

STRATEGIES OF  
**PROPHET  
MUHAMMAD**

صلى الله عليه وسلم



OMAR KHAYYAM SHEIKH



# Strategies Of Prophet Muhammad

(Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)

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# **THE GENIUS OF MUHAMMAD (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)**

## **The Quran:**

*“We have indeed, in the Messenger of God, a good example of conduct for anyone whose hope is in God and the Final Day.” (Quran 33:21)*

## **Karen Armstrong:**

If we could view Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) as we do any other important historical figure we would surely consider him to be one of the greatest geniuses the world has ever known. To create a literary masterpiece, to found a major religion and a new world power are not ordinary achievements. But to appreciate his genius to the full, we must examine the society into which he was born and the forces with which he contended. When he descended from Mount Hira to bring the Word of God to the Arabs, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was about to attempt the impossible.

## **W. Montgomery Watt:**

The more one reflects on the history of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and of early Islam, the more one is amazed at the vastness of his achievement. Circumstances presented him with an opportunity such as few men have had, but the man was fully matched with the hour. Had it not been for his gifts as seer, statesman, and administrator and, behind these, his trust in God and firm belief that God had sent him, a notable chapter in the history of mankind would have remained unwritten.<sup>3</sup>

## **Maxime Rodinson:**

In the strange atmosphere of Makkah, on the edge of the magnificent civilized world of the great powers, just then engaged in an apocalyptic struggle, the faith was growing up which was later to overflow into the world at large and endeavor to mould it. All this was taking place within the brain of a single man, but stirring within it were the reflected problems of a whole world; and the historical conditions were such that the results of all this mental activity were calculated to shake Arabia and beyond.<sup>4</sup>

## **Tor Andrae:**

A genuine prophet is one who really has a message to deliver, one in whose soul some of the great questions of his age have stimulated a restlessness which compels him to speak, the natural and inevitable expression of a strong lasting conviction and a genuine passion.<sup>5</sup>

## **M. K. Gandhi:**

I become more than ever convinced that it was not the sword that won a place for Islam in those days. It was the rigid simplicity, the utter self-effacement of the Prophet, the scrupulous regard for pledges, his intense devotion to his friends and followers and his intrepidity, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in God and in his own mission. These and not the sword carried everything before them and surmounted every obstacle.<sup>6</sup>



## **H. G. Wells:**

Islam prevailed because it was the best social and political order the times could offer. It prevailed because everywhere it found politically apathetic peoples, robbed, oppressed, bullied, uneducated and unorganized and it found selfish and unsound governments out of touch with any people at all. It was the broadest, freshest and cleanest political idea that had yet come into actual activity in the world and it offered better terms than any other to the mass of mankind.

## **Winwood Reade:**

Instead of repining that Mahomet [sic] did no more, we have reason to be astonished that he did so much. His career is the best example that can be given of the influence of the Individual in human history. That single man created the glory of his nation and spread his language over half the earth.

## **Regis Blachere:**

Neither indifference, nor wounds to his self-respect, nor wrong done to his material interests, nor intrigues nor threats, nor above all, the many offers of compromise made by the pagans, were able to deflect him from his mission. In the gravest hour – the Quran bears witness – he could retain his balanced judgment, revive the courage of his followers, and close his eyes to slight faults in order the better to destroy treason. As a true leader of men, he knew how to choose his advisers, turning to account the faithfulness of Ali, the moderation of Abu Bakr, the energy of Umar and the resilience of Uthman. He had no illusions about men, and never failed to remind them of their duty and their vocation. Better than anyone, too, he knew the faults and virtues of the people among whom he was born. This inspired man, who never for a day had thought of succeeding without God's help, yet knew how to look into the future and to measure the strength and weakness of his adversary.

## **Napoleon Bonaparte:**

“In a few years, the Muslims conquered half of the world. They snatched away more souls from false gods, pulled down more idols and demolished more pagan temples in fifteen years than the followers of Moses and Jesus did in fifteen centuries. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was a great man.”

## **Dr. Michael Hart:**

“[The Prophet] was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels.”

## Preface

Ever since I began my minors in Religion and History at Columbia University in 1983, I have been fascinated by the personality and achievements of the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). For the last twenty-nine years, I have reviewed biographies on the Prophet from Muslim writers as well as Western scholars. I have personally been impressed by the Prophet's genius, managerial sophistication, leadership capabilities and strategic brilliance.

Most of the literature I have reviewed to date does not fully address these aspects of the Prophet's achievements. Most writing by Muslim scholars on the Prophet's life and achievements, understandably, adds devotional aspects and spiritual language. However, this undermines the quality of the research in the eyes of the Western students of Islam. Many Western writers, on the other hand, are skeptical of the Islamic claim to be the final and definitive monotheistic religious tradition after Judaism and Christianity, which puts Muslim students on a defensive any time a particular issue is debated out of context of the ultimate veracity of Islam. Other Western writers are not deferential towards Islam and the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and underplay his and Islam's achievements. Many Western scholars consider Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) a controversial historical figure – a number of them think of him as a charlatan and a deceitful, lusty character.<sup>12</sup> However, several Western writers such as W. Montgomery Watt, Martin Lings, Karen Armstrong, and Barnaby Rogerson have made valuable and, on the whole, balanced contributions to developing an understanding of the Prophet's life and achievements.

There is a fundamental difference of opinion about the Prophet's source of inspiration. It is a basic tenet of Islam that the Prophet received divine guidance from God that inspired him and guided him throughout his life. Muslims believe that the Quran, the revelation of which took twenty-three years to complete, is the word of God and that the Prophet's achievements are not his personal accomplishments. Rather, they constitute the realization of a divine plan. On the other hand, Western scholars, who do not believe in Islam, maintain that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), in essence, was the right man at the right place at the right time. They attribute great sagacity to him in analyzing the state-of-affairs in Arabia and in coming up with a unique solution to this problem that worked. It is beyond the scope of this book to argue the divinity of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)'s inspiration which is a matter of faith for Muslims. However, the Prophet accomplished his mission through the values he imparted to others, his personal behavior that was very visible to the people around him (since he lived an open-book kind of life) and through his words which were ably recorded by many of his companions during his lifetime and afterwards (a large number of the Prophet's companions actually devoted their lives to becoming scribes). This book is focused on developing an understanding of the strategies the Prophet pursued that help explain his dramatic success.

With the above in mind, I began this writing project with the intention of making its approach and contents equally accessible to Muslim and non-Muslim readers. This essay intentionally does not add devotional language and also does not refer directly to the miraculous aspects of the Prophet's life. Muslim readers should say the words *Sallal laho alaihe wassalum* (May Peace be Upon Him) each time the words Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) or the Prophet appear in this text. Similarly, they should utter the words *Razi Allah Ta'ala Anhah* when name of one of the Prophet's Companions appears in this text. My goal is to keep both the language and the approach of this paper both analytical and accessible for the general reader who is interested in understanding the Prophet's accomplishments regardless of their faith.

The Prophet's life is a rewarding subject for any sophisticated, intelligent and curious mind because of the impact Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) has had on world history. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) himself said: "The superiority of the learned man over the

devout worshipper is like that of the full moon to the rest of the stars (i.e. in brightness).” Many Western scholars have considered Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) the most influential man in world history. Not only did he change the world-view of a society, he practically molded a nation out of a disparate group of warring tribes such that today, after 1400 years, more than one and a half billion Muslims now live all over the world and try to follow in the foot-steps of the Prophet in their daily routines. In many parts of the world, Islam is the fastest growing faith. Many demographers calculate that Islam will become’s the world’s largest religion by 2050. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) did not achieve his success through any miraculous powers; he repeatedly stated that he was an ordinary human being. If he had employed miraculous powers to achieve his goals, his life would not have been considered *uswah hasanah* (“the beautiful example”) by Muslims through centuries. It is quite natural that only a human being (and not an angel or other super-natural being) can truly serve as an example for other human beings. An ordinary mortal cannot aspire to follow the miraculous examples of a religious leader – that would be beyond his power, by definition. Unless the very human aspect of cause and effect is put before the common man – who does not and cannot rely on miracles– he will not find the conduct of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) a worthy and a practical example to imitate in his daily struggle of existence. I have tried to glean such cause-and-effect relationships from the Prophet’s conduct that can provide us with meaningful insights regardless of our religious beliefs.

This book is specifically focused on the brilliance of the Prophet as a strategist. The Webster New Universal Unabridged Dictionary defines strategy as “a plan, method or series of maneuvers or stratagems for obtaining a specific goal or result”. A stratagem can be defined as a plan or scheme devised or used to attain a goal or to gain an advantage over an adversary. Brilliant is defined by the same dictionary as “having or showing great intelligence, talent or quality”. In light of the above and in the specific context of this paper, I define strategy as “the voluntary and consistent pursuit by Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) of a coherent plan aimed at the propagation of Islam in Arabia and beyond.”

The Prophet’s life history is termed the *uswah hasanah* (“the beautiful example”) by Muslim writers. This is because practicing Muslims try to follow the Prophet’s example in their daily lives. His biography (his *seerat*), his actions (his *sunnah*) and his sayings (his *hadith*) are studied in great detail with the purpose of following his ‘beautiful example.’ This book, then, is an attempt to understand the strategies he adopted in the pursuit of his goal – the propagation of Islam in Arabia and beyond. The Prophet’s genius and brilliance cannot be doubted since he was successful at molding a disparate, disorganized, and backward group of tribes into a world super power in a matter of three decades. He founded a powerful world religion which now counts every fifth human being as a Muslim and is the fastest growing world religion at this time.

It is important for the purpose of this study to distinguish between what the Prophet received as revelations and what he informed his companions to be his own personal views. The Prophet was always very careful about differentiating the two. Our concern in this study is with voluntary and consistent actions of the Prophet that help explain his dramatic success. Naturally, it is also a purpose of this study to glean what the average reader can ‘take home’ from a study of the Prophet’s life. Arguably, this paper has a narrow focus and is, clearly, not meant to be a biography of the Prophet. Several excellent works on the Prophet’s life are generally available in a decent bookstore; some of which are recommended in the bibliography at the end of this paper. In writing this paper, I have reviewed a number of the major publications on the Prophet. Surprisingly, this specific aspect of the Prophet’s life does not seem to have been thoroughly explored in any biography of the Prophet that I have encountered to date. The bibliography at the end lists many of the eminent works of biography on the Prophet of Islam.

The paper has been divided in two sections. Section I presents the various strategies the Prophet pursued in the attainment of his goals. It has been a challenge to organize the information in this section. One of the difficulties has been the context in which the strategies have to be understood. To fully understand the context, one needs to review the Prophet's biography, but that is a subject that can overshadow the main objective of this study. Yet without the context, the raw power of some of the actions does not come out in full color. On balance, I decided to provide a summary of the Prophet's biography after the discussion on the strategies employed by him. I have been assisted by valuable comments from several close friends as well as a number of my professors at the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) where I completed my Executive MBA in 2005.

I have divided Section I into the following three chapters:

### **A. Personality Strengths**

I have grouped a number of the Prophet's strategies together that I believe emanated from the strength of his personality. The Prophet had a unique personal history. As an orphan, his childhood was devoid of parental love, attention and personality grooming. While his humility, impeccable integrity and softness of character might have emanated from his unique personal background and history; he, undoubtedly, matured at an early age and had to learn to fend for himself in a hostile world. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) exhibited an independence of thought and action and made decisions in his adult life that charted a unique life path for him. The star of the Banu Hashim clan of the Quraish, to which he belonged, was on the wane. Further, his uncle Abu Talib, who had agreed to take care of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), faced financial difficulties. This forced Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) to contribute financially to the house-hold of his uncle while growing up.

The Prophet was known as As-Sadiq (the "truthful one") and Al-Ameen ("the trustworthy one") from early adulthood. One can easily argue that these two were really personality traits and not strategies. Some of this relates to the never ending nature versus nurture debate in psychology / sociology. Even though one's genetic make-up predisposes a person towards certain directions, one's upbringing also plays an important role in one's future orientation. While there is tremendous merit in considering these two as personality traits, the Prophet very effectively put these traits to use in achieving his goals, and as such I have considered these to have been strategies of the Prophet. Smart individuals sometimes do give meaning to their lives at an early age. Many similar examples exist in history where a particular trait in an individual ends up defining the course he takes in order to achieve certain goals at an early age. Mozart was a genius as a musician at the age of five when he could compose entire symphonies. Picasso was a boy wonder as a painter. Churchill had prepared his entire life for a chance to lead his nation.

The Prophet's humility was legendary and even when he had become the leading Arab chieftain of his time, new-comers found it difficult to distinguish him from his companions. He wore simple clothes, sat on the floor most of the time and ate what his companions ate. He spoke softly and was almost shy in his demeanor. The Prophet was always careful not to jeopardize his life unnecessarily. To the extent possible, he planned his moves carefully and stayed ahead of his enemies' designs. He had a finely-tuned self-preservation instinct partly because he had a very long-term perspective. It was most important for him to be able to give form and shape to a large Muslim state that could then take on the leading super-powers of the time and expand Islam much beyond Arabia. A review of the Prophet's biography reveals that he was immensely proactive in his approach to events around him. He proactively tried to mould events to influence the outcomes; he was a doer and not a taker. He was not one who would let events, political or otherwise, unfold around him without his imprint.

### **B. Interactive Strategies**

The Prophet was clearly not an ascetic; neither was he an introvert. Although he enjoyed his moments of solitude and quite very much, he spent his entire life as a Prophet surrounded by individuals and events. His ministry was based on communication and interaction and he could not have succeeded without pursuing effective strategies aimed at making his interactions with others a great success. Further, he was keenly aware that he was being constantly watched by friends and foes. His life was an example to his companions. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) leveraged his capabilities and turned small successes into great victories. He chose his targets judiciously and waited for opportunities to arise for him to achieve maximum leverage. While the whole world was, by definition, in his circle of concern, he focused his energies and resources on his circle of influence. He built large victories on top of small wins and, within a matter of years, became invincible in the eyes of his enemies partly because of his successful interactive strategies. His status changed dramatically in a matter of seven years – from a fugitive on camel-back in 622 AD who had barely avoided being murdered by his own tribe to the undisputed leader of a successful Muslim community that had conquered Makkah, the religious, political and business capital of Arabia, in 629 AD.

This section reviews the Prophet's interactive strategies that relate to how he dealt with others – friends and foes. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was an excellent reader of human nature. In a sense he was one of the best human resource managers the world has known. He was very interested in how they should conduct themselves on their travels, how they should conduct diplomacy, how they should lead in battle, and how they should groom their subordinates. Time and again, we find him instructing his companions on managerial issues. Even a cursory reading of the differing personalities of his close companions is a testament to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)'s brilliance as a manager of human resources. In one sense, the four first caliphs of Islam, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali could not have been more different from each other purely in terms of their personalities. However, they were closely bound to each other through their close personal bond with the Prophet.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) also had a sharp understanding of the political landscape around him. He seems to have had an encyclopedic understanding of Arab tribal histories, clashes and inter-tribe rivalries and their relative strengths and weaknesses. He shows an amazingly nuanced understanding of tribal alliances. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) left Makkah in 622 AD in the dark of the night as a refugee. Seven years later, in 629 AD, he returned to Makkah as the undisputed leader of Arabia. This shows his sharp understanding of tribal politics and his ability to develop and nurture alliances while leaving his adversaries with fewer and fewer alliance options. In this area, he was probably helped by his travels to distant lands, beginning as a companion to his uncle Abu Talib, continuing as an international trade agent for his future wife Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her) and rounding it off as a very successful Makkan trader. His travels probably gave him a breadth of experience and depth of understanding of human nature that he put to excellent use in his later life.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)'s pursuit of alliances and collaborations of various kinds meant that a good deal of his success was predicated on his success in managing human relationships. Clearly, he was most careful in choosing appropriate interactive strategies for maximum leverage and for best results. In a way, these strategies would not have been as effective without the personal strengths of the Prophet mentioned earlier.

### **C. Diplomatic and Military Strategies**

It was in the diplomatic and military spheres, more than in any other, where the Prophet ultimately prevailed over his hardened enemies. Several of his enemies, especially the Quraish notables, understood the language of power and military might more than the language of reason, love and faith. After a thirteen year long unsuccessful attempt at converting the Quraish notables to Islam, the Prophet gave up

and migrated to Madina. He founded the first Islamic state in Madina and took up arms both to protect the small Muslim community and to increase his circle of influence (which eventually enveloped all of Arabia).

The Prophet's understanding of balance of power considerations assisted him tremendously in achieving his diplomatic goals. He first advised a number of Muslims to migrate from Makkah to Abyssinia to escape persecution from the Quraish. He judged correctly that Negus, the ruler of Abyssinia, would grant asylum to the Muslim contingent despite the pressure put on him by the Quraish. Upon his arrival in Madina, he called the chiefs of the Muslim tribes of Aws and Khazraj, as well as the pagan tribes and Jewish tribes to agree on a joint defense of Madina. He explained to them that if they did not agree to a joint defensive strategy, a foreign enemy could easily divide them and conquer them one by one. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) carefully developed and expanded his intelligence networks while in Madina to gain early information about the diplomatic and military moves of his enemies. He first developed Madina into a proper city-state and then negotiated peace treaties with a number of pagan tribes that lived around Madina. Thus, he developed actually two lines of defense for the Muslim community in Madina. The Prophet steadily expanded his circle of influence around Madina to the detriment of his adversaries. A major goal of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) diplomatic strategies was to achieve a bloodless takeover of Makkah which was to be the pivot of the pan-Arab Muslim state. The Prophet needed all of the administrative, diplomatic, and military capabilities of the Quraish working for Islam. While he was patient in achieving this goal, he was also persistent and most creative.

It is most important to appreciate that the Prophet actually spilled very little blood in all the battles he fought to achieve his goals. Exhibit 8 provides summary information on the major battles of Islam during the Prophet's life-time and the estimated loss of life on both sides. Historical sources indicate that perhaps a total of fewer than 400 individuals on both sides perished in the eight major battles that took place during the Prophet's life time.

The Prophet believed in preserving the element of surprise, presenting his enemy with overwhelming force, and in retaining significant strategic advantage against the adversary. These were important means to minimizing actual fighting and loss of life in battle. On many occasions, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) presented his enemies with a *fait accompli* (such as on the occasion of the conquest of Makkah). On other occasions, he withdrew (at Hudaibiya) when not prepared for battle or avoided head-on confrontation (at Battle of Ahzaab) when facing a well-prepared, much larger and united enemy force. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was brilliant in creative use of martial tactics. He was most practical (and least emotional) in waging warfare. He was quite comfortable hearing (and not responding to) the taunts of the Quraish notables (for instance, on the occasion of Battle of Ahzaab when the Quraish challenged him to a dual), or in hiding his own persona (he did not respond to Abu Sufyan when the latter wished to know whether he was alive or dead at Battle of Uhud, the Prophet was wounded and hiding in a cranny in Uhud mountain).

The Prophet also made sure that his forces waged warfare under a strict code of conduct. The Muslim forces were under strict orders not to harm children, women, the elderly or non-combatants on a battlefield. Generally, crops and trees were not destroyed. Contrary to Arab custom that preceded Islam, captured prisoners of war were not put to death. He was brilliant at utilizing his limited range of assets against much larger and deadlier forces.<sup>17</sup> While he was never trained as a warrior, as has been the case of many a famous victors in history, once again it was his keen understanding of human nature, his clear grasp of the political landscape and the personality strengths that he was able to make his military strategies a success. He chose his battle commanders very intelligently and entrusted the leadership to able-bodied, able-minded commanders. He clearly defined the chain of command in the battlefield and

appointed a deputy to run the affairs of the state in his absence in the event he himself led the military campaign.

Section II presents an abridged life history of the Prophet. The simple aim here is to introduce the Prophet's life history and highlight the major events of the Prophet's life. This should help the reader not familiar with the Prophet's biography to develop a basic framework in order to appreciate the strategies Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) pursued in the pursuit of his lifelong goal. Section I is the heart of this paper while Section II is a useful refresher of the Prophet's personal biography.

## **Historical Sources**

The earliest written source of information on the Prophet is naturally the Quran, the collection of revelations, which was dictated and compiled under the supervision of the Prophet himself. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) received his first Quranic revelation at the age of 40 in 610 AD. The revelations continued to arrive for the next 23 years, in fragments and at intervals, until about 81/82 days before the death of the Prophet in 632 AD, concluding with the following verse: "Today have I perfected your religious law for you, and have bestowed upon you the full measure of My blessings, and willed that self-surrender unto Me [i.e., definition of Islam] shall be your religion".

In addition to the Quran, massive amounts of information is available on the Hadith or Sunnah of the Prophet – extensive records of what the Prophet said and did, as related by his companions. The collection of Hadith verified by Imam Al-Bukhari is called the Sahih Al-Bukhari and is generally considered to be the most reliable source of Ahadith (the sayings of the Prophet). Many scholars consider this collection of Ahadith second only to the Quran itself in terms of authenticity. It is said that Imam Bukhari collected over 300,000 Ahadith and sifted through them to record only the ones that he was absolutely comfortable authenticating through historical and circumstantial evidence. His collection, Sahih Al-Bukhari, is comprised of 2,230 Ahadith which are considered the most authentic sayings of the Prophet. The two most authentic compilers of the Prophet's saying are Imam Al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim. For the most part, this book refers to sayings of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) that have been authenticated and verified both by Al-Bukhari and Muslim.

The life of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) is known as the Seera (also Seerat) and was lived in the full light of history. Allah's Messenger (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was constantly served by a group of forty-five scribes, at different times, in the Madina period who wrote down his sayings, his instructions and his activities. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) himself insisted on documenting his important decisions. Nearly three hundred of his documents have come down to us, including political treaties, military enlistments, assignments of officials and state correspondence written on tanned leather. Thus, we know a great deal about his life down to very minute details: how he spoke, sat, slept, dressed, walked; his behavior as a husband, father, friend; his attitudes towards women, children, slaves and animals; his business transactions, his stance towards the poor and the needy; his negotiations with other tribal leaders; his military strategies and achievements; his exercise of political authority and negotiating style; and his personal habits, likes and dislikes.<sup>19</sup>

From a very early date (a few decades after the Prophet's death), Muslim scholars and historians had started to write down a biography of the Prophet. Some biographies were even prepared during the time of his companions: at first, accounts of his campaigns and his expeditions, and then works of a wider interest.

## **Dates**

With regards dates, I have chosen to stay with the Gregorian calendar in citing dates as opposed to the Muslim calendar. This, naturally, causes some problems as the exactness of some Gregorian dates pertaining to the Prophet's life is contested by different scholars. Therefore, I have tried not to become too specific with exact dates and have been comfortable in citing years. In general, I have probably been more influenced by the dating scheme followed by W. Montgomery Watt in his eminently well-received studies of the Prophet. Exhibit 4 provides a summary chronology of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)'s life history for quick reference.

I have received valuable comments from many friends, writers and scholars for which I thank them. I seek forgiveness for any inadvertent mistakes in the text.

**Omar Khayyam Sheikh**

November 21, 2012,

Lahore, Pakistan



## **STRATEGIES PURSUED BY MUHAMMAD (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)**

The Prophet of Islam, was the most brilliant strategist the world has seen. Many western scholars consider him the most influential man in world history because of the impact he has had on billions of people in the last fourteen hundred years. Today, more than one and a half billion people (or one out of six living human beings) claim to follow in his foot-steps. Many demographers calculate that Islam will become the world's largest religion by 2050.

The world has seen many brilliant strategists in the last roughly 2,500 years of recorded history. Alexander and Julius Caesar were brilliant military strategists and conquerors. Sun Tzu and Von Clausewitz were brilliant military strategists. Aristotle and Plato were brilliant intellectual theorists. Augustus Caesar, Machiavelli and Gandhi were brilliant administrative and political strategists. Count Richelieu and Henry Kissinger were considered brilliant diplomatic strategists. Jack Welch and Steve Jobs are generally considered brilliant business strategists. Warren Buffet is considered an unmatched financial strategist.<sup>20</sup> However, the Prophet of Islam operated in a very wide realm of strategy. His influence has been profound on all aspects of human existence: personal, social, religious, spiritual, intellectual, political, diplomatic, military, administrative and commercial. No other single strategist in world history continues to have a dramatic influence on the total gamut of human existence on such a large scale.

The Prophet's field of activity ranged far and wide. Not only did he change the world-view of a people, he practically molded a nation out of a disparate group of warring tribes to the extent that more than one and a half billion Muslims now live all over the world. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) did not achieve his success through any miraculous powers. He himself stated many times that he was an ordinary human being. If he had employed miraculous powers to achieve his goals, his life would not have been considered *uswah hasanah* ("the beautiful example") by Muslims through centuries. Unless the very human aspect of cause and effect is put before the common man – who does not and cannot rely on miracles– he will not find the conduct of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) a worthy and a practical example to imitate in his daily struggle for existence.<sup>21</sup>

This essay is specifically focused on the brilliance of the Prophet as a strategist. The Webster New Universal Unabridged Dictionary defines strategy as "a plan, method or series of maneuvers or stratagems for obtaining a specific goal or result". A stratagem can be defined as a plan or scheme devised or used to attain a goal or to gain an advantage over an adversary. Brilliant is defined by the same dictionary as "having or showing great intelligence, talent or quality". In the specific context of this paper, I define strategy as "the voluntary and consistent pursuit by Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) of a coherent plan of action aimed at the propagation of Islam in Arabia and beyond."

It is important for the purpose of this study to distinguish between what the Prophet received as revelations and what he informed his companions to be his own personal views. The Prophet was always very particular about differentiating between the two. Our concern in this study is with voluntary and consistent actions of the Prophet that help explain his dramatic success. Naturally, it is also a purpose of this study to glean what the average reader can 'take home' from a study of the Prophet's life. The next section discusses the elements of the Prophet's strategy in detail.

## PERSONALITY STRENGTHS

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) possessed a unique personality. Naturally, some of his personality strengths were a result of his genetic make-up. He was born into the Leading Arab family of the time into a clan that was financially prosperous, politically well-connected, militarily strong and religiously the undisputed leaders of Arabia. Some of his leadership qualities were probably with him from his birth. His unique upbringing without a father, and soon thereafter without a mother, also shaped his personality. He learnt to care for himself from a very early age. Early on, he became more independent, cerebral and mature than most of his contemporaries. His early years in the desert also attuned him to nature and introduced a natural contemplative rhythm to his life. His sparse diet, love of physical activity and ability to endure harshness of climate and travel probably date back to his early years in the desert some of which were spent as a shepherd and a cattle-herd.

A dialogue that took place between Abu Sufyan (who as a Leading Quraish chieftain was the arch-enemy of the Prophet for many years) and the Greek emperor Heraclius about Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) dating to 628 AD (in the 7th year AH - when Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had sent a letter to Heraclius inviting him to convert to Islam) provides a great insight into Muhammad's character and personality as reported by an Arab arch-enemy and assessed by a Leading world leader. Upon receiving Muhammad's letter, Heraclius was interested in Understanding the sender's personality and standing within his own community. He therefore asked his forces to collect a visiting Arab trading delegation and bring them to his court. When Abu Sufyan and the other Arab traders were brought to his court, Abu Sufyan reports that Heraclius asked "if we were of the clan of this man and which was the nearest of kin to him." Upon Abu Sufyan's volunteering that he was the nearest of kin to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), Heraclius asked him to sit at the front and asked the other Arab traders to sit at the back. He then told Abu Sufyan that he would ask him a number of questions about Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and instructed the other Muslim traders to indicate if Abu Sufyan were lying about Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). Sitting in the Greek king's presence with a large army at his command, most visitors would find it hard to lie blatantly especially if the lie could be discovered immediately.

Heraclius then asked Abu Sufyan a number of questions and summed up his answers in the following words: "I asked you about his lineage and you alleged that it was pure and of your best and God chooses only a man of the noblest lineage as a prophet. Then I asked if any man of his family made similar claims and you said 'No'. Then I asked if he had been robbed of dominion and made this claim to recover it, and you said 'No'. Then I asked you about his followers and you said that they were the weak and poor and young slaves and women, and such have been the followers of the prophets in all ages. Then I asked if his followers left him and you said 'None'. Thus is the sweetness of faith: it does not enter the heart and depart. Then I asked if he was treacherous and you said 'No'; and truly if you have told me the truth about him he will conquer me on the ground that is beneath my feet."

In his seminal work, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Dr. Stephen Covey has developed an approach to Understanding human effectiveness and human greatness. After conducting a thorough research on human effectiveness spanning more than three decades, Dr. Covey postulated a personality development frame-work encompassing the habits that are adopted by the most effective people. He has postulated that truly great people seem to follow a pattern in their lives that then sets a spiral of greatness in motion that can take a person from good to great. In coming to his conclusions, Dr. Covey was assisted by his training as a corporate consultant and he was able to study thousands of people over more than thirty years. While it is not clear if he studied the life of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) in any detail, Dr. Covey's first three habits provide an insight into the Prophet's personality strengths:

*Be Proactive*

*Begin With The End In Mind*

*Put First Things First*

Dr. Covey believes that the most effective people are proactive by nature. They look at their life experiences and their life situation and actively seek to mould these into staging posts for development. They use their intellectual faculties to analyze their situation and seek resources that can help them elevate their status and make them into effective persons and leaders of people. This is in stark contrast to an individual who is reactive and knows only how to respond to stimuli present in his environment. The most effective people actively seek out opportunities to make a positive contribution to their environment. They are not deterred by a low social or economic standing but are determined to overcome their handicaps in order to leave their mark on the world.

The second habit (which leads from the first one) of the most effective people is that they develop an early and clear Understanding of their life goals. They do not develop these life goals in a hurry but are capable of deep introspection and accurate appraisal of their strengths and weaknesses. These individuals then relate their actual situation with their potential and determine how best they can impact their environment. Often, these individuals are not limited in their thoughts and do not often look for the visibly practical solutions. They are capable of seeking unique, very personal and very ingenious paths to glory. They are able to decide their life-long major goals early in their lives. Once they have decided on the overarching goals for themselves, they chart the various milestones that will help get them there. Thus, their lives can be analyzed through a detailed look at these various milestones since they begin with the end in mind. This book also looks at various milestones in the Prophet's life with the purpose of Understanding his strategies.

Thirdly, Dr. Covey postulates that the most effective people are able to prioritize their strategies. They are able to put first things first. These individuals instinctively know which goals are paramount and which are subservient. It is not important for them to win on all occasions and against all adversaries. They are good at giving way when it does not seriously damage their overall objectives. They can lose small skirmishes to the enemy while they remain focused on winning the major battles. The most effective leader never wishes to win Pyrrhic victories that lead to personal glory but so weaken the victors that they are unable to fight another battle for a long time. By being clearly focused on their major life goals, the most effective people are able to develop a life plan which is detailed, action oriented and broken down into a series of activities that will help them plan their months and years appropriately.

Dr. Covey argues that an individual needs to move from habit to habit. The first three habits, when effectively implemented in one's life, take an individual from a state of dependence to independence. True and positive leadership can only come from independent human beings. Only individuals who have a positive and pro-active mind-set, have a clear Understanding of their situation and have developed life goals with an accurate road-map are able to command others to make dramatic improvements in their lives. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was a passionate and complex human being with tremendous leadership qualities. He was inspired and was able to inspire others to perform way beyond their normal capabilities. He had great spiritual as well as political gifts. The following character traits were used by Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) very effectively as strategies to achieve his goals later on.

# 1. INDEPENDENCE OF THOUGHT AND ACTION

Muhammad's independence of thought and action made him follow a unique path in his life. He conquered uncharted territory by founding a new world religion and laying the foundation of a world super power. An independent mind was a great asset to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). Muhammad's accomplishments could not have been the work of an ordinary mind. He shaped the under-whelming circumstances of his childhood into the most extra-ordinary life story the world has ever come across.

Muhammad's father had died even before he was born. After birth, he was taken to the countryside to be nurtured in a clean and pure atmosphere away from the impurities of city life, as was the custom of the time. In the desert, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) shared the nomad's life in a most barren and harsh environment with sand dunes spread as far as the eye could see extending all the way to the horizon. The fragility of human existence and the total dependence on nature must have left an indelible mark on Muhammad's mind. The Romanian orientalist Konstan Virgil George writes in his book, *The Prophet of Islam*: "Until one has spent some time in the wilds of Arabia and the Middle East, one cannot begin to understand how the vastness and tranquility of the desert expands the human intellect and fortifies the imagination...Here it is as though man comes into direct contact with God...There is nothing blocking one's vision of reality in the vast open reaches of Arabia. Wherever one looks, one sees endless sands and fathomless sky. Here, there is nothing to stop one from consorting with God and His angels."

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was returned to his mother when he was four or five years old. When Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was six years old; his mother, Aminah, decided to take him to Yathrib to visit the grave of her husband and to visit her relatives. She, unfortunately, died on the way back and the six-year old Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was entrusted with the task of burying his mother in a far-off land. One can only imagine but not know what goes through the mind of a cerebral six year old boy when he has to wait for a caravan to pass to help him bury his mother in a far-off desert. That memory must have remained etched in Muhammad's mind for ever. A feeling of helplessness and the fleeting nature of human existence must have pervaded his soul. He must have dreaded his future as an orphan.

In Makkah, Muhammad's one hundred and eight year old grandfather, Abdul Muttalib, now took charge of caring for Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). However, he also died two years later. At time of his eighth birthday, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had already experienced fatherlessness, poverty, solitude, and the death of his mother and then of his grandfather. After his grandfather's death, Muhammad's upbringing became the responsibility of his paternal uncle, Abu Talib. Unfortunately Abu Talib had a large family and dwindling financial resources. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), at the tender age of eight, started tending after sheep in the blazing deserts of the Arabian Peninsula to support himself.

As a shepherd, young Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) learned to appreciate solitude, patience, nature, contemplation and watchfulness. The time spent in the desert tending to his flock must have cultivated in him qualities of patience and watchfulness – he had to care for his flock, protect it and bring it home safely. Such qualities of mind were to prove a great asset to him in his later life as a Prophet and helped him carry out his mission. A solitary existence marked most of Muhammad's childhood. Unlike other children that were more used to playing and frolicking around, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) developed a serious and cerebral disposition because of his peculiarly tragic childhood. It is said that orphans mature at a much early age intellectually. They become more aware of the world around them since they lose the protective custody of their parents. The caring embrace of parents and the protective environment of a complete home protect the lucky child from the

vicissitudes of life. Orphans, unfortunately, are denied emotional support and have to face the harsh realities of human existence without the warm embrace of loving parents. An orphan has to struggle to make his place in life. His task becomes even more complicated if he wishes to rise to a position of dignity and stature because that is even more of an uphill task for him. It is understandable that the Prophet's youth was marked by periods of contemplation and meditation. Extreme hardships, loneliness and sense of responsibility made Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) solemn and Understanding.

The Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was predisposed towards solitary meditation and a thoughtful existence. This inclination was further strengthened when he took on the burden of a reformer and a prophet. Ibn Ishaq quotes Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her) as follows: "When Allah desired to honor Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and have mercy on His servants by means of him, the first sign of prophet-hood vouchsafed to the apostle was true visions, resembling brightness of daybreak, which were shown to him in his sleep. And Allah, she said, made him love solitude so that he liked nothing better than to be alone."

His independence of thought and action made Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) choose a unique path in his life. Any Arab of his time would have been envious of Muhammad's achievements by the time he had turned forty. He belonged to a Leading family of Makkah and was by now a very successful merchant. He had married well and lived a most comfortable life in one of the finer mansions in the city. He enjoyed the company of a caring wife and had his children scampering around the house. He was well-attended by servants. His friends loved and admired him. Indeed, he was a Leading light of the city. Nonetheless, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) yearned for more in life. His independent mind made him restless as he refused to accept material well-being to be his ultimate goal in life. His quest for the absolute truth made him love solitude and meditation. Ultimately, he made connection with the Holy on one of his sojourns in Hira Cave outside Makkah in 610 AD.

Muhammad's independence made him reject the status quo. If he had no independence of thought and action, he would have continued to live a life of comfort and luxury, family harmony and societal acceptance in Makkah. Even without his calling to Islam, he would have been remembered by the historians of Makkah as an upright, honest, and hard working trader who had accomplished much in his life.

