigrate to Yathrib in large numbers to escape persecution at the hands of the Quraysh. The Prophet along with Abu Bakr migrated to Madinah in total secrecy, as men from the Quraysh had decided to kill him.

The people of Madinah accepted the Prophet as their leader. The spiritual mission of Islam continued here. However, when the Makkans came to know of the firm foothold Muslims had acquired in Madinah, they decided to nip Islam in the bud. Consequently, they launched armed offensive against Madinah causing Muslims to engage in war in defence. The Quran refers to war in some of its verses, but these relate to defensive war only. Launching an offensive against another group is absolutely unlawful in Islam, and so are all other kinds of war such as proxy

war and guerilla war. The Quranic principle of war is stated in this verse, “Permission to fight is granted to those who are attacked.” (22:39)

Three battles thus ensued between the Muslims and their Makkans opponents: the Battle of Badr in 624 AD, the Battle of Uhud in 624 AD and the Battle of Trench in 627 AD. These battles should rightfully be called skirmishes since each lasted for less than a day. Seeing the loss of life and hurdles in his constructive spiritual movement, the Prophet entered into extensive negotiations with the leaders of the Quraysh of Makkah and thus signed a ten-year no-war pact in 628 AD, known in history as the Treaty of Hudaibiyah. This peace treaty normalized relations between the people of Makkah and Madinah, who began to interact and mix freely in a secure environment. The result was that many people from Makkah embraced Islam as they gained knowledge about it. Finally, in



630 AD, when the Quraysh broke away from the peace pact the Prophet and Muslims conducted a peaceful march to Makkah, leading to the city with its inhabitants coming under the fold of Islam.

## The Teachings of the Prophet

### Sublime Character

In the Quran the Prophet Muhammad is described as being of “sublime character.” Here are two sayings of the Prophet which throw light on what this “sublime character” consists of:

Never debase your character by saying that if people treat you well, you will treat them well, and if they harm you, then you will do worse to them. Rather, become accustomed to being good to those who are good to you, and not wronging those who harm you. (*Jami‘ at-Tirmidhi*, hadith no. 2007)

Join hands with those who break away from you, forgive those who wrong you, and be good to those who harm you. (*Jami‘ al-Usul*, Ibn al-Athir al-Jazari, hadith no. 9317)

There are two levels of character: an ordinary and a superior level. An ordinary character is based on the principle: do as other have done to you. Such a character might be termed a “knee-jerk character,” for those possessed of such a character offer only reflex responses to treatment by others, breaking with those who break with them, wronging those who wrong them, and harming those who harm them. But the higher level of character is based on the principle: do as you would like others to do to

you. Those possessed of such a character deal with both friend and foe in the same principled manner, irrespective of how they have been treated. They are reconciliatory, even joining with those who break with them. They are compassionate, even to those who seek to harm them. They are forbearing, even towards those who wrong them.

When the Prophet entered Makkah victoriously in 630 AD, a question facing him was what treatment should be meted to those Makkans who had conspired and waged battles against him. These people were in the position of prisoners of war, and according to the custom of the time, this invited capital



“You are truly of a sublime character.”

The Quran, 68:4

punishment. Western historians have noted with astonishment that the Prophet declared a general amnesty and said to the Makkans who engaged in hostilities: “Let no reproach be upon you this day. Go, you are free.” (*Sirat Ibn Hisham*, vol. 2, p. 412)

### **Refraining from Retaliation**

Once a group of Rabbis came to the Prophet. When they entered, instead of giving the normal ‘Assalamu alaykum’ greeting (peace be upon you), they said ‘Assamu alaykum’, meaning “death to you”. Ayisha heard this, and was not able to contain herself and exclaimed: “Death to you instead,” which means, “May God damn you.” The Prophet told Ayisha not to answer back in this manner. “God is gentle,” he said, “and He likes gentleness in every matter.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, hadith no. 6927) In truth, there is no more effective method of winning a person’s heart than by returning soft words for harsh. It is possible to withstand armed onslaught, but noble conduct is a force in itself that no one can resist. It is sure to prevail in all situations.

