

Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah (Pbuh)

مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

In the annals of men, individuals have not been lacking who conspicuously devoted their lives to the socio-religious reform of their connected peoples. We find them in every epoch and in all lands. In India, there lived those who transmitted to the world the Vedas, and there was also the great Gotama Buddha; China had its Confucius; the Avesta was produced in Iran. Babylonia gave to the world one of the greatest reformers, the Prophet Abraham (not to speak of such of his ancestors as Enoch and Noah about whom we have very scanty information). The Jewish people may rightly be proud of a long series of reformers: Moses, Samuel, David, Solomon, and Jesus among others. Those prophets were locals with mission for their community at certain time

Prophet Muhammad's (Pbuh) mission is universal. Allah (SWT) tells mankind that Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) is no more than a Messenger (Quran'an 3: 144), the unlettered Prophet who believes in Him and His Words (Quran'an 7: 158). He is the Seal of the Prophets and the true universal Messenger of Allah to the whole mankind (Quran'an 33: 40). Allah (SWT), the All Mighty, makes this very clear:

"We have not sent you (O Muhammad) but as a universal (Messenger) to men giving them glad tidings and warning them (against sin) but most men understand not." Quran 34: 28

Concept of God Before Muhammad

If one should judge from the relics of the past already brought to light of the *homo sapiens*, one finds that man has always been conscious of the existence of a Supreme Being, the Master and Creator of all. Methods and approaches may have differed, but the people of every epoch have left proofs of their attempts to obey God. Communication with the omnipresent yet invisible God has also been recognised as possible in connection with a small fraction of men with noble and exalted spirits. Whether this communication assumed the nature of an incarnation of the Divinity or simply resolved itself into a medium of reception of Divine messages (through inspiration or revelation), the purpose in each case was the guidance of the people. It was but natural that the interpretations and explanations of certain systems should have proved more vital and convincing than others.

Every system of metaphysical thought develops its own terminology. In the course of time terms acquire a significance hardly contained in the word and translations fall short of their purpose. Yet there is no other method to make people of one group understand the thoughts of another. Non-Muslim readers in particular are requested to bear in mind this aspect, which is a real yet unavoidable handicap

By the end of the 6th century, after the birth of Jesus Christ, men had already made great progress in diverse walks of life. At that time there were some religions, which openly proclaimed that they were reserved for definite races and groups of men only, of course they bore no remedy for the ills of humanity at large. There were also a few, which claimed universality, but declared that the salvation of man lay in the renunciation of the world. These were the religions for the elite, and catered for an extremely limited number of men. We need not speak of regions where

there existed no religion at all, where atheism and materialism reigned supreme, where the thought was solely of occupying one self with one's own pleasures, without any regard or consideration for the rights of others.

Arabia At that time: Religion & Society

A perusal of the map of the major hemisphere (from the point of view of the proportion of land to sea) shows the Arabian Peninsula lying at the confluence of the three great continents of Asia, Africa and Europe. At the time in question, people of settled habitations as well as nomads inhabited this extensive Arabian subcontinent composed mostly of desert areas. Often it was found that members of the same tribe were divided into these two groups, and that they preserved a relationship although following different modes of life. The means of subsistence in Arabia were meagre. The desert had its handicaps, and trade caravans were features of greater importance than either agriculture or industry. This entailed much travel, and men had to proceed beyond the peninsula to Syria, Egypt, Abyssinia, Iraq, Sind, India and other lands.

We do not know much about the Libyanites of Central Arabia, but Yemen was rightly called Arabia Felix. Having once been the seat of the flourishing civilizations of Sheba and Ma'in even before the foundation of the city of Rome had been laid, and having later snatched from the Byzantians and Persians several provinces, greater Yemen which had passed through the heyday of its existence, was however at this time broken up into innumerable principalities, and even occupied in part by foreign invaders. The Sassanians of Iran, who had penetrated into Yemen had already obtained possession of Eastern Arabia. There was politico-social chaos at the capital (Mada'in = Ctesiphon), and this found reflection in all her territories. Northern Arabia had succumbed to Byzantine influences, and was faced with its own particular problems. Only Central Arabia remained immune from the demoralizing effects of foreign occupation.

In this limited area of Central Arabia, the existence of the triangle of Mecca-Taif-Madinah seemed something providential. Mecca, deserted, deprived of water and the amenities of agriculture in physical features represented Africa and the burning Sahara. Scarcely fifty miles from there, Taif presented a picture of Europe and its frost. Madinah in the North was not less fertile than even the most temperate of Asiatic countries like Syria. If climate has any influence on human character, this triangle standing in the middle of the major hemisphere was, more than any other region of the earth, a miniature reproduction of the entire world. And here was born a descendant of the Babylonian Abraham, and the Egyptian Hagar, Muhammad (Pbuh) the Prophet of Islam, a Meccan by origin and yet with stock related, both to Madinah and Taif.