A study of the Prophet's life history and the evolution of Islam in this period demonstrate, time and again, that the Prophet often came up with totally unique and proactive approaches to men and events surrounding him. He had an uncanny ability to transform obviously harsh and adversarial situations to his benefit. It is fair to state that many of his responses took his opponents by surprise (for instance, the Muslim migration to Abyssinia, the digging of the trench to protect Madina during the Battle of Ahzaab, his sending a portion of Madina's date harvest to Makkah to help alleviate extreme hunger and poverty there despite the highly adversarial relationship with Makkah at that time, etc.). He was never reluctant to use pre-Islamic tribal customs to his advantage (such as using the non-Muslim Quraish Chief Motim's protection to protect his own person from other Makkan chieftains after his unsuccessful preaching visit to Taif). He often confused his enemies by using their mores and customs against them (such as at Hudaibiya when he arrived to perform the Minor Pilgrimage with more than a thousand unarmed Muslims during a sacred month after having fought three battles with the Quraish). He was adept at presenting his enemies with irresolvable dilemmas (such as the circumstances that led to the submission and exile of the Banu Nadir tribe of Madina). At several critical moments, the Prophet adopted unique approaches towards his adversaries who were left fumbling and grasping for coherent responses to his moves.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) adopted numerous unique and inventive solutions in the pursuit of his strategy. Many of Muhammad's approaches were quite novel with no known precedents in Arab history. Here, we will outline a few to demonstrate Muhammad's independence of thought and action:

## **Migration to Madina**

There was no known precedent in Arab history of the mass migration initiated by the Prophet to Madina. The Arabs of that time lived in constant fear of life and liberty. The tribe was the protector of its members. Similarly, the Arab traveler who did not enjoy the protection of the Sayed of the area was easily murdered by bandits. Muhammad's instructions to his small Muslim community in Makkah in 622 AD to initiate a mass migration to Madina must have been puzzling for most of his followers. He urged his followers to make a hijra from Makkah to Madina. However, the hijra did not simply entail a change in geographic location. The Muslims of Makkah were about to abandon the Quraish and accept the protection of two tribes in Madina (the Aws and the Khazraj) that were not related to them by blood and who had a long history of blood-shed between themselves. Armstrong comments that this was "an unprecedented move and was in its own way as offensive to Arab sensibilities as the denigration of the pagan goddesses. There had always been a system of 'confederacy' whereby an individual or a whole clan could become honorary members of another tribe and accept their protection. But this was never a permanent severance; the bonds of blood were a sacred value in Arabia and the basis of society." Muhammad's exhortation to his followers to emigrate to Madina was an irrevocable and frightening step. Nobody knew how it would work out, because nothing quite like it had ever happened in Arabia before.

A different Western view of the migration to Madina is represented by Walker who argues that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) decided to move to Madina not because of any extra-ordinary physical threat to his life but because his cause had stagnated in Makkah. Walker argues that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) decided to move to Madina to bring commercial pressure on Makkah caravan trade. Regardless what view of history is more acceptable to the reader, the migration to Madina was a truly independent response on the part of the Prophet to a situation that was becoming more and more difficult for him in Makkah.

## **Treatment of Makkah Prisoners of War**

The Muslims of Madina took many prisoners during the highly successful Battle of Badr in 624 AD. After the battle was won, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) asked for his companions' views about how the prisoners should be treated. Most companions favored putting them to death. This would have been in line with Arab tradition. However, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) adopted a unique approach to this problem and allowed the pagan prisoners to go free if each of them would teach ten Muslims how to read or write or if their relatives paid for their release. On the one hand, this illustrates the importance placed by Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) on literacy and education. However, his lenient treatment of the Makkah prisoners was unique for that time. On their return to Makkah, these prisoners must have been glad to have their lives and their freedom back. Many of them spoke highly of the Muslim customs and discipline they had experienced in Madina.

## **Muhammad's Minor Pilgrimage to Makkah of 628 AD and the Subsequent Treaty of Hudaibiya**

In the Madina period, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) fought a series of battles with the Quraish of Makkah beginning with a decisive military victory at the Battle of Badr in 624 AD,

continuing with a rough stalemate at the Battle of Uhud in 625 AD and concluding with an inconclusive attack of the Quraish on Madina at the Battle of the Trench (also known as Battle of Ahzaab) in 627 AD (these battles are covered in detail in another section). At the Battle of the Trench, the Quraish had mustered a total strength of more than 12,000 fighters against the Muslim state in Madina. When the Quraish had failed at the Battle of the Trench and were retreating to Makkah, the Prophet had remarked that it was the last offensive of the Quraish and that the initiative had now passed on to the Muslims who would henceforth choose their own time and place of attack. The Prophet first launched a “peace offensive” against Makkah. He decided to go on a Minor Pilgrimage (the Umra) to Makkah in the spring of 628 AD. This alarmed many of his followers who could not comprehend the Prophet’s desire to visit the heart of the enemy territory as an unarmed pilgrim at a time of great hostility. Ibn Ishaq records this concern of the Muslims in the following words: “[The Prophet] called together the Arabs and neighboring Bedouin to march with him. Fearing that Quraish would oppose him with arms or prevent him from visiting the [Ka’abae (as they actually did); many of the Arabs held back from him. He went out with the emigrants and Ansaar [the Helpers – residents of Madina that had converted to Islam and had helped the Muslim migrants from Makkah in settling down in their midst] and such of the Arabs as stuck with him.” Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was disappointed that only 1,400 of his followers decided to accompany him on this pilgrimage.

Subsequent events were to show the Prophet’s sagacity in undertaking this risky pilgrimage to Makkah. At the height of his new power, he came to Makkah unarmed, and thus in effect vulnerable, even though circumstances could have enabled him to attain even greater supremacy over his enemies. Moreover, he called people to a new religion but did not hesitate to rely on respect of the rules of Arab traditions to protect himself from their attacks, and in doing so he put the Quraish into a dilemma, since they had to choose between their honor (respecting the rules – all unarmed pilgrims had the Quraish guarantee of a safe entry into the Ka’aba) and the loss of their prestige (allowing their arch enemies, the Muslims, to enter Makkah).<sup>36</sup> He was able to engage the Quraish in a dialogue that led to an agreement (the Treaty of Hudaibiya Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) negotiated with the Quraish on this occasion is discussed in detail in another section of this book). The Treaty of Hudaibiya was eventually the turning point that laid the foundation for the subsequent conquest of Makkah. All of his companions were not able to understand Muhammad’s approach and strategy which was very unique and proactive.

## **2. AL-SADIQ (“THE TRUTHFUL ONE”) AND AL-AMEEN (“THE TRUSTWORTHY ONE”)**

One can argue that these two attributes were his personality traits and not strategies he pursued on a conscious level. The possibility that the young Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) would have the sagacity to evaluate his immediate environment and decide on a life path that would make him a model of moral rectitude is actually quite real. One is reminded of Winston Churchill who, when put in charge of the British war effort during World War II, remarked that all of his life had prepared him for that one moment.

One wonders whether the young Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) also prepared all of his life for his Leading the Arabs into a new faith and into a new, united, enlightened and prosperous future. In a positive sense, he capitalized on this moral rectitude to lead and to win the accolades even from his sworn enemies on matters of principle and justice. Truthfulness and trustworthiness can be considered the two minimum foundations of a truly great personality. A great personality is one which is respected by friends and foes alike. In matters of personal integrity and trustworthiness, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) shines as a world leader. He was most particular about telling the truth, keeping his promises and commitments and honoring the trust reposed in him by others – regardless whether they were Muslims or non-Muslims. Abu Hurairah reported the Prophet as having said: “There are three signs of a hypocrite: When he speaks, he lies; when he makes a promise, he breaks it; and when he is trusted, he betrays the trust.” Another saying of the Prophet reported by Abu Bakrah Nufai bin Al-Harith shows his strong distaste for lies and misstatements: “...I warn you against giving forged statement and a false testimony; I warn you against giving forged statement and a false testimony.” Abu Bakrah states that “Allah’s Messenger kept on repeating that warning till we wished he would stop.”

The strength of Muhammad’s character, his resoluteness and his truthfulness are continuously demonstrated by his life history. In this section, we have highlighted just a few incidents from his life. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had been, on a few occasions, chosen to serve as a Hakim in small disputes. Hakim is a function entrusted to a Leading and highly respected member of Arab society who is entrusted with functioning as an arbitrator to settle disputes between members of the community.

### **The Black Stone (Hajre Aswad) controversy**

A brilliant example of Muhammad’s equanimity comes to us from his resolution of the Black Stone controversy. Mubarakpuri writes that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was thirty-five years old<sup>40</sup> when the different clans of the Quraish agreed to rebuild the Ka’aba. The clans divided the construction work so that the four major clans had a roughly equal share in this holy reconstruction effort. Swords were unsheathed, however, when the time came to set the holy Black Stone in its place. The Black Stone quarrel raged for four days. Abu Umayya Ibn Mughirah, a Quraish elder, proposed that the first person to enter the Haram next morning should be entrusted the task of deciding who should set the Black Stone in its place.

As luck would have it, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was the first to enter the Ka’aba the next morning. Mubarakpuri reports that on seeing Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) enter the Haram, people cried: “Al-Ameen [the trust-worthy one] has come. We are content to abide by his decision.” Ibn Ishaq quotes the Quraish chieftains to have remarked as follows when they saw Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) entering the Ka’aba: “This is the trustworthy one. We are satisfied. This is Muhammad.” Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be



upon him) quickly appreciated the gravity of the situation. He spread out his own shawl and asked the leaders of the four tribes to hold the four corners. Then he himself put the Black Stone on his shawl and instructed the four leaders to bring the shawl to the proper space in the wall where the Black Stone had to be set. He then lifted the Black Stone himself and set it in its place. His wise decision put the four clan leaders on an equal footing. The fact that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) actually laid the cornerstone himself shows his ability to lead and to project himself. His laying the cornerstone of the Ka'aba has deep symbolism within Islam and lays his very early claim to be the eventual protector of the Ka'aba. The personality traits that made Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) famous as Al-Sadiq and Al-Ameen were effectively capitalized into true leadership.

## **Muhammad's participation in Hilf-ul-Faduol ("The Pact of the Virtuous")**

The earliest example we have of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) joining a confederacy is the one known as Hilf-ul-Faduol. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) became a co-signer of this pact when he was a young man and had not yet proclaimed his prophet-hood. At the conclusion of the bloody sacrilegious Battle of Fijar which pitted the Quraish and the Banu Kinana tribes against the Qais Ailan tribe, a few notables of Makkah felt the need for forming a confederacy at Makkah for suppressing violence and injustice, and protecting the rights of the weak and the poor.

At this time, Makkah was undergoing a transformation from a nomadic tribal form of existence to a settled, commercial form of existence. This was leading to the demise of the traditional tribal ethic based on Muruwah. Muruwah can be defined as "the code of tribal conduct that was composed of important Arab virtues like bravery, honor, hospitality, strength in battle, concern for justice, and, above all, an assiduous dedication to the collective good of the tribe." The Makkan society was now becoming stratified. At the top were leaders of the ruling families of Quraish. If one was fortunate enough to acquire enough capital to start a small business, one could take full advantage of the city's religio-economic system. However, this was difficult for most residents of Makkah who lacked the financial means to get started in business. Life had become very difficult for the poor and the needy – especially those, such as widows and orphans, who enjoyed no formal protection. Poor Makkans who did borrow money from rich Makkans to start businesses often did so at exorbitant interest rates. This often led to debt, which in turn led to crushing poverty, and ultimately, to slavery.<sup>45</sup> This state of affairs was very disturbing for fair-minded Makkans.

Makkah had been the centre of commerce in Arabia from pre-historic times as it had always served as a religious centre because of the presence of the Ka'aba there. Annual pilgrimages to Makkah as well as minor pilgrimages to the city were a hallmark of Arab life and custom even before the arrival of Islam. Traders from all over Arabia flocked to Makkah – the commercial and religious capital of Arabia – to sell their wares.

However, over time, many Makkan traders had developed a habit of taking advantage of these visiting traders and offered them trade terms that were onerous and one-sided. It is quite possible that some of the leading Makkan traders developed collusion among themselves in order to offer low prices and extended payment terms to the visitors. Naturally, the visitors were in a hurry since they wished to off-load their cargoes and get paid in order to buy and take back other products that were in short supply in their hometowns. The situation became even worse when some Makkan traders began not paying for goods they purchased from such traders because of one pretext or another. The visiting traders, for the most part, were not protected by any treaty or agreement and were unable to rely on any alliances. This is what happened to a trader visiting from Yemen. He was cheated by the Makkan merchants and, rather than sulk and go home, he decided to proclaim this fact publicly and shamed the Quraish. He appealed to the nobility and dignity of the Quraish to bring him justice.

A few well-meaning and fair-minded Makkans including Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) established the Hilf ul-Faduol (the Pact of the Virtuous) as a way to combat such injustice in Makkah. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was an active member of this confederacy along with his friend, Abu Bakr. This alliance was special since it placed respect for the principles of justice and support for the oppressed above all other considerations of kinship and power. This Pact superseded tribal affiliations, pacts and agreements and transcended internecine conflict to bind the members to come to the support of the oppressed and the powerless in Makkah.

In later life, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) commented on his participation in the Half with very positive words: “I witnessed a confederacy in the house of Abdullah bin Jad’an. It was more appealing to me than herds of cattle. Even now in the period of Islam, I would respond positively to attending such a meeting if I were invited.” Tariq Ramadan makes the very important point that, in saying so, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) not only stressed the excellence of the terms of the pact, but he added that even as the bearer of the message of Islam – even as a Muslim – he still accepted its substance and would not hesitate to participate again. In his statement, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) acknowledged a pact that was established before the beginning of his prophetic career and which pledges to defend justice imperatively and to oppose the oppression of those who were destitute and powerless. This implies acknowledging that the act of laying out those principles is prior to and transcends belonging to Islam, because in fact Islam and its message came to confirm the substance of a treaty that human conscience had already independently formulated.

Since Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was not financially well-off himself, he participated in trading caravans organized by others as a trading agent or assistant. Historians mention that trading profits of one hundred percent were quite common at this time. However, people with limited financial resources were not able to organize these trading caravans because of the large scale of such an enterprise. A variety of produce needed to be procured at competitive prices and acceptable quality that could be sold quickly at the market. Further, substantial provisions needed to be procured for men and animals for long journeys; security arrangements needed to be made for protection along the way; and there was always the distinct possibility that either the caravan will be attacked by bandits or some animals will perish along the way. All of these risks meant that many traders came together to organize trading caravans. Muhammad’s reputation for honesty and integrity was enhanced because of his participation in many trading caravans during his youth. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) went on trading journeys with his uncle Abu Talib in his youth and later as an agent for Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her), his future wife. Later, well-recorded events in Muhammad’s life show that he had very detailed knowledge of far-off lands such as Abyssinia (Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) is known to use Abyssinian words in his conversations) and about tribes that lived in Eastern Arabia.<sup>51</sup> This indicates that he may have travelled to far-off lands in his youth.

## **Reasons given by Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her) in her marriage proposal**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) worked as a trading agent for Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her) who was a rich Makkan widow. She had asked Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) to lead her trading caravans and conduct trade on her behalf because she was aware of his reputation of truthfulness and trust-worthiness. She sent her trusted servant, Maisarah, with Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) on these trading journeys who was all praise for Muhammad’s integrity, sagacity and business acumen. Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her) proposed marriage to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) in 595 AD. She sent a messenger to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) asking him if he had any intention of marrying. When he made the excuse of poverty, the messenger said: “But if I tell you of a match where

you may gain beauty, wealth and noble birth?” When Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) learnt that Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her) herself was offering her hand to him, he accepted at once. Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her) did so out of respect for Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) as a person and as a businessman. “I like you because of our relationship,” she told him, “and your high reputation among your people, your trustworthiness, and good character and truthfulness”.

## **Conversation with Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her) on return from Hira cave**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) received the first revelation on August 10, 610 AD when he was forty years old and had been married to Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her) for fifteen years. On his shaken return to his home from the Hira cave where he had received his first revelation, he was comforted by his wife Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her). It is important to note the exact words she chose to reassure him: “You unite uterine relations; you bear the burden of the weak; you help the poor and the needy; you entertain the guests and endure hardship in the path of truthfulness” Ibn Ishaq quotes Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her), on this occasion, as having commented on “your [Muhammad’s] truthfulness, your great trustworthiness, your fine character, and your kindness.”

## **Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) invites the Quraish to Islam**

In the first phase of his Prophethood, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) preached Islam quietly for a period of three years in Makkah. He called only his immediate friends and family to Islam in this period and developed a small but devoted following. After these three years, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) publicly called his clan of Quraish to Islam. One day he went up Safa hill, opposite the Ka’aba, and following the ancient custom, called the Makkans to hear an important announcement. The city rushed to listen to him. Once a large crowd had gathered to listen to his announcement, he told the Makkans that he wanted to speak to only the tribes nearest to his own family. Then he asked the gathering: “Are you going to believe me if I tell you that behind this hill there is a hostile army which has pitched camp and is going to invade the town?” “Indeed, for we trust you, and we have never known you to tell a lie.” He then said to them: “God has commanded me to warn you, my nearest kinsmen, that I can guarantee to you no good on earth or in heaven unless you witness that there is no God but Allah.”

## **The discourse in the Court of Negus of Abyssinia among the Muslims and the Quraish**

The Quraish sent an emissary to the court of Negus, the ruler of Abyssinia, to convince him to extradite the small Muslim community that had taken refuge there from the persecution of the Quraish. The Muslim migration from Makkah to Abyssinia had pre-dated the Muslim migration to Madina. In the court of Negus, an emissary of the Quraish was asked to comment on the Prophet’s character and personality. Despite being the arch-enemy of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), the emissary of the Quraish told the truth and confirmed that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was a man of high character and noble birth and that the only difference the Quraish had with him was that he preached the oneness of God and criticized all other idols and gods of the Quraish.<sup>57</sup> This incident demonstrates very effectively the strength of Muhammad’s character – even his sworn enemies recognized his truthfulness and trustworthiness – Muhammad’s personality traits which unquestionably

figured in the decision of Negus to deny the Quraish their request that the Muslims be extradited from Abyssinia.

## **Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) delays his departure from Makkah for Madina**

Faced with persecution and the stiff resolve of the Quraish, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) decided to migrate to Madina in August 622 AD after having spent thirteen years trying to convert the Quraish to Islam. However, despite the fact that he was aware of the murder plot being hatched against him by the Quraish, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) decided to delay his departure from Makkah till such time that he had adequately disposed of the valuables he held in trust for several citizens of Makkah. He appointed his trusted cousin, Ali bin Abu Talib, to stay in Makkah and to return all of these valuables to their rightful owners before migrating to Madina.

## **The Muslim army arrives at Badr a second time to keep their promise to an adversary**

The Prophet was a man of his words and could be trusted to deliver on his promises without fail. This applied to his military campaigns as well. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) never broke his promises. Once he gave his word to do or not to do a deed he unflinchingly stuck to his resolution. At the end of the Battle of Badr, the departing Abu Sufyan had challenged Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and the Muslims to meet with him at Badr a year later so that Abu Sufyan and the Quraish could avenge their loss at the Battle of Badr. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) promised to meet Abu Sufyan for a second Badr and was ready to go even if he had to go by himself. The result of this resolve was that he went followed by his companions but Abu Sufyan failed to turn up. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was a man of his word and his word could be trusted.

## **Jewish attempts to “bribe” the Prophet in Madina**

A brilliant example of the Prophet’s adherence to principles of honesty and integrity comes from his early Madina period when he was keen to win over the Jews of Madina to the cause of Islam. The event is best illustrated in Ibn Ishaq’s own words: “Ka’ab bin Asad and Ibn Saluba and his son Abdullah and Sha’ said one to another, ‘Let us go to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) to see if we can seduce him from his religion, for he is only a mortal’; so they went to him and said: ‘You know, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), that we are the rabbis, nobles, and leaders of the Jews; and if we follow you the rest of the Jews will follow you and not oppose us. Now we have a quarrel outstanding with some of our people and if we believe in you and say that you are the truthful will you, if we appoint you arbitrator between us, give judgment in our favor?’ The Prophet refused to do so despite the apparent benefit he could have derived through their support for his prophet-hood if he had helped them.<sup>58</sup>

## **Muhammad’s letters to world leaders of the day**

In 629 AD, the Prophet sent letters to world leaders to invite them to Islam. In response to the Prophet’s letter, Caesar ordered an Arab to be brought to him. The Arab turned out to be Abu Sufyan who was on a trading visit to Gaza and Syri, at that time. Caesar questioned Abu Sufyan about the Prophet and about the Prophet’s family. Faced with questioning by none other than Caesar himself, Abu Sufyan decided to tell the truth and spoke highly of the Prophet’s moral rectitude and truthfulness. Even the Prophet’s enemies were aware that he was known as Al-Sadiq and Al-Ameen in Makkah.

## **Fairness in dealing with others**

The Prophet was always fair in his dealing with others. We see constant examples of his fairness in his personal life and in his dealings with his wives. He provided for them equally and was equally kind to them. Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her) narrates that the Prophet cast lots to choose which of his wives would accompany him on his numerous travels. She said: “When the apostle intended to go on an expedition, he cast lots between his wives [to decide] which of them should accompany him.”

However, this is not to say that he liked them all equally. It was a well-known fact that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), to the end of his life, considered his wife Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her) in very high esteem. He was also very fond of his young wife Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her) and played with her and enjoyed her company tremendously. In 632 AD (11th year after Hijra), when he was on his death bed, he had the strength of character to call his wives and ask them to allow him to spend more time in Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her)’s chambers. Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar narrates as follows: “When he was in the house of Maimunah he became so weak that he could hardly get up. He called all his wives and asked them in whose house he should pass his days of sickness. Such was his regard for the feelings of his wives and of all men. They all consented to the house of Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her) since they knew of the Prophet’s extreme love for Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her).” Even in a matter so personal, the Prophet ensured that he dealt with all with absolute fairness.

## **Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) Was Honest and Upright and Wished the Same from Other Muslims**

After the Muslim success at the expedition of Khaibar, the Prophet ordered his companions to follow a number of injunctions in the future. Ibn Ishaq records the following among these injunctions: It is not “lawful for [a Muslim] to sell booty until it has been properly divided; nor is it lawful for him to ride an animal belonging to the booty of the Muslims with the intention of returning it to the pool when he has worn it out; nor is it lawful for him to wear a garment belonging to the booty of the Muslims with the intention of returning it to the pool when he has reduced it to rags.”

Another incident from the same campaign serves to highlight the Prophet’s strong sense of integrity and honesty. Muhammad’s slave, gifted to him by Rifaa bin Zaid al-Judhami, was hit by a stray arrow which killed him. When the Prophet’s companions congratulated the martyr on having attained paradise, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) replied: “Certainly not. His cloak is even now burning on him in Hell. He had surreptitiously stolen it on the day of Khaibar from the spoil of the Muslims.” This shocked the Muslims who suddenly realized that even small matters of dishonesty could lead them straight to hell.

Abu Hurairah reported that “a man demanded of the Prophet for repayment of a loan and was harsh to him. His Companions were about to attack him, but he said, ‘Leave him, as the creditor is entitled to make a demand. Give him a camel of the same age as the camel that is due to him. They said, ‘We find a better camel senior to it in age.’ He said, ‘Then buy it and give it to him.’”

Not only was the Prophet fair to others, he expected the same degree of fairness and even-handedness among his companions. The following saying of the Prophet aptly summarizes his views on this subject. An-Numan bin Bashir reported that his father took him to the Prophet and said to him: “I have gifted one of my slaves to this son of mine.” Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) asked him if he had given such a gift to every son of his. When An-Numan Bin Bashir’s father replied, “No,” the Prophet said: “Be mindful of your obligation to Allah and do justice in respect of your children.” Abu

Hurairah reported that once a Bedouin (an Arab nomadic dweller of the desert) asked the Prophet: “When will the Last Day be?” The Prophet replied to him: “When the practice of honoring a trust is lost, expect the Last Day.”

The Prophet was also honest and fair when others asked his opinion about personal and worldly matters. The following anecdote illustrates this point very well. Fatimah bint Qais reported the following incident: “I came to the Prophet and said to him: ‘Muawiyah and Abu-Jahm sent me a proposal of marriage.’ The Allah’s Messenger said, ‘Muawiyah is destitute and he has no property, and Abu-Jahm is very hard on women.’” In matters where his opinion was sought, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was frank and direct and did not leave any confusion in the mind of the person seeking his advice.

### **An indirect tribute to the Prophet’s integrity**

Several western historians have heaped immense praise on the administrative capabilities of Caliph Umar – the second Caliph of Islam and one of the two closest companions of the Prophet. The Prophet himself is attributed to have said: “There were [recipients of Divine inspiration] among the nations before you. If there is any of such [recipient of Divine inspiration] among my followers, he must be Umar.” Tor Andrae makes the following comments about Caliph Umar and about Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) indirectly: “Umar’s character reveals no dark areas. He stands before us clear, upright, and without blemish. That such a friend became and remained Muhammad’s most loyal helper, in spite of occasional differences of opinion, that the faith and conduct of the Prophet became his Sunnah, his holy custom, which he maintained and guarded with unalterable consistency, is the most important and conclusive proof of Mohammad’s religious and personal integrity.”



### **3. HUMILITY AND KINDNESS**

Muhammad's humility and kindness are legendary. His life history teaches us that one does not have to become proud and arrogant as one ascends to greater power over others. Muhammad's behavior, his actions, his demeanor, his conversation and his attire all retained their simplicity through to the very end of his life. Abu Hurairah has reported the following saying of the Prophet: "...on every day when the sun rises: doing justice between two men is charity, and assisting a man to ride an animal or to load his luggage on it is charity, and a good word is charity, every step which one takes towards (the mosque for) Salat [to offer congregational prayer in the mosque] is charity, and removing harmful things from the way is charity." This saying illustrates the importance Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) attached to acts of kindness towards others.

History shows time and again that successful leaders and conquerors that become popular often distance themselves from their people, whether because of pride, arrogance, security concerns or some other reason. Many such leaders soon become unpopular. Despite becoming very powerful in a very short time-frame after declaration of Prophet-hood, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) never changed his demeanor towards his people and effectively used this personality strength to develop a following, and impart a teaching, that became everlasting.

The Prophet's humility was legendary. He understood his existence in this world to be transitory and was focused on living a balanced life. He 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." A review of Muhammad's biography brings forth numerous examples of his humility and kindness. He wore simple clothes (except for a gifted robe and sandals that he wore on special occasions only), ate a very simple diet (mostly milk, dates and barley and rarely meat), and lived even more simply in small thatched huts adjoining the mosque in Madina. The following examples (which are not meant to be exhaustive) shed some light on this aspect of his personality.

#### **A humble childhood**

During his years as an orphan child in the Abu Talib household, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) probably performed the small services expected of a child. Many years later, one day when some people passed the Prophet carrying the fruits of the arak tree, a thorny bush used to feed camels and other animals, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) is said to have told them: "Take care of the black fruit. It was those I gathered when I used to lead the sheep out to graze." They said to him: "Envoy of Allah, were you then a shepherd of sheep?" He answered: "Yes, and so have all prophets been."

#### **Humility in personal habits**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was in the habit of visiting the sick. He followed any bier he met, accepted invitation of a slave to dinner, mended his own clothes, milked the goats, and waited upon himself. He never first withdrew his hand out of another man's palm, and turned not before the other had turned. He lived with his wives in a row of humble cottages, separated from one another by palm-branches cemented together with mud. He himself used to light the fire and sweep the floor.

On one of his journeys, the Prophet asked his companions to roast a goat. One volunteered to slaughter the animal, another to skin it, and another to cook it. The Prophet said that he would collect wood. "Messenger of God," his companions protested, "we will do all the work." "I know that you will do it,"

the Prophet replied, “but that would amount to discrimination, which I do not approve of. God does not like His servants to assert any superiority over their companions.” Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) would always assist his servants with their work. Anas ibn Malik, who served Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) for the ten years of his life, claimed that “He was never angry with me. He never treated me harshly.”

The Prophet was a shy man who seldom looked anyone in the eye. He never created for himself a forceful, charismatic gaze, never adopted a rhetorical stance. The rulers of Muhammad’s day ate in fine vaulted halls from magnificent gilded silver services. He, however, preferred to eat on the ground in the open air. There was no table, no tray, no carpet, simply a woven palm mat spread out on the ground. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) slept on a simple cot woven together with leaves and reeds. Once when he got up from his bed to greet his friend Umar, the latter was shocked to see the deep red bruise like marks left on the Prophet’s back by the reeds on his cot.

### **Muhammad’s arrival at Madina (622 AD)**

News of the Prophet’s migration from Makkah had travelled fast to Yathrib where the residents of the city were anxiously waiting for him. The Muslim residents used to go to the outskirts of the city and wait for him till the heat of the afternoon became too oppressive for them. One afternoon, a Jew climbed up the roof of one of the forts and saw the Prophet and his companion, Abu Bakr, approaching Yathrib on camel back. On hearing his shouts, the Muslims rushed out to greet the Prophet on the summit of Harra. The Prophet turned with them to the right and alighted at the quarters of Bani Amr bin Auf. Abu Bakr stood up and received the people while the Prophet sat down and kept silent. Some of the Ansaar who had not seen the Prophet before began greeting Abu Bakr and mistook him for the Prophet. However, when the sunshine fell on Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and Abu Bakr came forward and shielded him from the heat with his sheet only then did they come to identify the Prophet. Clearly, the Prophet’s outward appearance, demeanor and manners did not show anyone present that he was the Prophet of Islam. Apparently, the Prophet was also in no hurry to receive the adoration of the Ansaar.

### **Muhammad’s advice to the palm-growers in Madina**

Once in the Madina period, the Prophet saw some palm-growers engaged in a particular kind of grafting, and advised them against it. When the palm-growers followed his advice, they discovered that the yields had declined considerably. When the Prophet learnt about it, he told them, “I am a mere human being. When I command you to do anything about religion in the name of God, accept it, but when I give my personal opinion about worldly things, bear in mind that I am a human being and no more.”

The Prophet’s wife, Umm Salamah, has narrated the following saying of the Prophet: “Verily, I am only a human and the claimants bring to me (their disputes); perhaps some of them are more eloquent than others. I judge according to what I hear from them. So, he whom I, by my judgment give the undue share out of the right of a Muslim, I in fact give him a portion of (Hell) fire.” The Prophet was deeply aware of his humanity. He was also disturbed by the possibility that in matters of worldly disputes, he could be swayed by eloquence and may decide wrongfully. His humility shines through this saying of the Prophet which demonstrates his internal agitation at the possibility that he may inadvertently wrong another human being. Iyad bin Himar has recorded the following saying of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him): “Verily, Allah has revealed to me that you should adopt humility. So that no one may wrong another and no one may be disdainful and haughty towards another.”



## **Muhammad's Lenient Treatment of Abdullah ibn Ubbaiy, the Hypocrite, Reflects the Prophet's Humility**

Abdullah ibn Ubbaiy, a Leading man of Madina, was about to be crowned king of Madina when the Prophet arrived there. Soon after his arrival in Madina, the Prophet methodically went about increasing his influence and power. The rising power of the Prophet meant that Abdullah ibn Ubbayy's role in Madina steadily became diminished and marginalized. However, although he accepted Islam, he continued to plot against the Prophet and enjoyed very solid relationships with the Jewish tribe of Banu Nadir who remained his confederates. For instance, Abdullah ibn Ubbayy left the Uhud battle-field with his 300 warriors just before the start of hostilities. His departure from the battle must have demoralized the Muslims who were now greatly out-numbered. Despite the many problems Abdullah ibn Ubbayy created for the Prophet, the Prophet continued to treat him with respect. This writer does not know of any incident in which the Prophet directly confronted Abdullah ibn Ubbayy. The Prophet took no retaliatory actions against him and his friends, except leaving him out of delicate situations, sensitive deliberations and military campaigns. He even led the funeral prayer when Abdullah ibn Ubbayy died shortly after returning from the Tabuk expedition, in spite of strong disapproval of Umar bin Al-Khattab.

What hearts contain lies beyond the limits of men's knowledge, and the Prophet himself was an example of prudence and humility when it came to judging individuals whose sincerity or intentions were doubtful. He was well aware of the presence of many hypocrites around him, but he took no particular action against them. He remained cautious, sometimes wary, but he avoided any final judgment. This is a dramatic sign of the Prophet's humility in dealing with the actions and intentions of other human beings.

## **The case of Wahshi, the slayer of Muhammad's beloved uncle Hamza**

Wahshi was an Abyssinian slave of the Makkan chieftain, Jubayr bin Mutim, and was most skilful at the art of javelin through. Abu Sufyan's wife, Hind, promised him freedom in case he was able to kill Hamza, the Prophet's beloved uncle, during the Battle of Uhud. With a skilful throw of his javelin from a distance, Wahshi managed to kill Hamza and "went off to the camp, for [he] had no business with anyone but him." Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was distraught at the murder of Hamza. As for his treatment of Wahshi, Muhammad's kindness can be best understood in Wahshi's own words narrated by Ibn Ishaq: "When I returned to Makkah I was freed and lived there until the apostle conquered Makkah, when I fled to-Taif, and stayed there for some time. When the envoys of Taif went out to the apostle to surrender, I was in an impasse and thought that I would go to Syria or the Yaman, or any other country, and while I was in this anxiety a man said to me, 'Good heavens, what is the matter? He does not kill anyone who enters his religion and pronounces the shahadah.' On hearing this I went out of the town to the apostle at Madina, and the first thing to surprise him was to see me standing at his head, witnessing to the truth of God and His apostle. When he saw me he said, 'Is it Wahshi?' 'Yes, O apostle of God,' I said. He replied, 'Sit down and tell me how you killed Hamza.' So I told him...When I had finished he said, 'Woe to you, hide your face from me and never let me see you again.' So I used to avoid the apostle wherever he was so that he should not see me, until God took him."

## **Humility during capture of Makkah (629 AD)**

When the expatriated Prophet returned to Makkah as the head of a large Muslim force after eight years of forced absence from the city, he did not return as a proud commander of the faithful. Instead, the Makkans found him seated on his camel with excessive modesty and gratitude, prostrating himself repeatedly on the back of the camel he was riding before God, thankful to Him for all He had done. Some eight years earliee, the Prophet had left Makkah secretly, but with dignity and with his head held high. He now came back to Makkah in broad daylight, victorious, but this time he prostrated himself on his mount

in thankfulness to God. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was dignified when facing persecution and humble when victorious.

Instead of taking revenge, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) declared an all-embracing amnesty and peace, in place of any thought of avenging any past misdeeds. This event shows dramatically that the Prophet was not vain. He was most humble when he was at the pinnacle of his power in Makkah. Indeed, he was deeply aware that what he had achieved was not for him but a major milestone along the goal he had set out to accomplish.

When Ikrimah ibn Abu Jahl came to the Prophet to embrace Islam after the conquest of Makkah, the latter warned his companions: "Ikrimah, Abu Jahl's son, is coming to you as a believer. Do not insult his father, for insulting the dead hurts the living without reaching the dead."<sup>84</sup> He thus reminded his companions not only to forgive but also to always remember that nobody can be held responsible for someone else's mistakes, not even their father's.

After the conquest of Makkah, large groups of Makkans came to the Prophet to accept Islam. Abu Bakr came into the Ka'aba mosque leading his very old and blind father, Abu Quhafa, to the Prophet. On seeing this, the apostle said: "Why did you not leave the old man in his house, so that I could come to him there?" Abu Bakr replied that it was more fitting that his father should come to see the Prophet of Islam than vice versa. This small incident demonstrates the tremendous humility of the Prophet. While he was now the undisputed Sayyid of Arabia; he disliked the fact that his close friend had brought his ailing father to him in order for the father to accept Islam.

After the capture of Makkah, Abu Sufyan's wife, Hind, came to the Prophet of Islam veiled and disguised and as part of a large group of Quraish women because of her role in the murder of the Prophet's beloved uncle Hamza in the Battle of Uhud. These women approached Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) in order to convert to Islam. The Prophet instructed them in Islam and accepted their allegiance. However, Hind's dialogue with the Prophet is very illuminating as it sheds valuable light on the Prophet's humility and kindness. The dialogue is recorded by Ibn Ishaq. The Prophet said, "And you shall not steal." She said, "By God, I used to take a little of Abu Sufyan's money and I do not know whether that is lawful for me or not." He said, "Do not commit adultery." She answered, "Does a free woman commit adultery, O Apostle of God?" He said, "And you shall not kill your children." She said, "I brought them up when they were little and you killed them on the day of Badr when they were grown up, so you are the one to know about them." The Prophet said, "You shall not disobey me in carrying out orders to do good." She responded: "We should not have sat all this time if we wanted to disobey you in such orders." This dialogue shows the Prophet's immense patience in dealing with all kinds of situations. This Quraish noblewoman had arranged for the murder of his beloved uncle and was a sworn enemy of the Prophet and Islam till this time. The Prophet clearly exhibited great patience in helping her convert to Islam.

## **Kindness towards children and animals**

The following incident reveals the highly humane character of the Prophet. A detachment of the Muslim army that he entrusted with a particular mission at the Battle of Hunain happened to kill a few children along with the enemy combatants. At the Prophet's castigation, a Muslim soldier, defending his actions, said: "They were only pagans' children." At this, the Prophet became furious and remarked: "The best Muslims among you are also pagans' children. Beware, do not kill children. Beware, do not kill children! Every soul is born in the natural state until it declares (its choice) by its tongue, and it is its parents that educate it to become a Jew or a Christian."