This principle has been expressed in a verse in the Quran: “Good and evil deeds are not equal. Do good deed in return for bad deed and you will see that one who was once your enemy has become your dearest friend.” (41:34)

This action of the Prophet illustrates that his followers should be unilateral well-wishers of others. Even if they have been treated



acrimoniously by those with whom they are dealing, they should still behave respectfully and honourably.

### **Non-Confrontation**

The Quran sums up the Islamic method in the following words: “Then if they should be inclined to make peace, make peace with them, and put your trust in God. Surely, it is He who is All Hearing and All Knowing.” (8:61-62)

This shows that the true Islamic method is to pursue our aims peacefully. Even when there is a fear that our opponents may deceive us, Muslims should still put their trust in God, and be ready to make peace. What this means is that we should concentrate our efforts in that field of action where – without any confrontation with others – there are opportunities for us to advance. As for other fields, those in which no opportunities present themselves – one should let the forces of nature go to work.

### **Behaviour with People of Other Faiths**

Madinah was also inhabited by some idolaters and Jews, who were in a minority. The Prophet decided that some form of law should be established so that there would be no misunderstanding or hostility of any sort, in the future between them and the Muslims. To solve this problem the Prophet of Islam issued a charter commonly known as the covenant of Madinah. Since the Muslims were in the majority, the Prophet’s position became that of a leader, or a head of state. In this capacity he declared in this charter that all the inhabitants of Madinah would enjoy equal rights. A clause of the charter read: *Lil-yahud dinuhum*

*wa lil-muslimin dinuhum*, that is, “For Jews their religion, for Muslims theirs.” (*Sirat Ibn Hisham*, vol.1, p. 503)

Everyone would be free to follow the religion and culture of his or her choice: the affairs of the Muslims would be decided according to the *Shariah*, while the affairs of the Jews and idolaters would be decided according to their traditions, laws and customs.

While in Madinah one day, the Prophet saw a funeral procession passing through a street in the town. At that time, the Prophet was seated, but upon seeing the funeral, he stood up out of respect. One of his companions said: “O Prophet, that was the funeral of a Jew. Why are you giving so much respect to a deceased non-Muslims?” The Prophet replied: *A'laysat nafsan*,



that is, “Was he not a human being?” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, hadith no. 1312) This example set by the Prophet of Islam shows that irrespective of religion or tradition, all men and women are equally worthy of respect.

## The Wisdom of the Prophet

### Anger Management

The hostile members of the tribe of Quraysh had given the Prophet the nomenclature of *Mudhammam* (the condemned one), although his name was Muhammad, meaning “the praised one”. By addressing the Prophet with this derogatory name, the Quraysh used to heap abuses on him. The Prophet said to



God has sent down to you the Book and Wisdom and has taught you what you did not know. God's favour to you has been great indeed.

The Quran, 4:113

his companions, "Don't you wonder how God has saved me from the abuses of the Quraysh? They abuse and condemn a person named Mudhammam, while I am Muhammad." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, hadith no. 3533) We tend to become sensitive when our ego is hurt and respond with similar rebuttals. But what did the Prophet do? He managed the issue of being ridiculed with wisdom. Often, we make a certain issue an instance of our dignity being offended and thus respond with hypersensitivity. However, the Prophet taught us that there is also greater dignity in avoiding and dismissing such situations with ease. Cultivating the attitude exemplified by the Prophet can help us deal with such situations better.

### **Positive Thinking: Ignore the Problem, Avail the Opportunity**

The Prophet would carry out his mission of spreading the message of monotheism in Makkah. The pattern that can be observed repeatedly from the method he followed was that he avoided people's unpleasant behaviour and would steadfastly continue to work to disseminate the teachings of Islam. The Quran is filled with injunctions to the Prophet to avoid the opponents with enduring patience and focus on his duty. We can say that the Prophet followed the formula: ignore

the problem, avail the opportunity. Even in trying situations, he looked for opportunities to spread his message instead of becoming enmeshed in disputes and reactionary behaviour.

We observe such exceptional positivity exhibited by the Prophet even in a very hostile environment. The Prophet would ask his companions to adhere to patience and forbearance. In today's terms, we could say that the Prophet maintained his unwavering positivity and uplifted the spirits of his companions. Why such emphasis on positive bent of mind? We can readily observe in



our own experiences that our minds benefit from what is known as the “positivity advantage.” When we cultivate a positive mindset, our brains perform significantly better than in negative states. In this uplifting state, our intelligence, creativity, and energy levels all increase markedly. The Prophet, therefore, did not only perform a religious duty but gave us a very significant lesson in how to train our minds to function.