From the point of view of religion, Arabia was idolatrous; only a few individuals had embraced religions like Christianity, Mazdaism, etc. The Meccans did possess the notion of the One God, but they believed also that idols had the power to intercede with Him. Curiously enough, they did not believe in the Resurrection and Afterlife. They had preserved the rite of the pilgrimage to the House of the One God, the Kabah, an institution set up under divine inspiration by their ancestor Abraham, yet the two thousand years that separated them from Abraham had caused to degenerate this pilgrimage into the spectacle of a commercial fair and an occasion of senseless idolatry which far from producing any good, only served to ruin their individual behaviour, both social and spiritual

In spite of the comparative poverty in natural resources, Mecca was the most developed of the three points of the triangle. Of the three, Mecca alone had a city-state, governed by a council of ten hereditary chiefs who enjoyed a clear division of power. (There was a minister of foreign relations, a minister guardian of the temple, a minister of oracles, a minister guardian of offerings to the temple, one to determine the torts and the damages payable, another in charge of the municipal council or parliament to enforce the decisions of the ministries. There were also

ministers in charge of military affairs like custodianship of the flag, leadership of the cavalry etc.). As well reputed caravan-leaders, the Meccans were able to obtain permission from neighbouring empires like Iran, Byzantium and Abyssinia - and to enter into agreements with the tribes that lined the routes traversed by the caravans - to visit their countries and transact import and export business. They also provided escorts to foreigners when they passed through their country as well as the territory of allied tribes, in Arabia. Although not interested much in the preservation of ideas and records in writing, they passionately cultivated arts and letters like poetry, oratory discourses and folk tales. Women were generally well treated, they enjoyed the privilege of possessing property in their own right, they gave their consent to marriage contracts, in which they could even add the condition of reserving their right to divorce their husbands. They could remarry when widowed or divorced. Burying girls alive did exist in certain classes, but that was rare.

Birth of the Prophet

It was in the midst of such conditions and environments that Muhammad (Pbuh) was born in 569 after Christ. His father, 'Abdullah had died some weeks earlier, and it was his grandfather who took him in charge. According to the prevailing custom, the child was entrusted to a Bedouin foster-mother, with whom he passed several years in the desert. All biographers state that the infant prophet sucked only one breast of his foster-mother, leaving the other for the sustenance of his foster-brother. When the child was brought back home, his mother, Aminah, took him to his maternal uncles at Madinah to visit the tomb of 'Abdullah. During the return journey, he lost his mother who died a sudden death. At Mecca, another bereavement awaited him, in the death of his affectionate grandfather. Subjected to such privations, he was at the age of eight, consigned at last to the care of his uncle, Abu-Taleb, a man who was generous of nature but always short of resources and hardly able to provide for his family

Young Muhammad (Pbuh) had therefore to start immediately to earn his livelihood; he served as a shepherd boy to some neighbours. At the age of ten he accompanied his uncle to Syria when he was leading a caravan there. No other travels of Abu-Taleb are mentioned, but there are references to his having set up a shop in Mecca. It is possible that Muhammad (Pbuh) helped him in this enterprise also.

By the time he was twenty-five, Muhammad (Pbuh) had become well known in the city for the integrity of his disposition and the honesty of his character. A rich widow, Khadijah, took him in her employ and consigned to him her goods to be taken for sale to Syria. Delighted with the unusual profits she obtained as also by the personal charms of her agent, she offered him her hand. According to divergent reports, she was either 28 or 40 years of age at that time, (medical reasons prefer the age of 28 since she gave birth to five more children). The union proved happy. Later, we see him sometimes in the fair of Hubashah (Yemen), and at least once in the country of the 'Abd al-Qais (Bahrain-Oman). There is every reason to believe that this refers to the great fair of Daba (Oman), where, according to Ibn al-Kalbi (the traders of China, of Hind and Sind (India, Pakistan), of Persia, of the East and the West assembled every year, travelling both by land and sea. There is also mention of a commercial partner of Muhammad (Pbuh) at Mecca. This person, Sa'ib by name reports: "We relayed each other; if Muhammad (Pbuh) led the caravan, he did not enter his house on his return to Mecca without clearing accounts with me; and if I led the caravan, he would on my return enquire about my welfare and speak nothing about his own capital entrusted to me."

Foreign traders often brought their goods to Mecca for sale. One day a certain Yemenite (of the tribe of Zubaid) improvised a satirical poem against some Meccans who had refused to pay him the price of what he had sold, and others who had not supported his claim or had failed to come to his help when he was victimised. Zuhair, uncle and chief of the tribe of the Prophet, felt great remorse on hearing this just satire. He called for a meeting of certain chieftains in the city, and organized an order of chivalry, called *Hilf al-fudul*, with the aim and object of aiding the oppressed

in Mecca, irrespective of their being dwellers of the city or aliens. Young Muhammad (Pbuh) became an enthusiastic member of the organisation. Later in life he used to say: "I have participated in it, and I am not prepared to give up that privilege even against a herd of camels; if somebody should appeal to me even today, by virtue of that pledge, I shall hurry to his help."

Beginning of Religious Consciousness

Not much is known about the religious practices of Muhammad (Pbuh) until he was thirty-five years old, except that he had never worshipped idols. All his biographers substantiate this. It may be stated that there were a few others in Mecca, who had likewise revolted against the senseless practice of paganism, although conserving their fidelity to the Kabah as the house dedicated to the One God by its builder Abraham.

About the year 605 of the Christian era, the draperies on the outer wall of the Kabah took fire. The building was affected and could not bear the brunt of the torrential rains that followed. The reconstruction of the Kabah was thereupon undertaken. Each citizen contributed according to his means; and only the gifts of honest gains were accepted. Everybody participated in the work of construction, and Muhammad (Pbuh)'s shoulders were injured in the course of transporting stones. To identify the place whence the ritual of circumambulation began, there had been set a black stone in the wall of the Kabah.