Muhammad's cousin, Jafar Bin Abu Talib, who was a commander of the Muslim army, was killed at the Battle of Mutah against the Roman in September 629 AD (8th year AH). Jafar was a brother of Ali bin Abu Talib, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet. This was a major loss for the Muslims and a personal loss for the Prophet and his family. Ibn Ishaq has recorded the following comments from Asma bint Umayy, wife of Jafar Bin Abu Talib: "The apostle came in to me when I had just tanned forty skins and kneaded my dough and washed and oiled and cleaned my children. He asked me to bring him Jafar's sons and when I did so he smelled them and his eyes filled with tears. I asked him whether he had heard bad news about Jafar and his companions, and he said that he had and that they had been killed that day." The Prophet then went to the house of Zayd ibn Harithah, who had also been killed in the same battle. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had loved Zayd like a son and his eyes swelled up with tears as he told Um Ayman and Usamah of Zayd's death. As he left Zayd's house, Zayd's youngest daughter came running out of her home and rushed into the Prophet's arms. The Prophet wept as he consoled her. A companion who was passing by asked the Prophet for an explanation. The Prophet answered that this was "someone who loves weeping for his beloved." On a personal level, the Prophet was most humane and kind. He empathized with the feelings and sufferings of others around him.

The Prophet's companion, Abu Hurairah reported: "The Prophet kissed his grandson Hassan bin Ali in the presence of Al-Aqra bin Habis. Thereupon, he remarked: "I have ten children and I have never kissed any one of them." Allah's Messenger looked at him and said, "He who does not show mercy to others will not be shown mercy."

Muhammad's kindness was not limited to humans alone. It extended to animals. He was known to rise and open the door for a cat seeking to enter. He attended with his own hands to a sick rooster and rubbed down his own horse with his own sleeve. When Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her) rode on an obstinate camel and began to pull him hardly, he said to her, "Softly and gently please."

It is reported that when the Muslim army was marching on Makkah, the Prophet saw a bitch with her puppies on the road side. He immediately issued orders that the bitch and her puppies were not be injured and, in fact, stationed a soldier at the site to ensure that the animals were not harmed by the Muslim army in any way. Anas reported that when the Muslim army encamped for the night somewhere, the Muslim soldiers "would not offer (voluntary) prayers until [they] had unsaddled [their] beasts." Kindness was a part of the Prophet's daily life. He cared deeply not only for people but for all creatures.

The Prophet's companion, Abu Hurairah [a kuniya that literally means "father of the kittens" Allah's Messenger (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) gave him this kuniya when he saw him with a cat, reported that the Prophet shared the following story with his companions: "While a man was walking on his way, he became extremely thirsty. He found a well; he went down into it to drink water. Upon leaving it, he saw a dog which was panting out of thirst. His tongue was lolling out and he was eating moist earth from extreme thirst. The man thought to himself: 'This dog is extremely thirsty as I was.' So he descended into the well, filled up his leather sock with water, and holding it in his teeth, climbed up and quenched the thirst of the dog. Allah appreciated his action and forgave his sins." The Companions asked: "Shall we be rewarded for showing kindness to the animals also?" He said, "A reward is given in connection with every living creature." Abu Hurairah reported another saying of the Prophet: "When you travel through green and lush land, give the camels their due from the ground, and when you travel through a dry and barren land, make them walk quickly lest their strength falters."

## **Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) Forgives Muslims Who Did Not Join Tabuk Expedition**

In terms of its sheer scale and audacity, the expedition to Tabuk was perhaps the most difficult and potentially dangerous mission undertaken by the Prophet. This was the first Muslim expedition against the Byzantine Empire, the only acknowledged super-power of the time that had gained even more power and stature because of their recent victory over the Persian Empire. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) left Madina with more than thirty thousand Muslim fighters – the largest fighting force he ever gathered. However, many of his companions did not join him for various reasons. Considering the importance Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had attached to this campaign, he must have been disappointed with this. Upon his return to Madina, these companions gathered around him and gave him various excuses to explain their absence. Ka’ab bin Malik reports that “when [Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)] sat, those who had remained behind him began to put forward their excuses and take an oath before him. They were more than eighty in number. Allah’s Messenger accepted their excuses on the very face of them and accepted their allegiance and sought forgiveness for them and left their insights to Allah.”

## **Muhammad’s Last Hajj Sermon**

A truly inspiring example of his humility is recorded as a part of his last sermon which he administered as part of his last pilgrimage to Makkah in 632 AD. At the crowning moment of his Prophet-hood when he had unquestionably set the stage for Islam to be a major force in history, and at the time the Quran was completed, he ended his sermon to a gathering of more than 125,000 Muslims<sup>96</sup> by making them his judge: “O people, have I faithfully delivered unto you my message?” A powerful murmur of assent, “O God, yes!” rolled like thunder throughout the valley. At this, the Prophet raised his right forefinger and said, “O God, bear witness!” Muhammad’s need for feedback is a strong indication of his humility. Even though he was effectively the religious, military and political ruler of Arabia at this time; he was first and foremost a Messenger who was eager to know whether he had been effective in performing the task entrusted to him. At the end of the sermon, the assembled pilgrims answered: “We bear witness that you have faithfully conveyed the message, that you have fulfilled your mission, and that you have given your community good advice.”

## **Muhammad’s Instructions to Educators He Sent to Other Tribes**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was keen to project a positive image of Islam in communities that were considering converting to Islam. He often sent his close companions to other tribes to teach them the basic tenets of Islam. However, he chose among his companions very carefully to ensure that these individuals were patient, educated, caring and excellent communicators. For instance, when the Prophet sent Muadh to instruct the Yemenis in Islam, he gave him the following instructions: “Deal gently and not harshly; announce good news and do not repel people.” Thus, not only was the Prophet himself humble and kind, he desired to inculcate the same virtues in his close companions.

## **Humble in Personal Demeanor**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was humble to the point of being shy. He often walked looking down at his feet. He seldom laughed although he was known to smile. He was gentle and kind. His voice was not loud and shrill but modest and moderate. It is a sign of his humble personal demeanor that most new visitors who approached him for the first time in his mosque in Madina often had to call out his name to get his attention since they could not easily make him out from among his companions. His elevated status of a Prophet was not generally visible to a new-comer because of his

immense modestor. He disliked arrogance, loud talk and haughty behavior. Jabir bin Abdullah has recorded the following saying of the Prophet: “The dearest and the closest of you to me on the Day of Resurrection will be those who are the best in behavior; and the most hateful and the farthest from me on the Day of Resurrection will be the talkative and the most pretentious and the most rhetorical.”

## **Modest to the Very End of His Life**

It is said that in the last days of his life in Madina when he was at the pinnacle of his religious, military and political authority, the Prophet would readily get off the mat where he would be seated and make place for an unknown visitor while sitting on mud himself.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was most diligent in offering prayers. Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her) reports that the Prophet kept standing (in voluntary prayer) so long that the skin of his feet would crack. She asked him: “Why do you do this, while you have been forgiven of your former and latter sins?” Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) responded: “Should I not be a grateful slave of Allah?”

As he lay on his death-bed in 632 AD, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) would have been quite satisfied with a life well-lived. Even his staunchest adversaries had to admit that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had accomplished his mission in life. It would have been very easy for the Prophet to ascribe super-natural powers to his persona. In fact, many of his followers would have been quite happy if he had done so. Instead, he curbed their enthusiasm and warned them not to deify him. On his death-bed, the Prophet was informed that a rumor had spread among the faithful that he was dead. This caused great grief among the faithful. The Prophet mustered all of his courage, walked to the mosque and addressed the gathering in the following words: “I am told that rumor of the death of your Prophet has filled you with alarm, but has any prophet before me lived forever? Everything happens according to God’s will and has its appointed time which can neither be hastened nor avoided. I will return to my Lord who has sent me.” Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her) reported that while the Prophet was reclining against her (during his last illness), she heard him saying “O Allah, forgive me, bestow Your Mercy on me and let me join with the exalted companions.” This probably was the last saying of the Prophet. It is quite telling that he was seeking God’s forgiveness and mercy for himself. Muslims generally believe that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was the closest to Allah. For someone like Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) to seek Allah’s mercy and forgiveness is an amazing demonstration of his humility.

## **Muhammad’s insistence on his being only human**

The Prophet repeatedly stressed that he was but a humble servant of God. He never attributed any extra-human powers to himself and emphatically rejected any attempts to deify him. In fact, he warned his people to ensure that their belief in the oneness of God was paramount. The Quran also emphasizes the same point over and over again: “I am but a human like you unto whom a revelation is given that your God is one God.” The Quran also asserts in many places that “God does not forgive any association of aught with Him but He forgives to whomsoever He wishes anything else.” Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was so humble that he once said: “By God, I really do not know, even though I am God’s messenger, what will become of me and what will become of you.”

Most of Muhammad’s followers who saw how he moved from immense weakness to great strength in a very short period of ten years would readily have ascribed super-natural powers to him. However, it is quite telling that Abu Bakr broke the news of the Prophet’s death to the faithful in Madina in 632 AD in the following words: “O men, if anyone worships Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) is dead: if anyone worships God, God is

alive, immortal.” Then he recited the following verses from the Quran: “Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) is nothing but an apostle. Apostles have passed away before him. Can it be that if he were to die or be killed you would turn back on your heels? He who turns back does no harm to God and God will reward the grateful.”

## **Can a prophet be modest?**

Many western historians have legitimately asked this question.<sup>107</sup> Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) accepted with modesty the role of herald that had been assigned to him by God. However, he must have had a legitimate pride in his vocation. He, after all, was the one Arab selected for this important mission. One is reminded of Muhammad’s response showing both humility and pride to his uncle Abu Talib who suggested a rapprochement with the other Quraish elders in the early days of his public proclamation of Islam in Makkah: “By Allah! If they placed the sun in my right hand and moon in my left, I would never abandon this course until Allah makes it victorious, or I die therein.”

Any intelligent politician, in Makkah, Madina or elsewhere in Arabia, would have easily understood the ramifications of this development. The logic of Muhammad’s position was bound to push him, in spite of himself, to supreme power. How could a man who was in direct communication with the Almighty be subjected to majority vote of a council of elders? How could the revelations received from up above be subjected to discussion and debate? Clearly, an acceptance of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) as a prophet necessitated accepting him as the final authority on human behavior in religious, political and military spheres. Yet this deliberated choice, which was bound to put him in a position of supreme power, was always exercised hand in hand with remarkable humility. This humility was clearly a part of the Prophet’s character but it was exercised as a strategy. The Prophet’s humility and approachability made it easy for others to be-friend him. He could disarm his opponents with his pleasant personality and measured conversation. As Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) gained stature in Madina and evolved into the Leading Sayyed of the area, many Arab tribes from far and wide sent deputations to Madina to meet with him and to assess him. His humility, kindness, hospitality and generosity of spirit made it easy for him to make friends. Most of these deputations either converted to Islam or developed political and military alliances with the Islamic state. Muhammad’s (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) humility was also a great example to the four distinguished Caliphs (known as Khulfa-e-Rashideen in Islam or the “rightly guided Caliphs”) who followed Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and helped them in their efforts to expand Islam far beyond the frontiers of Arabia.



## **4. SELF-PRESERVATION INSTINCT**

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was always most concerned about his physical safety and did not get in harm's way unnecessarily. The Quran says: "And we sent you as a blessing to all worlds". This emphasizes the universality of the Prophet's message. Clearly, it would have been a great tragedy if the Prophet had not protected his life or if his life had been cut short by some adverse event or accident. The message of the Quran was completed over a twenty-three year period. An early demise of the Prophet would have left his message incomplete. The early Surahs (chapters) of the Quran that date from the Makkah period have a different tone from the later Madina period Surahs. Many of the early Surahs focus on the basic tenets of Islam (the omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence and oneness of God, for example, and exhort the non-believers to believe in Islam's message). Many of the later chapters date from a period where Islam had gained a wide foot-print and great success. Many chapters of this period are focused on detailed directions to the Muslim community on matters such as marriage, shares of children in the estate of their fathers, relationship of the Islamic state with other states, etc.

One has to understand the Arab concept of *jiwar* to understand how Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) could continue to preach to the Arabs in Makkah for thirteen years without serious physical harm to himself. The Prophet did not find it degrading to ask for protection for he knew that without this protection his mission was in peril. Since proclaiming his prophet-hood, the Prophet was serially under the protection of his uncle Abu Talib, his uncle Abbas, Mu'tim the chieftain of Nawfal tribe, and later under the protection of the Ansaar in Madina on a continuous basis. It would be fair to argue that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was a great believer in life insurance – he ensured that he was continuously protected. In fact, the presence of his pagan uncle, Abbas, at the Second Pledge of Aqabah in 622 AD (when a large contingent of more than seventy Muslims from Yathrib (later to be renamed Madina) pledged to protect Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) from harm in case he decided to migrate to their city) shows that the Prophet believed in and understood the concept of reinsurance.

### **Importance of *Jiwar* (protection) in the Arab Culture**

The Arab tribal culture put great emphasis on *jiwar*. Roughly translated as protection, *jiwar* implied that the client (or seeker of *jiwar*) was under protection of someone who had offered him *jiwar*. Naturally, powerful tribal leaders were in a better position to offer *jiwar* to the weak members of society. For instance, in the early days of Muhammad's (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) proclamation of Prophethood in Makkah, the Muslims were being persecuted by the powerful Quraish of Makkah. However, while the powerless converts and slaves would be picked out and beaten up by gangs; the Muslims who were safe within the protection of one of the clans would be scorned, accused of betraying their heritage, their ancestors and their reputation but not threatened physically. It was the Arab tradition not to refuse *jiwar* even to enemies when requested by them. Naturally, stronger tribes were in a better position to offer *jiwar* compared to weak tribes. The ancient Arab custom of hospitality implied that a seeker of *jiwar* was rarely spurned.

The following incident will illustrate this concept and its importance. In spite of this ancient Arab custom, a number of prominent Muslims refused to accept *jiwar* because they desired to equalize with weak Muslims. For instance, `Uthman (May Allah be pleased with him) was able to walk the streets of Makkah in almost complete safety. This actually bothered `Uthman (May Allah be pleased with him) a great deal for he was not at peace with the knowledge that, while he was safe, his brothers in faith suffered on a daily basis. He felt a great deal of anxiety for being in a better situation than they were in. He said to himself, "It is a great defect in myself that I go about safely in the morning and afternoon, under the

protection of a man from the people of polytheism, while my companions (May Allah be pleased with them) and the people of my religion are subjected to hardship and affliction for the cause of Allah” `Uthman (May Allah be pleased with him) then went to Al-Waleed ibn Al-Mugheerah and said, `O Abu `Abd-Shams (i.e., Al-Waleed), you have fulfilled your obligation, but I now return to you your protection.” “My nephew, why?” asked Al-Waleed. `Perhaps you have been harmed or violated in some way.” “No,” said `Uthman (May Allah be pleased with him), `But I am content with the protection of Allah, and I do not want to seek out the protection of anyone else.’ “Then go to the Masjid [Ka’aba] and openly renounce my protection, just as I gave it to you openly.’ The two of them then went to the Ka’aba and in front of the people that were gathered there, `Uthman (May Allah be pleased with him) pronounced that he was no longer under the protection of Al-Waleed.

Upon renouncing Al-Waleed's protection, `Uthman (May Allah be pleased with him) sat down in one of Quraiss gatherings. Among those present was Labeed ibn Rabe’ah, the famous poet. Labeed was reciting some of his poetry. `Indeed, everything other than Allah is false,’ Labeed said. `Uthman (May Allah be pleased with him). said, `You have spoken the truth.

`And every instance of happiness must necessarily come to an end,’ continued Labeed. “You have uttered a lie,” said `Uthman (May Allah be pleased with him). `The happiness of Paradise never comes to an end!” Labeed, who was not a native member of the Quraish, said, `O people of Quraish, a person who would sit among [you] was never before harmed (like this)! When has this started among you?” One man among those gathered said, `Indeed, he is one among other foolish people that are with him; they have parted from our religion, so please do not mind what he says.’ `Uthman (May Allah be pleased with him) refuted the man's words, and the situation between them soon escalated, until the man stood up and struck `Uthman (May Allah be pleased with him) in the eye, causing it to turn green in color.

Standing nearby, Al-Waleed ibn Al-Mugheerah saw and heard all that had happened. He said to Uthman (May Allah be pleased with him):” “My nephew, by Allah, your eye needed not the blow that was inflicted to it, for you had over you (my) secure protection.’ “By Allah,” Uthman said, “My good eye is in need of that which afflicted its sister (i.e., his other eye) in the way of Allah. And indeed, I am under the protection of He Who is mightier and more able than you are, O Abu `Abd-Shams.” Feeling sorry for his relative, Al-Waleed repeated his offer to protect `Uthman t, but the latter outright refused. `Uthman (May Allah be pleased with him) did not have to forego Al-Waleed’s protection, but he did so anyway, desiring reward from Allah (SWT).

## **System of Mutually Assured Destruction**

It should be remembered that the system of public security in force in Makkah was the protection by each clan of its members. If a member of Clan A killed a member of Clan B, another member of Clan B was justified to kill another member of Clan A. The principle of “a life for a life” prevailed and powerful Arab tribes were reluctant to shed blood of members of other powerful tribes. Most of the clans were sufficiently strong to cause serious inconvenience to anyone who mal-treated a clansman or confederate; and thus there was little scope for physical violence to members of a Leading family of Makkah. The Leading tribes, therefore, ascribed to a doctrine of mutually assured destruction in case one of their members was threatened by another tribe.

## **Abu Talib and the Banu Hashim Clan were Protectors of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) himself escaped physical harm because his clan, the Banu Hashim, stuck by him and continuously offered him jiwār. The reason for this was that his uncle



Abu Talib, under whose protection he had grown up, still retained considerable influence among the Banu Hashim, in spite of the decline in his fortunes. The honor of the clan demanded that even the most culpable members be protected. The fact that Abu Talib was steadfast in his defence of his nephew considerably irked his opponents in the other clans of the Quraish who over time used this pretext to isolate Banu Hashim in many ways.

The Arabs took *jiwar* quite seriously indeed. We see this very clearly in the following request several leaders of the Quraish made to Muhammad's uncle and protector, Abu Talib: "O Abu Talib, your nephew has cursed our gods, insulted our religion, mocked our way of life and accused our forefathers of error; either you must stop him or you must let us get at him..."

### **For Most of His Preaching Career in Makkah, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was Under Protection**

In the Makkan period, physical attacks on the Prophet consisted of the Quraish littering with thorns the lanes he passed. They threw filth at him. Uqba ibn Muail flung a sheet of cloth around Muhammad's neck when the latter was offering his prayers in the Haram (Ka'aba) and dragged him so forcefully that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) fell on his knees. The Quraish would also throw the entrails of a dead camel on him.

The persecution of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was of a very under-handed nature. As long as he was protected by his uncle and his clan a serious threat to his safety was out of the question. His opponents had to content themselves with plotting against the Prophet in secret meetings and with maligning and ridiculing him. Ibn Ishaq comments on this in the following words on the occasion of the first Muslim immigration to Abyssinia: "When the apostle saw the affliction of his companions and that though he escaped it because of his standing with Allah and his uncle Abu Talib, he could not protect them," he advised some of them to migrate to Abyssinia.

Most Muslim writers concur that during the thirteen years Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) preached Islam in Makkah, the one real threat to his life came about only at the very end when the tribes of Quraish conspired to join forces to kill him in the summer of AD 622 after the death of Mu'tim, the leader of the Nawfal clan, who had provided protection to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar, for example, has the following to say about the enmity of the Quraish in those thirteen years: "They abused him; they tortured him and his small band, the boycotted him for nearly three years; they stoned him (when he went to Taif) and finally they planned to kill him."

### **The Prophet's Loss of Protection under the Leadership of Abu Lahab**

*Jiwar* (protection) was a most serious affair at that time in Arabia. Someone who had been offered protection could not be harmed unless the offender wished to invite the wrath of the protecting clan. After the death of Abu Talib in 619 AD, the protection of the Prophet became the responsibility of his uncle Abu Lahab, who was actually an enemy of the Prophet. In this period, a young hooligan used to throw dust on Muhammad's head. Ibn Ishaq reports that when this happened, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) went into his house with the dust still on his head and one of his daughters got up to wash it away, weeping as she did so. "Don't weep, my little girl," he said, "for God will protect your father." He went on to say: "Quraish never treated me thus while Abu Talib was alive."

Baihaki, in his book *Proof of Prophecy*<sup>114</sup> relates that Amr ibn Al Aas was asked, what was the hardest thing which the Prophet was obliged to suffer from the Quraish? He answered: "I was once present when

the chief among the idolaters assembled at the Ka'aba. They were discussing Allah's Apostle, and said: 'Never have we had to tolerate from anyone what we have had to tolerate from this man. He slanders our fathers, criticizes our religion, divides our people, and blasphemes our gods. Such grievous things have we tolerated from this man, etc.' Meanwhile the Apostle of Allah approached. He touched the corner of the Ka'aba and passed by those assembled in order to walk around the sanctuary. They heaped abuse upon him as he passed, and it was evident that he understood what they were saying. This was repeated three times. The third time he stopped and said: "Men of Quraish! I will surely repay you for this with interest!" His words so affected the men that there was not one among them who did not sit as still as if he were carrying a bird upon his head. Finally, in order to pacify him, the man who had formerly been the worst of the group said: "Go, Abul Qasim [Abul Qasim was the Prophet's kuniya as he was father of Qasim, his son, who had died in infancy], you are no fool." During the night his enemies regretted their caution. The next day, when they again met Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) at the Ka'aba, they all rushed toward him and surrounded him, and said: "Are you he who abuses our gods and our religion?" He replied: "Yes, it is I who speak thus." Then I saw that a man seized his cloak. Abu Bakr now arose and said, with tears: "Woe to you, will you kill a man because he says, Allah is my Lord?" Then they went away. This was the hardest thing that he was compelled to suffer at their hands." Another time his worst enemy, his uncle Abu Jahl, and several of his companions, took the uterus of a newly slaughtered camel and struck the Prophet between the shoulders with it as he was bowed in prayer. Then Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) spoke three times: "Allah! Thou must repay the Quraish for this!" Therewith he mentioned by name seven of his bitterest enemies. All seven of them died as unbelievers at Badr. The story states that this was the only time that the Prophet was heard to petition Allah for the punishment of enemies."

## **Migration to Madina without Any Protection**

When time came for the migration of Muslims from Makkah in 622 AD, the Prophet first arranged for the secret transport of Muslims from Makkah. He did not leave Makkah until everyone (except for his cousin Ali, whom he had entrusted with the solemn duty of returning valuables various people of Quraish had entrusted to him) had left town safely. This was important because the eyes of the Quraish were focused on him and they watched his every movement. He, on the other hand, made sure that his followers left Makkah in ones and twos and in such a manner that they did not arouse much interest. This, generally, helped the Muslims leave Makkah without being noticed or detained by the Quraish. It is clear that the Prophet waited for the safe exit of his followers before he left Makkah himself. Eventually, Makkah became empty of Muslims and many houses were left desolate and without inhabitants. For instance, of the large Jahsh house in the middle of Makkah, Utba ibn Rabiah noted that it looked desolate and portentous "with its doors blowing to and fro, empty of inhabitants."

The Prophet was most careful in arranging an orderly but surreptitious exit for his followers from Makkah since many of them now enjoyed no protection from their clans. The same was true of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) himself as Abu Lahab, the new clan leader of the Hashim clan, had withdrawn his protection. Muhammad's own journey to Madina was bound to be difficult and dangerous. At this time, the energies of the Quraish were focused on harming him personally and he had let himself stay in their cross-hairs in order to ensure the safe exit of his followers from Makkah prior to his own departure. Muhammad's late night departure from Makkah along with his friend, Abu Bakr, was the beginning of an extremely dangerous journey since, while on the road, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was not yet under anybody's formal protection.

## **Meticulous Planning for the Emigration to Madina**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) meticulously planned his emigration to Madina over a two year period. He left nothing to chance. His first meeting with a small contingent of pilgrims from Yathrib took place during the Hajj pilgrimage of 620 AD. They listened to his message and eventually accepted the message of Islam. They promised to inform the members of their tribe of the substance of the message and to keep in contact with the Prophet. A year later, during the Hajj season of 621 AD, a follow-up meeting was held at Al-Aqabah between the Prophet and the Yathrib delegation. This clandestine meeting was attended by twelve people from Yathrib. The Prophet sent with them a most able companion, Musa'b bin Umayr to teach them Islam. Musa'b was known for his calm, his wisdom and the beauty of his recitation of the Quran. Historians have recorded Musa'b's achievements in converting many Yathrib chieftains and inhabitants to Islam. However, he must also have remained in contact with the Prophet and reported on the political and cultural landscape of the city to him. Muhammad's eventual departure in the middle of the night for Yathrib was therefore preceded by meticulous planning of more than two years. The two major aims of this planning were (a) to safeguard the Muslim community in a secret transition to a new home and (b) to avoid physical harm to the Prophet himself.

## **The Prophet's Pursuit of Self-Preservation Should not be Equated with Timidity**

It is important to distinguish between the Prophet's avoidance of recklessness and timidity. There are innumerable examples of personal courage, valor and bravery on the part of the Prophet throughout his life.

Although the Prophet was careful about not putting his life in unnecessary danger, it does not mean that he was timid in his dealings with others. Quite the contrary, in his public preaching in Makkah he was very daring and vigorous in his approach. In fact, the Quraish became quite distressed by the aggressive preaching tactics of the Prophet. As a reaction, they stirred up against him foolish men who called him a liar, insulted him, and accused him of being a poet, a sorcerer, a diviner, and of being possessed. However, despite threats to his life and challenges to his sanity and good moral standing, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) continued not only to preach the oneness of God but also continued to condemn the idols of the Quraish.

One can recall an important incident dating back to the consultations of the Quraish about banishing the Hashim and al-Muttalib clans in order to make them give up their protection of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) in 616 AD. A delegation of the Quraish finally met with Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and suggested a compromise: the Muslims could worship Allah in their religion and the others could go on worshipping the three goddesses Al-Lat, Al-Uzza and Manat. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) would have nothing to do with such a compromise and he responded to this delegation of the Quraish by reciting Sura 109 of the Quran:

*Say: 'O Unbelievers,*

*I serve not what you serve.*

*And you are not serving what I serve.*

*Nor am I serving what you have served.*

*Neither are you serving what I serve.*

*To you your religion and to me my religion!*

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) never hid behind ushers, doormen or bodyguards. In times of war two brothers volunteered to sleep across his doorway but this was always an exceptional measure. He always remained accessible to whoever wished to speak to him.

The only incident this writer found where Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) intentionally put matters of personal safety aside and engaged in a one-to-one duel with an enemy was when he engaged in hand-to-hand combat at the Battle of Uhud with Ubayy bin Khalaf who had challenged him to a dual. Rather than hide behind the security of some of his more physically fit companions, the Prophet faced him with a javelin in his hand. He stabbed Ubayy bin Khalaf in his collarbone and the latter fled in panic. This wound proved mortal and Ubayy bin Khalaf died at Sarif.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was always deeply aware of his grand mission in life. He was keen to preserve his life in order to fully serve out his time in the cause entrusted to him. As such, he was careful not to put his life in jeopardy for frivolous matters and risks.

## **The Prophet was Pragmatic about Seeking Protection**

The Prophet was not averse to seeking protection from non-Muslim notables of Quraish. His return from his unsuccessful preaching visit to the prosperous agrarian metropolis of Taif, about sixty kilometers to the south-east of Makkah, in May/June 619 AD demonstrates this fact very dramatically. The news of his heckling at the hands of the prosperous community of Taif preceded him back to Makkah. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had been pelted with stones in Taif and his feet bled as he made his way back towards Makkah. He was acutely aware of his own vulnerability since the people of Taif had already demonstrated to the people of Makkah that physical harm to the Prophet was very much possible. On his return to Makkah, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) did not proceed directly to the city and stayed in Nakhlah. From Nakhlah, he first sent a message to the chief of Zuhrah tribe, the clan of his long-dead mother, asking for his protection. The chief of Zuhrah clan declined protection to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). Next, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) sent a similar message to the chief of the Amir clan but received a similar answer. Finally, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) sent a message to Mu'tim, the chivalric head of the Nawfal clan who accepted the request at once. Mu'tim had the courage to agree to what must have been the most unpopular decision of a Quraish notable on that day. Mu'tim and his sons escorted Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) back to Makkah with their swords unsheathed to take care of anyone who stood in their way. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) thus safely made his way back to the Ka'aba sanctuary. In fact, the death of Motim in the summer of 622 AD was a major factor that made Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) decide to leave Makkah, his beloved city, for sanctuary in the small far-off town of Yathrib.

## **Muhammad's Continuous Pursuit of Protection**

After Abu Lahab's withdrawal of protection in Makkah and Muhammad's unsuccessful preaching trip to Taif, it must have been obvious to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) that he now needed to get away from the most hostile climate of Makkah. Historians have recorded that at the time of the Hajj pilgrimage in 620 AD, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) met with no less than fifteen contingents of Hajj pilgrims from far-off Arab lands at Mina, in the suburbs of Makkah. Ibn Hisham states that the Prophet was then looking for alliances in order to be able to go abroad and obtain protection and defence when needed. The subject matter of these endeavors was: "Give me protection and

follow my teaching and you will soon become the masters of the neighboring empires of the Persians and the Byzantines.” For Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), as can be seen from numerous incidents, was certain of it, as from the very first years of his mission.

## **Agreements with the People from Yathrib Guaranteed his Protection before his Migration**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) conducted his secret discussions and negotiations with people from Yathrib over a three year period – during the Hajj pilgrimage in the summer months of AD 620, 621 and 622. In the first year, he met with six people from the oasis of Yathrib who asked for a Muslim preacher to be sent back with them. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) agreed and chose well in sending Mus’ab Ibn Umair to Yathrib with them.

However, in his final negotiations with people of Yathrib that took place in the Hajj season of AD 622, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was careful to take his pagan uncle, Abbas, with him to meet more than seventy members of the Aws and Khazraj tribes of Yathrib. In the late night clandestine meeting on the Aqaba hill outside Makkah, Abbas escorted his nephew Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) decided to leave for Madina only after the people from Yathrib agreed to defend him as much as they would defend their families. Abbas was there as a form of reinsurance and a notable of Quraish who had witnessed this pact between Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and the Aws and Khazraj of Yathrib. It is interesting to note that it was Abbas and not Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) who first addressed this secret late night gathering. Abbas was an elder statesman of the Quraish and a man of high standing in Makkah. He addressed the gathering in the following words: “O you people...we have protected [Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)] from our people as much as we could...If you think you can...defend him against the enemies, then assume the burden you have taken. But if you are going to surrender him and betray him...you had better leave him now because he is respected and well defended in his own place.” The deputation from Yathrib pledged to protect the Prophet. Al-Bara bin Marur, for instance, used the following words in pledging allegiance to the Prophet: “We swear by Allah, Who sent you as a Prophet in Truth, that we will protect you from whatever we protect our women from. Have confidence in us, O Messenger of Allah. By Allah, we are genuine fighters and quite reliable in war, it is a characteristic passed down to us from our ancestors.”<sup>119</sup>

## **Need for Self-Preservation in Madina**

Muhammad’s stature in Madina was radically different from his position in Makkah. In Makkah, the Prophet had not succeeded in developing a great following despite thirteen years of preaching in the city. Most people he came across in Makkah did not believe in him. Many, in fact, ridiculed him and made fun of him. Some notables were bent upon killing him. On the other hand, on arrival at Madina, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) found himself the head of a nascent Islamic state. Stanley-Lane Pool writes that in Madina, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) “was virtually a king, ruling a large city with despotic power, and needing every resource of statecraft to maintain order among its contentious elements.” A group of people, known as the “hypocrites” in the Quran had accepted Islam but looked for opportunities to weaken the Prophet on every occasion. The Jewish tribes of Madina were also most unhappy with Muhammad’s (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) growing power in the city since their position in Madina was now becoming marginalized. These developments called for the Prophet to maintain a focus on his self-preservation and also on the preservation and protection of his community.

## **Self-preservation during Military Conflicts**

The Prophet did not expose himself to unnecessary physical harm, he wore double coat of arms during the Battle of Uhud. Before the start of the Battle of Badr, a trellis was built for the Prophet at the suggestion of Sa'ad bin Muadh to provide reasonable protection to the leader. A small hut was set up on top of a hill so that the Prophet could survey the whole scene during the battle and issue appropriate orders to his commanders. Thus, His head-quarters was not exposed and arrows could not achieve a direct hit. Two fast she-camels were available near his hut so that they could be used in case of a retreat.<sup>121</sup> The goal was that, in the case of defeat, the Prophet could return to Madina unharmed and fight the Makkans another day.

During the Battle of Uhud, the Prophet was well-hidden in a crevice of Mount Uhud. He had a number of his closest friends with him personally guarding him. When Abu Sufyan called out to him, he asked his friends to stay quiet and not give away his location to his enemies. Even in times of peace in Madina, armed guards typically watched over the Prophet as he slept through the night in Madina in times of military emergency.

Thus we find that Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was consistently concerned about his self-preservation. He was most judicious in using the Arab tradition of *jiwar* during the Makkah period to protect his person from his enemies to the extent that he was not reluctant to seek protection from non-Muslim clan leaders of Makkah. He migrated to Madina only after the people of Yathrib had pledged to defend him against all dangers and all enemies. In Madina, the Prophet was ably guarded by loyal followers in times of emergency.



## 5. PERSEVERANCE AND LONG TERM PERSPECTIVE

The Prophet had a very long-term perspective. One can argue that his life achievements actually followed a geometric progression. With a very slow start to his ministry as a prophet, the pace remained slow for the first thirteen years. It seems that successes and failures almost alternated in this period. Towards the end of the Makkah period, the resistance of the Quraish had hardened against Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). However, the pace of Muhammad's successes quickened with his migration to Madina. The last five years of the Prophet's life actually show us dramatic Muslim successes. By the time of his death, Islam was firmly established in the Arabian Peninsula and a large Muslim army was poised to take on the major world powers of the day. In a certain sense, the twenty-three years of the Prophet's ministry defy logic. Many western historians have also expressed awe at the first fifty years of Islam. There exists no example in world history of the development and success of a new religion in such a short span of time. Islam also became a world military power with a wide geographic reach in the same time-frame.

### Three years of private preaching in Makkah

The Prophet was in no hurry to propagate Islam in Makkah in the first three years of his ministry. In this period, he approached only his closest family members and companions with the goal of converting them to Islam. Ibn Ishaq writes: "Three years elapsed from the time that the apostle concealed his state until God commanded him to publish his religion."<sup>122</sup> This shows that the seed of Islam took time to take root in Makkah. In the first three years of his ministry, he was most secretive and invited only his closest family members and friends to convert to Islam. At this time, he was most cautious about the people he approached. He wanted to develop a close-knit group of hardened supporters and converts to Islam before he ventured forth and offered a general invitation to the people of Makkah to join him in the new faith. In this regard, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was not at all an eager self-publicist as described by some historians. He spent the first three crucial years of his ministry in extremely private propagation of his faith.

The first eight male converts to Islam were the following:

1. Ali ibn Abu Talib, Muhammad's young cousin.
2. Abu Bakr As-Siddique, Merchant from Taym clan of Quraish.
3. Zayd bin Harithah, Freedman of the Prophet
4. Uthman bin Affan, Scion of the Leading family of Abd Shams of Quraish
5. Zubair Ibn al-Awwan, Leading Makkan family, Abu Bakr friend
6. Abd ar-Rahman ibn Auf, Trader from Zuhrah clan of Quraish, Abu Bakr friend
7. Talhah ibn Ubaidullah, From Taym clan of Quraish, Abu Bakr friend
8. Sa'ad ibn Abu Waqqas, Leading Makkan family, Abu Bakr friend.

The Prophet was very circumspect in inviting others to Islam and only ventured forth with an open invitation when he had developed a strong foundation of belief in his friends and family.

## **Thirteen years of preaching in Makkah**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) preached in Makkah for a total of thirteen years with limited success. Only some immediate family members and some close friends joined him: Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her), Abu Bakr, Ali, Zaid and eventually Umar and Hamza, among others. His uncles Abu Talib and Abbas did not convert to Islam in this period. A number of his friends also did not accept his invitation to join him in the new faith. Most notables of the Quraish actually became his sworn enemies. Most people from adjoining cities and villages also did not believe in him although his fame had spread far and wide. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) spent the prime of his life (between the age of 40 and 53) in preaching Islam in Makkah. The Prophet was a most patient and persevering human being. If events unfolded against his expectations, he did not blame externalities but set out on a corrective course of action.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) persevered in preaching Islam in Makkah despite very serious odds stacked against him. His preaching was aimed at turning the established Makkan order on its head. He was a threat to the established social and material hierarchy. The Quraish nobles who benefited tremendously from the status quo were hell-bent on making him fail in his efforts. However, the Prophet was steadfast in his efforts. A time came when the entire nobility of the Quraish (Utba Ibn Rabia, Shaiba, Abu Sufyan, Aas Ibn Hisham, Abu Jahl, Walid Ibn Mughira, Aas Ibn Wail and others) approached Abu Talib to either stand down or to take up the gauntlet. The Prophet replied to Abu Talib with tears in his eyes: "By God I swear, were these men to place the moon in one of my hands and the sun in the other, even then I will not give up. Allah will either bring my work to fruition or I shall be sacrificed."