### **Seeing Stress as a Challenge, not a Threat**

One particular aspect of the life of the Prophet Muhammad comes before us in chapter 94 of the Quran: “Surely, with every hardship there is ease.” (94:5-6) The context of this verse is that Prophet’s opponents would try to dissuade every person or tribe from paying attention to him. They would accuse him of being a heretic. This false propaganda became the means of spreading his message far and wide. People from outside Makkah would come enquiring about the person who claimed to receive revelations. So what started as a campaign to smear the image of the Prophet ended up granting him, as the Quran says, “high renown”. (94:4)

This gives us a principle of turning disadvantageous situations to our advantage and continuing our activities with hope, as the Prophet did, even in times of great frustration. He saw stress as a challenge instead of as a threat.

### **The Prophet of Peace**

Throughout his life as a Prophet, what did the Prophet do? He recited non-war-related Quranic verses to the people, such as: “Read in the name of your Lord who created.” (96:1) He

kept asking them to discover God, the Creator and Sustainer. He taught them how to worship and make supplications to God. He taught them about morality and humaneness. He told them that when others troubled them, even then, they must behave with patience and avoid conflict. He gave people the teachings of the Quran as a book for reforming themselves and for sharing divine wisdom with others. He taught them that true success lies in entering Paradise, not in gaining worldly power. By his own practical example, he showed people how to carry on the mission of Islam through peaceful means and without resorting to confrontation. He demonstrated how it is possible for people to save themselves from falling prey to hatred of others in even the most turbulent situations and how, at such times, one can remain peaceful and carry on working for the true welfare of others.



All these non-violent activities of the Prophet are undoubtedly exalted Islamic actions. In fact, these are the very essence of the mission of prophethood. As far as war is concerned, it is only an exceptional necessity.

War always aims at removing external obstacles, not at producing an inner state of higher consciousness within individuals. For the latter purpose, the appropriate method is advice, exhortation and guidance. It has nothing to do with war.

The lesson that we learn from the life of the Prophet is to avoid confrontation at all costs and avail opportunities. No constructive work can be accomplished in the absence of a peaceful environment. Whether it is economic progress, social welfare, spiritual development, or even worship, all can only thrive in peaceful conditions. This is why Islam stresses the avoidance of war and confrontation. It commands its followers to establish peace at all costs. This is expressed in a verse of the Quran which states, "Reconciliation is best." (4:128)

Peace is thus inextricably linked to Islam. The goal Islam gives to its followers cannot be achieved in the absence of peaceful conditions or in a situation of war and violence. In Islam, the spiritual goal of a believer is the discovery of God through study, contemplation and reflection on nature, the universe and life. This kind of spiritual and intellectual work cannot happen when people are continually engaged in war or are living in a society where violence is perpetrated as a norm. For this reason, Islam places the utmost significance on the establishment of peace at any cost, for without peaceful conditions, the very goal or objective of Islam is jeopardised and remains unachieved.





## Summary

The Prophet Muhammad followed these teachings of the Quran throughout his missionary life. The Quran describes the Prophet as “a mercy to all mankind.” (21:107) The Prophet’s mission was to bring about a spiritual awakening in a human being. His mission can be summed up in these words of the Quran: *Kunu rabbaniyin* (3:79), that is, to become God-oriented in one’s speech, actions, and thoughts. Such a mission requires an intellectual revolution and not a political revolution. The Prophet’s concern was to bring personal transformation in an individual and help him deal with life’s various challenges. With the help of the Quran the Prophet worked to guide individuals in search of meaning and purpose in life beyond material gratification.

*The Brief Life of Prophet Muhammad* offers a concise yet insightful overview of the Prophet's life. This biography sheds light on his personality, thoughts, character, principles, and the wisdom that led to his remarkable success. It presents him as a model of compassion, wisdom, and peace, while providing profound insights into his spiritual depth, moral excellence, and timeless teachings.

This booklet serves as an inspiring guide to understanding the legacy of the Prophet of Islam, offering readers a deeper appreciation of his enduring influence on individuals and societies alike.



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