Chapter-I

LIFE OF THE PROPHET: A BRIEF STUDY
CHAPTER I

In this chapter an attempt is made to study a few important events in the life of the Prophet Muhammad (570-632 C.E.). No other human life on the earth is as heavily documented as that of Prophet Muhammad. His every action is recorded. His every saying forms the basis of the faith. Nearly 1/3 of the humanity looks at his model day in and out, with a belief that the salvation lies in following his footprints.

This chapter is spread over two sections. In Section 1 some important events pertaining to his birth, youth and prophethood are explained. Section 2 examines the impact left behind by the Prophet.

I

The Prophet: Important Events of His Life

The Prophet of Islam was born in the year 570 C.E. to the Banu Hashim family which belonged to the tribe of Quraish in Makkah. "He is the only one of the world's
prophets to be born within the full light of history. Banu Hashim were custodians of Ka'ba the holiest shrine of the Arabs. The Prophet's father Abdullah bin Abd al-Muttalib died two months before his birth. Therefore, the Prophet came under the guardianship of his grandfather Abd al-Muttalib. He was chief of Banu Hashim and was highly respected. When the Prophet was six years of age, his mother, Amina, died. This was followed by the death of his affectionate grandfather at the age of nine. The prophet was taken charge of by his uncle Abu Talib. The Quran speaks of these events:

"Did He not find thee an orphan and give thee shelter (and care). And He found thee wandering, and He gave thee guidance. He found thee in need and made thee independent. Therefore treat not the orphan with harshness. Nor repulse the petitioner (unheard). But the Bounty of

The Prophet received no formal education. As a boy he tended a flock of sheep and herded cattle. When he was twelve he began accompanying his uncle on trade journeys outside Makkah particularly Syria. During one of these trips he stopped at Busrah, where he met a Nestorian monk, Buhairah, who was first to notice signs of an enlightened soul in the Prophet. He warned the Prophet's uncle to guard his nephew.

The Prophet was scrupulously honest in his business dealings. He came to be known as al-Amin, or the trustworthy. His reputation for integrity brought him an offer to run the business of a twice-widowed rich woman Khadijah. Later both got married.

The Prophet continued to travel extensively to Syria, Yemen, Bahrain for business purpose, but his interest began to shift to the life of spirit. Often he would retreat to Mount Hira and meditate. One day while meditating on Mount Hira, the Prophet received his first
"Proclaim! (or read) In the Name of Thy Lord and Cherisher, who created--Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood. Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful,--He Who taught (the Use of) the Pen,--Taught man which he knew not" (96:1-5)

He was, after some gap, asked to declare his prophethood and call people to the right path.

"O thou wrapped up (in a mantle)! Arise and deliver thy warning! And thy Lord Do thou magnify" (74:1-2).

Khadijah, his wife; Ali, his cousin; Zaid, his freed slave and Abu Bakr, his friend were the first muslims. In three years the Prophet could gather only thirty followers. The Quraish under the leadership of Abu Sufiyan were positively hostile to the Prophet and his message. They persecuted him and his followers. Physical assaults, abuses and harassment continued day after day. Unable to bear the hardship, a group of his followers migrated to Abyssinia. This is now known as the first migration.
Genealogical chart: the Prophet's kin.
(Names of those who played an important role in the Prophet's lifetime or immediately afterwards are underlined.)

Quraysh
- Quray (founder of Quraysh power)

Abd-Manaf
- Hashim (clan)
- Muttalib (clan associated with Hashim)
- Abd-Shams (clan)
- Nawfal (clan)

Abd-Muttalib
- Umayyah

Abu Talib
- Abu Lahab
- Abdullah = Aminah
- Abbas
- Hamzah
- Abd As
- Harb

Mahmud = Khadijah b. Khuwaylid
- Abdullah
- Ailan
- al-Hakam
- Abu Sufian = Hind

Jafar Tayyar
- Ali = Fatimah
- Zainab
- Umm Kaltum
- Ruqayyah = Lihman
- Marwan
- Musa

Hassan
- Hussain

Abdul Malik
- Yarid

Source: Akbar S. Ahmed, Discovering Islam: Making a Sense of Muslim History and Society, Vistar Publications, New Delhi, 1990
In the meanwhile Khadijah died, followed by Abu Talib, the Prophet's uncle who provided moral and emotional support during most testing times. His enemies became even more belligerent and they demanded his head. The years that followed after the deaths of Khadijah and Abu Talib were worst for the Prophet. The Prophet learnt of a plot to kill him. Entrusting his cousin Ali to return deposits, the Prophet along with his trusted friend Abu Bakr left for Madinah in the year 622. This is the landmark event in the history of Islam and it is known as the *hijrah*.

The first contours of an organised Muslim *ummah* emerged at Madinah leading later on to the establishment of the city-state of Madinah. The Prophet imposed upon his followers discipline in the shape of prayers, fasting, alms-giving and continence and called upon them to refrain from avarice, slander, falsehood, indecency and other vices. A spirit of brotherhood was inculcated among Makkah migrants (*muhajirun*) and local residents of Madinah (*ansar*). The religious bond proved to be more effective and powerful than tribal affiliations and blood relations.
The Prophet also invited Jews and pagans to join him and his followers in establishing a welfare state where every one would be equal before law and enjoy equal rights provided every one carried out his obligation to defend the city-state of Madinah. He incorporated these assurances in a document that came to be known as the Constitution of Madinah. However, the Jews, pagans and local hypocrites did not remain loyal to the city-state of Madinah.