When the Prophet used to call the Makkans to Islam, they used to mock him and jeer him. The following comments attributed to the Quraish recorded by Ibn Ishaq are indicative of Muhammad's impossible task in Makkah: "Our hearts are veiled; we do not understand what you say. There is a load in our ears so that we cannot hear what you say, and a curtain divides us from you, so follow your path and we will follow ours, we do not understand anything you say."

## **Conversation with Waraqa bin Naufal**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had a very long-term view. It is quite possible that his extreme patience and perseverance in dealing with the people of Makkah might also have had its origin in his discussions with Waraqa bin Naufal, cousin of Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her), Muhammad's wife, whom he consulted when he first received the revelations. Waraqa warned him that his calling was not an easy task. Waraqa was an old man and not likely to live long. He told Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) that he wished he could still be alive to help Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) when his people cast him out. Ibn Ishaq quotes Waraqa bin Naufal as follows: "Thou wilt be called a liar, and they will [treat] thee [despicably] and cast thee out and fight against thee." Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was horrified to hear this. Would they really cast him out, he asked in dismay. Waraqa sadly told him that a prophet is always without honor in his own country.

During the Makkan period, Khabbab Ibn Al-Aratt, a Muslim convert who could no longer bear the torture being meted out by the Quraish, asked the Prophet to pray for a curse. The Prophet turned red with anger and said: "There have gone men before us whose heads were severed and bodies rent asunder, yet they did not flinch from duty."



## **Lenient Treatment of Prisoners of War**

The fact that the Prophet had a long-term perspective can also be gauged from his treatment of prisoners of war during the Madina period. Before him, it was customary for an Arab tribe to simply kill all combatants of the enemy tribe that were captured during a battle. This “solved” the problem once and for all. However, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) discontinued this practice and was in favor of offering a simple choice to such prisoners of war: (a) teach ten Muslims how to read and write; or (b) have your family pay ransom for your freedom. Naturally, the risk the nascent Muslim state of Madina ran was of the return of the same captives to fight the Muslims another day. However, the Prophet persevered in this policy despite some resistance from other Muslim elders. This was not simply a mark of leniency of disposition and of the great need for improving the financial position of the Muslims. It is quite clear from history that some of these captives taught Muslims to read and write. Other captives were impressed by the disciplined and enlightened life of the Muslims in Madina and, in fact, converted to Islam and opted to stay in Madina as freed men. Others were ransomed by their rich relatives from Makkah who, when they arrived at Madina, were influenced and impressed by the state of affairs in Madina. Some of them took back their positive views to Makkah and helped weaken the Makkan resolve against Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and his fellow Muslims. However, the strongest reason perhaps was the awareness of the Prophet that, to achieve his distant aims over the horizon, he required the administrative abilities of the Makkans, and that, therefore, his task must be not to destroy the Quraish but to win them to his cause.

## **Perseverance in Decision Making**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was not one who dilly-dallied or reconsidered his decisions once he had made up his mind. He regretted very few of his actions, if any. This is not to say that he did not change his strategies in light of fresh information. Once he had made up his mind after considerable deliberation, he pursued the agreed upon course of action. A classic example of the Prophet’s holding steadfast to his decision can be seen in his adoption of his martial strategy at the Battle of Uhud in 625 AD. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) himself had advocated that the Muslims adopt a defensive military approach and stay in Madina to defend the city in light of the over-whelming force the Quraish had managed to put together. However, he relented when a number of the young Muslims advocated a face-to-face encounter with the enemy outside Madina. The young Muslims were swayed by the recent success of the Muslims at the Battle of Badr in March 624 AD against a larger army of the Quraish. The Prophet put on his armor and came out to lead the Muslim army. However, by this time, several of the Muslim hot-heads had reconsidered and regretted that they had not abided by the Prophet’s views. The Prophet responded to them as follows: “I have previously called you to follow such a course but you resisted. The Prophet is not one to put away his armor and sword once he puts them on until God’s judgment is rendered between him and his enemies. Obey me henceforth. Victory will be yours provided you bear yourselves in patience.” Later events were to show that the Prophet’s approach would probably have constituted a better response to the Makkan onslaught.

In his persevering with the consensual decision that had been taken, the Prophet showed that orderly decision making is at the heart of responsible government. Once the community has made up its mind after due deliberation, it should not alter it in haste, but endeavor resolutely to follow the agreed upon course of action.

## **Treaty of Hudaibiya (628 AD)**

The Prophet had a very patient and long-term perspective. He was able to concede short-term “victories” to others because he had his eyes set on the long-term prize: the conversion of entire Arabia to Islam and

the spread of Islam beyond the Arab borders. We see this very clearly in his agreeing to return to Madina from Hudaibiya without performing the minor pilgrimage (Umra) after agreeing to what many Muslims considered an unfair agreement with onerous conditions. Later events were to show his brilliance in agreeing to the terms of the Treaty of Hudaibiya. This Treaty is covered in greater detail in the section titled Effective Use of Pledges and Agreements.

The military power, political prestige and financial health of the Quraish had been considerably weakened after their failure during the Battle of the Trench (Ahzaab). Despite collecting a massive army totaling more than 10,000 fighters, they had failed in defeating the Muslims of Madina. The Prophet's arrival as head of a Muslim pilgrimage party at Hudaibiya, at the outskirts of Makkah, had presented the Quraish with an irreconcilable dilemma. After very intense negotiations, the Prophet had agreed to return to Madina without performing the pilgrimage. He had also agreed to a few terms that seemed quite onerous to his companions. Despite the misgivings of his close companions, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) decided to give breathing space to the Quraish. He did not press his advantage although he could have done so. The Prophet's long term perspective made him look for a success far beyond an immediate humiliation of the Quraish. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) could not humiliate the Quraish in order to save the Muslims' honor and prestige. He did not wish to take an immediate advantage of the situation after the Muslim victory at the Battle of the Trench. Agreeing not to enter the Ka'aba sanctuary that year took into account the Quraish's vulnerability and protected their prestige. This helped achieve the Prophet's long-term goal of a peaceful takeover of Makkah by the Muslims.

We also see this in his decision not to take revenge in Makkah once he had captured the city. He needed the notables of Makkah to actually join Islam and help administer the expanding Islamic state.

## **Letters sent to world leaders (629 AD) provide long-term direction to Islam's foreign policy**

It is generally agreed that the Prophet sent letters to several world leaders in 628 AD after the Treaty of Hudaibiya with the Qurais. Through this ten year peace treaty, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had effectively neutralized the military threat from the Quraish. He was now free to deal with the other Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula. Now, for the first time, he also had the luxury of looking well beyond the Arabian borders towards the propagation of Islam in other lands. In the current discussion, I have followed the commentary provided by Mubarakpuri in his highly regarded work, The Sealed Nectar. It would be a failure on our part not to acknowledge the excellent research undertaken by Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) Hamidullah in analyzing and dating the Prophet's letters to the world leaders. These letters had the expressed aim of inviting these world leaders to Islam and offered to them safety and protection in case they embraced Islam. The Prophet sent letters to the following world leaders of that time:

Letter to Negus, the king of Abyssinia.

Letter to Muqawqis, the king of Egypt

Letter to Chosroes, Emperor of Persia

Letter to Heraclius, Emperor of the Roman Empire

It is interesting to note the language used by Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). In his letter to the Negus, the Prophet writes: "Peace be upon him who follows true guidance." In his letter to Muqawqis, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) writes: "If you want security, accept

Islam.” The letter to Chosroes warns him to “accept Islam as your religion so that you may live in security.” The letter to Heraclius invited him “to embrace Islam so that you may live in security.”

While it is quite clear that the Prophet intended for the recipients of his letters to accept Islam; this writer believe that he had additional important motives in dispatching these letters. The Prophet was sixty years old at this time and must have known that he probably did not have the time to undertake large scale military campaigns against all of these world leaders in case they did not accept Islam. He, therefore, meant to provide direction and guidance to the Muslim chieftains who were going to take over after him. These letters pointed outwards and guided the Muslim foreign policy after his demise. The four Caliphs who led the Muslims after the demise of the Prophet clearly were focused on uniting the Arab tribes with the singular aim of expanding the frontiers of the Muslim state far and beyond the Arabian Peninsula.

### **Lenience towards the Quraish at the conquest of Makkah (629 AD)**

History shows us that the Prophet worked very hard at a peaceful conquest of Makkah. The very terms he offered to the Makkan combatants show his desire not to wage war against an enemy that he had “smoothed” over time. Prior to his entry into Makkah as a victor, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) announced that the Makkans that wished peace could do either of the following:

Take shelter in the Ka’aba sanctuary; or

Take shelter in the house of Abu Sufyan; or

Take shelter in their homes and not come out on the streets to fight the Muslims

He made it clear that the Muslim army would fight only those Makkans that came out on the streets with the intention to fight. Most historians agree that no more than twelve Makkan combatants lost their lives during the conquest of Makkah.

On the completion of the conquest of Makkah, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) announced a general pardon. He did not take revenge on the people of Makkah for the many hardships they had caused him. They had effectively banished him from the city, conspired against him, killed many people close to him and had made life unbearable for him there. However, he returned to Makkah as a magnanimous victor. Perhaps the best example of this was the conversion to Islam of Hind, Abu Sufyan’s wife. Hind, earlier, had contracted with an African slave, Wahshi, to kill the Prophet’s favorite uncle, Hamza, during the Battle of Uhud. Wahshi killed Hamza with a well-aimed javelin throw. She had then proceeded to mutilated Hamza’s dead-body, had cut it open and had tried to eat his heart and kidneys. She appeared before the Prophet in an entourage of veiled ladies of the Quraish that converted to Islam. Upon the Prophet’s inducting her into Islam, she took off her veil to show that she was Hind. The Prophet smiled and pardoned her. He simply told her not to come before him unveiled since she reminded him of his beloved dead uncle Hamza.

### **Distribution of booty after Battle of Hunain (630 AD)**

The Prophet’s long-term perspective is also evident in how he distributed booty after victory at the Battle of Hunain to favor the Quraish notables who had only recently converted to Islam after the conquest of Makkah. “Do you feel anxious for the things of this world, wherewith I have sought to incline these people unto the Faith in which you are already established?” he asked the Ansaar after this battle since many Ansaar notables were disturbed by how little booty had come their way.<sup>134</sup> He had aimed to strengthen their faith in Islam and give them a foretaste of the great monetary wealth to come if they united behind him in his planned outward expansion of Islam. The Prophet rewarded these Quraish

notables at the expense of his long-established loyal followers who had been with him through very tough times.

Throughout his life and especially after his proclaiming Prophet-hood at the age of forty, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) demonstrated an incredibly long-term perspective. Time and again, we see how even his closest friends, confidants and family members were sometimes unable to understand his intentions and plans. For instance, (a) Most Muslims who were at Hudaibiya when the Prophet agreed to the terms of the Treaty of Hudaibiya were totally frustrated with the turn of events; and (b) When the Muslim forces were leaving Madina for the conquest of Makkah, even his closest friends and family members such as Abu Bakr and Aishaa did not know the true destination of this large Muslim force until the very start of the journey. Muhammad's time in Madina demonstrates his uncanny ability to lead a nation to greatness and to found a world religion. None of this would have been possible without his planning for the very long-term.

### **Conversion of Adi bin Hatim to Islam During the Year of the Deputations**

After the conquest of Makkah, Arab deputations from around Arabia came to visit the Prophet in Madina to proclaim their submission to Islam. One such visitor was Adi bin Hatim, a Christian chief of noble birth. Ibn Ishaq records Adi as saying: "I was my own master in religious matters and was a king among my people and treated as such." When he met with the Prophet, he was treated with respect and Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) convinced him to embrace Islam with the following prophetic words: "It may well be that the poverty you see prevents you from joining this religion but, by God, wealth will soon flow so copiously among them that there will not be the people to take it. But perhaps it is that you see how many are their enemies and how few they are? But, by God, you will hear of a woman coming on her camel from Qadsiya to visit Ka'abh unafraid. But perhaps it is that you see that others have the power and sovereignty, but by God you will soon hear that the white castles of Babylon have been opened to them." These prophetic words of the Prophet demonstrate his long-term perspective. He could see far beyond the present and the immediate and was setting in motion forces that would very quickly make Islam into a growing world religion with adherents spread far and wide. In the Prophet's own words: "...and whosoever would be patient, Allah will give him patience, and no one is granted a gift better and more comprehensive than patience."

## **6. PROACTIVE AGGRESSIVE APPROACH TO EVENTS**

The Prophet had a proactive-aggressive approach to events. He moved men, shaped the course of events and changed history. Before him the world was moving in one direction and because of him the world started moving in an entirely different direction. Before him, Arabia and the Arabs were a back-water and the have-nots of the world – mere spectators on the world stage. Because of him, Arabia became the nucleus of the most powerful people in the world. It is no wonder that he is considered the most powerful man in world history by many historians.

### **Muhammad's Active Solicitation of Arab Tribes**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was very proactive in managing his congregation. He was constantly concerned for their physical safety and well-being. On finding the situation in Makkah becoming unbearable, he arranged for a large number of his followers to migrate to Abyssinia in 615 AD. He sent a number of the not well-off and not very well-protected members of his community to Abyssinia with the hope that they will find sanctuary there.

After a number of years of inviting the Quraish to Islam, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) began approaching Arab tribes that visited Makkah at the time of the Hajj pilgrimage. His preaching to the Quraish had not led to mass conversions of the Quraish to the new religion. Quite the contrary, their resistance to him had hardened over time. The Prophet therefore must have become most interested in finding a sanctuary for himself and his small band of loyal followers away from Makkah. Since Makkah was the religious and trading capital of Arabia, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had regular opportunities to interact with other Arab tribes that visited Makkah. This was especially true during the annual Hajj pilgrimage. The Prophet invited the visiting tribes to embrace Islam. He also visited tribes around Makkah and proclaimed his message to them. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) found people from Yathrib receptive to his message and was able to build on this opening. Over a three year period, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) developed a large following among the Arab tribes of Yathrib and eventually migrated there with his small band of followers. All of this would not have become possible if he had not pursued a proactive-aggressive approach to events.

### **Aggressive Stance Towards Quraish Caravans**

Muhammad's migration to Yathrib in the summer of 622 AD was a turning point in human history. Once he had arrived in Yathrib, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) set about creating a theocratic community. From this secure base he began to make life difficult for the Quraish trade caravans that had to pass near Madina on their way up North to Syria. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) began this aggressive campaign even though his forces were much weaker than those of his adversaries. The following facts help understand the Prophet's aggressive stance towards the Quraish: (a) the Quraish had decided to murder Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) during his sleep in June of AD 622; (b) the Quraish had announced a reward of 100 camels to anyone who captured Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) when he was trying to flee from Makkah; and (c) the Quraish had confiscated the houses and property of many Muslims who had migrated to Madina. Therefore, it can be argued that the hostility of the Quraish forced the Muslims in Madina to adopt a belligerent attitude towards them.

Furthermore, it is important to note that a specific revelation dating to the Madina period condoned fighting in the way of God. In Sura Hajj, which was probably revealed in 623 AD (in the first year AH), we read: "Permission to fight has been granted to those against whom war has been waged because they

have been treated unjustly, and God is certainly able to help them. These are the people who have been expelled unjustly from their homes only for the reason that they have said, ‘Our Lord is God.’ This is the first verse of the Quran with regard to fighting. It allowed the Muslims who were unjustly expelled from their homes to take up arms to defend themselves against this naked aggression.

## **Proactive Approach to Administrative Matters**

Soon after his arrival in Madina, the Prophet had a census conducted of the Muslim population. This was important since he needed to plan the welfare of all of the Muslims in Madina. A physical count must be the first logical step in this regard. The Prophet asked Hudaifah to do a physical count of all Muslims in Madina and write down their names in a register. Bukhari reports the following: “Hudaifah reports that the Prophet asked us to write down the names of all those who recognize Islam. We wrote down for him the names of fifteen hundred persons.”<sup>139</sup> A proper census and written down population records of the Muslims were the first steps taken by the Prophet to organize the Muslim community in Madina.

Soon after his arrival in Madina, the Prophet integrated the immigrant Muslim families into the host families. The immigrants were known as Muhajireen and the Muslims of Madina were called the Ansaar (“the helpers”). From a sociological point of view, it must have been the case that in the early days in Madina, the Makkans congregated among themselves while the Muslims of Madina kept to themselves. The two groups were actually quite different from each other. The Makkans were very cosmopolitan and many belonged to the Leading tribe of Arabia, the Quraish. The Makkans were generally sophisticated and educated. However, Madina was a small agrarian society organized along matrilineal lines. While the Jews of Madina were generally educated, the tribes of Aws and Khazraj were typically unlettered. The Prophet needed to integrate these two disparate groups of Muslims quickly to give shape to the first Muslim society in the world, the Umma.

The Prophet called the Muhajireen and the Ansaar to a meeting and made each one of the Muhajireen head of family a brother of one of the Ansaar. He then asked the Ansaar to share their belongings with the immigrants. Through their generosity, the Ansaar quickly assisted the Muhajireen to integrate well in Madina. Many historians maintain that through this act, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) integrated 186 Makkani families into as many Madenite families. This means that around 400 heads of families were already Muslim at the beginning of Hijrah – around 622 AD.

Prior to the Prophet’s arrival in Madina, the extent of the town’s territory was not well-defined. To defend themselves against invaders, each tribe had a certain number of towers or small citadels. These physical structures helped shelter women and children in times of war and also served as granaries and shielded herds of sheep and cattle. The able-bodied men then went out to fight the enemies in the plains around Madina. Generally, the various tribes of Madina lived pell-mell in the valley. Muslim families lived in the midst of Jewish establishments and vice versa. The Constitution of Madina that the Prophet negotiated with all important tribes living in Madina (the Aws, Khazraj as well as the three main Jewish tribes of Banu Nadir, Banu Qainuqah and Banu Quraizah) speaks of the “jau” of Madina, meaning the whole extent of the plain and valley where the various tribes lived.

Bukhari reports that the Prophet sent Ka’ab ibn Malik to erect pillars on the various frontiers of the city-state. Ka’ab reports: “The Messenger of God had asked me to construct pillars as marks on the hills around the territory of Madina. I therefore did that on the heights of Dhat al-Jaish, on Mushairib, on the heights of Makhid, on Hufaiya on Dhu al-Ushairah, and on Taim.”

The above two important incidents from the Prophet’s early Madina period illustrate the proactive approach of the Prophet to administrative affairs. He was most keen to understand the physical extent of his responsibilities to protect the Madenite population. A census of the Muslim population of Madina had



to be the first step. A clear physical demarcation of the territory of Madina was also a logical first step in Understanding the area that had to be defended against all aggressors.

## **The Prophet's Proactive Approach to Military Affairs**

In his military maneuvers, the Prophet always took the offensive in great secrecy and never let the enemy know his intentions until he was actually on the battlefield. He went on eleven major and seventeen small expeditions and in eight of the major and all of the small expeditions he took the offensive and the initiative was always on his side.<sup>142</sup> However, this did not happen at Taif where the nature of the enemy position made it rather difficult. Even at Badr, Uhud and Ahzaab, though the enemy had marched towards the Muslims, the main initiative was still on Muhammad's side, whose superior tactical moves often baffled and confused his enemies. These military strategies are discussed in detail in a later section.

The total number of Ghazvas (military expeditions which were led in person by the Prophet himself) and Sariyat (military expeditions where the Prophet entrusted the leadership to someone other than himself) were seventy-eighty in number.<sup>143</sup> Considering that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was in Madina for a total of 120 months (from his migration to Madina in July 622 AD through his death in Madina in June 632 AD), this translates to roughly one Ghazva or Sariyat every six weeks or so! This frequency of military maneuvers provides one example of the fast-paced martial strategy adopted by the Prophet.

In addition to the military goals being sought, this high level of activity probably also served the dual purpose of providing most valuable military training to the Muslims and keeping their enemies constantly on the defensive. Of the seven Muslim expeditions that took place within the first eighteen months of Muhammad's arrival at Yathrib, six were directed against Makkian caravans. The geographical situation was uniquely advantageous to the Muslims since the Makkian caravans to Syria in the North had to pass between Madina and the coast which was a maximum radius of 80 miles from Madina. In this area, the Makkian caravans were far away from their own base in Makkah (which was at a distance of 500 miles from Madina) and would have to rely on the force accompanying the caravan to defend themselves. For the record, it should be noted here that there was no actual fighting during these six expeditions which served more as a show of force and a warning to the Makkians.

It is important to note that very few Muslim expeditions actually resulted in the Muslims capturing a Makkian caravan. Most of these expeditions served the dual purpose of a show of force to the Makkians as well as a means of developing friendship pacts with the tribes adjoining Madina. The case of Abdullah bin Jahsh's expedition to Nakhlah on the road between Makkah and Taif in 624 AD is well-documented. It is not clear from the facts of this case that the Prophet had asked him to intercept a caravan this far away from Madina. The Prophet expressed his immense displeasure with the fact that Abdullah bin Jahsh had killed a Makkian, Amr Ibn Al-Hadhrami, and captured booty on this expedition. The Prophet said on this occasion: "I have not instructed you to fight during the holy months." The Prophet also refused to take any part of the booty. This event became a scandal both in Makkah and Madina since the Muslims had killed the pagan in a sacred month. The situation was calmed only by a Quranic revelation that declared that while killing in a sacred month was bad, persecution of Islam was worse and justified the violation. The Quranic verses relating to this incident read as follows:

*You count war in the holy month a grave matter,*

*But graver is, if one judges rightly,*

*Your opposition to Muhammad's teaching, and your*

*Unbelief in it, which God sees and witnesses,*

*Your driving God's people from His mosque*

*So that none can be seen worshipping Him there.*

This act of aggression on the part of Abdullah bin Jahsh served to deepen and widen the rift between the Muslims and the Quraish to a breach with the whole of pagan Arab culture. A key foundation of the Makkan system was the general agreement that no fighting will take place in the sacred months. The primacy of Islam over all pagan symbols and old Arab customs was asserted. No bond or tie of pagan society needs hold, in the Islamic community, unless explicitly acknowledged and approved a new within Islam. Hodgson makes the following perceptive comments about the Nakhlah expedition and the Prophet's response to the pagan fatality in the sacred month: "Muhammad's acceptance of the success at Nakhlah despite the qualms of his followers may be thought of as a mark of courageous consistency in which he discerned, without flinching, the complete implications of his mission and carried them through as occasion presented itself. Had he compromised here, he might well have been reducing his Umma to the status, in practice, of but one more competing tribe within a common pagan moral framework. In the clarity and single-mindedness of aim here displayed surely lay much of his genius." Abdullah bin Jahsh, the leader of the Nakhlah expedition was given the title of "Commander of the Faithful" (Amir al Mumineen) – a title later to be borne by the caliphs.

The first incident where we find the Muslims capturing a Makkan caravan is after the Makkans had raided Madinan date farms in the aftermath of their defeat at the Battle of Badr. Abu Sufyan led a few of his Makkan friends on a raid on Madinan territories. They killed two Muslims and ran away after destroying some farm land. To avenge this, the Prophet sent an expedition under the command of Zaid ibn Harithah to the area of al-Qaradah in the Najd to intercept a Makkan caravan. While the leaders of the caravan escaped, booty consisting of silver worth 100,000 dirhams fell into the hands of the Muslims. This was the first and almost the last caravan which really fell into the hands of the Muslims.



## **Chapter 2: INTERACTIVE STRATEGIES**

The Prophet's greatest successes were in the inter-personal sphere of human existence. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had unique personality strengths and great diplomatic and military capabilities. However, his greatest triumphs and achievements resulted from his interaction with others. In the Madina period, the Prophet developed a core group of devoted and committed followers who stayed loyal to him through thick and thin.

In the Madina period, he held regular counsels both with the Emigrants as well as the people of Madina. He continuously communicated his message of Islam to his followers and other potential converts. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was a master communicator. Many people from a variety of backgrounds felt that they were uniquely close to him. He inspired loyalty and commanded respect. In this section, we discuss the major interactive strategies used by Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) in the propagation of Islam.

### **1. UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN NATURE AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

The Prophet was one of the finest readers of human nature in world history. He knew how to motivate his followers and to get them to perform at their finest. He trained them well, encouraged them and looked after their well-being. He developed a closely-knit high performance team out of a disparate group of men and women belonging to different clans and tribes (many of whom were fighting each other before they befriended Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)). He was acutely aware of human strengths and weaknesses. He had a big heart and could easily forgive and forget human shortcomings, foibles and mistakes. He allowed his followers to develop into fine human beings and Muslims and had the patience to see this process through. He was keenly aware that his teachings were going to cause a sea change in human behavior, customs and values. He had the sagacity to see this process through with utmost patience and perseverance.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was keenly aware of human limitations. He wished and strived to make the new religion easy for all to follow. He was a very strong believer of moderation and did not like it if his followers followed a path of extreme hardship or worship. On the contrary, he required that his followers ease their burdens and follow a path of moderation. To some companions who wanted to put an end to their sexual life, pray all night long, or fast continuously (such as Uthman ibn Mazun or Abdullah ibn Amr ibn Al-As), he said: "Do not do that! Fast on some days and eat on others. Sleep part of the night, and stand in prayer another part. For your body has rights upon you, your eyes have a right upon you, your wife has a right upon you, your guest has a right upon you." He once exclaimed, repeating it three times: "Woe to those who exaggerate [who are too strict]." On another occasion, he said: "Moderation, moderation! For only with moderation will you succeed." The Prophet's insistence on moderation also meant that the average human being could also aspire to be a great Muslim. Thus, he made the new religion most egalitarian. Success in Islam was not going to come from extremes of devotion or worship but from moderation in all spheres of life including family life, the social sphere, economic activity and religious devotion.

The Prophet kept striving to soothe the conscience of believers who were afraid of their own weaknesses and failings. One day, Hanzalah al-Usaydi met Abu Bakr and confessed to him that he was convinced of his own deep hypocrisy because he felt divided between contradictory feelings: in the Prophet's presence, he almost saw paradise and hell, but when he was away from him, his wife and children and daily affairs caused him to forget. Abu Bakr shared with Hanzalah his own doubts on the same subject and his own despair at his apparently weak commitment to Islam. Both of them came to the Prophet to seek his

guidance on this point. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) answered: “By He who holds my soul in His hands, if you were able to remain in the [spiritual] state in which you were when in my company, and remember God permanently, the angels would shake your hands in your beds and along your paths. But it is not so, Hanzalah: there is a time for this [devotion, remembrance] and a time for that [rest, amusement].” As an illustration, Ibn Masud used to preach to Muslims on every Thursday. When Shaqiq bin Salamah told him that he and his companions loved Ibn Masud’s talk and wished him to preach every day, Ibn Masud replied: “There is nothing to prevent me from doing so, but I don’t lest I bore you. I follow the same method in preaching to you that Allah’s Messenger adopted in preaching to us for fear of boredom.”

The Prophet’s companion, Abu Hurairah, reported that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “The religion (of Islam) is easy, and whoever makes the religion a rigour, it will overpower him. So, follow a middle course (in worship); if you can’t do this, do something near to it...” Abu Masud Uqbah bin Amr Al-Badri has reported another saying of the Prophet: “Some of you [his companions] create hatred among the people against faith. Whoever leads Salat (the prayer), should make it brief because the congregation includes old men and youngsters and those who have some urgent work to do.” On another occasion, the Prophet said: “No Salat (prayer) should be performed when the food has been served, nor should it be performed when a person is in need of relieving himself.” A saying of the Prophet attributed to Anas is reported both in Sahih Al-Bukhari and Sahih Al-Muslim. Three young Muslims agreed among themselves to extreme acts of devotion to Islam. Upon hearing of this, “the Prophet came to them and said, are you the people who said such and such things? By Allah, I fear Allah more than you do, and I am most obedient and dutiful among you to Him, but still I observe fast and break it; perform Salat and sleep at night and take wives. So whoever turns away from my Sunnah does not belong to me.”

The Prophet also displayed immense patience in dealing with human mistakes and short-comings. He was quick to forgive mistakes himself and kept reminding every-one that God was the Master Forgiver. He did not wish his companions to live in a state of shame or guilt. He repeatedly told them to ask God for forgiveness for mistakes and move on with their lives. The Prophet himself exemplified that in many circumstances. On one occasion, a Bedouin came and urinated in the Masjid-e-Nabvi (the Mosque of the Prophet in Madina). The companions were horrified and rushed to beat him up. The Prophet stopped them and said: “Leave him alone, and just throw a bucketful of water on his urine. God has only sent you to make obligations easy, and not to make them difficult.”

He was intrinsically interested in people around him and was also most eager to learn a good deal about Arab tribal leaders and leaders of people in far off lands. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was able to convert and hold the loyalty of diverse sorts of outstanding and able men. In fact, he won their respect at the most intimate level. A summary review of the personalities of the early converts to Islam shows this unique quality of the Prophet. Two youths of his own household, whose conversion may be attributed to his private influence on them, developed into exceptionally strong leaders of Islam. His uncle, Abu Talib, had entrusted Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) with the upkeep of his young son, Ali. Ali was the first boy to embrace Islam. As a man, he proved a powerful warrior, winning in his own person an almost fanatical loyalty from many men. Muhammad’s slave, Zaid bin Harithah, converted to Islam almost at the same time as Ali. Later, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) adopted Zaid as a son. Zaid became a great general of Islam during the Madina period.

One of the earliest converts from other clans was Abu Bakr bin Abu Quhafa, a well-to-do merchant of Makkah. He was a close friend of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and converted to the new faith as soon as Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) invited him to join. Abu Bakr became a great lieutenant of Muhammad’s and devoted his wealth unhesitatingly to the cause.

He always showed good judgment and an admirable impartiality, and won abiding general respect among the Muslims. Uthman bin Mazun, also an early convert, contrasted with Abu Bakr in having independently become something of an ascetic monotheist before Muhammad's preaching and seems to have continued, even while loyal to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), as something of a leader on his own; he is listed as chief of those Muslims who went to Abyssinia to escape persecution. Uthman bin Affan (who later became a caliph) was a retiring and deeply pious member of one of the best families of Makkah. Abdul Rahman bin A'waf was a clever businessman. It is said that on his penniless arrival in Madina from Makkah, he refused the small help he was offered by a Madinan Muslim. He chose instead to walk to the town market and quickly became the richest Muslim of his time.

Umar bin Al-Khattab was impulsive, almost fiery, but intensely committed to whatever won him. He is said to have been talking of killing Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) out of zeal for the Makkan godlings one day, when he was told for the first time that his sister had herself become a Muslim. When he went to her house in rage, he found her reciting verses from the Quran. He was impressed and converted to Islam immediately. After he had proclaimed Islam, he forced the Quraish to allow him to worship at the Ka'aba. He won this concession for the other Muslims as well. His uprightness was never doubted; on occasion he chided Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) himself. His sternness is said to have been such that levity which was tolerated in Muhammad's own presence was suppressed if Umar appeared. After Muhammad's death, Umar governed the Muslims with genius during their greatest conquests.

The above discussion is meant to illustrate the very different personalities of some of the earliest converts to Islam. The fact that all of the above individuals remained totally devoted and committed to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) throughout their lifetimes shows the immense influence Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) exercised over different personalities and very different individuals. His uncanny ability to understand human nature and influence a varied mix of persons was a great asset.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had a voracious appetite for information about people and events. A saying of the Prophet probably dating to the year 631 AD, the Year of Delegations, sheds interesting light on his interest in people and his ability to develop accurate assessment of others' strengths and weaknesses. A delegation from the tribe of Tai under the leadership of Zaid Al-Khail came to see the Prophet in Madina after the conquest of Makkah to proclaim their acceptance of Islam. Ibn Ishaq quotes the Prophet in the following words: "The Arabs are never precise at estimating people. They have never told me about the virtues of a man correctly, for when I see the man concerned, I realize that they have overestimated him – except Zaid Al-Khail; when I met him, I know that they had underestimated him." The Prophet's companion, Abu Hurairah has reported the following saying to him: "People are like ores. Those who are excellent in the Days of Ignorance are excellent in Islam provided they acquire the knowledge and Understanding of the religion."

The Prophet cultivated many relationships that were special to him and to the other person. Many of his followers and companions genuinely believed that the Prophet was a special friend to them. The Prophet had many special relationships in his life which were not shared by any except himself and the person in question. One can easily think of his very special one-to-one relationships with Abu Bakr, Umar, Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her), Ali, Zaid and Bilal, for example. However, the Prophet's friendship was not limited to his followers alone. This was also true of his relationships with non-Muslims even during his Madina period. Many non-Muslims such as the Prophet's scribe and emissary, Amr ibn Umayyah, counted Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) as a close friend.

He was very aware of the capabilities and limitations of his companions. He was most interested in their development and assigned challenging tasks and targets to many of them in order to increase their skill

base, productivity and confidence. In his delegation decisions, the Prophet seems to have been guided by a complex internal calculation that not only compared the relevant skill set, but also looked at loyalty, intellectual rigour, physical strength, leadership capability, and long-term growth potential of the field of candidates. Different assignments clearly required different mix of capabilities and the Prophet seems to have fine-tuned his decisions keeping the skill-sets of his followers in mind. He was also keenly aware of the impact of his final decision on his other followers.

## **Upgradation of Human Resource**

At the start of Muhammad's mission there were said to have been only seventeen men among the Quraish, the aristocracy of Makkah, who could write.<sup>163</sup> The scribes and accountants employed by the richer merchants were usually Jews, Christians or Abyssinians. In Muhammad's early days in Madina, writers were equally in short supply. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) used to offer the poorer captives of his raids and battles their freedom if they would teach Muslims the art of writing.

## **The Prophet's Early Appreciation of the Command Capabilities of Khalid bin Walid**

Khalid bin Walid was a valiant Makkan warrior of the Makhzum clan before he embraced Islam. Much of the credit for the Makkan victory at the Battle of Uhud was attributed to the brilliant and ruthless command of Khalid bin Walid. When Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) entered Makkah to perform the minor pilgrimage (Umra) in the year 629 AD as part of the agreement he had struck with the Quraish the year earlier at Hudaibiya; he got married to Maimunah, the widowed aunt of Khalid bin Walid and sister-in-law of Muhammad's uncle Abbas. With the consummation of this marriage, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) became an uncle to Khalid bin Walid who embraced Islam on this occasion.

Khalid joined Islam with vigour and devotion. His leadership capabilities were highly acclaimed. He won renown as the greatest of the Muslim generals. The Prophet had the sagacity to recognize Khalid's martial talents at an early stage. He had the patience to see Khalid convert to Islam and then devote his life to the expansion of the Muslim state.

## **The Prophet's Prompt Reassignment of the Leadership of the Ansaar Contingent during Conquest of Makkah**

A great example of brilliant delegation decisions of the Prophet comes to us from the conquest of Makkah. The Prophet had divided the Muslim army into four large contingents. The Prophet commanded them all not to engage in any fighting or shed any blood except in cases of extreme emergency. The Prophet had appointed Sa'ad bin Ubadah, his trusted Madina companion and leader of the Aws tribe of Madina, to lead the contingent of the Ansaar. On entering Makkah as victorious conquerors, Sa'ad bin Ubadah was heard to have told the Makkans: "Today is a day of war, Sanctuary is no more." No doubt Sa'ad was keen to take revenge on the people of Makkah what had been the source of so much suffering for Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and other fellow Muslims. However, Sa'ad's utterance on this occasion was contrary to the Prophet's policy of forgiveness that he had already announced for Makkan non-combatants in order to urge them to surrender and not fight the invading Muslim army. When Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was informed of Sa'ad's dialogue with the Makkans, he immediately ordered the command of the Ansaar contingent to be taken away from Sa'ad bin Ubadah. Many historians have noted that the Apostle entrusted the flag of the Ansaar contingent to Qays, the son of Sa'ad bin Ubadah. This was brilliant human resource management

of the Prophet on two levels: (a) it helped enforce a strict discipline in the Muslim ranks so that they would not dare go beyond the instructions given to the Muslim army by Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) himself; and (b) while Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) sanctioned Sa'ad, he left the leadership of the Ansaar contingent to his son thereby reconfirming Sa'ad's claim to leadership of the Ansaar.