Dating probably from the time of Abraham himself. There was rivalry among the citizens for obtaining the honour of transposing this stone in its place. When there was danger of blood being shed, somebody suggested leaving the matter to Providence, and accepting the arbitration of him who should happen to arrive there first. It chanced that Muhammad (Pbuh) just then turned up there for work as usual. He was popularly known by the appellation of *al-Amin* (the honest), and everyone accepted his arbitration without hesitation. Muhammad (Pbuh) placed a sheet of cloth on the ground, put the stone on it and asked the chiefs of all the tribes in the city to lift together the cloth. Then he himself placed the stone in its proper place, in one of the angles of the building, and everybody was satisfied.

It is from this moment that we find Muhammad (Pbuh) becoming more and more absorbed in spiritual meditations. Like his grandfather, he used to retire during the whole month of Ramadan to a cave in Jabal-an-Nur (mountain of light). The cave is called 'Ghar-i-Hira' or the cave of research. There he prayed, meditated, and shared his meagre provisions with the travellers who happened to pass by.

Revelation

He was forty years old, and it was the fifth consecutive year since his annual retreats, when one night towards the end of the month of Ramadan, an angel came to visit him, and announced that God had chosen him as His messenger to all mankind. The angel taught him the mode of ablutions, the way of worshipping God and the conduct of prayer. He communicated to him the following Divine message:

With the name of God, the Most Merciful, the All-Merciful.

**Read: with the name of thy Lord Who created,
Created man from what clings,**

**Read: and thy Lord is the Most Bounteous,
Who taught by the pen,**

Taught man what he knew not. (Quran 96:1-5)

Deeply affected, he returned home and related to his wife what had happened, expressing his fears that it might have been something diabolic or the action of evil spirits. She consoled him, saying that he had always been a man of charity and generosity, helping the poor, the orphans, the widows and the needy, and assured him that God would protect him against all evil.

Then came a pause in revelation, extending over three years. The Prophet must have felt at first a shock, then a calm, an ardent desire, and after a period of waiting, a growing impatience or nostalgia. The news of the first vision had spread and at the pause the sceptics in the city had begun to mock at him and cut bitter jokes. They went so far as to say that God had forsaken him.

During the three years of waiting. The Prophet had given himself up more and more to prayers and to spiritual practices. The revelations were then resumed and God assured him that He had not at all forsaken him: on the contrary it was He Who had guided him to the right path: therefore he should take care of the orphans and the destitute, and proclaim the bounty of God on him (Quran 93:3-11). This was in reality an order to preach. Another revelation directed him to warn people against evil practices, to exhort them to worship none but the One God, and to abandon everything that would displease God (Quran 74:2-7). Yet another revelation commanded him to warn his own near relatives (Quran 26:214); and: **"Proclaim openly that which thou art commanded, and withdraw from the Associators (idolaters). Lo! We defend thee from the scoffers."** Quran 15:94-5. According to Ibn Ishaq, the first revelation had come to the Prophet during his sleep, evidently to reduce the shock. Later revelations came in full wakefulness

The Mission

The Prophet began by preaching his mission secretly first among his intimate friends, then among the members of his own tribe and thereafter publicly in the city and suburbs. He insisted on the belief in One Transcendent God, in Resurrection and the Last Judgement. He invited men to charity and beneficence. He took necessary steps to preserve through writing the revelations he was receiving, and ordered his adherents also to learn them by heart. This continued all through his life, since the Quran was not revealed all at once, but in fragments as occasions arose

The number of his adherents increased gradually, but with the denunciation of paganism, the opposition also grew in tension on the part of those who were firmly attached to their ancestral beliefs. This opposition degenerated in the course of time into physical torture of the Prophet and of those who had embraced his religion. These were stretched on burning sands, cauterized with red-hot iron and imprisoned with chains on their feet. Some of them died of the effects of torture, but none would renounce his religion. In despair, the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) advised his companions to quit their native town and take refuge abroad, in Abyssinia, "where governs a just ruler, in whose realm nobody is oppressed" (Ibn Hisham). Dozens of Muslims profited by his advice, though not all. These secret flights led to further persecution of those who remained behind.

The Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) was instructed to call this religion "Islam," i.e. submission to the will of God. Its distinctive features are two:

- A- A harmonious equilibrium between the temporal and the spiritual (the body and the soul), permitting a full enjoyment of all the good that God has created, (Quran 7:32), enjoining at the same time on everybody duties towards God, such as worship, fasting, charity, etc. Islam was to be the religion of the masses and not merely of the elect.
- B- A universality of the call - all the believers becoming brothers and equals without any distinction of class or race or tongue. The only superiority, which it recognizes, is a personal one, based on the greater fear of God and greater piety (Quran 49:13).

Social Boycott

When a large number of the Meccan Muslims migrated to Abyssinia, the leaders of paganism sent an ultimatum to the tribe of the Prophet, demanding that he should be excommunicated and

outlawed and delivered to the pagans for being put to death. Every member of the tribe, Muslim and non-Muslim rejected the demand. Thereupon the city decided on a complete boycott of the tribe: Nobody was to talk to them or have commercial or matrimonial relations with them.

The group of Arab tribes called Ahabish, inhabiting the suburbs, which were allies of the Meccans, also joined in the boycott, causing stark misery among the innocent victims consisting of children, men and women, the old and the sick and the feeble. Some of them succumbed yet nobody would hand over the Prophet to his persecutors.