Even after migration the Prophet was not allowed to lead a life of peace. What was before migration personal persecution of the Prophet and his followers, now turned into armed encounters after migration. These armed encounters were between Muslims on one side and Quraish of Makkah, Jews and pagans from Madinah on the other. For twenty years, out of a period of twenty three years of preaching, the Prophet was tortured, persecuted and harassed. On him and his followers wars were imposed, a few major wars include: Battle of Badr (624 C.E.), Battle of Uhad (625 C.E.), Battle of Trench (627 C.E.).

The Prophet entered Makkah as a victor from where he was forced to migrate. Clearing the Kaaba of idols, he declared:

"There is no god but Allah, He has no partners. He has fulfilled his promise and helped His slave and defeated all coalitions against Him. He is the final authority. there will be no revenge and no blood reparations".

In his hour of supreme triumph the Prophet did not allow a house to be plundered or woman to be molested. He announced a general amnesty and all were pardoned. He returned to Madinah appointing a local as the governor of Makkah.

1. For a detailed account of battles please see Muhammad Hamidul lah's Battlefields of the Prophet, Kitab Bhavan, New Delhi, 1996.
The Prophet had a premonition of his approaching end; therefore he decided to go on a pilgrimage to the Ka'abah, described in the Muslim annals as the "Farewell Pilgrimage". "Messengers were sent to all the parts of Arabia inviting people to join him in this great pilgrimage. It was necessary for them since they should learn by first hand knowledge the several injunctions and practices of pilgrimage, free from all taints of ignorance, an ideal pattern which was to be kept intact in its pristine glory for all times to come". Thousands listened to him raptly. "We may observe the widening impact of Islam by the increasing numbers involved. At Badr, the Prophet fought alongside about 300 men. Less than 10 years later, in 632 C.E., about 90,000 accompanied him to Makkah. The gathering that received him was about 1,24,000 in number."

After the pilgrimage was over the Prophet left for Madinah where he spent remaining months of his life. He worked ceaselessly to settle the affairs of newly born Islamic state so as to keep it on a sound footing.

1. Siddiqui, A.H., The Life of Muhammad, op.cit., p.297

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sort out problems between various tribes and groups and educating people on the Quranic lines. He passed away at noon on Monday June, 632 C.E. leaving a vast multitude of believers to mourn his death.

II

The Prophet: His Overall Impact

The Prophet's mission was extra-ordinary. No parallels can be drawn. His mission was to teach the highest morals, to purify humanity and to wipe out prejudice and superstition. "It was the Prophet who looked beyond the artificial compartments of race and nation-state, who laid the foundations of a moral, spiritual, cultural and political superstructure for the good of the whole world, who practically, not theoretically, placed business transactions, civic, politics and international relations on moral grounds and produced such a balanced synthesis between worldly life and spiritual advancement that even to this day it is considered a masterpiece of wisdom and foresight"\(^1\).

\(^1\) Maududi, Sayed Abu A'ala., *Towards Understanding Islam*, Markazi Maktaba Islami, Delhi, 1960, p.55
The life and character of the Prophet left a powerful impact on the hearts and minds of the Companions that their attitude towards life, family, property, etc., was largely determined by his own example and they on the whole had become living symbols of his precepts. Of them, those who were nearer to him naturally bore a deeper imprint of his personality.

A new meaning was given to economic, political and social approach. He practically transformed everything and conquered all that which came in his way. The basic principles of economics which the Prophet taught have ushered in many a movement in world history and hold out the same promise for the future. "The laws of governance which he formulated brought about many upheavals in political theories and continue to have influence even today. The fundamental principles of law and justice which bear the stamp of his genius have influenced, to a remarkable degree, the administration of justice in the courts of nations. This unlettered Arab was the first person to formulate a framework of international rela-
tions and lay down laws of war and peace"\textsuperscript{1}.

The Quran also adverts to those marks and features of the last Prophet which sound the keynote of his being the exemplar and model par excellence for all times to come. The Quran says:

"Verily in the Messenger of Allah ye have a good example for him who, looketh unto Allah and the Last Day, and rememberth Allah much", (33:21).

"Say, (O Muhammad to mankind): If ye love Allah, follow me; Allah will love you and forgive your sins. Allah is Forgiving, Merciful" (3:31).

"O Prophet, Truly We have sent you as a witness, a bearer of glad tidings, and warner" (33:45).

In brief it can be said that every equation, be it political, economic and social, got changed. Every

\textsuperscript{1} Maududi, Sayed Abu A'ala., Towards Understanding Islam, op.cit., p.54
relation bore impact of the teachings of the Prophet. Every aspect of human life was refined. History tells us that those who followed him in principle dominated the world scene. The rise of Muslims worldwide is directly in proportion to his obedience, and that disobedience has brought humiliation, disgrace and disrepute.