## **Muhammad's Effective Human Resource Management Extended to Non-Muslims**

Muhammad's management of human resource was not restricted to Muslims only. He was quite skilful in harnessing the capabilities of non-Muslims in the service of Islam. A great example is the invaluable ambassadorial services provided by Amr ibn Umayyah to the Prophet. After their defeat at the Battle of Badr, the Quraish sent a diplomatic mission to the Negus in Abyssinia demanding the extradition of the small Muslim contingent there to Makkah. When the Prophet learnt the news of this deputation of the Quraish to the Negus, he sent Amr ibn Umayyah to Abyssinia to intercede with the Negus in favor of the Muslims. Amr ibn Umayyah had not yet embraced Islam but was a most effective spokesperson for the Muslims. This small incident is very significant. First, it confirms the human resource management capabilities of the Prophet. Amr ibn Umayyah was, in all likelihood, a personal friend of the Prophet from his early days in Makkah. He probably had the confidence of the Prophet despite the fact that he had participated in the Makkan army against the Muslims at Badr. This event also shows the Prophet's capability to see beyond the here and now and to harness the long-term capabilities of his friends. He was aware of Amr's diplomatic capacities and of his intimate relations with the Negus. Some historians have noted that Amr ibn Umayyah belonged to the tribe of Dumrah of the Badr area and personally knew the Negus and was also aware of the conditions obtaining in Abyssinia. The Negus had become king during his childhood when his uncle became the regent. He quietly sold the nephew, it is said, to some Arabs who lived in Badr. It is, therefore, quite possible that Amir ibn Umayyah knew the Negus from his childhood.<sup>167</sup> Finally, this event also shows us that the Prophet knew how to remain well-informed of the movements of his enemies, in order to counter them in a timely and effective manner.

## **Digging of the trench on occasion of Battle of Ahzaab (also known as the Battle of Trench and Battle of Confederates, 627 AD)**

The Battle of Ahzaab was a turning point in Islamic history. It was the one confrontation between Islam and the Quraish of Makkah wherein the Quraish had put in their best efforts, spent their fortunes and made tremendous preparations to field a broad-based, comprehensively large and well-equipped army to root out Islam once and for all. The Prophet was keenly aware that given the heavy odds against him, the best he could aim for was to defend the city of Madina and to draw his enemies to a stalemate after a protracted military stand-off. On learning of the planned Quraish advance on Madina, the Prophet called a council to advise him on military strategy. He adopted a novel idea proposed by Salman Farisi. Salman Farisi was of Persian descent and advised that the Muslims should use the peculiar geography of Madina to defend the city. The city of Madina was naturally defended by lava plains on three sides with the city's residential compounds provided a natural defensive backdrop. Salman Farisi advised that the Muslims dig a long, wide and deep trench on the fourth and open side and then defend it against the invaders. The Prophet decided to try this defensive maneuver although it was unheard of in Arab history. Given that the arrival of the Quraish army was imminent, the Prophet immediately ordered the digging of the trench. He himself participated in this effort. He divided the digging team into two groups - the Ansaar and the Muhajireen - and divided the work between them. He, in fact, started a healthy competition between the two of them for the speed and quality of work.

Salman-Farisi had come to Madina from Persia. His proposal was unique - to defend Madina by means of a Persian-type fortified trench (called Khandaq in Persian) dug around the weaker section of Madina's perimeter. Thus, the Prophet was able to deploy considerable human resources to work for him. Salman's proposal helped save Madina from the massive, consolidated Makkan attack.

A classic example of the Prophet's empathy for human nature can be found in how the Battle of Ahzaab actually ended. The intense rain, severe cold and harsh thunderstorms had combined with lack of progress on the part of the Makkan invaders to weaken their resolve. The lack of food and fodder and the internal disunity among the Quraish and their confederates had further undermined their position. These developments led to their leaving the battlefield without any success late in the night. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had already sent a spy to the enemy camp who confirmed their plans to leave the area immediately. On the departure of the enemies, the Muslim defenders (who were extremely malnourished and overworked) rushed back to their homes. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) suddenly realized that this could be a ruse on the part of the Makkans and they may come back to attack Madina. He called back the Muslim defenders but they continued to rush home. At this, the Prophet started laughing and let them continue on their way.

## **The Treaty of Hudaibiya**

During the intense negotiations between the Prophet and the Quraish notables at Hudaibiya, a man from the tribe of Banu Kinana visited with the Prophet on behalf of the Quraish notables. When he approached the Prophet and his companions, the Prophet said: "He is [Hulays of the Bani al-Harith, one of the clans of Kinana]. His tribe respects the Budn (i.e. camels of the sacrifice)." So, the Budn were marched before him to show him that the Muslims had come prepared for the minor pilgrimage and for no other purpose. The Muslims received Hulays while they were reciting Talbiya (the Arabic verses uttered by a pilgrim on his travels). When he saw that scene, he said, "Glorified be Allah! It is not fair to prevent these people from visiting the Ka'aba." When he returned to his people, he said, "I saw the Budn garlanded and marked. I do not think it is advisable to prevent them from visiting the Ka'aba." This incident shows the sharp Understanding the Prophet had of various personalities around him.

Hudaibiya also presents us with a unique situation when the Prophet's companions did not obey his command! Once the treaty had been negotiated and it had become clear that the Muslims will not perform the minor pilgrimage on this journey, serious disappointment and depression took over the Muslim ranks. The large Muslim contingent of 1,400 pilgrims had travelled a long distance under harsh weather conditions with grave danger to themselves (since they were un-armed) with the goal of performing the minor pilgrimage. Now, they would have to return to Madina without having performed this important religious rite. The Prophet approached the main body of the Muslim pilgrims that had accompanied him and commanded them: "Rise and sacrifice your animals," he said, "and shave your heads." Sacrifice of the animals and shaving of the heads was normally performed after the completion of pilgrimage rites. Not a man moved, and the Prophet repeated his instruction a second and a third time without effect. Dejected, the Prophet withdrew to his tent and told Umm Salamah, his wife who had accompanied him on this pilgrimage, about what had just happened. "Go forth," she said, "and say no word to any man until thou hast performed thy sacrifice." On seeing the Prophet getting ready to perform the sacrifice, his companions leapt to their feet with the intention of being the first to emulate the Prophet's Sunnah (practice).

## **The Prophet's Treatment of Abdullah bin Ubbayy, the Hypocrite**

Abdullah bin Ubbayy was the Leading figure in Madina before the Prophet's arrival there. In fact, most residents of Madina had agreed to install him as their king so that he could serve as a uniter and help keep

peace in the city which had been wrecked by the strife between the two Leading Arab tribes of the city – the Aws and the Khazraj. The Prophet's arrival at Madina had been bad news for Abdulla bin Ubbayy who missed no chance of weakening the Prophet's position in Madina and maligning Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and his family. Although Abdulla bin Ubbayy converted to Islam early on, he remained a thorn in Muhammad's side. However, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was always mindful of bin Ubbayy's senior position in Madina and did not engage in direct confrontation with him despite several instigations. After the Muslim raid on the Banu Mustalik in January 628 AD, Abdullah bin Ubbayy again instigated the Ansaar against the Muhajireen because of a minor quarrel between one Muslim from the Ansaar and one from the Muhajireen. At this juncture, Abdullah bin Ubbayy's own son, Abdullah, came to the apostle offering to kill his father in the way of Islam. His dialogue with Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) is most illustrative about the Prophet's brilliant Understanding of human nature and human resource management. "I have heard that you want to kill Abdullah bin Ubbayy for what you have heard about him. If you must do it, then order me to do it and I will bring you his head, for-Khazraj know that they have no man more dutiful to his father than I, and I am afraid that if you order someone else to kill him my soul will not permit me to see his slayer walking among men and I shall kill him, thus killing a believer for an unbeliever, and so I should go to hell." Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) responded: "Nay, but let us deal kindly with him and make much of his companionship while he is with us." After that it happened that if any misfortune befell it was his [Abdullah bin Ubbayy's] own people who reproached and upbraided him roughly. Thus, the Prophet handled the Abdullah bin Ubbayy problem through patience and not through direct confrontation. He waited for Abdullah bin Ubbayy's true colors to become visible to the people of Madina which eventually neutralized Abdullah bin Ubbayy as a presence and a force in Madina.

## **The Prophet's Treatment of Abu Sufyan – A Leader of the Quraish**

Muhammad's human resource management skills are on full display in how he proactively changed his relationship with Abu Sufyan, a Leading Quraish chieftain belonging to the Abd Shams clan of the Quraish. It should be recalled that Abu Sufyan remained an arch-enemy of Islam right up to the conquest of Makkah. He had always resented the prophet-hood of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and had considered his preaching a great threat to the Quraish. After the defeat of the Quraish at Badr, Abu Sufyan had vowed not to touch his wife or cut his hair till he had avenged the death of many Quraish notables on the Badr battle-field. His wife, Hind, felt a great personal hatred for the Prophet and was the one who hired the African slave Wahshi to kill the Prophet's uncle Hamza at Uhud since Hamza had killed her father and brother during the Battle of Badr. She had desecrated Hamza's body and had chewed upon his liver. Abu Sufyan himself had believed that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had been killed in the Battle of Uhud and had actually returned the next year to complete that unfinished business.

The Prophet married Ramlah (also known as Ume Habibah), the daughter of Abu Sufyan, in 628 AD. Ramlah was 38 years old at this time. Earlier, Ume Habibah had been married to Abdullah ibn Jahsh and both husband and wife had converted to Islam in the early Makkan period. The persecution in Makkah had forced the husband and wife to migrate to Abyssinia. However, when her husband converted to Christianity, she divorced him but stayed on in Abyssinia. The Prophet's marriage to Ume Habibah made him son-in-law of Abu Sufyan, perhaps the Leading noble of the Quraish of that time. This fact was bound to weaken Abu Sufyan's resolve to fight Islam.

The Treaty of Hudaibiya was a treaty of peace between the Muslims and the Quraish of Makkah. However, in 629 AD, during a skirmish between the Khuza tribe (affiliate of the Muslims) and the Banu Bakr tribe (affiliate of the Quraish), the Quraish sided with the Banu Bakr against the Khuza and an affiliate of the Muslims had been killed. This was a clear contravention of the Treaty of Hudaibiya. When



Abu Sufyan came to Madina to intercede with the Prophet to extend the Treaty of Hudaibiya in 629 AD, none of the Muslim notables such as Uthman, Abu Bakr and Ali agreed to intercede on his behalf with the Prophet. Dejected, he came to the Prophet's residence to ask his daughter, Ume Habibah to intercede on his behalf. She did not even let him sit on the Prophet's bed since her father, Abu Sufyan, was a pagan and not worthy of sitting on the Prophet's bed. This set of events demonstrated to Abu Sufyan clearly that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was both a man of his words and also did not like to be cheated. It also reconfirmed for him that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was a true Prophet to his followers who dared not side with a cheater in his eyes. Abu Sufyan took this message back to the Quraish with him.

Abu Sufyan eventually converted to Islam after the arrival of the large Muslim force numbering more than ten thousand fighters on the outskirts of Makkah. His was a grudging profession of faith made when he visited the Prophet on the periphery of Makkah on this occasion. Nevertheless, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) gave a very special treatment to Abu Sufyan. He ordained that the residents of Makkah who sought refuge in the Ka'aba or simply remained inside their homes or took refuge in Abu Sufyan's house will not be harmed. This offered a special position of honor to Abu Sufyan who then hurried back to Makkah and advised everyone to surrender and not to offer any resistance to the large Muslim army. Abu Sufyan, therefore, played a critical role in softening Makkan resistance and helped in the peaceful takeover of the city.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had turned Abu Sufyan into an ally, not only because Abu Sufyan had converted to Islam but also because the Prophet had understood his character and personality. Even when Abu Sufyan had appeared prepared to accept Islam, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) did not hurry him. He let Abu Sufyan understand Muslim character and discipline. He also demonstrated the immense power of the Muslims and the inevitability of Makkan take-over by the Muslims. Thus, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) encouraged and not forced Abu Sufyan on the right path. Even after Abu Sufyan had embraced Islam, the Prophet was aware that he retained an attraction for power and glory, and he took this into account when he exposed him to the strength of his army and conferred on him a glorified role in the possible resolution of the conflict. Tariq Ramadan notes that "though Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) insisted on common principles, he was able to take particular traits into account; his mission was to reform the latter through the former, but he never neglected character, aspirations, and specific features that made up each individual's personality."

## **Lifting of the Taif Siege despite Objections of Some Valiant Muslim Fighters**

The Muslims besieged the prosperous and well-fortified hill-top city of Taif after they had conquered Makkah and after they had defeated a large non-Muslim army at Hunain. When the siege of Taif had lasted for more than twenty days, the Prophet consulted with his senior companions about the lack of success and the pressing need to return to Jirran (to distribute the immense booty won at the Battle of Hunain) and to Makkah. The subsequent developments at Taif are best summarized by the following Hadith: "Narrated Abdullah bin Umar: When Allah's Messenger besieged Taif and could not conquer its people, he said, "We will return (to Al-Madina) if Allah will." That distressed the companions (of the Prophet) and they said, "Shall we go away without conquering it (i.e. the fort of Taif)?" The Prophet said, "Let us return." Then the Prophet said (to them), "Fight tomorrow." They fought and (many of them) got wounded, whereupon the Prophet said, "We will return (to Al-Madina) tomorrow if Allah will." That delighted them, whereupon the Prophet smiled."



## **Return of the Hawazin Human Booty Won at Battle of Hunain**

The Prophet's sharp Understanding of human nature and long-term perspective are demonstrated very effectively by the way he diplomatically handled the return of the human booty of the Hawazin tribe after the Battle of Hunain. The Prophet left the booty won in battle at Jirran and pursued his enemies into the stronghold of Taif. After an unsuccessful siege of Taif that lasted more than twenty days, the Prophet returned to Jirran and distributed the booty among his supporters.

The Hawazin arrived at Jirran late. By this time, the Prophet had already distributed their captives and belongings. The Prophet told them: "I refrained from distributing the booty for these long weeks only in the hope that you would become repentant, and that I could return to you your families and your herds. It is too late now to return to you all that once belonged to you, as it is already distributed. However, select one of the two things, your families or your herds, and I shall see what I can do." They selected their women and children. The Prophet then told them: "The portion of your families attributed as booty to me and to my family is returned to you; as for others, ask me in public, when I have concluded the congregational prayer." They did so. The Prophet repeated that he had liberated what he and his family had received. Abu Bakr and Umar and other prominent leaders followed suit one after the other, and with the exception of one or two clans, all the Muslim soldiers liberated gratis the enslaved members of the Hawazin tribe. Even for the hot-headed and the greedy, the Prophet commanded that they should surrender their human booty, for which, however, they would be compensated from the state treasury. This kindness and generosity on the part of the Prophet won the hearts of the Hawazin. Later, the whole tribe converted to Islam and tendered their allegiance to the Prophet and the cause of Islam.

## **Preparations for the Battle of Tabuk in 630 AD**

The Prophet believed in maintaining the element of surprise and did not disclose his true martial intentions when he prepared for war. This kept his enemies guessing and enabled him to take them by surprise, on many occasions. Not only did it help achieve his goals; it often presented his enemies with a *fait accompli* thus leading to very little blood-shed. This was always true except when he was preparing for the war against the Byzantine Empire after the conquest of Makkah. The Prophet had returned to Madina and a general and growing peace had been achieved. However, the news from the northern frontiers became alarming when the Byzantine Empire under Heraclius defeated the Persian Empire. It seemed that the Byzantines had now allied with Arab tribes in the north and they were together planning an attack on the nascent Muslim state in Arabia. An immediate reaction was required, and the stakes were so high and the expedition so dangerous that, for the first time, the Prophet informed his companions of his destination. Both Bukhari and Muslim report that "on this expedition, [Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)] set out in extremely hot weather; the journey was long and the terrain was waterless desert; and he had to face a strong army, so he informed the Muslims about the actual position, so that they should make full preparation for the campaign."<sup>178</sup> With his sharp Understanding of human nature, the Prophet did not want his companions to be caught unawares. A firm believer in real politics, the Prophet informed his companions of the potential dangers inherent in this campaign and gave them the guidance and the time to arrange their affairs and make appropriate preparations for what could potentially be the most dangerous and largest military campaign ever undertaken by the Prophet himself. The Byzantine Empire, after all, was the undisputed super power of the time. The Prophet eventually left Madina with a large Muslim army of thirty thousand men under his command.

## **Instructions to Subordinates to be Kind and Fair in their Treatment of Subjects of the Muslim State of Madina**

The Prophet was deeply aware of human limitations and did not like any of his subordinates to put extraordinary burden on people or to be unfair in their treatment of others – whether Muslim or non-Muslim. We highlight three anecdotes here for reference. When the Christians of Najran in Yemen came to Madina, they declined to accept Islam but agreed to live in the Islamic state as subjects. Eventually, they asked Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) to appoint a Muslim judge to settle their internal disputes for them. The Prophet appointed Abu Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah and praised him as a person in whom Muslims had full confidence and he would, therefore, perform his duties conscientiously.<sup>179</sup> On another occasion, the Prophet appointed his son-in-law Ali as a judge. Ali was a young man at that time and told the Prophet that he had no experience of the job and did not know how to perform the task assigned to him. The Prophet gave him a fundamental piece of advice:

“When someone comes to you with a complaint, do not decide the case on his evidence alone. Send for the other party; listen to it and then make a decision in the light of the statements of the two parties.” The Prophet deputed Abu Musa and Muadh bin Jabal to Yemen as governors since Yemen, at that time, was comprised of two distinct provinces. His instructions to them on their departure are quite significant in what they illustrate about the Prophet’s approach to human nature: “Facilitate things for the people and do not make things difficult for them. Be kind and lenient (both of you) with the people, and do not be hard on them and give the people good tidings and do not repulse them.”

## 2. AWARENESS OF POLITICAL LANDSCAPE AND PERSONALITIES

From a very early age, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) appears to be acutely aware of the political landscape and personalities around him. The Arabs of Makkah had transitioned from a nomadic to a settled lifestyle around the Ka'aba shrine within a period of three generations beginning with the settlement around Ka'aba initiated by Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) great-great grandfather, Qussay. This had led to a major upheaval in societal norms since the old tribal virtues of chivalry and hospitality were quickly giving way to appreciation for wealth accumulation and economic stratification.

The nomadic lifestyle was based on a communal ideal with the tribe caring for and protecting all its members, even the weak and the very poor. The new settled and commercial lifestyle meant that the old tribal unity was breaking down leading to a city culture of haves and have nots. This transition to a more settled lifestyle had transformed the relations between the various clans of the Quraish. The more commercially successful clans (such as Makhzum and Asad) were quickly gaining an upper hand while the traditionally more respected clans (such as the Prophet's clan of Hashim) were losing in stature and economic strength. Even from his youth, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was cerebral by nature and was inclined towards contemplating the changing societal norms and structures around him. This instinctive appreciation of the political landscape provided tremendous dividends to him in his struggle to bring supremacy to Islam in the Arabian Peninsula.

Through his proclamation and preaching of Islam, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) created a new over-arching trans-tribal structure in the Arabian Peninsula. In the time Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) preached Islam in Makkah, he and his followers gradually emerged as a new quasi-tribal formation (possibly, on this level, analogous to what happened when the Quraish first gathered in Makkah under the able leadership of Qussay, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) 's great-great grand-father).iii Each man retained his loyalties to his inherited clan; but (and here, Qussay's example does not apply) he was coming to have overriding loyalties to the new grouping, based not on family ties but on acceptance of the faith which Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) preached. The word Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) used for the new grouping was Umma – a word which he had used of a people to which a prophet had been sent (such as the Makkans), but which now was applied to such of that people as did respond to the Prophet and so formed a new community with him. In the negotiations with the Madinite Muslims during the Hajj season of 621 and 622 AD, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) claimed explicitly an authority over the religious community which had become increasingly implicit already even among the Makkan followers. He did not yet make the same demands among non-Muslims, of course, but the political autonomy of the Muslims allowed them to establish at least a certain level of social expectation in their dealings with the non-Muslims. Moreover, as hakim, judge-arbiter, among even those Madinites who were not Muslims, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was able to extend something of the new spirit outside the Umma proper even before the whole of Madina merged into the Islamic group. None of this would have been possible without Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)'s sharp understanding of the political landscape around him.

We have to appreciate that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and Abu Bakr left Mecca in AD 622 in the middle of the night when they barely escaped murder at the hands of a unified force of the Quraish. The two of them hid in the cave of Thor to the south-east of Makkah as they took a circuitous escape route going towards Taif before eventually heading north towards Madina. As a migrant, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) did not possess any wealth except for the she-camel he rode to Madina which he had duly purchased from Abu Bakr before his departure from

Mecca. The fact that within the next ten years, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had become the religious, political and military ruler of most of Arabia has a good deal to do with his sharp understanding of the political landscape around him in Madina.

An indirect appreciation of the Prophet's dramatic appeal to the pilgrims from Yathrib in the year 620 AD comes from comments attributed to Bayhara bin Firas of Banu Amir by Ibn Ishaq. The Prophet's message actually held meaning for many Arab tribes. Although most Arabs of his time could not appreciate the long-term implications of the Prophet's proposal; the serious potential and possibilities hidden in the Prophet's message were not hidden from Arab intellectuals. Ibn Ishaq attributes the following comments to Bayhara: "By God, if I could take this man from Quraish I could eat up the Arabs with him." Then he said to the Prophet: "If we actually give allegiance to you and God gives you victory over your opponents, shall we have authority after you?" Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) replied logically but diplomatically: "Authority is a matter which God places where He pleases." He answered, "I suppose you want us to protect you from the Arabs with our breasts and then if God gives you victory someone else will reap the benefit! Thank you, No!"

Later events were to demonstrate that Bayhara actually foretold the future. The Aws and the Khazraj of Yathrib came to dominate Arabia through their allegiance to the Prophet. They enjoyed significant authority under the Prophet in his lifetime. However, unfortunately for them, with the conquest of Makkah and the demise of the Prophet, the leadership of the Muslim community passed on to the Quraish. A disgruntled member of the Ansaar could easily have uttered Bayhara's words "if God gives you victory someone else will reap the benefit" after the distribution of the Hunain booty at Jirran in 630 AD (where the Prophet favored the recently converted Quraish notables with the lion's share of the booty) or after the selection of Abu Bakr to be the first Caliph of Islam (when Sa'ad bin Ubadah, leader of the Ansaar, was also a candidate) after the death of the Prophet in Madina in 632 AD.

## **The Prophet's Development of Constitution of Madina Reflected His Sharp Understanding of the Political Landscape in Madina**

The Constitution of Madina was developed by the Prophet soon after his arrival in Madina. His proposal was balanced and well-formulated which he presented to the notables of Madina. He encouraged them to think of a collective defence and foreign policy in order that they could face all foreign threats together. Prior to the Prophet's arrival in Madina, there were no signs of a state of any kind there. There were many related tribes who were constantly in a state of civil war. In fact, these tribes had fought the last bloody war only five years before the arrival of the Prophet in the city. Although this document is well-covered in another section, we discuss it here to highlight the fact that the Prophet applied a very balanced approach to tribal power sharing and tribal autonomy. While the tribes agreed to pool their resources for a common defence of Madina, they retained their former autonomy in most matters. In a few matters, power was delegated to the central government. One of the central subjects was defence. War and peace were declared as indivisible. Defence became a collective responsibility. This was an insurance against external attack. The tribal system was retained to a large extent in the case of judiciary. However, in the event of the parties to the dispute belonging to different tribes, the case had to be referred to the centre. The court of appeal (if this expression can be used) was common. That is, the ruler of the city was to be approached in the last resort. The treaty included a clause about religious freedom. The Jews could follow their deen and Muslims would follow theirs. And deen was understood to embrace religion, law, and justice. An unusual and unexpected clause of the agreement related to insurance. If someone was unable, for instance, to pay ransom money his tribe or neighboring tribes and finally the central authority were responsible for the payment.

## **The Prophet Sets Up a Secretariat to Help Manage Affairs of the State in Madina**

Since Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was the first to form a state in Madina, he did not inherit any institutions of state that could have helped him with administration. Functions of treasury, judiciary, education, foreign affairs, army/security and general administration were immediately required if he was to succeed in laying the foundations of the first Muslim state and a world religion in Madina. An important step was to set up a small secretariat consisting of a few secretaries. Al-Masudi and other scholars have elaborated the duties of these secretaries. Some secretaries wrote down the revelation, some kept accounts of zakah indicating sources of receipt and giving details of expenditure. Booty won in a war was to be distributed among those who had participated in that battle with one-fifth going to the state. It was necessary to keep an account of the collection and distribution of booty. Special secretaries were assigned this task. Bilal was both the Minister of Finance and the Caller to Prayer. Details are available of a dozen subjects which were dealt with by different secretaries. Among them were foreign affairs, for correspondence was conducted with foreign rulers in connection with propagation of Islam. Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ash-Shaybani states in *as-Siyar al-Kabir* that one of the secretaries of the Prophet was responsible for preparing a list of adults who were able and willing to join army campaigns whenever called upon to do so.

## **Balanced Approach Towards the Aws and the Khazraj Tribes in Madina**

In all likelihood, the Prophet's negotiations with the Aws and Khazraj tribes of Yathrib between 620 AD and 622 AD made him deeply aware of the schism and intense rivalry that existed between these two Arab tribes. After all, these two tribes had fought bloody battles and lost many gallant chieftains in fighting each other. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) probably foresaw the great difficulties he would encounter in Madina since he would have to maintain a very fine balance in his dealings with these two large Arab tribes of Yathrib. Clearly, the Prophet would have a very limited possibility of creating a large Islamic state if he were to fail at uniting the hearts and minds of the Aws and the Khazraj – his basic constituency in Madina. With this in mind, the Prophet probably decided on a very even-handed course of action in Madina. The following facts help illustrate this strategy of the Prophet.

The Prophet sent Musa'b bin Umair to propagate Islam in Madina in 621 AD. Musa'b was an excellent choice as he was most diplomatic in his approach and a great teacher. Ibn Ishaq writes that Musa'b himself used to lead the Friday prayers since the Aws and Khazraj "could not bear to see one of their rivals take the lead."

On his arrival in Quba enroute to Madina, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) lodged with Kulthum, an old man of Quba who had earlier had the honor of hosting Hamza and Zayd on their way to Madina. The Bani Amr, Kulthum's clan, were of Aws. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was keenly aware of the political landscape in Madina which probably explains why Abu Bakr, at the same time, lodged with a man of Khazraj in the village of Sunh, which was a little nearer to Madina. Another indication of the strong enmity between the Aws and the Khazraj at this time comes from the fact that a chief of Khazraj and an early convert to Islam, Asad ibn Zurarah, could not come to Quba to welcome the Prophet on his arrival there. Upon the Prophet's inquiry, the people of Quba stated apologetically that he had killed some of their leaders in the battle of Buath and could not, therefore, enter their territory.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was deeply aware of his obligations both to the Aws and the Khazraj tribes of Madina. He sagaciously chose to let his she-camel, Qaswa, decide where

he would decamp in Madina. Almost all of the notables of the Aws and Khazraj wanted the honor of hosting Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) on his arrival at Madina. To quote from Martin Lings: "...Many were the eager invitations which were offered. 'Alight here, O Messenger of God, for we have strength and protection for thee, and abundance.' More than once a man or a group of clansmen took hold of Qaswa's halter. But each time the Prophet blessed them and then said: 'Let her go her way, for she is under the command of God.'" By trusting Qaswa to decide his initial abode in Madina, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) chose not to take this decision on his own. If he had made this decision himself, some town elders might have felt slighted while others might have been elated. This may also have had an unintended consequence of making the Prophet's host the "second-in-command" to the Prophet. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) also insisted on paying the orphans for the piece of land where Qaswa decided to rest. He did this to ensure that the first mosque of Islam was not built on a piece of land gifted by a specific member of a Madina tribe but on a properly purchased piece of land.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was generally very careful in choosing his partners. Immediately after his arrival in Madina, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) called a gathering of the prominent men of Ansaar and the Emigrants from Makkah. Through a pact of brotherhood, he united 45 men of the Ansaar with 45 men from the Emigrants whereby each of the Ansaar agreed to share half of his wealth and household with his Emigrant brother. However, he himself did not choose a brother from among the Ansaar. He made himself and his family an exception, for it would have been too invidious for him to choose as his brother one of the Helpers, rather than another. So he took his cousin, Ali bin Abu Talib, by the hand and said: "This is my brother."

During his years in Madina, the Prophet became very close to Sa'ad bin Muadh, a leader of the Aws, and Sa'ad bin Ubadah, a leader of the Khazraj. The two Sa'ads were his closest companions among the Ansaar. Both the Sa'ads were politically sophisticated, religiously meticulous and diplomatically urbane. They provided great service to the Prophet in the cause of Islam. The Prophet was very close to both of them. Ibn Umar has reported that when Sa'ad bin Ubadah was on his deathbed, the Prophet visited him accompanied by a few Leading companions including Abdur-Rahman bin Auf, Sa'ad bin Abu Waqqas and Abdullah bin Masud. Ibn Umar records that "Allah's Messenger began to weep. When his Companions saw this, their tears also started flowing." In choosing a leader each from the Aws and the Khazraj to become his close companions, the Prophet struck a fine balance between the two erstwhile warring tribes of Madina.

The Prophet did not marry a woman from the Aws or the Khazraj. Upon his death in 632 AD, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was survived by nine wives. Sources name many women of the Aws and Khazraj who had expressed an interest in marrying the Prophet. However, the Prophet probably did not marry a woman of the Ansaar in order to retain his disinterested status as the undisputed leader of Madina.

The earlier bloodshed between the Aws and the Khazraj often simmered very close to the surface and ran the risk of boiling over at the smallest instigation. Once, some Jews conspired to bring the Aws and the Khazraj to each other's throats. The Prophet knew the seriousness of the situation and came out to meet the two groups that were about to unsheathe their swords. He addressed them in the following words which shed light on the Prophet's continuous efforts: "O Muslims, remember God. Remember God. Will you act as pagans while I am with you after God has guided you to Islam and honored you thereby and made a clean break with paganism; delivered you thereby from unbelief; made you friends thereby?"

Muhammad's sagacity in cultivating parallel and equal relationships with the Aws and Khazraj can be seen in the following commentary of Ibn Ishaq: "These tribes of the Ansaar, Aws and Khazraj, competed the one with the other like two stallions: if Aws did anything to the apostle's advantage Khazraj would

say, 'They shall not have this superiority over us in the apostle's eyes and in Islam' and they would not rest until they could do something similar. If Khazraj did anything Aws would say the same."

## **Neutralizing the Negative Influence of Abdullah ibn Ubbayy in Madina**

In Madina, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was continuously dealing with a very delicate political situation. Muhammad's difficulties were further compounded by the presence of people such as Abdullah ibn Ubbayy who were Madenite chieftains whose place had been taken over by the Prophet himself. Abdullah ibn Ubbayy and his followers were quick to exploit the differences between Muhammad's followers. For instance, on the occasion of the raid on Banu Mustalik in 628 AD, Abdullah ibn Ubbayy exploited a small quarrel between the Emigrants and Ansaar to launch into a tirade against the Emigrants: "[The Emigrants] dispute our priority, they outnumber us in our own country, and nothing so fits us and the vagabonds of Quraish as the ancient saying: 'Feed a dog and it will devour you.' ... This is what you [the Ansaar] have done to yourselves. You have let them occupy your country, and you have divided your property among them. Had you but kept your property from them they would have gone elsewhere." These statements from ibn Ubbayy were bound to inflame a raw nerve. The Emigrants had arrived from Makkah where they had been vilified by the Quraish. They now outnumbered their hosts in Madina and these very hosts had also given half of their property to these new arrivals from Makkah. The fact that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) surmounted such internal dissensions and grave challenges is a testament to his sharp Understanding of the political landscape and the personalities around him.

On this particular occasion, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was quite sensitive to the possibility of real bloodshed and a deep rift in the Muslim community. He, therefore, made the Muslims march out of Madina incessantly and tired them out. Ibn Ishaq narrates: "Then the apostle walked with the men all that day till nightfall, and through the night until morning and during the following day until the sun distressed them. Then he halted them, and as soon as they touched the ground they fell asleep. He did this to distract their minds from what Abdullah ibn Ubbayy had said the day before."

A great example of Muhammad's sagacity in dealing with tribal political matters was his asking for permission from the Helpers in how to avenge the calumny instigated by Abdullah ibn Ubbayy against Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her) in what came to be known as "the affair of the lie". He summoned a meeting of the Leading men among the Helpers and asked for their permission to take punitive measures against Abdullah bin Ubbaiy who was one of them and had slandered the Prophet's wife, Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her). What needs to be noted is that the year was 628 AD when Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) exercised great power and influence in and around Madina. Muhammad's request was followed by an angry scene with the two groups of the Helpers, Aws and Khazraj, competing with each other to offer their loyalty to the Prophet and to kill Abdullah bin Ubbayy. This was a great showdown with Abdullah ibn Ubbayy who was quick to realize his increasing weakness and isolation. Thus, Muhammad's insights into tribal politics made it very easy for him to weaken his opponents by his intelligent use of tribal customs rather than the exercise of raw power and brute force.

Ibn Hisham reports the following dialogue between Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and Umar at this time: "Don't you see Umar if I had him [Abdullah ibn Ubbayy] killed, a large number of nobles would have furiously hastened to fight for him. Now, on the contrary, if I ask them to kill him, they will do so out of their own free will." Upon this, Umar is reported to have replied: "I swear by Allah that the Prophet's judgment is [better] than mine."



## Success in Enlarging His Circle of Influence around Madina

The remarkable speed with which Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) developed and then strengthened the Islamic state in Madina was due in large part to his phenomenal Understanding of the political landscape and tribal politics in Arabia. From his base in Madina, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) quickly built upon the ties of alliance that existed prior to his arrival between the tribes of the Aws and Khazraj and the Bedouin tribes in the surrounding area. The Prophet systematically built up Bedouin connections to rival those of the Quraish. If not a full allegiance to Islam, the Bedouin accepted at least alliance with the Muslims and some recognition of Muhammad's leadership. Hodgson notes that "this was accomplished partly by direct conversion; partly, when some anti-Muslim act gave occasion, by punitive raiding (in parties ranging from a dozen to several hundred). But mostly it was by diplomacy. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) played on differences between factions in a clan or a tribe as well as offering the more direct advantages that might come from the friendship and perhaps the arbitration of a neutral Madina and, later, from sharing in the Muslim raids. Thus the system of security among clans, which he had built in Madina, was extended into considerable territory beyond the oasis."

Just one day prior to his passing away in June 632 AD, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) gave the following very illuminating advice to the Muslims who had gathered at the Masjid-e-Nabvi: "O Muhajirun, be good to the Ansaar. The Muslim community increases every day, but the number of Ansaar remains the same. The Ansaar have been my own people, my trustworthy people among whom I have taken shelter. Be good to the virtuous among them, reward the pious, and forgive the wrong-doers." The Prophet's success in enlarging the group of Muslims in Madina and in expanding his circle of influence can be seen referred to indirectly in the above verse

Muhammad's successful expulsion of the powerful Jewish tribe of Al-Nadir in 625 AD (year 4 AH) provides another example of his accurate assessment of his adversaries' strengths and weaknesses. On learning of the Prophet's plans to wage war against them, the Jews of An-Nadir tribe took refuge in their forts. At this development, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) ordered that the palm-trees belonging to the An-Nadir should be cut down and burnt. On seeing this from their safe havens, the An-Nadir called out to the Prophet: "Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), you have prohibited wanton destruction and blamed those guilty of it. Why then are you cutting down and burning our palm trees?" Quran describes this incident in these words -Allah (SWT) then revealed the Verse:

﴿ مَا قَطَعْتُمْ مِّن لِّينَةٍ أَوْ تَرَكْتُمُوهَا قَائِمَةً عَلَىٰ أُصُولِهَا فَبِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَلِيُخْزِيَ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴾

*"What you (O Muslims) cut down of the palm-trees (of the enemy), or you left them standing on their stems, it was by the Leave of Allah, and in order that He might disgrace those who are disobedient to Allah)." (The Qu'an 59: 5)*

After mentioning the different views of scholars regarding the interpretation of this Verse, Shaikh Muhammad Abu Zuhrah wrote, 'As for the destruction and burning that occurs during war, these are some of the conclusions we can derive from the sources of Islamic legislation and from the actions of the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) during the wars he fought: First, the general rule is



that it is not permissible to cut down trees or destroy buildings, since the goal of war is not to hurt citizens (of a country) but to ward off the harm and wrongdoing of an oppressive authority. Second, if it is established that cutting down trees and destroying buildings is a military necessity for which there is no alternative - such as when the enemy uses trees to shield themselves or when they use buildings to hurt the Muslim army - then doing so is permissible, as is exemplified here (i.e., regarding the siege of Banu An-Nader) and in the case of Thaqif's fortress. Third, when certain scholars speak about the permissibility of destroying (buildings) and cutting down (trees), we should be clear on the point that they are speaking about cases of necessity. Therefore, Muslims do not destroy infrastructure simply to wreak havoc and harm the enemy, since citizens (of a country) are not the enemy; rather, the enemy is anyone who carries weapons in order to fight against the Muslims.

The Al-Nadir had also been promised military support by their confederate, Abdullah ibn Ubbayy, so they stood firm for some time. However, this military support did not materialize and the An-Nadir decided to seek a dialogue with the Prophet. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) spared their lives on condition that they could retain all their property which they could carry on camels, except their armor. The An-Nadir then left Madina taking their women, children and precious belongings with them.