An uncle of the Prophet, Abu Lahab, however left his tribesmen and participated in the boycott along with the pagans. After three dire years, during which the victims were obliged to devour even crushed hides, four or five non-Muslims, more humane than the rest and belonging to different clans proclaimed publicly their denunciation of the unjust boycott. At the same time, the document promulgating the pact of boycott which had been hung in the temple, was found, as Muhammad (Pbuh) had predicted, eaten by white ants, that spared nothing but the words God and Muhammad (Pbuh). The boycott was lifted, yet owing to the privations that were undergone the wife and Abu Taleb, the chief of the tribe and uncle of the Prophet died soon after. Another uncle of the Prophet, Abu-Lahab, who was an inveterate enemy of Islam, now succeeded to the headship of the tribe.

The Ascension

It was at this time that the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) was granted the *mi'raj* (ascension): He saw in a vision that he was received on heaven by God, and was witness of the marvels of the celestial regions. Returning, he brought for his community, as a Divine gift, the [ritual prayer of Islam, the salaah], which constitutes a sort of communion between man and God.

It may be recalled that in the last part of Muslim service of worship, the faithful employ as a symbol of their being in the very presence of God, not concrete objects as others do at the time of communion, but the very words of greeting exchanged between the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) and God on the occasion of the former's *mi'raj*: "The blessed and pure greetings for God! - Peace be with thee, O Prophet, as well as the mercy and blessing of God! - Peace be with us and with all the [righteous] servants of God!" The Christian term "communion" implies participation in the Divinity. Finding it pretentious, Muslims use the term "ascension" towards God and reception in His presence, God remaining God and man remaining man and no confusion between the twain.

The news of this celestial meeting led to an increase in the hostility of the pagans of Mecca; and the Prophet was obliged to quit his native town in search of an asylum elsewhere. He went to his maternal uncles in Taif, but returned immediately to Mecca, as the wicked people of that town chased the Prophet out of their city by pelting stones on him and wounding him.

Migration to Madinah

The annual pilgrimage of the Kabah brought to Mecca people from all parts of Arabia. The Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) tried to persuade one tribe after another to afford him shelter and allow him to carry on his mission of reform. The contingents of fifteen tribes, whom he approached in succession, refused to do so more or less brutally, but he did not despair. Finally he met half a dozen inhabitants of Madinah who being neighbour of the Jews and the Christians had some notion of prophets and Divine messages. They knew also that these "people of the Books" were awaiting the arrival of a prophet - a last comforter. So these Madinans decided not to lose the opportunity of obtaining an advance over others, and forthwith embraced Islam, promising further to provide additional adherents and necessary help from Madinah.

The following year a dozen new Madinans took the oath of allegiance to him and requested him to provide with a missionary teacher. The work of the missionary, Mus'ab, proved very successful

and he led a contingent of seventy-three new converts to Mecca, at the time of the pilgrimage. These invited the Prophet and his Meccan companions to migrate to their town, and promised to shelter the Prophet and to treat him and his companions as their own kith and kin.

Secretly and in small groups, the greater part of the Muslims emigrated to Madinah. Upon this the pagans of Mecca not only confiscated the property of the evacuees, but also devised a plot to assassinate the Prophet. It became now impossible for him to remain at home. It is worthy of mention, that in spite of their hostility to his mission, the pagans had unbounded confidence in his probity, so much so that many of them used to deposit their savings with him. The Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) now entrusted all these deposits to 'Ali, a cousin of his, with instructions to return in due course to the rightful owners. He then left the town secretly in the company of his faithful friend, Abu-Bakr. After several adventures, they succeeded in reaching Madinah in safety. This happened in 622, whence starts the Hijrah calendar.

Reorganization of the Community

For the better rehabilitation of the displaced immigrants, the Prophet created a fraternization between them and an equal number of well-to-do Madinans. The families of each pair of the contractual brothers worked together to earn their livelihood, and aided one another in the business of life. Further he thought that the development of the man as a whole would be better achieved if he co-ordinated religion and politics as two constituent parts of one whole.

To this end he invited the representatives of the Muslims as well as the non-Muslim inhabitants of the region: Arabs, Jews, Christians and others, and suggested the establishment of a City-State in Madinah. With their assent, he endowed the city with a written constitution - the first of its kind in the world - in which he defined the duties and rights both of the citizens and the head of the State - the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) was unanimously hailed as such - and abolished the customary private justice. The administration of justice became henceforward the concern of the central organisation of the community of the citizens. The document laid down principles of defence and foreign policy: it organized a system of social insurance, called ma'aqil, in cases of too heavy obligations. It recognized that the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) would have the final word in all differences, and that there was no limit to his power of legislation. It recognized also explicitly liberty of religion, particularly for the Jews, to whom the constitutional act afforded equality with Muslims in all that concerned life in this world.

Muhammad (Pbuh) journeyed several times with a view to win the neighbouring tribes and to conclude with them treaties of alliance and mutual help. With their help, he decided to bring to bear economic pressure on the Meccan pagans, who had confiscated the property of the Muslim evacuees and also caused innumerable damage. Obstruction in the way of the Meccan caravans and their passage through the Madinan region exasperated the pagans, and a bloody struggle ensued.

In the concern for the material interests of the community, the spiritual aspect was never neglected. Hardly a year had passed after the migration to Madinah, when the most rigorous of spiritual disciplines, the fasting for the whole month of Ramadan every year, was imposed on every adult Muslim, man and woman.