### **Accurate Judgment of Adversaries' Personalities, Approaches and Plans - Abu Sufyan and Abbas**

Muhammad's choice of Abu Sufyan as his father-in-law was also most appropriate. Abu Sufyan was held in very high esteem in Makkah. He was a Leading light of the city and one of the foremost merchants of the town. The Prophet seems to have known very early on that Abu Sufyan's stature in Makkah was bound to grow. Abu Sufyan had eluded the Muslim raiding party at Badr by choosing an alternative route for his caravan. Abu Sufyan eventually converted to Islam and played a critical role in the almost bloodless conquest of Makkah in January 630 AD (the ninth month of the 8th year AH).

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was an astute observer of political developments. His Understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of his adversaries was often uncannily accurate. From his base in Madina, he was able to judge how his adversaries, the leaders of the Quraish, will respond to his moves and maneuvers. On occasion of the breach of the Treaty of Hudaibiya by the Quraish in 629 AD, the Prophet was informed of the bloodshed between the Khuzaa tribe (affiliates of the Muslims) and the Banu Bakr tribe (affiliates of the Quraish) by Budayl bin Warqa. The Quraish had provided physical assistance to the Banu Bakr and affiliates of the Muslims had been killed – a clear contravention of the Treaty of Hudaibiya. On Budayl's departure from Madina, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) told him: "I think you will see Abu Sufyan coming to strengthen the agreement and to ask for more time." When Budayl and his companions had got as far as Usfan they met Abu Sufyan who had been sent by the Quraish to re-affirm the agreement with Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and to ask for an extension, for they were afraid of the consequences of what they had done. The Prophet had known that the Quraish would depute Abu Sufyan, now his father-in-law because of the Prophet's marriage to Ume Habibah, to come to Madina for this purpose thinking that Abu Sufyan would now have more influence over the Prophet.

### **Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) Provided Support to Abu Sufyan and Abbas to Ensure Peaceful Takeover of Makkah**

It would be fair to argue that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) propped-up his pagan uncle, Abbas, and the Leading Makkan merchant, Abu Sufyan in Makkah although they were his adversaries. Muhammad's pagan uncle, Abbas, had accompanied him to the Second Pledge of Aqabah with the contingent from Yathrib (before the Prophet's migration to Yathrib) in 622 AD to obtain a

guarantee of the Prophet's personal safety. Through his various actions, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) ensured the ascendancy of these two Quraish leaders in Makkah.

Abbas had become the leader of the Hashim clan (the immediate family of the Prophet) of the Quraish after the death of Abu Lahab. Abbas was a banker and financier. He was an idolater and a long-time opponent of Islam. Abbas had fought against Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) at Badr, although he subsequently decided to take a more neutral attitude.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) married Umme Habiba, the daughter of Abu Sufyan, in 628 AD and married Maimunah, the widowed sister-in-law of Abbas, in 629 AD. The marriage with Maimunah took place when the Prophet was performing the minor pilgrimage one year after the treaty of Hudaibiya – as agreed with the Quraish of Makkah. At this time, Abbas declared that he was ready to accept Islam. Through these two marriages, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) further cemented his ties with these two prominent leaders of Makkah. Maimunah was also the aunt of the great Makkan general, Khalid bin Waleed, who also joined the Muslim ranks at this time.

Further, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) sent money and provisions to Makkah during the draught that afflicted that town after the treaty of Hudaibiya. However, he chose Abu Sufyan to distribute these in Makkah. During the capture of Makkah, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) announced amnesty to those who would be in Abu Sufyan's house. Both Abu Sufyan and Abbas played a most critical role in the almost bloodless takeover of Makkah by the Muslim forces. Capture of Makkah was a water-shed event in Islamic history. The future progress and expansion of Islam very much depended on this critical and most important development. Thus, Muhammad's explicit and implicit support to his pagan uncle Abbas and the Leading Quraish merchant Abu Sufyan played a most important role in the capture of Makkah. In later years of Islam, Abbas gave his name to the Abbasid dynasty of Islam and was father of future caliphs of Islam.

## **Abu Sufyan's Conversion to Islam at the Conquest of Makkah**

The Prophet had a sharp Understanding of his adversaries. He knew their strengths and weaknesses and continued to apprise himself of the various moves of his enemies. On the arrival of the very large Muslim army outside Makkah, the shrewd Abu Sufyan understood that the tide had truly turned once and for all. His friend and Quraish chieftain, Abbas brought him to the Prophet under his protection. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) asked him: "Isn't it time that you should recognize that there is no God but Allah?" Abu Sufyan answered, "You are dearer to me than father and mother. How great are your clemency, honor, and kindness! By God, I thought that had there been another God with God he would have continued to help me." Not only did Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) want Abu Sufyan to convert to Islam, he wanted Abu Sufyan to help in the peaceful surrender of Makkah to Islam. Abbas pointed out to the Prophet that "Abu Sufyan was a man who liked to have some cause for pride." Understanding Abu Sufyan's need for early recognition, the Prophet granted him a unique gift by stating that all Makkans who entered Abu Sufyan's house were safe as were those who stayed in their own homes or who entered the Ka'aba area. Later events were to demonstrate the sagacity of the Prophet's approach to Abu Sufyan as he became a Leading light of Islam in later years.

## **The Prophet Adjusted His Strategies in Real Time**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) continued to apprise himself of political and military developments in and around Madina and expended great effort in fine-tuning his moves and counter-moves. Muhammad's approach to the personalities and events around him was most dynamic. He incorporated fresh information into his planning and changed his strategies on a real time basis. A classic example of this can be found in his pursuit of the trading caravan of Abu Sufyan in the Badr area in 623

AD. Abu Sufyan eluded the small Muslim contingent because of information he obtained about the movement of the Muslim expeditionary force. However, a large military reinforcement arrived from Makkah to protect the Abu Sufyan-led caravan. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) could easily have avoided battle. However, after consultation with his companions and after gaining approval of the Ansaar, he decided to face them in battle at Badr. He had changed his strategy in real time.

## **Muhammad's Treatment of Malik bin Auf, the Enterprising Commander of the Hawazin**

Immediately after Muhammad's successful conquest of Makkah, Malik bin Auf had gathered the Hawazin and Thaqif chieftains together with the aim of resisting the Muslim advance on their area. Malik bin Auf had gained the command of the Hawazin very scrupulously and developed a détente with the Thaqif to fight the Muslims together. The Battle of Hunain ensued in which Malik bin Auf came quite close to defeating the much larger Muslim army by adopting smart guerrilla style martial tactics. It was only the sagacity and the valor of the Prophet himself who stood his ground when faced with the retreating rump of the Muslim army that saved the day for the Muslims. The Prophet appreciated the valor and leadership of Malik bin Auf. After the ensuing unsuccessful siege of Taif, the Prophet inquired about Malik bin Auf on his way back. He sent a message to Malik that if the latter became a Muslim, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) would return his family and property to him and give him a hundred camels. On getting this enticing offer from Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), Malik bin Auf came out of Taif and joined the Prophet who promptly restored his family to him and gifted him a hundred camels. Ibn Ishaq reports that Malik "became an excellent Muslim and at that time he said: 'I have never seen or heard of a man/Like Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) in the whole world; / Faithful to his word and generous when asked for a gift.'

The Prophet put Malik bin Auf in command of those of his people (the Hawazin tribe) who had accepted Islam and he proved an adept commander and leader. Thus, through his sagacity and far-sightedness, the Prophet made an erstwhile brilliant adversary into a loyal military tactician and able commander whom he used to great Muslim advantage.

## **Distribution of Booty Won at Battle of Hunain**

The Battle of Hunain took place immediately after the conquest of Makkah and several Quraish chieftains took place in this battle as Muslim commanders. This was the first instance in which Quraish leaders had fought a battle as Muslim commanders. When it came time to distribute the large booty, the Prophet favored these Quraish chieftains to show them the benefits they could gain by steadfast contributions for the Islamic cause. Ibn Ishaq states that "the Apostle gave gifts to those whose hearts were to be won over, notably the chiefs of the army, to win them and through them their people." The Prophet made the following distributions of booty:

*Abu Sufyan bin Harb 100 camels*

*Muawiya bin Abu Sufyan 100 camels*

*Hakim bin Hizam 100 camels*

*Al-Harith bin Al-Harith 100 camels*

*Al-Harith bin Hisham 100 camels*

*Suhayl bin Amr 100 camels*

*Huwaytib bin Abdul-Uzza 100 camels*

*Al-Ala bin Jariya 100 camels*

*Uyayna bin Hisn 100 camels*

*Al-Aqra bin Habis At-Tamimi 100 camels*

*Malik bin Auf 100 camels*

*Safwan bin Umayya 100 camels*

*Makhrama bin Naufal Less than 100 camels*

*Umayr bin Wahb Less than 100 camels*

*Hisham bin Amr Less than 100 camels*

*Said bin Yarbu 50 camels*

*As-Sahmi 50 camels*

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was an excellent human resource manager and knew how to win the Quraish, his adversaries for many years, over to the cause of Islam. The distribution of booty favored the Quraish and gave them a taste of the riches and wealth that could flow their way if they remained steadfast in their new religion.

## **Encyclopedic Knowledge of Arab Tribes**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) actively solicited information about Arab tribes. He was most interested in getting first-hand information about the tribal leaders and continuously assessed their strengths and weaknesses. All of Arabia was to become his field of activity and he needed to monitor the shifting balance-of-power in the Arabian Peninsula on an ongoing basis. The Prophet routinely sent intelligence agents into adjoining territories and received thorough briefings from them. A small illustration of the Prophet's large mental database can be seen from a small incident reported by Ibn Ishaq. After the Tabuk campaign in 9 AH, the Prophet was riding with a companion, Abu Ruhm Kulthum bin Al-Husain. The Prophet inquired about a number of Muslim tribes. When he asked Abu Ruhm about "the men with short curly hair", Abu Ruhm confessed that he did not know of them. The Prophet told him that "they are those who own camels in Shabakatu Shadakh." Abu Ruhm then promptly remembered the tribe as among the Banu Ghifar who were a clan of Aslam and had already converted to Islam.

The Prophet was generally most interested in the power of communication to convert the pagan tribes to Islam. He understood tribal politics and tribal leaders very well and seems to have known when to use the power of diplomacy, when to use military force and when to let events simply take their own course. The following incident shows this very well. The Prophet sent Amr ibn Umayyah to the Banu ad-Dil, a large and powerful tribe in the north-east of Arabia, as an envoy and a missionary. Amr ibn Umayyah returned to Madina without any success. "I invited them to come to God and to His Messenger, but they refused categorically," he reported upon his return to Madina. The Prophet's companions demanded that a punitive expedition be sent against the Banu ad-Dil. However, the Prophet replied: "No, leave them in

tranquility; if their chief embraces Islam and celebrates the officers of prayer and tells them: ‘Embrace Islam,’ nobody will refuse.”

Another illustration of the Prophet’s sharp Understanding of tribal behavior comes from the advice he gave Urwa bin Masud ath-Thaqafi in 9 AH. The Prophet had returned from the Tabuk Expedition and a deputation from the Thaqif tribe came to visit him. One of the Thaqif chieftains, Urwa bin Masud ath-Thaqafi met with the Prophet after this meeting and embraced him. He volunteered to return to the Thaqif as a Muslim and wished to invite his tribe to Islam. The Prophet advised him against this course of action telling him “they will kill you” since he knew the proud spirit of opposition that was in the Thaqif. Urwa bin Masud ath-Thaqafi did not accept Muhammad’s advice. He was a man much loved and admired by his people. When he returned to his tribe and invited them to Islam, they killed him.

### **Reasonable Approach to the Thaqef of Taif Upon Their Acceptance of Islam in AH 9**

The Thaqef of Taif eventually accepted Islam in 9 AH. This was after the Prophet’s unsuccessful siege of their city. However, over time, they had been won over to the cause of Islam since they were eventually encircled by Muslim developments all around them. In their internal deliberations, Amr bin Umayya remarked to the Thaqef: “We are in an impasse...All the Arabs have accepted Islam and [we] lack the power to fight them.”<sup>214</sup> The Thaqef were then quick to conclude that they should submit to the Prophet and accept Islam. However, they approached the Prophet with the intention of securing some concessions.

Upon their approach to him, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was most reasonable towards them. Among these concessions was their demand that they be allowed to retain their idol, Al-Lat un-destroyed for three years. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) did not accede to this desire of the Thaqef but excused them from destroying the idol themselves. He was sensitive to the fact that the Thaqef had worshipped Al-Lat for a long time and had venerated Al-Lat and the shrine for centuries. He therefore did not force them to destroy the idol and the temple. Instead, he sent his own companions to accomplish this task. In his command to Said bin Abu Hind whom he sent to the Thaqef to teach them Islam, the Prophet instructed Said “to be brief in prayer, to measure men by their weakest members; for there were old and young, sick and infirm among them.”

### **3. CHOOSING A LIFE OF POVERTY IN MADINA**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had risen from a humble origin to become a prominent trader in Makkah with a comfortable life in an elegant mansion. By the time he was forty, he had a loving wife, beautiful children frolicking around the house, and a team of servants calling on him. His was a success story. Not only was he a scion of the Leading Arab family of Arabia, he had also succeeded in business, married well and lived a comfortable life. The Arabs around him looked up to him. Many of them, no doubt, were jealous of his achievements. After all, he had been orphaned early, spent part of his childhood looking after sheep in the deserts around Makkah and his family, although a part of the ascendant tribe of the Quraish, had fallen on hard times.

It is most important to appreciate that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) chose a life of frugality after he migrated to Madina. He was a sophisticated trader and knew full well how to conduct international business. It would have been easy and actually logical for him to start trading in Madina's abundant agricultural produce on his own account. Madina lay on the strategic north-south trading route that linked Yemen with Arabia and Syria. Abdur Rehman bin Awf, his companion who had migrated to Madina from Makkah, arrived in penury in Madina but very quickly became the richest man in the entire region because of his trading skills. However, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) chose to live poor and focus his energies on his ministry and not on the pursuit of physical wealth and well-being.

It is hard to appreciate the material transformation undertaken by the Prophet in his life in Madina. He, and his family, must have become accustomed to a comfortable existence in Makkah. He enjoyed good food and good clothes. He liked to use perfume and was neat and tidy in his appearance throughout his life. Yet, in the Madina period, we find him living a life of poverty. The Prophet lived very modestly: his dwelling was particularly bare, and he often had nothing but a few dates left to eat. Yet he kept helping the destitute around him, especially the Ashab As-Suffah, the people of the bench, who lived near his home. When he received presents, he had them given out, and he immediately freed the slaves who were sometimes sent to him as gifts. In spite of his increasingly important role in Madina society and of his many responsibilities, he kept this simplicity in his life and in the way he allowed the members of his community to approach him. He owned nothing, and he let himself be accosted by women, children, slaves, and the poorest people. He lived among them; he was one of them.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) enjoyed doing his own chores. He cleaned his apartment himself. He lived a frugal life. He mended his own clothes and ate most frugally (dates, barley and milk on most days with meat served only on rare occasions). He slept on a mat made of reeds. His close companions such as Umar often remarked in dismay on this material transformation. However, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was steadfast in his humility and piety. He lived a frugal life even when he had essentially become ruler of Arabia by the time he died.

#### **Muhammad's Lineage**

To develop a better appreciation of the Prophet's economic transformation to a life of piety and frugality, one has to appreciate Muhammad's lineage and economic status in Makkah. It is worth spending some time Understanding the lineage of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) which is shown in Exhibit 3. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was son of Abdullah son of Abdul Muttalib who was the leader of the Hashim clan of the Quraish. The Quraish were the care-takers of the venerated Ka'aba shrine which, for centuries, had been the centre of worship in Arabia. Arab tribes from all over the Arabian Peninsula visited Ka'aba for the Hajj pilgrimage once a year and for minor pilgrimages (Umra) throughout the year.



## **Enhanced Economic Status after Marriage to Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her)**

After his marriage to Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her) and his successful trading caravans, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had become a highly respected member of the Hashmi clan of the Quraish. Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her) came from the clan of Asad which was more powerful than the Hashim clan of the Quraish at this time.<sup>217</sup> In fact, many historians argue, the hopes of the Hashim and Muttalib clans were set upon Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) for recovery of their waning influence. But beyond all questions of clan, he had come to be considered by the chiefs of Quraish as one of the most capable men of the generation which would succeed them and which would have, after them, the task of maintaining the honor and the power of the tribe throughout Arabia. The praise of As-Sadiq and Al-Ameen (the truthful one and the trusted one – names given to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) by the Quraish community in Makkah) was continually upon men's lips.<sup>218</sup> Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had become a wealthy Makkkan trader who lived a comfortable life with his wife and daughters. Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her) had been a rich widow before she married Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). However, their marriage was not a marriage of convenience.

Shibli Naumani comments that of all the early converts to Islam in Makkah, “none of them held a position of honor in the hierarchy of the Quraish.”<sup>219</sup> In fact, when these poor people entered the Ka'aba with the Prophet, the Makkans used to say: “Are these the persons whom God hath favored in preference to us.”<sup>220</sup> However, other historians have adopted quite the opposite view in arguing that many of the first converts were from the prominent families of the Quraish. For instance, Montgomery Watt has argued that many of the early converts came from “the most influential families in the most influential clans.”<sup>221</sup> These were mostly young men, the majority under thirty years old, who felt the same discontent with Makkkan society as Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) did. This early group was comprised perhaps of thirty to forty people who referred to themselves as Muhammad's Companions.<sup>222</sup>

## **Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) Could Easily have Pursued a Life of Material Well-Being in Madina**

The discussion in this section does not imply that the Muslims who had migrated to Madina with the Prophet lived financially comfortable lives. In fact, the opposite was true in the first few years of their existence in Madina. The Makkans had fled to Madina to escape persecution on the hands of the Quraish who had hardened in their resolve to decimate Islam. On their arrival in Madina, these Muslim immigrants had no homes, no means of financial support and no work of any kind. Therefore, early on, the Prophet bound these migrants with an equal number of hosts from among the Ansaar. Many of the Ansaar split their belongings and welcomed their immigrant brothers into their homes.

The Quraish had declared economic sanctions against the people of Madina. Most Arab tribes that were allied with the Quraish followed their lead. Madina's internal sources ran short of providing the means of sustenance for the burgeoning Muslim population of Madina. Food rations used to run so low that people used to suck dates rather than eat them. The early Madina period was a period of financial hardship for all Muslims of Madina including the Prophet of Islam.

However, once the period of initial hardship was over, the Prophet could have chosen a life of comfort as the undisputed religious, political and military leader of Madina. In addition, he had been an astute businessman and a respected trader in Makkah. Makkah had been the cosmopolitan and trading centre of Arabia where Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had, over fifty-three years, interacted with thousands of people from all over Arabia. The fact that he was known as Al-Ameen (the

truthful one) shows the high regard he enjoyed among his companions and family. He was most capable of arranging trading caravans, had personal familiarity of trading routes, and had first-hand knowledge of commodity sources and selling markets. Since Madina also lay on the North-South trading route, he could easily have launched trading caravans from Madina. Trading in the famous Madina dates and wheat, for example, could have been obvious options he could have pursued had he been even remotely interested in his personal material well-being. However, the historical sources do not discuss the Prophet's business ventures in Madina. He does not seem to have organized any trading caravans while he was in Madina.

After his marriage to Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her) in Makkah, the Prophet had enjoyed a comfortable life in Makkah. His trading caravans were quite successful. However, very few concrete details are known about his business life in Makkah since his marriage to Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her) in 595 AD when he was twenty-five years old. Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her)'s comments on his ascension to prophet-hood are one indication of his economic status. She comforted him by saying: "You unite uterine relations; you bear the burden of the weak; you help the poor and the needy, you entertain the guests and endure hardships in the path of truthfulness."

In Madina, he could easily have lived a comfortable life. Beginning with the arrival of booty in 624 AD (the second year after Hijra), the Prophet was entitled to khums or 20% of all booty collected. However, he chose to distribute this wealth among the poor and destitute Muslims whose numbers were growing by the day. The Prophet had proclaimed that Muslims from all over Arabia should avoid persecution by migrating to Madina. With the arrival of more and more impoverished Muslims into Madina, the Prophet's responsibility towards feeding, sheltering and clothing these poor grew manifold. Further, the Prophet also made an effort to meet the daily needs of the Suffa Companions – the Muslims who had dedicated their lives to learning and teaching Islam. In addition, the Prophet was also kind towards orphans, widows and travelers. His level of charity was unknown in the earlier history of Arabia.

He took very little for use by his own family. In fact, time and again, his daughter and his wives used to complain of the meager rations he used to bring home for their consumption. Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her) narrates that the Prophet and his household would spend many days at a stretch eating dates and drinking water only. Muhammad's companion, Abu Hurairah has reported the following incident from the Madina period: "A man came to the Prophet and said, 'I am hard pressed by hunger.' He sent a word to one of his wives who replied: 'By Him Who has sent you with the Truth, I have nothing except water.' Then he sent the same message to another (wife) and received the same reply. He sent his message to all of them (i.e. his wives) and received the same reply. Then he said, 'Who will entertain this (man) as guest?' One of the Ansaar said: 'O Allah's messenger, I will.' So he took him home and said to his wife: 'Serve the guest of Allah's Messenger.'" Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) lived a life of poverty, ran his own errands, mended his own shirts and shoes and died a poor man as well. Living a life of poverty while many of his close companions were living a life of reasonable luxury must have been very difficult for him. It was probably very difficult for some of his wives who were from leading families (such as Jawairiya and Saffiyah) and he must have been under considerable pressure in this regard.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) himself always lived a simple and frugal life, even when he became the most powerful sayyid in Arabia. He hated luxury and there was often nothing to eat in this household. He never had more than one set of clothes at a time and when some of his companions urged him to wear a rich ceremonial dress; he refused, preferring the thick, coarse cloth worn by most of the people. When he received gifts or booty, he gave it away to the poor and told the Muslims that the poor would enter the paradise before the rich.

The Prophet was keenly sensitive to making sure that undue wealth and riches did not accrue to his immediate family in Madina including his wives and daughter, Fatima. To relieve their extreme poverty,



Ali, the Prophet's paternal cousin and son-in-law, earned some money as a drawer and carrier of water while his wife and daughter of the Prophet, Fatima used to grind corn for others. When eventually the both of them decided to approach the Prophet to be given a share from the spoils, the Prophet declined to go out of his way to help them. He said, "I will not give to you and let the People of the Bench [the Suffa Companions – the impoverished Muslims who resided in the Mosque and had no means of subsistence who had devoted their lives to the study of Islam] be tormented with hunger. I have not enough for their keep; but I will spend on them what may come from the selling of the captives."

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was most concerned about the corrupting influence of wealth and power. He wished to lay the foundation of an egalitarian, pluralistic and caring society where the haves and the have-nots were not engaged in a power struggle for meager resources. Towards the end of his life, he could see that his community could succumb to the lulling influence of wealth and power. Amr bin Awf Al-Ansari reported that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) sent Abu Ubaidah bin Al-Jarrah to Bahrain to collect jizyah, the poll tax. When Amr returned from Bahrain with wealth, the Ansaar got news of it and joined the Prophet for the morning prayers. When the Prophet concluded the prayer, they stood in his way. When he saw them, he smiled and said: "I think you have heard about the arrival of Abu Ubaidah with something from Bahrain." They said, "Yes! O Messenger of Allah!" He said: "Rejoice and hope for that which will please you. By Allah, it is not poverty that I fear for you, but I fear that this world will be opened up with its wealth for you as it was opened to those before you; and you vie with one another over it as they did and eventually it will ruin you as it ruined them."

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) achieved such a degree of mastery over life that he did not hesitate to give all that he had whenever he wanted to give. A contemporary of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) once said of him: "Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) gives as if he has no fear of want at all." Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had once confided in one of his companions: "Keep away from [do not envy] what men love, and men will love you." In order not to allow anything to exercise any power over him but rather to enable him to determine it, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) led a very ascetic life. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was quite contemptuous of life's joys and attractions. He slept in a bed of palm fibers and never ate his fill.

## **Muhammad's Eating Habits**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) is known to have eaten simply throughout his life. He was, by nature, thrifty with his appetite. In his infancy and youth, camel's milk remained his staple food. The central deserts of the Arabian Peninsula around Makkah were scarce in orchards of date trees and, therefore, camel's milk remained the major source of nourishment for the ordinary Bedouin.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) used milk in the desert and ate bread and dates in the city, but he never ate both of these together. He used to say that to satisfy hunger, only one is enough, and if the other is being eaten as well, it would be lavishness.

To the end of his life, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) always ate while sitting on the ground. His food cloth consisted of a mat that was made from the bark of date trees. Apart from bread or dates, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) used to have another dish made of wheat and lentils (gruel) cooked for him. The day when he ate this food, he would not take bread or dates. Meat was a luxury. It was cooked only occasionally in the years in Makkah, for it was the custom to use meat only during the pilgrimage of Holy Ka'aba. During his stay in Madina, the Prophet never ate his fill; he never ate barley bread on two consecutive days, gruel being his main daily meal together with dates. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), due to his love for simplicity and avoidance of

an ostentatious existence, had no chairs and tables in his house. He used to sit and rest by lying down on a mat.

Anas said about the Prophet's life: "According to my knowledge, Allah's Messenger has never tasted a thin flattened loaf in all his lifetime." Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her) said: "Over two months used to elapse during which we would have seen three crescents – while no fire was kindled in the houses of Allah's Messenger. What did you eat to sustain yourselves? Urwah asked. She said: "The two black things: dates and water." This remarkable restraint, however, did not prevent Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) from enjoying from nature's bounties on occasion. He was known to love roasted leg of lamb, squash, honey and other sweets.

## **Muhammad's Attire**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was very frugal with his attire. His wife once gave him a new robe because he was in need of one. When one of his companions asked for something with which to shroud a dead relative, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) gave him this new robe. Although he dressed very simply on most occasions, he was not averse to wearing a luxurious Yamani robe on special occasions. He used to wear a simple sandal, and he did not wear slippers until the Negus of Abyssinia sent him some together with other clothes.

## **Strategic Significance of Choosing a Life of Frugality**

Muhammad's denial of the world and its luxuries was not pursued for its own sake. Nor was it a duty imposed by religion. The Quran says: "Eat of the delicacies of God's providing," and "Do seek the other world in what God has given you of this, but do not give up your share of this world. Do good as God has done good to you." In a conversation with Hakim bin Hizam, the Prophet made the following comments: "O Hakim, wealth is pleasant and sweet. He who acquires it with self-contentment, it becomes a source of blessing for him, but it is not blessed for him who seeks it out of greed. He is like one who goes on eating but his hunger is not satisfied."

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) always lived his heartfelt prayer – "O Lord! Keep me alive a poor man, and let me die poor; and raise me amongst the poor" – and this helps to explain the extraordinary success of his mission to the Arabs. His most compelling personal example was a continual sermon, putting the tenets of the Quran into practice.

The material well-being of the Quraish in the Prophet's time has been well-documented. The Quraish of Makkah were the caretakers of the Ka'aba shrine as well as sophisticated traders. Trading caravans from all over Arabia used to descend on Makkah in order to buy and sell. The Quraish also arranged and organized regular trading caravans themselves. Makkah was a truly unique centre of religion and commerce in Arabia at that time. The wealth that accrued to the Quraish was spent on lives of luxury and, in many cases, on debauchery. Many Makkans enjoyed gambling, drinking and the company of women. The Makkan society was divided between the haves and the have-nots. The poor and the destitute had limited rights, enjoyed very little protection and were resigned to a life of misery and misfortune. The majority of the Makkans lived a life of poverty in this way.

Muhammad's message of Islam was universal. In order to become a universal religion with a broad appeal, Islam clearly had to appeal to the masses. It is no accident that the first converts to Islam actually belonged to the very poor segment of Makkan society. Islam was a great "equalizer" since it brought the notable and the noteworthy together with the "riff-raff" to pray while standing shoulder to shoulder with each other.

## **4. EFFECTIVE USES OF PLEDGES, AGREEMENTS, AND TREATIES**

In the pursuit of his life-long mission, the Prophet needed to befriend many individuals, clans, tribes and nations. His preference was always to befriend someone and make them active participants and supporters. In the event that this was not possible, he needed to ensure that he could count on the other party to remain neutral. This helped him since it enlarged his circle of influence and, simultaneously, reduced the influence and power of his adversaries. In the pursuit of these aims, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) made tremendously effective use of pledges, treaties and agreements. Such verbal and written contracts helped him codify his relationships with others and helped reduce the uncertainty surrounding him. Since an Arab typically was a man of his words, once he had given his word, he could be expected to behave in a predictable manner in the future.

### **Why Pledges and Agreements were Necessary**

The social structures in Arabia at the time of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) were in a state of flux. The nomadic cultural values were under threat from values that govern city life. Virtues of hospitality and chivalry that were treasured by the nomadic Arab tribes (the Bedouin) were giving way to respect for material well-being. Clan affiliations were being weakened by the onslaught of settled city existence which was tipping the balance in favor of the nuclear family. This revolution (and not evolution - considering that it had been the Prophet's great-great grandfather, Qussay, who had convinced the Quraish to give up their nomadic existence and settle down around the Ka'aba shrine) in social values was causing great consternation. .

Given this state of affairs, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was most keen to create as much predictability in his environment as was possible. Since an Arab of his day generally considered a pledge a sacred promise, the Prophet astutely used pledges and agreements as an effective tool. Beginning with pledges from individual believers to treaties with heads of state, the Prophet was a tireless negotiator throughout his prophetic life. These pledges and agreements helped him solidify his support, pacify his neighbors, neutralize his enemies and gain time for the nascent Muslim state in Madina to gain traction.

At the beginning of his prophet-hood in 610 AD, Muhammad's mission in life of "arise and warn" must have appeared extremely daunting to him. He returned from Hira Cave visibly shaken by his Divine experience. He was frightened, confused and unsure. His conversation with Warqa bin Naufal, an ascetic cousin of his wife Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her), caused him further anguish. While confirming the authenticity of his Divine Calling, Warqa regretted that he would not live long enough to help Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) at a time when he was going to be cast out by his own people. Being cast out by one's own tribe was only slightly better than being murdered by one's own kinsmen since an outcast faced an "open season" – no one would avenge any harm that may be inflicted upon him. His apparently insurmountable challenge (most Makkans laughed at him when he began preaching to them – several genuinely believed that he had lost his mind) probably made him an ardent believer in the domino effect. While he would preach to large groups; he would focus his energies and resources on communicating with individuals. In case he was successful, he would win converts to his cause one-by-one who would then also pledge their obedience to him. The Shahadah is uttered by everyone who converts to Islam and translates into the following sentence: "I testify that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) is his Messenger." The Shahadah, itself, is the first pledge of Islam.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was very proactive in seeking pledges and in proposing and negotiating agreements and treaties. During his preaching career in Makkah, he had bound his followers to himself through various pledges. At the same time, different Quraish chieftains had pledged to protect him from harm. Eventually, he migrated to Madina after a large contingent from Yathrib had pledged to protect his life with the same vigour they would use to protect their own families. During his ten very eventful years in Madina, most of these events were either the agreements he negotiated with other tribes or the direct consequences of these agreements.

The Prophet was a brilliant treaty negotiator and drafter. The Prophet proved himself to be a better drafter and negotiator of agreements than anyone else around in Arabia at that time. In all the treaties we have seen in early Islamic history, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) took the lead in drafting the treaties. Experienced contract negotiators maintain that the party that drafts an agreement gets at least ten percent more value out of the agreement simply through the act of drafting the agreement.<sup>238</sup> This is because of a number of reasons:

1. The drafter of an agreement is able to frame the issue. Framing of an issue is often of tremendous value as it allows the drafter to make explicit and implicit connections between the various terms of an agreement.
2. The drafter of an agreement is inherently biased in his own favor. Even though the terms of the treaty may have been agreed between the parties, this inherent bias tends to yield more value to the drafter in the long-run because of the language employed.
3. An agreement typically lays out the representations and warranties that apply to each party. In drafting these representations and warranties, the drafter is able to use language that favors him.

We are not attributing malafide intentions to the drafter of an agreement here. It is simply true that the drafter, even with the fairest of intentions, gets more value out of an agreement.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was extremely cognizant of the Arab psyche and made excellent use of the Arab tradition of taking oath. No Arab of good standing would abrogate his word once given. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) made extensive use of pledges in his personal life to advance the cause of Islam. He could take a pledge from his companions in war that they would not run away. He sometimes took a pledge from them that they would fight to the death. He also, on occasion, took a pledge from them to undertake jihad. He sometimes took a pledge from them to submit to Allah (Islam). The Prophet made very effective use of pledges to make sure that the new converts to Islam adhered to all of the precepts of Islam.

## **Participation in Pledge of Hilf-ul-Fadool**

In his youth, the Prophet had actively participated in the Hilf-ul-Fadool: an agreement among the youth of Makkah to protect the poor, the needy and the travelers from exploitation. However, this agreement had a short life and became a victim of the times. The Prophet always fondly remembered his participation in this pledge and considered this better than ownership of red camels.

## **Agreement with the People of Yathrib that Paved the Way for his Departure to Yathrib**

After three years of clandestine meetings with the Hajj pilgrims from Yathrib during 620 AD through 622 AD, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) finally decided to migrate to Yathrib.

However, he did so only after obtaining the pledge from the Yathrib pilgrims in 622 AD. The following were the articles of the second pledge of Aqabah of 622 AD:

*To listen and obey in all difficulty and ease;*

*To spend in plenty as well as in scarcity;*

*To enjoin good and forbid evil;*

*To fear the censure of none in Allah's service; and*

*To aid Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) when he comes to Madina and to protect him from anything the people of Madina protect themselves and their families.*

We see in the clauses above that, in the agreement with the people of Yathrib before Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) migrated there, the people from Yathrib promised to protect him as much as they protected their own families. However, this was truly a win-win contract as the Prophet made clear in his most memorable speech to the Ansaar after the Battle of Hunain in 630 AD. In his classic oratory on this occasion, he addressed the unhappy members of the Ansaar who had felt wronged by him since he gave large parts of the booty to the new converts of Makkah. He addressed them in these words: "Didn't I come to you when you were astray and Allah guided you? You were poor and Allah gave you wealth. Weren't you foes and Allah made you love one another?" As a corollary, he also admitted the following in the same speech when he addressed himself on behalf of the Ansaar: "You came to us belied and rejected, and we accepted you; you came to us as helpless, and we helped you; you were a fugitive, and we took you in; you were poor and we comforted you."

The Prophet was most sensitive about the agreement he had made with the people of Yathrib. He had agreed to become one with this community which eventually became the foundation of Islam. The Prophet's strong commitment to the people of Madina can be gauged from the fact that he stayed in Makkah only fifteen days after the capture of Makkah. Makkah was the city of his birth and the city of his ancestors. He had lived here most of his life. He had friends and family here. He had now returned to Makkah as the undisputed leader of Arabia and the founder of a world religion. However, after the capture of Makkah, he stayed there no more than fifteen nights.

## **Fraternization Pledge in Madina**

Before the construction of the mosque in Yathrib (Masjid-e-Nabvi) was complete, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) called a meeting of the Immigrants (Muhajireen) and the Helpers (Ansaar, the Muslim men of Yathrib) and made the 45 Muhajireen brothers of 45 members of the Ansaar on one-to-one basis. The Prophet called one from the Muhajireen and one from the Ansaar and said "Each of you is a brother to the other." The new brotherhood was treated as real kinship to such an extent that whenever an Ansaari died his property was inherited by his Muhajir brother and not by his own kinsmen. This practice continued till the following verse was revealed at the time of the Battle of Badr: "But kindred by blood are nearer to one another regarding inheritance."

## **The Charter of Islamic Alliance**

A great example of the Prophet's brilliant use of agreements is the treaty he negotiated between the Muslim and non-Muslim tribes of Madina. This treaty aimed at ruling out all pre-Islamic enmities and inter-tribal hostilities. It is important to note a few of the provisions of this treaty which is reproduced below:

*In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.*

1. This is a document from Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), the Messenger of Allah, concerning Emigrants and Helpers and those who followed and strove with them.
2. They are one nation to the exclusion of other people.
3. The Emigrants of Quraish shall unite together and pay blood money from among themselves, and shall ransom honorably their prisoners. Every tribe of the Helpers shall unite together, as they were at first, and every section among them will pay a ransom for releasing its relative prisoners.
4. Believers shall not leave anyone poor among them by not paying his redemption money or blood money in kind.
5. Whoever is rebellious or whoever seeks to spread enmity and sedition, the hand of every God-fearing Muslim shall be against him, even if he be his son.
6. A believer shall not kill another believer, nor shall he support a disbeliever against a believer.
7. The protection of Allah is one (and is equally) extended to the humblest of the believers.
8. The believers are supported by each other.
9. Whosoever of the Jews follows us, shall have aid and help; they shall not be injured, nor any enemy be aided against them.
10. The peace of the believers is indivisible. No separate peace shall be made when believers are fighting in the way of Allah. Conditions must be fair and equitable to all.
11. It shall not be lawful for a believer, who holds by what is in this document and believes in Allah and the Day of Judgment, to help a criminal nor give him refuge. Those who give him refuge and provide him help shall have the curse and anger of Allah on the Day of Resurrection. Their indemnity is not accepted.
12. Killing a believer deliberately with no good reason entails killing the killer unless the heirs consider it otherwise.
13. Whenever you differ about a matter, it must be referred to Allah and to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him).