Struggle Against Intolerance and Unbelief

Not content with the expulsion of the Muslim compatriots, the Meccans sent an ultimatum to the Madinans, demanding the surrender or at least the expulsion of Muhammad (Pbuh) and his companions but evidently all such efforts proved in vain. A few months later, in the year 2 H., they sent a powerful army against the Prophet, who opposed them at Badr; and the pagans thrice as numerous as the Muslims, were routed.

After a year of preparation, the Meccans again invaded Madinah to avenge the defeat of Badr. They were now four times as numerous as the Muslims. After a bloody encounter at Uhud, the enemy retired, the issue being indecisive. The mercenaries in the Meccan army did not want to take too much risk, or endanger their safety

In the meanwhile the Jewish citizens of Madinah began to foment trouble. About the time of the victory of Badr, one of their leaders, Ka'b Ibn al-Ashraf, proceeded to Mecca to give assurance of his alliance with the pagans, and to incite them to a war of revenge. After the battle of Uhud, the tribe of the same chieftain plotted to assassinate the Prophet by throwing on him a millstone from above a tower, when he had gone to visit their locality. In spite of all this, the only demand the Prophet made of the men of this tribe was to quit the Madinan region, taking with them all their properties, after selling their immovable and recovering their debts from the Muslims.

The clemency thus extended had an effect contrary to what was hoped. The exiled not only contacted the Meccans, but also the tribes of the North, South and East of Madinah, mobilized military aid, and planned from Khaibar an invasion of Madinah, with forces four times more numerous than those employed at Uhud. The Muslims prepared for a siege, and dug a ditch to defend themselves against this hardest of all trials. Although the defection of the Jews still remaining inside Madinah at a later stage upset all strategy, yet with a sagacious diplomacy, the Prophet succeeded in breaking up the alliance, and the different enemy groups retired one after the other.

Alcoholic drinks, gambling and games of chance were at this time declared forbidden for the Muslims.

The Reconciliation

The Prophet tried once more to reconcile the Meccans and proceeded to Mecca. The barring of the route of their Northern caravans had ruined their economy. The Prophet promised them transit security, extradition of their fugitives and the fulfillment of every condition they desired, agreeing even to return to Madinah without accomplishing the pilgrimage of the Kabah. Thereupon the two contracting parties promised at Hudaibiyah in the suburbs of Mecca, not only the maintenance of peace, but also the observance of neutrality in their conflicts with third parties

Profiting by the peace, the Prophet launched an intensive programme for the propagation of his religion. He addressed missionary letters to the foreign rulers of Byzantium, Iran, Abyssinia and other lands. The Byzantine autocrat priest - Dughatur of the Arabs - embraced Islam, but for this, was lynched by the Christian mob; the prefect of Ma'an (Palestine) suffered the same fate, and was decapitated and crucified by order of the emperor. A Muslim ambassador was assassinated in Syria-Palestine; and instead of punishing the culprit, the emperor Heraclius rushed with his armies to protect him against the punitive expedition sent by the Prophet (battle of Mu'tah).

The pagans of Mecca hoping to profit by the Muslim difficulties, violated the terms of their treaty. Upon this, the Prophet himself led an army, ten thousand strong, and surprised Mecca, which he occupied in a bloodless manner. As a benevolent conqueror, he caused the vanquished people to assemble, reminded them of their ill deeds, their religious persecution, unjust confiscation of the evacuee property, ceaseless invasions and senseless hostilities for twenty years continuously. He asked them: "Now what do you expect of me?" When everybody lowered his head with shame, the Prophet proclaimed: "May God pardon you; go in peace; there shall be no responsibility on you today; you are free!" He even renounced the claim for the Muslim property confiscated by the pagans. This produced a great psychological change of hearts instantaneously. When a Meccan chief advanced with a fulsome heart towards the Prophet, after hearing this general amnesty, in order to declare his acceptance of Islam, the Prophet told him: "And in my turn, I appoint you the governor of Mecca!" Without leaving a single soldier in the

conquered city, the Prophet retired to Madinah. The Islamization of Mecca, which was accomplished in a few hours, was complete

Immediately after the occupation of Mecca, the city of Taif mobilized to fight against the Prophet. With some difficulty the enemy was dispersed in the valley of Hunain, but the Muslims preferred to raise the siege of nearby Taif and use pacific means to break the resistance of this region. Less than a year later, a delegation from Taif came to Madinah offering submission. But it requested exemption from prayer, taxes and military service, and the continuance of the liberty to adultery and fornication and alcoholic drinks. It demanded even the conservation of the temple of the idol al-Lat at Taif. But Islam was not a materialist immoral movement; and soon the delegation itself felt ashamed of its demands regarding prayer, adultery and wine. The Prophet consented to concede exemption from payment of taxes and rendering of military service; and added: You need not demolish the temple with your own hands: we shall send agents from here to do the job, and if there should be any consequences, which you are afraid of on account of your superstitions, it will be they who would suffer. This act of the Prophet shows what concessions could be given to new converts? The conversion of the Ta'ifites was so whole hearted that in a short while, they themselves renounced the contracted exemptions, and we find the Prophet nominating a tax collector in their locality as in other Islamic regions.

In all these "wars," extending over a period of ten years, the non-Muslims lost on the battlefield only about 250 persons killed, and the Muslim losses were even less. With these few incisions, the whole continent of Arabia. With its million and more of square miles, was cured of the abscess of anarchy and immorality. During these ten years of disinterested struggle, all the peoples of the Arabian Peninsula and the southern regions of Iraq and Palestine had voluntarily embraced Islam. Some Christian, Jewish and Parsi groups remained attached to their creeds, and they were granted liberty of conscience as well as judicial and juridical autonomy.