**An analysis of the above clauses yields the following very important points:**

1. This agreement combines the Muslims into one indivisible community (the umma) the loyalty to which is supposed to supersede tribal loyalties; all Muslims are one nation to the exclusion of other people;
2. All Muslims are equal before God regardless whether they are rich or poor;
3. Kindness and support towards poor Muslims is highly desirable;
4. However, within this unity of the umma, the Emigrants are to form one group and the Helpers another, in so far as each group must demand and pay penalties for itself, and buy the freedom of its own slaves;
5. Muslims are forbidden to kill other Muslims. They are also forbidden to offer refuge to a criminal;



6. The agreement offers peace and mutual support to the non-Muslim tribes of Madina in exchange for the same;
7. Enmity towards Islam and sedition would be dealt with severely by the Prophet; and
8. Disagreements arising in the congregation are to be brought before Allah and His Apostle who, by definition, would be the final arbiter and judge of such developments.

Tor Andrae remarks that in this Charter of Islamic Alliance as promulgated by the Prophet, we meet for the first time this formula which makes the Prophet the final arbiter of all disputes in the community.<sup>244</sup> This is significant for Muhammad's growing self-consciousness. It shows us that the Prophet, with increasing assurance, has come to regard his judicial decisions to carry the best long-term prospects for the Muslim community.

**The following seem to have been the Prophet's motives behind launching this charter in Madina:**

1. He wished to unite the often feuding tribes of Aws and Khazraj for larger Islamic interests. Clearly, a unification of the Aws and Khazraj had to be the pre-condition for the creation of a larger, united Islamic community, the Umma, comprised of all Muslims;
2. He wished to rule out all pre-Islamic enmities and inter-tribal hostilities;
3. He did not want to allow pre-Islamic traditions to creep in or violate the new Islamic environment in Madina;
4. He was keen to develop friendly relations between the Muslims and non-Muslim tribes of Arabia;
5. He wished to make the protection of Madina a common duty of the Muslims and non-Muslims alike; and
6. This document made Allah and Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) the ultimate holders of power in Madina and arbiters in all disputes / interpretations.

**Treaty with the Jews of Madina (the Meesaq-e-Madina or the Constitution of Madina)**

After setting up his own residence adjacent to the Masjid-e-Nabvi (the mosque of the Prophet) which served as a prayer hall, conference room, public gathering place and a shelter for destitute Muslims, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) bound the Ansaas of Madina and the emigrants from Makkah in a bond of brotherhood discussed above. Subsequently, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) negotiated a peace treaty with the Jewish tribes of Madina. This document has been preserved in written form and is commonly known as the Constitution of Madina.

One has to appreciate that on his arrival in Madina, the Prophet was the undisputed head of the growing Muslim community of Madina. This event is unique in world history as most major heads of religion have not enjoyed this advantage. Most law-givers in world history did not enjoy the simultaneous powers that come from being a religious head as well as political and military head of a community. Neither Zoroaster, nor Confucius, nor Lao Tzu, nor Krishna, nor even Moses and Jesus had had this chance; Buddha himself deliberately refused the throne. Without this providential luck, it would not have been possible for Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) to become a "perfect example to be

imitated” for his community, the example of a man who teaches and puts his teaching into practice, a man who guides our life in the spiritual as well as in the moral and material aspects.

In the drafting and negotiation of this treaty, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) consulted his followers as well as his non-Muslim neighbors. They all assembled in the house of Anas and resolved to constitute themselves into a city-state. The constitutional law was drawn up in an act, which fortunately has been integrally preserved to date. Being the constitution of the first Muslim city-state, it is equally the first constitution ever written for a state in the history of the world. According to Hamidullah, the books of Confucius (551 – 419 BC), Lao Tzu (600 BC – 470 BC), of Aristotle (384 – 322) and of his Indian contemporary Kautilya do not represent constitutions promulgated by sovereigns; they were meant to be textbooks for princes or suggestions intended for rulers, who were free to accept them or not. Even the “Constitution of Athens” emanating from Aristotle, is nothing but a work of a historian, prepared at a time when Athens was no more than a city-state, and Aristotle was at best a minister, not a ruler.

It is quite intriguing to note the following two statements from the Constitution: From clause 15: “And verily the Dhimmah (protection) of God is one” and from Clause 17: “And verily the peace of the Believers shall be one.” Acknowledgement of these two clauses by any Madina tribe meant that they were now committed to uniting with Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and the Muslim state of Madina and they could not develop their own peace or friendship treaties with others independent of the Muslim community.

**The major highlights of this treaty were the following:**

1. The Jews of Banu Araf are one community with the believers. The Jews will profess their religion and the Muslims theirs.
2. The Jews shall be responsible for their expenditure, and the Muslims for theirs.
3. If attacked by a third party, each shall come to the help of the other.
4. Each party shall hold counsel with the other. Mutual relation shall be founded on righteousness; sin is totally excluded.
5. Neither shall commit sins to the prejudice of the other.
6. The wronged party shall be aided.
7. The Jews shall contribute to the cost of war so long as they are fighting alongside the believers.
8. Madina shall remain sacred and inviolable for all that join this treaty.
9. Should any disagreement arise between the signatories to this treaty, then Allah the All-High and His Messenger shall settle the dispute.
10. The signatories to this treaty shall boycott the Quraish commercially; they shall abstain from extending any support to them.
11. Each shall contribute to defending Madina, in case of a foreign attack, in its respective area.
12. This treaty shall not hinder either party from seeking lawful revenge.



This treaty with the Jews is a brilliant example of the Prophet's shrewd negotiating skills. Clauses 1 through 6 are statements about which there can be little dispute among two parties that wish to live amicably with each other. Clauses 7 and 8 are quite logical and reasonable. If the Jews are fighting alongside the Muslims in a future war, it is reasonable to ask them to fund part of the war effort. It is also quite reasonable to proclaim Madina as a land of peace for all signatories to this treaty. Clause 9 should have been highly contentious from the Jewish perspective. This clause makes the Prophet himself, who is a party to this treaty, the sole arbiter of all future disputes arising from the implementation and interpretation of this treaty. This clause 9 provides the Prophet immense power in dealing with the Jews in the future. Clause 10 is also very problematic from the Jewish perspective since it makes the Quraish the enemies of the Muslims as well as of the Jewish tribes of Yathrib. We have no historical evidence of any serious enmity between the Jews of Yathrib and the Quraish of Makkah prior to this time. In fact, given their relatively cosmopolitan natures and love of trade, the two communities should have been on good terms with each other prior to the Prophet's arrival in Madina. This was to change dramatically with the negotiation of this treaty. Clause 11 is perhaps the most problematic of all the clauses. A forward-looking Jewish leader should have seen that the arrival of the Prophet from Makkah meant trouble in the future. Clause 11 binds the Jews to support the Muslims in case they are attacked by foreigners. The same clause also binds the Muslims to support the Jews from a foreign attack on them. However, the facts on the ground would have shown that the future would bring warfare to Madina on account of the Muslims and that the Jewish support for the nascent Muslim state was bound to be tested shortly.

**Muhammad's treaty with the Jews of Madina shows the Prophet's strategic brilliance at its finest. The following were the critical positive implications of this treaty for Islam:**

1. This treaty codified the relationship between the Muslims and the Jews making crystal clear the rights and obligations of each party and leaving little room for ambiguity or interpretation.
2. It protected the Muslim flank from any near-future Jewish attack.
3. The treaty marks the Quraish as enemies of Madina and prevents the Jews from helping the Quraish against the Muslims.
4. The treaty obligates the Jews to defend the Muslims and Madina from attacks from the Quraish.
5. The Jews were not aware of the Prophet's future plans relating to expeditions to disrupt the trade routes of the Quraish. If the Jews had known of these plans, they may have disagreed with some terms of this treaty.
6. The Jews somehow agreed that all future disputes between the Jews and the Muslims will be settled by Allah and His Messenger. This was bound to weaken the position of the Jews in the future in matters of treaty interpretation.
7. The treaty called for a commercial boycott of the Quraish to be undertaken.

Two themes are worth noting from the Constitution of Madina outlined above. One is the concern to clarify the relationship between the new community (umma) and the existing tribal structure. This is particularly apparent in the regulations regarding the payment of blood money and the ransoming of captives. The other theme is the fact that a major interest of the parties to the document is the waging of war. There are stipulations regarding the initiation and termination of hostilities, contribution to their cost, and so forth. Jews contribute, and fight alongside the believers. One is reminded of the remark of a man of Yathrib at the Pledge of Aqabah before the Prophet migrated to Yathrib: "If God unites them [the people of Yathrib] in it, no man will be more powerful than you."

Muhammad's treaty with the Jews of Madina is a great example of his brilliant negotiating skills. Though the Jews of Banu Quraizah, Banu Nadir and Banu Qainuqah did not sign this covenant at its conclusion, they did enter later on into similar pacts with the Prophet.<sup>249</sup> Most Muslim historians, including Ibn Hisham and At-Tabari, place the composition of the Meesaq-e-Madina among the Prophet's first acts upon arrival at Madina in 622 AD. However, that seems highly unlikely. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), after all, had just fled Makkah in the dark of the night and had just arrived in Madina which was providing him sanctuary against his enemies. Though the small Muslim community in Madina clearly accepted him as their undisputed leader, it is not at all clear that the non-Muslims of Madina and the Jews of Madina would have agreed to come under his direct influence and power so early in his career in Madina. It was not until the Battle of Badr in 624 AD, and perhaps not even until 627 AD, that the majority of the Aws tribe converted to Islam.<sup>250</sup> Before then, few people outside the Muhajireen and the Ansaar would have submitted to his authority. In the early days before the Battle of Badr in 624 AD, Muhammad's followers in Madina were a tiny fraction of Madina's total population where the Jewish population itself totaled in the thousands. It is, therefore, highly likely that the Jewish tribes of Madina may have joined the Meesaq-e-Madina after the Battle of Badr.

Through this treaty, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) bound these three important Jewish tribes of Madina not to wage war with the Muslims and to defend Madina jointly with the Muslims against an attack. In fairness to the Jews, had they known of the proactive military strategy about to be adopted by Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), they may have wished to add several reservations to the treaty and may have wished to remain neutral in the conflict between the nascent Islamic state in Madina and the powerful Quraish chieftains of Makkah.

In any case, within the next five years, all three of the Jewish tribes had broken the agreement with dire consequences for themselves. As a result of their breach of this agreement, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) waged war against them. A trivial quarrel in the second year after Hijra (624 AD) led to the expulsion of the Banu Qainuqah from Madina. In the fourth year after Hijra (626 AD), the Banu Nadir were also expelled from Madina because the Prophet declared that they had planned to assassinate him during his visit to their stronghold. In the fifth year, the Banu Quraizah were found to be conniving with the invading force of the Quraish during the Battle of Ahzaab (627 AD). The outcome was the mass execution of the men and the enslavement of the women and children. Thereafter, the Jews seized to be a power in Madina. The brilliant treaty Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) negotiated with the Jews helped him neutralize their ability to develop a second source of power in Madina. In doing so, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) also neutralized Abdullah bin Ubbaiy, the Leading chieftain of Madina who had had aspirations to be crowned the undisputed leader of Madina before the Prophet's arrival there. Abdullah bin Ubbaiy had been a confederate of the Jewish tribe of Banu Nadir and had enjoyed their support. Thus, this treaty helped Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) gain comprehensive political and military control over the city and its adjoining territories while also eliminating a dangerous potential friend of the Quraish from his area of control.

The expulsion of the Jewish clans of Madina was a logical move on the part of the Prophet. Islam needed to develop an independent identity as a monotheistic religious tradition. The Jews of Madina had not been eager to embrace Islam. After all, they considered themselves the "chosen people" and were adherents of the "senior" monotheistic religious tradition. While Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had won many converts among the pagan Arab tribes and clans of Makkah and Madina, he had not won many converts among the Christians and the Jews. But just as serious Christians could not accept a timeless monotheism stripped of the Incarnation, so most Jews could not accept a universalism in which their history as the chosen people lost its unique significance.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) continued to invite Jews to Islam. However, for the most part, his efforts did not bear fruit. This is very well-illustrated by a conversation recorded by Ibn Ishaq between the Prophet and the Jews of the Banu Qainuqah tribe of Madina after the Muslim victory at the Battle of Badr: “The apostle assembled [the Banu Qainuqah] in their market and addressed them as follows: ‘O Jews, beware lest God bring upon you the vengeance that he brought upon Quraish and become Muslims. You know that I am a prophet who has been sent – you will find that in your scriptures and God’s covenant with you.’ They replied, ‘O Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), you seem to think that we are your people. Do not deceive yourself because you encountered a people with no knowledge of war and got the better of them; for by God if we fight you, you will find that we are real men!’”

One only needs to remember the comments of Al-Abbas bin Ubadah bin Nadlah of Yathrib who, on seeing the seventy-five strong team of Yathrib ready to pledge allegiance to the Prophet in the second pledge of Aqabah in June 622 AD had remarked to his companions: “Do you know the significance of the pact that you are entering into with this man? You are in fact affirming that you will fight against various people. If you fear that your property will be at risk or the lives of your nobles will be in danger, then leave him now, because if you do this after the pledge, it will be degrading for you both in this world and the world to come. But if you think that you can carry out what you are called upon to do in spite of the loss of previous lives and property, then undertake this heavy responsibility.”

Meesaq-e-Madina (the constitution of Madina) allowed the Prophet an opportunity to give form to the first Islamic state. This document established the freedom of faith and opinion, the inviolability of the city, human life, and property, and the forbiddance of crime. It constitutes a breakthrough in the political and civil life of the world of that time which was beset by exploitation, tyranny and corruption.

## **Non-aggression Treaties with Tribes around Madina**

In the very first few Muslim expeditions in Madina, the Muslim foreign policy, so to speak, can be seen taking shape. While the first seven expeditions that took place in the first eighteen months of the Prophet’s arrival at Madina did not lead to any actual fighting, they did lead to pacts of mutual non-aggression with a number of tribes around Madina that saw the arrival of the Muslim expeditionary forces in their area and were impressed with their discipline and resolve. The first few pacts of mutual non-aggression were with Banu Damrah and Banu Mudlij. According to one account, the terms were that neither party was to make raids on the others, to join in hostile concentrations against the other, or to help the other’s enemies. These pacts of mutual non-aggression were to form the cornerstone of Muslim foreign policy in the Madina period. They were a tremendous boost to the nascent Muslim polity in Madina as they helped neutralize possible enemies of the Islamic state and also helped alienate the Makkans from this part of the Arabian Peninsula.

One has to appreciate the fact that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) felt as bound by his agreements as were his contractual partners. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was keenly aware of the niceties and nuances of such agreements and felt bound by them as much as the parties that contracted with him. Prior to the Battle of Badr which took place in the environs of Madina, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) conferred with the Ansaar before committing himself to a course leading to battle. He needed to get their approval to wage war with the Quraish. He asked them if they would support him in these circumstances. The Ansaar were not contractually bound to support Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) in this martial enterprise as it did not technically constitute a defence of Madina. Therefore, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) felt obliged to ask them for a fresh situation-specific pledge of support.

## **Context for the Two Pledges of Aqabah, the Fraternity Pledge in Madina and the Constitution of Madina**

The Prophet's proactive approach to developing contractual relationships (along with the concomitant rights and obligations) within the Muslim community as well as with the various tribes living in Madina should be seen in the context of the belligerent stand taken by the Quraish about his successful departure from Makkah. Soon after Muhammad's arrival in Madina, Abu Sufyan and Ubbay ibn Khalaf, two of the Leading chieftains of Makkah, wrote a letter to the Ansaar of Madina: "Whereas there will be no tribe, among the Arab tribes, with which a burn (meaning a hot war) will be more painful for us than with you; but you have tried to help someone from among us, [someone who was the noblest and in the highest position], and you have given him shelter, and you defend him, and this is really shameful thing and a defect for you, so do not interfere between him and us. If he constitutes a good, we are the ones to take advantage of it; if he is otherwise, we have more rights than any other to hold him." The praise in the letter for the Prophet may be a later alteration.

The Prophet's migration to Madina had not brought an end to the Makkani hostility towards him. The Makkans wrote another letter to Abdullah ibn Ubbayy and his friends: "You have given shelter to our comrade (in flight). We swear by God that if you do not fight him, or expel him, we shall all march against you to kill your combatants and violate your women."<sup>257</sup> This letter from the Quraish caused a stir in Madina as Abdullah ibn Ubbayy wished to rouse the Madenites against the Prophet. However, the Ansaar remained steadfast in their loyalty to the Prophet and this letter did not collect the support wished by the Makkans.

## **The Prophet Honors His Pledge to Meet the Quraish at Badr a Second Time in 626 AD**

The Battle of Uhud had been inconclusive for the Muslims as well as for the Quraish of Makkah. The Muslims suffered very heavy casualties; however, the Quraish were not able or not willing to drive home their advantage by invading the city of Madina itself. Before his departure from the Uhud battlefield, the Makkani chieftain, Abu Sufyan went to the top of the mountain and shouted out loudly saying: "Victory in war goes by turns. Today in exchange for the day [Battle of Badr]...Your meeting place is Badr next year." The Prophet told one of his companions to say, "Yes, it is an appointment between us."<sup>258</sup> Thus, the Prophet did not show any weakness at a time of immense weakness for the Muslims. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) remembered this pledge. In the Islamic month of Shaban, 4 AH, the Prophet went to Badr a second time to honor the pledge he had made to Abu Sufyan. He stayed in Badr for eight nights waiting for Abu Sufyan. Abu Sufyan with the men of Makkah went as far as Majanna in the area of Al-Zahran. He told the Quraish that the only suitable year was a fertile year when they could pasture the animals on the herbage and drink their milk, whereas this was a dry year. He convinced the Quraish to return to Makkah with him. The Prophet had kept his pledge and kept his commitment.

## **The Treaty of Hudaibiya (628 AD)**

In 628 AD, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) decided to visit Makkah to perform a minor pilgrimage. In and of itself, this intention of the Prophet is actually quite complex and not very easy to understand. After all, the Muslims had fought three major battles with the Quraish during the preceding five years. Prior to that, the Quraish had conspired to kill the Prophet in 622 AD before his migration to Madina. The three battles also had this specific aim: to kill Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and exterminate the small Muslim community of Madina. For the Prophet now to decide to visit Makkah, the stronghold of the Quraish, to perform a minor pilgrimage is, on the surface,

not an understandable decision. At a minimum, this decision carries very high level of risk to personal safety. The Muslims who decide to accompany him were bound to wear the Ehraam (a dress worn by pilgrims comprised simply of two white sheets of cloth) and carry no arms since they were planning to enter Makkah with peaceful intentions to perform a religious duty.

The question then does arise. Why did the Prophet decide to go for a minor pilgrimage to Makkah at this time? He must have been keenly aware of the potential dangers. If the Quraish successfully ambushed the Muslim pilgrims on the outskirts of Makkah, they could have dealt a deadly blow to Islam. The Prophet was clearly pursuing a risky strategy in deciding to go for the minor pilgrimage to Madina at this time. It is possible that the Prophet may have had the following reasons:

**A.** The Prophet may have felt that there was a small probability that the Quraish would let the Muslims enter Makkah to perform a pilgrimage despite the high level of animosity and hatred. This would be possible because the Quraish, after all, were the custodians of the Ka'aba which was open to followers of all religions. Makkah, itself, was an open city which thrived on tourism and commerce revolving around visitors to the Ka'aba from all over the Arabian Peninsula. Religiously, Makkah was an international city having in its vicinity, chambers for all religions where idols and sketches of their gods and deities were kept. Irrespective of the religion one followed, one was at freedom to circumambulate the Ka'aba. Thus, Muhammad's arrival at the outskirts of Makkah to perform the Umra pilgrimage was bound to present the Quraish with a profound dilemma. Visiting the sanctuary had, for decades, been the Peninsula's tribes' most legitimate right.

**B.** On the other hand, the Quraish could not allow the Muslims to move about freely in their city, as they had been humiliated by these very people in various battles. If they segregated the Muslims from the followers of other religions by not allowing them to enter Makkah, this would have serious negative implications for the universality of Makkah as the religious and trading capital of the Arabian Peninsula. Further, some of the Quraish leaders may have been genuinely concerned that the Muslims may simply try to capture the city once allowed inside.

**C.** The Prophet may also have hoped to take advantage of the disunity among the Quraish. Muhammad's arrival outside Makkah to perform Umra pilgrimage could easily have divided the Quraish and paved the way for the Makkan resistance to Islam to implode from the inside.

**D.** The fact that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was travelling with many companions who were family members and kinsmen of Leading Makkan notables would not be lost on the Makkans. This would reduce the probability of a bloodbath. Most Makkan notables would have been very reluctant to shed the blood of their kinsmen who were visiting Makkah to perform a pilgrimage on a large scale.

**E.** In the event that the Quraish allowed the Muslims to enter Makkah, this would have been a proud homecoming for the Muslims. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), after all, had left Makkah six years ago with one companion in the thick of the night. For him now to return to Makkah as head of a 1,400 strong Muslim contingent that had earlier defeated the Makkans in a number of battles was bound to impress many in Makkah. Furthermore, the discipline of the Muslims and the homecoming of many of them to families disunited by the battles could also have strengthened the cause of Islam inside Makkah.

**F.** In case the Quraish united among them and presented Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) with a unified front thwarting the Muslim attempts to enter Makkah, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) would then be presented with a difficult situation. He would need all of his diplomatic and leadership skills to come out victorious from such an eventuality. Later events were to

show that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was more than equal to such a situation.

Again, one has to appreciate the proactive approach of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). As soon as he realized that the Quraish had united in their resistance to his desire to enter Makkah as head of the Muslim pilgrim party, he initiated a dialogue with the Quraish. At the time of Hudaibiya, the tribe of Khuzaa was in alliance with the Muslims and enjoyed their confidence. The chief of the tribe, Budayl bin Warqa, came to see the Prophet about news of the advance of the Quraish armies. The Prophet instructed him to visit the Quraish elders with the following message: “Go and tell them that we have come to perform an Umra and not to show fight. Wars have reduced the Quraish to a wretched state and they have suffered considerable losses. They would be well advised to make a truce for a specified period and leave me to the Arabs.” At-Tamimi quotes the Prophet to have also said the following as part of his message to the Quraish: “...If they [Quraish] wish I will conclude a truce with them, during which they should refrain from interfering between me and the people [that is, the Arab infidels other than the Quraish], and if I have victory over those infidels, Quraish will have the option to embrace Islam as the other people do, if they wish; they will at least get strong enough to fight.”

Not only is this message an example of brilliant oratory, it is also Muhammad’s win-win truce proposal to his arch enemies. He takes the initiative in proposing a peace treaty and is willing to agree to a truce for a specified period with them. However, while this will provide a much needed respite to the Quraish from the continuous fighting with the Muslims and will save their trade caravans from Muslim raids; it will allow Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) the luxury of focusing his energies on dealing with the other Arabian heathen tribes with full knowledge that the Quraish will not support these tribes against Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). Such a truce would neutralize the Quraish as a threat to the Muslims and allow the Muslims to develop a broader foreign policy. It is most interesting that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) proposed the broad outline of a possible treaty with the Quraish in the very first message he sent to them through Budayl bin Warqa. This would have the desired result of focusing the Quraish on a possible truce with the Muslims to the exclusion of a number of other possibilities they may have contemplated.

## **Key Incidents of Hudaibiya**

Hudaibiya was truly a test of the Prophet in many respects. His 1,400 followers had accompanied him unarmed from Madina to Makkah in the hopes of performing the minor pilgrimage. This was a great spiritual journey for them which was about to become a total anti-climax from their perspective. The actual 338 kilometer long journey through a barren and arid landscape took a severe toll on the Muslim pilgrims. On their arrival on the outskirts of Makkah, the Muslims were tired and eager to enter Makkah – the city of their dreams. Many Immigrants from Makkah were known to cry at night with fond memories of Makkah – the large cosmopolitan city they had left behind to settle in the small agrarian community of Madina.

On the other hand, the Quraish had stood firm and united in their fierce opposition to the Prophet and were ready to shed blood rather than let this Muslim contingent enter Makkah. Any false move on either side could have led to serious loss of life on both sides. The rumor that Muhammad’s emissary, Uthman bin Affan, had been killed by the Quraish made the Prophet obtain a pledge of loyalty (known as Bait Rizwan) from his followers. This was a difficult time for the Prophet who employed his considerable mental capacity to deal with a very difficult situation.

After a number of emissaries had been unsuccessful in resolving the impasse, the Quraish sent Suhayl bin Amr to the Prophet to negotiate an agreement. Suhayl bin Amr was accompanied by two men, Mikraz and Huwaytib. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was sagacious in choosing to conduct

these difficult negotiations at a distance from his companions. He was aware that heated exchanges could easily take place between him and the Quraish emissaries. He did not wish for his followers to follow the negotiations step-by-step and become embroiled in half-baked proposals and counter-proposals. After very intense negotiations with Suhayl bin Amr of the Quraish, the Prophet asked Ali bin Abi Talib to write the agreement between the two parties. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) dictated to Ali: "These are the terms of the truce between Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) the Messenger of God and Suhail the son of Amr." Sohail protested: "If we knew thee to be the Messenger of God, we would not have barred thee from the House [the Ka'aba], neither would we have fought thee; but write Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) the son of Abdullah." Ali had already written the words "the Messenger of God" and was now reluctant to erase them. Upon seeing this, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) asked Ali to point out where the words were written and struck them out himself. The Prophet appreciated that Suhayl bin Amr actually was arguing a valid point and was able to take appropriate action that only he could take (that is, erase the words "the Messenger of God" from the text of the agreement). The following was the text of this agreement:

1. In the Name of Allah. This accord takes place between Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) in the Name of Allah. This accord takes place between Muhammad messenger of God" from the text of the agreement).eopriateadnot have barred thee from the Hous
2. In these ten years, if anyone joins the Muslims, without permission of the Quraish, it is compulsory for the Muslims to return him to the Quraish, but if anyone leaves the Muslims to join the Quraish, they will not return him to the Muslims.
3. During these ten years, neither of the parties will attack nor hurt the other's life or property.
4. During this decade, the Quraish will be permitted to form alliances at their free will with anyone they like, and establish open alliance. Similarly, the Muslims will be allowed the same right of entering new relations with their free will for alliances.
5. The Muslims will not be allowed to enter Makkah and perform pilgrimage this year, but they can come the next year for this purpose. However, the condition is that they will not stay in Makkah for more than three days and will not bring with them any arsenal except swords."

The treaty of Hudaibiya provides us an invaluable insight into Muhammad's (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) negotiation style and brilliance. Muhammad (#r was quite willing to concede small situational advantages to his adversaries while he had his eyes firmly set on winning the major prize in the long run. He was quick to propose solutions out of an impasse and allowed even his adversaries to save face. He was never interested in fight to the death type of scenarios. Clause 3 above meant that the people of Makkah and the Muslims pledged that they would not attack and fight each other nor would they flout or betray the treaty through subterfuge or covert treachery and conspiracy. In other words, the Makkans undertook to remain neutral in the event of a Muslim conflict with a third party. There would be no betrayal or treachery. In return, the Prophet agreed to a period of peace for ten years. He allowed transit facilities to the Makkan trade caravans through the territory of Madina. In return, he obtained their neutrality in the event of a future Muslim war against a third party.

It is this writer's view that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) instinctively knew that the Quraish would be unable to meet the terms of this treaty, in the long-run. After all, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was a member of the Quraish and knew their strengths and failings very well. The disunity among the Quraish was legendary by now as their tribal unity of two generations ago was now only history. For instance, during the Prophet's life in Makkah, the Quraish had



fought the bitter Battle of Fijar which had been a bloody feud that had lasted many years. The Quraish clans had fought against other Quraish clans. The old unity of the tribe was breaking down. It was bound to disintegrate further because of the onslaught of Islam. Islam was making quick inroads on two levels. Islam was affecting an evolutionary change in Makkah because of the growing number of converts there. Islam was also making inroads through success at adversarial military campaigns.

This comprehensive and incessant pressure on the Quraish was bound to fray the edges of their internal unity even further. It would only be a matter of time before one or more tribes of the Quraish broke the covenant they had negotiated at Hudaibiya. About the Treaty of Hudaibiya, Ibn Ishaq writes as follows: “No previous victory in Islam was greater than this. There was nothing but battle when men met; but when there was an armistice and war was abolished and men met in safety and consulted together none talked about Islam intelligently without entering it. In those two years double as many or more than double as many entered Islam as ever before.” It is no surprise, then, to note that in the course of the year following the Treaty of Hudaibiya, the number of Muslims doubled.

### **Sanctity of a Pledge and Promise in Muhammad’s Eyes**

The Prophet considered the sanctity of a promise a grave matter. Time and again, he educated other Muslims to keep their promises and to consider pledges and agreements sacrosanct commitments. An incident from the Battle of Badr illustrates this point very vividly. A Yamanite, Hudhaifah ibn Al-Yaman, narrated the following incident: “I was not prevented from taking part in the Battle of Badr on the side of the Prophet except for the fact that when my father and I embraced Islam and passed through Makkah en route, we were detained by the Makkans. They suspected that we had embraced Islam and that we would take part in the war ahead. We assured them that we were going to Madina on our private vocations, and had no intention of joining the forces of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him); on our taking oath they released us. We came to Badr and narrated the incident to the Prophet. He asked us to go to Madina and carry out the pledge and said: “God will help us against the Quraish.”

The Prophet’s companion, Abu Umamah reported: “Allah’s Messenger said: ‘Allah decrees the [Hell] fire and debars Heaven for the one who usurps the rights of a believer by taking a false oath.’” One man asked: “O Allah’s Messenger! Even if it should be for an insignificant thing?” He said, “Even if it be a stick of the Arak tree” (i.e. the tree from which Miswak sticks are taken which Arabs used to clean their teeth).<sup>269</sup> A promise, a commitment and an agreement were most sacrosanct in the eyes of the Prophet. He was most particular about meeting his commitments and taught his companions to do likewise.

### **Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) Abides by the Terms of the Hudaibiya Treaty**

The Prophet was extremely cognizant of the terms of the treaties he negotiated and was most careful about honoring their terms. He was most scrupulous in such matters and constantly reminded his companions of their obligations as well. A quick summary of his abiding by the terms of the Treaty of Hudaibiya shows this very well. These events are summarized here.

The Prophet returned Abu Jandal, the youngest son of Suhaylibin Amr – the Quraish negotiator, to his father. Abu Jandal had accepted Islam and wished to join the Prophet and the Muslims on their return to Madina. Abu Jandal had run away from Makkah, his feet still in shackles, after his father had imprisoned him to prevent him from joining the Muslims. Suhayl bin Amr reminded the Prophet of the terms of the treaty he had just negotiated. The Prophet then comforted Abu Jandal in the following words: “O Abu Jandal, be patient and control yourself, for God will provide relief and a means of escape for you and



those of you who are helpless. We have made peace with them and we and they have invoked God in our agreement and we cannot deal falsely with them.”

After the Prophet’s return to Madina, Abu Baseer, another Muslim from Makkah, came to Madina and asked for asylum. The Prophet, scrupulously faithful to the terms of the covenants he signed, could not allow him to stay, and when a Quraish envoy came to demand Abu Baseer, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) complied with the demand. However, during the return journey, Abu Baseer killed the Quraish envoy. Since now no one was willing to escort Abu Baseer back to Makkah, the Prophet simply asked him to leave Madina (since the pact forbade him to stay). The Prophet ordered him to leave but addressed an elliptical remark: “Would that he had other Companions with him!” Abu Baseer did not go back to Makkah and settled, instead, on the caravan route followed by the Makkan traders near Madina. Very quickly he started raiding these caravans and was joined by other Muslims. The Quraish became so frustrated with this situation that they asked the Prophet to suspend the relevant clause of the Hudaibiya Agreement and take Abu Baseer back into Madina.

This treaty bound the Prophet to return any new converts that made the hijra (migration) from Makkah to Madina. However, this treaty had not said anything about returning women converts, so when Othman’s half-sister emigrated to Madina shortly after Hudaibiya, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) refused to send her back. When Umm Kulthum, a daughter of Uqbah ibn Abu Muayt, escaped from Makkah to Madina after the Hudaibiya treaty, the Prophet refused to return her to her brothers judging that the treaty did not apply to women. He said that if women called for assistance and shelter, their request could not be turned down. To this, the Quraish raised no objections.

In the year after the Hudaibiya treaty, the Prophet came back to Makkah to perform the minor pilgrimage in 629 AD. A large number of Muslims accompanied him on this sacred journey. The Prophet had agreed to stay in Makkah for three nights and the Quraish emptied the city and went up the hills surrounding the Ka’aba shrine. On the third day, Huwaytib bin Abdul Uzza and Suhayl bin Amr came to see Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) along with other Quraish dignitaries. They reminded him that he had agreed to stay in Makkah for three days only. By this time, the Prophet had decided to marry Maimunah, the widowed sister-in-law of his uncle, Abbas. The Prophet invited Huwaytib and the Quraish to a wedding feast: “How would it harm you if you were to let me stay and I gave a wedding feast among you and we prepared food and you came too?” Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) issued this invitation to the Quraish knowing very well the powerful reconciliatory effect his performance of the pilgrimage rituals had had on the hearts of the Quraish. The Prophet sought to further this feeling by having them participate in a joyous occasion, one which would undoubtedly furnish the Makkans with further evidence of Muhammad’s (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) sincerity and love of peace. He had hoped that if he could talk to them leisurely and in an atmosphere such as a wedding ceremony and banquet would provide, he could further allay their fears. However, the Quraish did not wish to participate in the wedding feast. The Prophet, being aware of the terms of the treaty he had negotiated a year earlier, decided to abide by it and left Makkah. He very much wanted to spend another day in Makkah with his family; however, his personal wishes were subservient to the agreement he had reached with his adversaries. This small incident goes a long way to show the sanctity of a pledge in Muhammad’s eyes.

## **Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) Abides by the Second Pledge of Aqabah after Conquest of Makkah**

After the conquest of Makkah in 630 AD, the Prophet ascended Safa Mountain and called the Quraish to Islam. Islam was on the rise in Arabia and the Prophet was suddenly the captain of the peninsula. Huge numbers of Quraish and other pagans were now accepting Islam as their religion. All of these

developments dismayed some of the Ansaar who now had apprehension whether the Prophet would actually return to Madina with them. Makkah, after all, was the nucleus of Arabia; it was his city of birth and the city of his ancestors. It was also now the seat of Islam in the sense that the Ka'aba was located there. When the Prophet heard about these apprehensions of the Ansaar, he asked them to assemble and addressed them in the following words: "Never, by God! I have covenanted to join you in life and death. I shall remain true to my covenant." Evidently, neither relatives, nor native city, nor even the holy sanctuary of Ka'aba itself could dissuade Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) from honoring a pledge he once gave to those who stood by him at his hour of need. He returned to Madina with the Ansaar shortly after the conquest of Makkah and eventually died there. At the Second Pledge of Aqaba in 622 AD, Abul Hatham bin At-Tayyihan of Yathrib (Madina) had asked the Prophet: "When...God will have given you victory, you will return to your people and leave us?" The Prophet had smiled and pledged the following words: "I am of you and you are of me." He clearly remembered his pledge and abided by it on becoming the most powerful Sayyed of Arabia.

## **Denunciation of the Pacts of Alliance with the Pagans**

A discussion of the Prophet's effective use of agreements cannot be complete without mentioning the change in the Prophet's approach in this regard towards the end of the year 9 AH (631 AD) after the Muslim capture of Makkah. The Prophet received certain verses (Surah 9, verses 1 – 29 – the Surah itself is called "The Denunciation" or "The Disavowal") that were important in this regard and the Prophet sent his son-in-law, Ali, to Makkah during the pilgrimage season to proclaim this chapter of the Quran to the pilgrims who had assembled in Makkah from different corners of Arabia. The following are the essential points of this passage relevant to our discussion here:

1. In spite of the ideological basis of the Islamic State, the very justification of whose existence was to propagate and make prevail the way of life prescribed by it, an appreciable degree of tolerance is allowed to the adherents of the other developed religions: they are admitted as subjects and citizens of the Islamic State. The Prophet himself gave the liberty of belief to the Jews, the Sabeans, the Christians and the Magians living in the Islamic territory. The same liberties were extended by the four Caliphs and the Abbasid caliphs after the Prophet.
2. The Muslims were enjoined to observe scrupulously their pacts and treaties with the non-Muslims, even the polytheists and the idolaters.
3. The treaties of alliance with the non-Muslims should not be concluded for ever; if there are any, they must be revoked. To the tribes of Arabia, the Quran allows four months, at the end of which further treaties can be negotiated for limited periods.
4. Although there is no equality between Islam and other religions, it does not prevent the adherents of different faiths (including Islam) to be treated equally by the law in worldly matters. In the matters of this world, the Muslims and non-Muslims must be treated equally by the law courts, military tribunals and the civil administration.
5. The Ka'aba was reserved for the Muslim faith only. The polytheists have no right to practice their religion there.