In the year 10 H., when the Prophet went to Mecca for *Hajj* (pilgrimage), he met 140,000 Muslims there, who had come from different parts of Arabia to fulfil their religious obligation. He addressed to them his celebrated sermon, in which he gave a resume of his teachings: "Belief in One God without images or symbols, equality of all the Believers without distinction of race or class, the superiority of individuals being based solely on piety; sanctity of life, property and honour; abolition of interest, and of vendettas and private justice; better treatment of women; obligatory inheritance and distribution of the property of deceased persons among near relatives of both sexes, and removal of the possibility of the accumulation of wealth in the hands of the few." The Quran and the conduct of the Prophet were to serve as the bases of law and a healthy criterion in every aspect of human life.

On his return to Madinah, he fell ill; and a few weeks later, when he breathed his last, he had the satisfaction that he had well accomplished the task, which he had undertaken - to preach to the world the Divine message.

He bequeathed to posterity, a religion of pure monotheism; he created a well-disciplined State out of the existent chaos and gave peace in place of the war of everybody against everybody else; he established a harmonious equilibrium between the spiritual and the temporal, between the mosque and the citadel; he left a new system of law, which dispensed impartial justice, in which even the head of the State was as much a subject to it as any commoner, and in which religious tolerance was so great that non-Muslim inhabitants of Muslim countries equally enjoyed complete juridical, judicial and cultural autonomy. In the matter of the revenues of the State, the Quran fixed the principles of budgeting, and paid more thought to the poor than to anybody else. The revenues were declared to be in no wise the private property of the head of the State. Above all, the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) set a noble example and fully practised all that he taught to others.

What the West Said About Muhammad (Pbuh)

Muslim scholars and non-Muslim researchers have written about the Prophet Muhammad. He is the only Messenger and Prophet whose life is known in great detail and a full biography would fill many volumes. His deeds and sayings are solid historical facts and not pious myths and legends. He is, as noted in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, "the most successful of all the Prophets", as manifested by the spread of Islam. As a private person, he is a husband, father, friend and businessman. As a public figure, he is a statesman, leader, legislator, judge, and the Chief of Staff. In Summary he is a Messenger of God, a lawgiver, preacher, theologian, saint and mystic. Such a combination is unique in history and well befits the "Seal of the Prophets."

Michael H. Hart in, The Top 100: A Ranking Of The Most Influential Persons in History, New York: Hart Publishing Company, Inc., 1978 said." My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world's most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular level."

"If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man in modern history with Muhammad?" Lamartine, Histoire De La Torque, Paris, 1854

"He was Caesar and Pope in one; but he was Pope without Pope's pretensions, 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." Bosworth Smith, MOHAMMAD AND MOHAMMADANISM, London, 1874.

In the opinion of Prof. Hurgronje "the league of nations founded by the prophet of Islam put the principle of international unity of human brotherhood on such Universal foundations as to show candle to other nations." In the words of the same Professor "the fact is that no nation of the world can show a parallel to what Islam has done the realization of the idea of the League of Nations."

Bernard Shaw said, "If Muhammad were alive today, he would succeed in solving all those problems which threaten to destroy human civilization in our times." Thomas Carlyle was amazed as to how one man, single-handedly, could weld warring tribes and wandering Bedouins into a most powerful and civilized nation in less than two decades. Napoleon and Gandhi never tired of dreaming of a society along the lines established by this man in Arabia fourteen centuries ago.

Muhammad persisted in his call to Islam refusing offers of wealth and power in return for abandoning his mission. Consequently, the Muslims began to experience persecution, which ranged from boycott to physical torture. In spite of all the persecution, the number of Muslims grew steadily. Converts to Islam included, but were not limited to, Jews and Christians as well as idol-worshipping Arabs.

Despite all the exhortation of the Prophet, the disbelievers persisted in asking him for a sign from his Lord, so that they would believe. The Prophet replied: "Because miracles had proved inadequate to convince. Noah was sent with signs, and with what effect?"

Many Muslim scholars studied the Old and New Testaments and show that many verses in the Bible can be interpreted to refer to Mohammed. There appear to have been references to his similarity to Moses, to his birthplace, to his migration from Mecca to Madinah amongst other facts of his life.

Muhammad Character

“By the grace of Allah, you are gentle towards the people; if you had been stern and ill-tempered, they would have dispersed from round about you” Quran 3:159

About himself the Prophet (Pbuh) said *"Allah has sent me as an apostle so that I may demonstrate perfection of character, refinement of manners and loftiness of deportment."*

Ayesha; the prophet's wife said: "The character of the Messenger of Allah (Pbuh) was the Quran"

By nature he was gentle and kind hearted, always inclined to be gracious and to overlook the faults of others. Politeness and courtesy, compassion and tenderness, simplicity and humility, sympathy and sincerity were some of the keynotes of his character. In the cause of right and justice he could be resolute and severe but more often than not, his severity was tempered with generosity. He had charming manners, which won him the affection of his followers and secured their devotion. Though virtual king of Arabia and an apostle of Allah, he never assumed an air of superiority. Not that he had to conceal any such vein by practice and artifice: with fear of Allah, sincere humility was ingrained in his heart. He used to say, "I am a Prophet of Allah but I do not know what will be my end." (Bukhari, Sahih Bukhari, Chapter "Al-Janaiz")

He always received people with courtesy and showed respect to older people and stated: "To honour an old man is to show respect to Allah." He would not deny courtesy even to wicked persons. It is stated that a person came to his house and asked permission for admission. The Prophet (Pbuh) remarked that he was not a good person but might be admitted. When he came in and while he remained in the house, he was shown full courtesy. When he left Ayesha said, "You did not think well of this man, but you treated him so well." The Prophet (Pbuh) replied, "He is a bad person in the sight of Allah who does not behave courteously and people shun his company because of his bad manners." (Bukhari, Sahih Bukhari)

He would sit with the humblest of persons saying that righteousness alone was the criterion of one's superiority over another. He invariably invited people be they slaves, servants or the poorest believers, to partake with him of his scanty meals (Tirmizi, Sunan Tirmizi).

He would not hesitate to do the menial work of others, particularly of orphans and widows (Nasi, Darmi). Once when there was no male member in the house of the companion Kabab Bin Arat who had gone to the battlefield, he used to go to his house daily and milk his cattle for the inhabitants. (Ibn Saad Vol. 6, p 213).

He was especially fond of children and used to get into the spirit of childish games in their company. He would have fun with the children who had come back from Abyssinia and tried to speak in Abyssinian with them. It was his practice to give lifts on his camel to children when he returned from journeys. (Bukhari, Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 2 p.886).

The Prophet (Pbuh) asked people to be just and kind. As the supreme judge and arbiter, as the leader of men, as generalissimo of a rising power, as a reformer and apostle, he had always to deal with men and their affairs. He had often to deal with mutually inimical and warring tribes when showing justice to one carried the danger of antagonizing the other, and yet he never deviated from the path of justice. In administering justice, he made no distinction between believers and Nonbelievers, friends and foes, high and low. From numerous instances reported in the traditions, a few are given below.

The Jews, in spite of their hostility to the Prophet (Pbuh), were so impressed by his impartiality and sense of justice that they used to bring their cases to him, and he decided them according to Jewish law.

Muhammad (Pbuh) asked people to shun notions of racial, family or any other form of superiority based on mundane things and said that righteousness alone was the criterion of one's superiority over another. It has already been shown how he mixed with everyone on equal terms, how he ate

with slaves, servants and the poorest on the same sheet (a practice that is still followed in Arabia), how he refused all privileges and worked like any ordinary labourer.

The Prophet (Pbuh) not only preached to the people to show kindness to each other but also to all living souls. He forbade the practice of cutting tails and manes of horses, of branding animals at any soft spot, and of keeping horses saddled unnecessarily.

The Prophet (Pbuh) enjoined upon Muslims to treat the poor kindly and to help them with alms, zakat, and in other ways. He said: *"He is not a perfect Muslim who eats his fill and lets his neighbour go hungry."*

He accepted all invitations, all apologies, all presents. He returned favours with equal or higher value presents. He visited the sick, was the first to greet people he met, was the last to pull away when shaking hands with someone or embracing him. He always listened to others until they finished what they had to say. At home, he cleaned and mended his clothing repaired his shoes, milked his sheep and saddled his camel and horse. He lived a very simple life and donated anything he earned or received beyond his minimum requirements to the needy on a daily basis. He placed his faith in God to provide for his future needs. He prayed frequently which meant his body and clothing were always clean since Muslims must complete a cleansing ritual before praying.

The Prophet Muhammad once summarized his code to be: "mindfulness of God privately and publicly, fairness in anger or satisfaction, moderation in poverty or wealth, connecting with those who avoided him, giving to those who deprived him, forgiving those who wronged him, speaking out for what is good, and making his silence a meditation, his speech a recital of the name of God, and what he saw a lesson."

The Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) always guarded against becoming a divine intermediary. He emphasized being the servant of God at all times.

" Say thou: I am but a man like you: It is revealed to me by Inspiration, that your Allah is one Allah: so stand true to Him, and ask for His Forgiveness." And woe to those who join gods with Allah" Quran 41:6

Mohammed came with a book that was preserved in exactly the same text that it was revealed to him in. This book is the Quran. Mohammed also made speeches that were not part of the Quran. Those were not recorded in written form during his life and are called the sayings, "Hadith," of Mohammed. The fact that the Hadith was not recorded in Mohammed's life gave rise to some uncertainty over the authenticity of some of these Hadiths and to some variations in Islam. These variations do not affect the core of Muslim belief but rather the execution of duties of a Muslim.

"Say (O Muhammad to mankind): "If you (really) love Allah then follow me (i.e. accept Islamic Monotheism, follow the Quran"n and the Sunnah), Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." Say (O Muhammad): "Obey Allah and the Messenger (Muhammad)." But if they turn away, then Allah does not like the disbelievers." Qur'an 3: 31

"O mankind! Verily, there has come to you the Messenger (Muhammad) with the truth from your Rabb (Sustainer). So believe in him, it is better for you. But if you disbelieve, then certainly to Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth. And Allah is Ever All-Knowing, All-Wise." Quran 4: 170

"O you who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger (Muhammad) and render not vain your deeds." Quran 47: 33

"He who obeys the Messenger (Muhammad) has indeed obeyed Allah, but he who turns away, then we have not sent you (Muhammad) as a watcher over them." Quran 4: 80

Muhammad's call to Islam met with stiff resistance from most of the people of Mecca. They were afraid to lose Mecca's advantage, as a trading and religious centre for Arabia if Arabs abandon the idols in Mecca and embrace Islam. The Arabs, hundreds of years earlier, had abandoned the religion of Abraham and Ishmael and used idols as intermediaries between them and God.

On the sacred month of pilgrimage (632 C.E.), Muhammad makes a farewell pilgrimage to Mecca. He addressed the assembled multitude from the top of Mount Arafat in the following words: *"O people! Listen to my words, for I know not whether another year will be vouch safe to me after this year to find myself among you. Your lives and property are sacred and unfringeable among one another until you appear before the Lord, as this day and this month are sacred for all; and remember, you will have to appear before your Lord Who will demand from you an account for all your actions. O people, you have rights over your wives, and your wives have a right over you. Verily you have taken them on the security of Allah and have made their people lawful unto you by the words of Allah. And your slaves, see that you feed them with such food as you eat yourselves, and clothe them with the stuff you wear, and if they commit a fault which you are not inclined to forgive, then part with them; for they are the servants of the Lord and are not to be harshly treated. O people listen to my words and understand them. Know that all Muslims are brothers. You are one brotherhood; but no man shall take ought from his brother, unless by his free consent. Keep yourselves from injustice. Let him who is present tell this to him who is absent. It maybe that he who is told this afterward may remember better than he who has now heard it.*

The Prophet concluded his sermon by exclaiming: "O Lord, I have fulfilled my message and accomplished my work." The assembled multitude, all in one voice, cried: "Yea, verily you have." The Prophet again exclaimed: "O Lord, I beseech You, bear witness to it."

Indeed no other human being ever accomplished so much, in such diverse fields of human thought and behaviour, in so limited a space of time, as did Muhammad. He was a religious teacher, a social reformer, a moral guide, a political thinker, a military genius, an administrative colossus, a faithful friend, a wonderful companion, a devoted husband, and a loving father—all in one. No other man in history ever excelled or equalled him in any of these difficult departments of life.

After the death of Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) his followers continued to spread Islam by following his Sunnah (his way of life and mannerism).

The Prophecies of Holy Books

Since there is only one God, it is logical to assume that His guidance to all prophets should essentially be the same. The Holy Books profess about future prophets and future events. There are many references to Muhammad in the Torah and the Gospel:

Blessings of God: The full legitimacy of Ishmael as Abraham's son and that of his mother, Hagar as Abraham's wife are stated in Genesis 21:13 and 16:3. After Jesus, the last Israelite prophet, God's promise to bless Ishmael and his descendants was fulfilled with Muhammad 600 years later.

Cannot be a Jew: Christians deny that prophet after Moses will be a Jew: "there arose not a prophet since Israel like unto Moses" Deut 34:10. So the awaited prophet like Moses must come from outside Israel and from their Jew's brethren. The brethren of Jewish nation (sons of Jacob and Isaac) are the Arab nation, Muhammad is the descendent of Ishmael

The Rejected Stone: “ Jesus spoke of the kingdom of being taken away from the Jews and given to the rejected stone....” Genesis 21:13-18.
Prophethood was transformed from the nation of the Jews to the nation of Arab, the nation of Muhammad.

Until Shiloh Come: Jacob told his children “gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that shall befall you in the last days” Genesis 49:1. “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law given from between his feet, until Shiloh come. And unto him shall the gathering of people be” Genesis 49:10. Shiloh means Peace (ISLAM). So the Israelite Prophethood in the lineage of Isaac would stop as soon as Muhammad comes. “ The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits’ Mathew 21:43

A Prophet like Moses: God said to Moses: “I will raise up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him” Deuteronomy. Christians claim that this verse refer to Jesus, however, Jesus is not like Moses, Muhammad has many common features with Moses: Both had fathers and Mothers, both were raised among idolaters, both have regular family life, both were leaders, gave laws and scriptures, both migrated from their initial home town, both marched to battles, both died natural human death, both stated their prophetic missions at the age of forty, both receive revelations (Angel Gabriel used to bring revelation to Muhammad and ask him to repeat it, “ He (Muhammad) does not speak desire, it is no less than inspiration sent down to him” Quran53:3-4).

God’s Chosen Prophet who gave laws: “ Behold my servant, whom I uphold my chosen, in whom my soul delight; I have put my spirit upon him, he will bring forth Justice to the nations, He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; He will not fall or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and coastlands wait for his law” Isaiah 42:1-4. That description is not of Jesus, because he cried on the cross (Mark 15:34), raise his voice, and called people names: serpents, brood of vipers Matthew 23:33. He did not established justice on earth, he died on the hands of injustice and he did not give any law Matthew 5:17-19

Gospel of John: “If you love me, keep our commandments. And I will pray the father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever” John 14:14-16. “If I go not away, the comforter will not come unto you,; but if I depart, I will send him unto you” John 16:7. Another comforter is another prophet “Muhammad”.

The are many others examples, outlined in “Where do you stand” by Dr. Abdul Hye

Some Sayings of the Prophet

"None amongst you believes (truly) till one likes for his brother that which he loves for himself"
"He will not enter Paradise, he whose neighbour is not secure from his wrongful conduct"
"He is not a perfect believer, who goes to bed full and knows that his neighbour is hungry"

Allah Said: Invoke Blessings on the Prophet (Pbuh)
"Allah and His angels are praying on (and praising) the Prophet "
"Truly you are of a magnificent character" Quran 68:4

Prophet Muhammad said, "None of you believes until he loves me more than he loves his children, his parents, and all people."

References:

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2- Living Islam: From the life of Prophet Muhammad

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3- Abdul Hye "Where do you stand?"