These verses are quite significant for the conduct of the Prophet's future policy towards the pagan tribes of Arabia. Abu Ubaid states that the denunciation of the pacts of alliance here related to the Khuzaa, the Mudlij and a few other friendly tribes. This unilateral denunciation constituted a pressure on the pagan Arabian tribes to enter the fold of Islam. However, this did not apply to the Arab tribes living under

Muslim control outside Arabia and also did not apply to the monotheist non-Muslims living inside Arabia (the Jews and the Christians).

Clearly, the foundation of Islamic foreign policy was now shifting. From an earlier emphasis on peaceful co-existence in the early years in Madina, Islam in these nine years had come to dominate the Arabian Peninsula. This shift in the balance of power and ground realities necessitated a change in the contractual arrangements between the Muslim community and the pagan tribes of Arabia. The Prophet was eager for the conversion of all of Arabia to the cause of Islam. His diplomatic skills and political insights led him to adopt the following as the appropriate course of action:

1. He sent Ali, his cousin and son-in-law (and a future Caliph of Islam), to announce this shift in foreign policy to ensure everyone understood the seriousness of this development. Rather than choose an envoy from among his companions, the Prophet felt it important to depute Ali to convey this important change in foreign policy.
2. He sent Ali to Makkah to make this announcement to the pilgrims gathered at Makkah in the pilgrimage season so that this news would directly reach a large number of people. In addition, this news would travel all over Arabia quickly as the assembled pilgrims will carry this news home with them.
3. He gave advance notice about this up-coming development so that the other parties to the agreements would be given sufficient time to adjust their posture. This important change in Muslim policy was not presented as a *fait accompli* to the pagan tribes of Arabia. They were informed that all existing agreements with them would expire after four months.
4. The adjustment in foreign policy was specific and not broad. For example, it did not relate to the monotheists such as Christians and Jews living in Arabia. As such, it was not a universal revolutionary change but a specific evolutionary change.

One can see that significant lessons for the conduct of foreign policy and sanctity of pledges are contained in this one incident from the life of the Prophet.

## **5. CONSULTATION WITH COMPANIONS AND ACCEPTANCE OF SOUND ADVICE**

A review of the Prophet's life shows that he did not consider himself the holder of all knowledge and was quite ready and often eager to seek advice from others. Not only was he proactive in seeking advice, he often acted upon such advice. This shows his ability to harness the capabilities of his companions and use their collective wisdom for the promotion of Islam. His brilliance lay in weighing the different pieces of advice and choosing the most appropriate course of action. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) leveraged the competencies of his companions. He sought advice from them and adopted a course of action that generally reflected the best advice.

The Prophet encouraged his companions to make a distinction between his role as a Prophet and a Messenger and his role as a human being. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) encouraged his companions to come forward and present their views on worldly matters unrelated to his role as a Messenger. The companions made a distinction between Revelations the Prophet received, which they obeyed without a second thought, and the opinions of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) the man, which could be debated, improved on, or even rejected outright (which was the case during the deliberations leading up to the Battle of Uhud, for instance). The Messenger's authority in human affairs was neither autocratic nor unrestricted; he allowed his companions a substantial role in consultation, and his teachings developed the conditions for acquiring those critical and creative faculties. The Prophet gave his companions, women and men alike, the means and confidence to be autonomous, to dare to address and contradict him without his ever considering it a lack of respect for his status. Through his attitude, he showed them his deep respect for their intelligence and for their heart: as for them, they loved their Prophet, their leader, for this attention, this availability, and this demand to use their abilities to the fullest.

In matters of religious teaching and instruction, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was himself the guide and interpreter of the Quran for his companions. However, in day-to-day life decisions, martial strategies, diplomatic interactions, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) took advice from a council of close friends. This group of advisers expanded dramatically in the Madina period because of large-scale conversions to Islam and because many Arab noblemen came from far-off lands to convert to Islam and spent time with Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). Muhammad's active interest in obtaining advice from others meant that he could obtain different points-of-view and weigh them against each other. This helped Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) in his decision making. After the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet acquired a rich human resource lode that would help make the mission of Islam a truly international one.

We can pick up several instances from the Prophet's life that show his continuous interest in seeking advice from his companions.

### **Early Conversion of Abu Bakr**

Attiq ibn Uthman (who was better known by his kuniya of Abu Bakr) was the Prophet's closest companion. Abu Bakr was one of Islam's earliest converts. He was a close friend of the Prophet even before he announced his prophet-hood. In later years, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) is believed to have commented: "I have never invited anyone to accept Islam but he has shown signs of reluctance, suspicion, and hesitation, except Abu Bakr. When I told him of it he did not hold back or hesitate." Abu Bakr was the most influential early convert to Islam. He was also an invaluable source of information and advice to the Prophet in sharpening his Understanding of the political landscape. Ibn Ishaq makes the following comment about Abu Bakr: "Abu Bakr was a man whose society was desired,

well liked and of easy manners. He knew more about the genealogy of Quraish than anyone else and of their faults and merits. He was a merchant of high character and kindness. His people used to come to him and discuss many matters with him because of his wide knowledge, his experience in commerce and his sociable nature.”

## **Origin of the Call to Prayer**

One of the first major acts of the Prophet on his arrival in Madina was the construction of the Mosque there (which became known as the Masjid e Nabvi). The Masjid was built, and the timings for prayer were established, but not everybody made it on time to the Masjid for the congregational prayers. Some people were busy in the marketplace and were unaware of the fact that prayer had commenced; others were innocently sleeping. Therefore, there was a palpable need to announce to people the commencement of each prayer. The question that remained was how to go about doing that. The Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) consulted his Companions (May Allah be pleased with them) in the matter. Some people suggested that they should raise a flag at the time of prayer; people would see it and know that they should start making their way towards the Masjid for the congregation prayer. But this suggestion was rejected for the obvious fact that the flag was not going to benefit someone who was sleeping or someone who was not looking in the direction of the flag or if it was dark. Others suggested that a fire should be lit to announce the time of prayer, but this idea too was quickly rejected. It was also suggested that they use a horn, like the Jews, but the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) rejected this idea as well, for he disliked imitating the People of the Book. A bell was also suggested, but it was rejected for the same reason that the horn was rejected. Finally, a group of people suggested that some among them should call out whenever the congregational prayer was about to begin. And this idea was accepted.

Abdullah ibn Zaii, one of the callers to prayer, saw a dream while he was in between the states of wakefulness and sleep. In the dream, a person appeared before him and said, ‘Shall I not teach you words that you should say when you make the call for prayer?’ Abdullah answered, ‘Yes.’ The person said, ‘Say twice: Allah is the greatest. Bear witness twice (i.e., bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah twice, and bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah twice). Then twice say: Come to prayer. Then twice say: Come to success. Then praise your Lord twice (i.e., by saying, ‘Allah is the greatest’). Then say: None has the right to be worshipped but Allah.’ Upon waking up, Abdullah went to the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and informed him about his dream. ‘Indeed, it is a true dream,’ said the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). ‘Dictate it to Bilal ibn Rabaah for indeed he has a sweeter voice than you do.’

Bilal ibn Rabaai (May Allah be pleased with him) became one of the callers of prayer in-Madinah; the other caller was Abdullah ibn Umm Maktoom !. In the call for morning prayer, Biaai added the words, ‘The Prayer is better than sleep,’ which he would say twice after saying, ‘Come to success.’ And the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) approved of this practice. At first, the call to prayer would be made from an elevated place, but later on the minaret was built and used for the purpose of making the call to prayer] Thus we see that the call for prayer, which has been heard five times every day around the world for more than fourteen hundred years, originated not in the Quran or a saying of the Prophet but in advice given by the Prophet’s Companions.

## **Battle of Badr**

At the Battle of Badr, the Muslim army arrived at the Badr valley early and Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) gave orders to encamp at the farther bank of the valley. Al-Hubab bin Mundhir, a member of the Ansaar, asked the Prophet whether his choice of encampment was the result of

divine instruction or worldly wisdom. When the Prophet informed him that the choice of location had nothing to do with a divine revelation, he suggested that the Muslim army encamp around the largest well of water and destroy all other water wells in the area. The Prophet liked this advice very much and instructed his men to do likewise. The plan was carried out at midnight. This move proved critical and helped lay the foundation for Muslim victory. Many wars are not won by manpower or fire power but by better logistics. In this case, the better logistics management of the Muslims, as advised by Al-Hubab bin Mundhir, helped the Muslims win this battle.

After victory at Badr, the Prophet consulted with his companions about how the Makkan prisoners of war should be treated. Umar ibn Khattab was of the view that the customary Arab tradition of killing prisoners of war should be applied. Abu Bakr disagreed. Other views were aired by other companions. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) decided to spare the lives of these prisoners except for two of them who had been particularly cruel to the Muslims in Makkah, humiliating them and torturing them to death. Eventually, some Makkan relatives came to pay their dues and returned with their family members. Other prisoners were freed without any ransom, while the poorest were dealt with individually, according to their particular circumstances. For example, those who could read or write were given their freedom after they taught ten Muslim youths how to read and write.

## **Battle of Uhud**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was quick to employ the services of local guides when passing through unfamiliar terrain. When he left Madina for the Uhud Mountain to face the large Quraish army, he was determined to compensate for the disparity of numbers by taking up a position which would give his army an advantage and which would at the same time be unexpected and therefore disconcerting to the enemy. He employed the services of a guide belonging to the Bani Harithah whose territory adjoined Uhud. This guide helped the Muslim army choose a travel path into the Uhud valley that surprised the Quraish with the positioning of the Muslim army in the early morning.

## **Battle of Ahzaab**

In AD 625, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) received news that the Quraish were amassing a large army to attack and decimate Madina. He called a meeting to discuss the coming battle with his companions. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) received all kinds of advice that was both of an offensive and defensive nature. The Makkan army and their confederates numbered as many as ten thousand fighters. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) held a council and conducted a careful discussion of a plan to defend Madina. After a lengthy discussion, the Prophet adopted a unique proposal from Salman-Farisi that a trench be dug as a defence line to stop the advance of the invading army.

During the Battle of Ahzaab, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) continued his policy of consultation with senior members of his entourage. During the battle, news of a possible rapprochement between the local Jewish tribe of Banu Quraizah and the attacking Makkan army perturbed him a great deal. This possible military tie-up would literally have sandwiched the Muslims between a rock and a hard place. One course of action he considered seriously was making an offer of one third of the fruit crop of Madina to the chiefs of the powerful Ghatafan tribe to induce them to withdraw from the battlefield. He consulted with two senior members of the Ansaar, Sa'ad Bin Muadh and Sa'ad bin Ubadah whose reply went as follows: "O Messenger of Allah! If it is Allah's Order, then we have to obey, but if it is a new course you want to follow just to provide security for us then we don't need it. We experienced those people in polytheism and idolatry and we can safely say that they don't need the fruit of our orchards; they rather need to exterminate us completely. Now that Allah has honored us with



Islam, I believe the best option in this situation is to put them to the sword.” It is recorded that, although the Prophet disagreed with their view, he did not press ahead with his offer to the chief of the Ghatafan tribe.

## **Decision about the Fate of the Treacherous Tribe of Banu Quraizah**

The Prophet besieged the Jewish tribe of Banu Quraizah upon cessation of hostilities during the Battle of Ahzaab. The Banu Quraizah had conspired with the invading Quraish to attack the Muslims from the rear and thus had broken the covenant of peace they had agreed in the Constitution of Madina. The Prophet had become aware of this conspiracy and had defused the situation with intelligence and alacrity. The Banu Quraizah had traditionally been the allies of the Aws tribe of Madina. The Prophet asked them: “Will you be satisfied, O Aws, if one of your own number pronounces judgment on them?” When they agreed he said that Sa’ad bin Muadh was the man. Sa’ad bin Muadh had been wounded by an arrow during the Battle of Ahzaab and a nurse had been attending to him. He was brought to the Banu Quraizah on a donkey. Ibn Ishaq reports as follows: Upon his arrival, he asked the Muslims of Madina: “Do you covenant by Allah that you accept the judgment I pronounce on [the Banu Quraizah]? They said “Yes”, and he said: “Then I give judgment that the men should be killed, the property divided, and the women and children taken as captives.” This sentence was duly carried out. Thus we see here that the Prophet entrusted a difficult decision regarding the fate of the Banu Quraizah to Sa’ad bin Muadh, a leader of their Muslim allied tribe of Aws. The total number of Banu Quraizah men who were killed was probably 600 to 700 (however, some historians have suggested a figure as high as 900).

## **The Prophet Seeks Advice from Close Companions about Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her)**

In January 628 AD, the Prophet led the successful expedition against the Banu Mustalik tribe. On the return of the Muslim army, an incident occurred that greatly disturbed the Prophet and shook his household because it allowed an opportunity to the “liars” and the “slanderers” to slander the Prophet’s beloved wife Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her). This development, if left unchecked, had the potential to cause a rift between the Aws and the Khazraj of Madina. On the return journey, Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her) had left her camel to answer a call of nature. Upon her return, she found her necklace of Zafar beads missing. She returned to try to find this necklace. Meanwhile, the Muslim caravan prepared to disembark and her guards also left thinking that she was already in the “howdah” she being small and under-weight. On her return to the encampment, Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her) found that the Muslim contingent had already left. At that time, a Muslim, Safwan bin al-Muattal, who had also fallen behind, found her wrapped in a smock and led her back to safety. Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her)’s delayed return caused some to spread rumors about her faithfulness to the Prophet.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was distraught because of the spreading rumor mill. The misinformation flames were further fanned by a number of people including Abdullah bin Ubayy, Mistab bin Uthatha, Hassan bin Thabit and Hamna bint Jahsh. At this critical juncture, the Prophet asked for advice from his cousin Ali bin Abu Talib and Usama bin Zayd. Even though this was a most sensitive personal and familial matter, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) thought it appropriate to ask for his companions’ advice. In this specific instance, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) did not seek advice from his close companion, Abu Bakr, since Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her) was Abu Bakr’s daughter.

## **The Prophet Seeks Advice from His Wife, Umme Salamah, at Hudaibiya (May Allah be pleased with them)**

After reaching an impasse at Hudaibiya, the Prophet had negotiated an agreement with Suhayl ibn Amr, the emissary of the Quraish. This agreement prevented the Muslims from performing the minor pilgrimage to Ka'aba that year; however, they could return the next year for that purpose. Other terms of the treaty were also, on the surface, quite onerous for the Muslims. The Prophet had led this large contingent with the aim of performing the pilgrimage. Many of these Muslims had not seen Makkah, their birth-place, for many years and they longed to be back. Now that the decision had been made to return without a visit to Makkah, many were dejected and disappointed. The Prophet told them to sacrifice the camels and cut their hair – the two rituals associated with completion of a pilgrimage. The companions did not obey. Dejected, the Prophet went to his wife, Umme Salamah, who had accompanied him on this trip, and told her of this surprising and adverse development. She comforted him and suggested a beautiful solution to the problem. She advised the Prophet to proceed to sacrifice the camels and have his hair cut. She felt that the Muslims will be eager to emulate his actions (his sunnah) and will proceed to perform these rituals with haste. This is exactly how the events turned out. Thus, we find the Prophet incredibly human in his interaction with his wives, in general, and women, in particular. As with Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her) so many years before, he never hesitated to confide in the women around him, to consult them, talk with them, and adopt their opinions. Tariq Ramadan notes that “at a time when the future of the whole community was playing out through visions, pledges of allegiance, and peace covenants, he returned to his wife’s side and, like a simple human being, told her of his need for love, trust, and advice – an example for all human beings.”

## **Siege of Taif**

After his monumental takeover of Makkah and magnificent victory at Hunain, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and the Muslim army had proceeded to Taif and had immediately laid siege to the city. However, Taif was a well-defended and well-provisioned stronghold that was ably defended by its inhabitants who were the keepers of the Al-Lat shrine – whom they considered to be the daughter of Allah and protector of Taif. After an indecisive siege of more than twenty days in 630 AD, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) sought the advice of Naufal Ibn Muawiyah. Naufal suggested that the fox had retreated into its den; with protracted efforts he might be caught, but if left to himself, there was nothing to be afraid of. The Prophet accepted this advice and lifted the siege without capturing Taif even though many Muslim notables were not in favor of this course of action. He had many major developments on his mind and could wait for the citizens of Taif to accept Islam in due course.

We see time and again that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) actively sought advice from his trusted companions. However, he also followed the sound advice of his wives. He regularly held meetings with others to obtain their views on administrative, political, diplomatic and military affairs. On many critical junctures, such advice proved most invaluable and helped the Prophet and aided the cause of Islam.



## 6. AFFECTING CHANGE THROUGH COMMUNICATION

Perhaps the greatest role the Prophet played on the world stage was that of a communicator and a messenger. He was in touch with the Holy and it was his responsibility to convey that message to the people around him. Through his teachings, speech, actions, and behaviors; he communicated the message of Islam.

The Prophet caused a major revolution in the personal, social, cultural and political lives of his followers. His teachings caused a dramatic shift in personal habits, daily routines, business practices, social behavior and religious orientation of his followers. This transformation was not easy given the well-entrenched Arab values prior to arrival of Islam. It was actually quite dramatic given the short time-frame of twenty-three years involved. The Prophet simply had to be a great communicator in order to have caused such a dramatic change in attitudes and behavior in his followers on such a large scale. His accomplishment is even more impressive considering the sustained change in behavior and practices he has caused over the last fifteen centuries. In the absence of any modern means of communication and in an era where news travelled only as fast as the fastest camel rider or horseman, the Prophet successfully reached out to a large number of people in a vast swathe of land across deserts and mountains.

It is said that it is easiest to change behavior, more difficult to change attitudes and most difficult to change values. Thus, changing the behavior of one individual is dramatically easier compared to changing the values of millions of people. Someone who can change the values of millions of people is dramatically more powerful and influential compared to someone who changes the behavior of one individual. Simply based on this rather straight-forward statement of facts, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) comes across as the most powerful man in human history. One simple way to appreciate the level of change he introduced in the world is to understand the dramatic change in values he brought about. The Prophet consistently maintained that on the Day of Judgment none of the traditional virtues – wealth, fame, lineage, position in society, friendship with the poets, and beauty of women in the household or the number of descendants – would be of any consequence. What mattered were an individual's behavior; feeding the poor; caring for orphans; sheltering widows and protecting the weak. This overturned all the fundamental values upon which Arab society had been based.

The following comments in the court of Negus, the ruler of Abyssinia, attributed to Jafar bin Abu Talib, show the extent of change the Prophet brought about in Arabia: "O King, we were an uncivilized people, worshipping idols, eating corpses, committing abominations, breaking natural ties, treating guests badly, and our strong devoured our weak. Thus we were until God sent us an apostle whose lineage, truth, trustworthiness, and clemency we know. He summoned us to acknowledge God's unity and to worship him and to renounce the stones and images which we and our fathers formerly worshipped. He commanded us to speak the truth, be faithful to our engagements, mindful to the ties of kinship and kindly hospitality, and to refrain from crimes and bloodshed. He forbade us to commit abominations and to speak lies, and to devour the property of orphans, to vilify chaste women. He commanded us to worship God alone and not to associate anything with Him, and he gave us orders about prayer, almsgiving, and fasting. We confessed his truth and believed in him, and we followed him in what he had brought from God, and we worshipped God alone without associating aught with Him. We treated as forbidden what he forbade, and as lawful what he declared lawful."

An obvious way to assess the level of his success would be to figure out how well or poorly he conveyed the message of Islam. Communication effectiveness must have figured very highly in his strategic thinking and he must have spent considerable time in perfecting his communication skills and strategy. The following seem to have been the components of the Prophet's communication strategy:

## **Muhammad's Noble Background**

The Prophet used the nobility of his background very effectively in his communications. The Prophet was a notable of the Banu Hashim clan of the Quraish. The Quraish were the Leading family of Makkah and custodians of the Ka'aba shrine. The Quraish were also the richest family in Arabia and organized both the Hajj pilgrimage as well as the largest trading caravans in all of Arabia. Muhammad's lineage was not lost on the people he approached with the message of Islam. This helped his cause since a messenger's lineage and status in society were key criteria by which the messenger (and, hence, his message) were judged in Arabia at that time. The Quran, itself, refers to this very important fact: "I have already lived a life-time among you before its [the Quran's] revelation. Do you not use your common sense?"

One must also appreciate that the Arabs customarily called each other by full names that included the father's name and the tribal affiliation. These two considerations were paramount in the Arab mind when meeting and greeting people. Hence the Prophet's lineage was never lost on the people he approached to bring them into the fold of Islam.

## **Personal Integrity and Truthfulness**

Muhammad's personal integrity and truthfulness also lent credibility to his message. The receiver of a communication evaluates the merits of the communication in light of the credibility of the communicator. It was tremendously helpful that the Prophet was known as As-Sadiq and Al-Ameen in Makkah before his proclamation of his prophet-hood. When he proclaimed his mission publicly, he stood on the Safa hill in Makkah and asked the Quraish whether they would believe him if he told them that there was an army standing on the ready, on the other side of the hill, to attack Makkah. They proclaimed that they would believe whatever he told them.

His concern for the well-being of others was also well-known. He had been a member of the Hilf-ul-Fadool confederacy that aimed at challenging injustice in Makkah. Some of the early converts to Islam did so because they genuinely believed in the Prophet and, therefore, in his message.

## **Eloquence and Communication Skills**

Muhammad's eloquence and communication skills were great personal assets that helped him in his mission. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had travelled a great deal and was quite familiar with how Arabic was spoken in different parts of Arabia. He was also a connoisseur of poetry and understood the power of oral and written expression. He had a vast vocabulary; chose his words well; used dialect that was familiar to his listeners; spoke in measured tones; repeated major injunctions for added emphasis; and devoted a good deal of time to communicating the message of Islam.

From Sahih Al-Bukhari, which is the most authentic collection of the sayings of the Prophet, we find several examples of the Prophet's focus on effective communication of his message. For instance, Anas narrated that whenever the Prophet spoke [conveyed something substantial], "he used to repeat it thrice so that the people could understand it properly from him." Many historians have written that the Prophet spoke so slowly that his words could be counted. Abu Said Al-Khudri reported that some women requested the Prophet to fix a day for them as the men were taking all his time. On that he promised them one day for religious lessons and commandments.

Arabs came to him with their domestic, social, political, economic and religious difficulties and questions. The Prophet took the time to explain what he thought was right and just in each situation. His regular teaching sessions were most invaluable as they helped the early Muslims relate Islam to their daily

existence. Sahih Al-Bukhari contains thousands of the Prophet's sayings on various topics of relevance to ordinary Muslims. Topics range from evaluation of joint property, vigilance during holy battles, selling products by auction, riding during Hajj, assessment of zakat, and the signs of a hypocrite. This ability to communicate with the faithful on a most personal level was a great asset of the Prophet.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was one of the greatest communicators of all times. However, he was contemplative and silent by nature. A childhood mostly devoid of parental attention and doting had probably instilled in him independence of thought and action. He had faced harsh realities of existence at a much earlier age and had probably matured earlier and faster than many of his contemporaries. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was given to sadness, and there were long periods of silence when he was deep in thought. However, he was always busy with something. He never spoke unnecessarily. What he said was always to the point and sufficient to make his meaning clear, but there was no padding. Over his feelings he had a firm control. When he was annoyed he would turn aside; when he was pleased, he lowered his eyes. His time was carefully apportioned according to the various demands on him. In his dealings with people he was above all tactful. He could be severe at times; however, he was not rough but gentle by nature. His laugh was mostly a smile.

### **Examples of Command over Oral Expression**

In the early phase of the Prophet's propagation of Islam in Makkah, the Quraish notables approached the Prophet's uncle and protector, Abu Talib, to intercede with Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and cause a rapprochement. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) responded in language that expressed his firm resolve in most uncertain terms: "O my uncle, by God, if they put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left on condition that I abandoned this course, until God had made it victorious, or I perish therein."

At around the same time, Quraish notables approached him directly several times to stop him from conducting his mission. He was most clear in his response to them: "I am not possessed, nor do I seek among you honors or power. God has sent me to you as a messenger, He has revealed me a Book and has ordered me to bring you good news and warn you. I have conveyed to you my Lord's message and I have given you good advice. If you accept from me what I have brought, this will cause you to succeed in this world and in the hereafter, but if you reject what I have brought, then I shall wait patiently until God judges between us." Later history was to demonstrate very clearly the truth of the Prophet's comments here. The Quraish did eventually join Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) after the conquest of Makkah and gained immensely from their conversion to Islam.

### **Exhortation to the 312 Muslims at the Battle of Badr**

Just before the launch of hostilities against the much larger force of the Quraish at the Battle of Badr which was the first military conflict with the Quraish of Makkah, the Prophet addressed his companions. He said to them: "At this moment, you alone are the guardians of Truth in the whole world, and you alone are fighting for the cause of God, while the rest are all His enemies." The speech had the desired effect and the Muslims fought valiantly and secured a great victory against a much larger and better-equipped force. The Quraish lost seventy of their fighters and a larger number were taken prisoners of war by the Muslims.

### **Dialogue with Abu Sufyan at the Battle of Uhud (625 AD)**

The Prophet had great command over oral communication. For instance, when the army of the Quraish was leaving the battle field of Uhud under the command of Abu Sufyan after having routed the Muslim

army, Abu Sufyan called out to the Muslims: “War goeth by turns, and this is a day for a day. Exalt thyself, O Hubal! Make prevail thy religion!” This comment was Abu Sufyan’s way of telling the Muslims that they had avenged their previous defeat at Badr and telling the Muslims that the religion of Quraish would now prevail. Upon hearing this, the Prophet commanded Umar to respond as follows: “God is All Highest, Supreme in Majesty. We are not equal: our slain are in Paradise, yours are in the Fire.”

### **Death of Al-Usairim at Battle of Uhud (625 AD)**

Al-Usairim was a member of the Banu Adil Ashhal tribe. The entire tribe except for Al-Usairim had converted to Islam before the Second Pledge of Aqaba in AD 622. Al-Usairim did not embrace Islam until the day of the Battle of Uhud. On that day, he embraced Islam and fought and was killed, having never prostrated even once to Allah. The Prophet said of him:

Amila qaleelan wa ujira kaseeran (mention it in Arabic)

“His deeds were few, but his reward is great.” The English translation here does not do justice to the simple but poetic Arabic spoken by the Prophet.

### **The Second Visit to Badr (to fulfill pledge made to Abu Sufyan at Uhud)**

In 626 AD, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) remembered that Abu Sufyan had challenged the Muslims to meet him once again at Badr. Although Abu Sufyan had no intentions of coming to Badr to fight the Muslims that year on account of draught in Makkah, he sent Nuaim bin Masud to Madina to tell the Muslims that Abu Sufyan had amassed a large army to meet them at Badr. The Muslims believed Nuaim and were concerned for their safety. They wished to remain in Madina and not proceed to Badr. However, the Prophet employed his impressive eloquence and castigated the Muslims for their fear and apprehension. He warned them that he would proceed to Badr even if he had to do this entirely on his own. The Prophet’s eloquence carried the day and he eventually arrived at Badr with a Muslim force numbering 1,500 soldiers. Although a 2,000-strong force of the Quraish arrived in the area, they left without facing the Muslims.

### **Hudaibiya**

In AD 628, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had arrived at Hudaibiya (on the outskirts of Makkah) with 1,400 Muslim pilgrims from Madina with the intention of performing the minor pilgrimage. The Muslims had been stopped by the Quraish and prevented from entering the safe precincts of Makkah. At this juncture, the Prophet became busy in receiving emissaries from the Quraish and in sending messengers to them to end the stalemate. When Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was informed that one messenger from the Quraish, Suhayl bin Amr had arrived. He said: “Qad Sahla Lakum Min Amrikum.” This can be translated in English as “Now the matter has become easy.” It should be noted here that the name Suhayl is derived from the Arabic verb sahl meaning to become easy, i.e. easy by name, easy by nature. This is a beautiful example of the kinds of witty puns the Prophet could employ in his everyday life. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and Suhayl eventually negotiated an agreement that was acceptable both to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and to leaders of the Quraish. Thus, as predicted by the Prophet, the arrival of Suhayl bin Amr of the Quraish made the matter (“amr”) easy to settle (“sahl”).

## **Battle of Khaibar**

During the Battle of Khaibar, a black Muslim slave asked the Prophet: “O Messenger of Allah! I am a man whose skin color is black, I am ugly of countenance and have an unpleasant odor and I have no wealth; if I fight these people until I am killed, will I enter Paradise?” He replied: “Yes”. So he advanced and fought until he was killed. When the Prophet saw his dead body, he said:

*“Laqad Ahsan allaho wajhak wa tayyaba reehak wa kassara malak”*

“Allah has made your face handsome, made your odor pleasant and increased your wealth”. The beauty of the Prophet’s language can only be seen in the Arabic he employed.

## **Battle of Hunain**

The large Muslim army was almost routed by the shrewd and uncanny leadership of Malik bin Awf, the commander of the Hawazin tribe, who had hidden his fighters in the crevices of the hills that surrounded the Muslim army on its arrival in the battle-field. The Muslims started fleeing the battle-field in disarray. It was quite possible that the chaos that had permeated the Muslim ranks could actually decide the fate of that battle. However, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) quickly regrouped and gathered his closest companions around him. He began to call out to the Muslims with the help of his uncle Abbas who had a loud and resounding voice. They both shouted: “O Companions of the tree, O Companions of the acacia” in order to remind the fighters of their pledge of allegiance to the Prophet at the time of the covenant of Hudaibiya. The latter gradually realized what was going on and responded to the Prophet’s call, shouting back: “Labbayk! Labbayk” (“Here we are! Here we are!”).<sup>304</sup> More and more came back to join the Prophet and reorganized to launch a successful counter-attack. Thus, the Prophet’s command over oral expression helped win this most important battle.

## **Excellence of Written Communication**

Some of Muhammad’s correspondence bears witness to his command over language and his use of nuances in conveying a fine-tuned message. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had an amazing command over written and oral communication as is illustrated by the examples given below.

### **Letters to World Leaders (probably dated to 629 AD)**

After the truce of Hudaibiya which neutralized the threat from the Quraish for the near future, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) could focus his energies on propagating Islam in other directions. He sent letters to various kings and invited them to Islam. The letters were sent to the Emperors of Byzantine, to the King of Iran, Najashi – the King of Abyssinia and to the Emperor of Egypt.

The Prophet’s letters to various world leaders are examples of simple, direct and powerful communication. His letter to Hiraclius, the emperor of Rome, has been well-preserved and reads as follows: “In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful. This letter is from Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), the Messenger of Allah to Hiraclius, the Emperor of Rome. Blessed are those who follow guidance. I invite you to embrace Islam. If you do so, you shall be safe and secure. If you come within its fold, Allah will give you double reward and in case you turn your back upon it, then the burden of the sins of people shall fall on your shoulders.” The Prophet used no more than 80 words to introduce himself to a head of state, invited him to Islam, gave him reasons for doing so and also warned him of negative consequences in case he decided not to accept Muhammad’s invitation.

A messenger the Prophet sent to Harith bin Abu Shamir was killed by a governor of the emperor. Upon learning of this great tragedy, the Prophet sent a message to Harith bin Abu Shamir which is an example of great letter composition. The Prophet's letter read as such: "A governor of yours, Shurhabil bin Amr Al-Ghassani, has put an innocent person to death who was coming to you just to deliver a letter. The person was alone and unarmed in your territories and his journey was not to express any enmity, even then, he was put to death. To kill an ambassador is not permissible in any tribe, nation or religion. As your governor has murdered Harith bin Umair, it should be made known whether he has wilfully done the deed or by your approval and orders? If he has killed our ambassador without your approval, you must hand over the person to us so that he could be sentenced for his deed, but if your approval was also included in this crime, then you are also responsible for this murder and you should better be prepared for the punishment as well."

## **Letter to Musaylimah**

After the conquest of Makkah and in the 9th year AH, the Prophet was visited by a delegation of the Bani Hanifah in Madina. This delegation included a man by the name of Musaylimah bin Thumamah. On his return from Madina, he set himself up as a prophet of God and partner of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) in the largely Christian tribe of Hanifah in the centre of Arabia. He is said to have written to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) a letter that proposed to divide God's empire between the two of them. His letter to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) is said to have begun thus: "From Musaylimah the Messenger of God to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) the Messenger of God, peace be on thee! It hath been given me to share with thee the authority. Half the earth is ours, and half belongeth unto Quraish, although they are a people who transgress." When Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) received this letter, he dictated and sent the following letter to Musaylimah: "From Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) the Messenger of God to Musaylimah the liar. Peace be on him who followeth the guidance! Verily the earth is God's; He causeth whom He will of His slaves to inherit it; and the final issue is in favor of the pious."

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had a finely developed aesthetic sense and loved eloquence as well as musicality of speech. Poetic verse expressing beauty, conveying the depth of feelings and spirituality as well as the love of the holy was part of his natural universe. That art, that spirituality of speech, was throughout his life a means to express the depths of the self in the hope of rising naturally toward God.

## **Strong Belief in Two-Way Communication**

One cannot be a great communicator without the ability to listen. Communication that makes its way to the hearts and minds of the listeners can only do so if it truly 'speaks' to them. A great communicator is one who first spends considerable effort in listening to his audience and who understands their motivations, fears and aspirations. Only after immense preparation can a message be crafted that can be termed an effective communication. The Prophet was a keen listener throughout his life. This can be seen in his continuous and proactive seeking of counsel and advice from his companions which has been discussed in a separate section in some detail.

Throughout his mission, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) sought advice from his companions and encouraged them to express their opinions. He then gave due consideration to such advice. He regularly held discussion sessions with his companions. In addition, the Prophet had evolved a genuine pedagogy through which he encouraged the Muslims to develop their critical faculties and thinking skills. He did this through an elaborate and sophisticated two-way communication methodology.

He would often ask questions on various subjects and give the answers only after his companions had thought by themselves and expressed different conjectures. Sometimes, more subtly, he would utter a judgment in a paradoxical form, thereby prompting his listeners to consider the matter more deeply. For example, he once said: “A strong man is not a man who overcomes his enemy!” The Companions mulled this over among themselves, then asked him: “Then who is a strong man?” The Prophet surprised his audience and led them to a deeper Understanding of the question with his answer: “A strong man is a man who controls himself when he is angry.” He would sometimes speak figuratively: “Wealth does not lie in the riches you possess!” After the Companions pondered this, the Prophet would elaborate: “True wealth is the wealth of the soul.” On occasion, the Prophet’s statements appeared to contradict common sense or ethics: “Help your brother, whether he is just or unjust!” The Companions could not but wonder about the nature of the help they were to provide to an unjust brother. They would wonder and discuss among themselves. The Prophet, who would often smile in such situations, would then say: “Prevent him [the unjust brother] from acting unjustly; such is the way for you to help him!”

In addition, the Prophet had an ability to read the other person’s mind and to see the events from his adversary’s perspective. We see instances of this ability throughout his life. A great example of this comes from Muhammad’s intense negotiations at Hudaibiya with Suhayl bin Amr, the emissary of the Quraish. Once the agreement with Suhayl had been verbally finalized, the Prophet asked his cousin Ali bin Abu Talib to record it on paper so that it could be properly executed and witnessed. Suhayl bin Amr objected to the start of the treaty document with the Muslim’s habitual formula referring to God and to Muhammad’s status as God’s Messenger. The Prophet instantly understood and appreciated Suhayl bin Amr’s point of view. After all, if the Quraish accepted the Prophet as God’s Messenger, the impasse at Hudaibiya would have never come about. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) instinctively understood that the Quraish could never agree to a written agreement that mentioned him as the Prophet. His own companions, on the other hand, could not comprehend how the Prophet could allow a most basic tenet of Islam to be dropped from the written agreement, once written. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) himself rubbed out the language from the written agreement. In analyzing this incident, Tariq Ramadan points out that “the point was that the heart’s relation to the truth – deep spirituality – must never be allowed to turn into emotional, passionate blindness: reason must always be called upon to analyze the situation, temper one’s reaction, and help establish an attentive, coherent relation to the other’s truth.”

The Prophet’s gift of oratory and talent for really listening to his audience can be best seen in his dialogue with the leaders of the Ansaar who were disappointed at the meager share they had received from the large booty won at the Battle of Hunain in 630 AD after the capture of Makkah. This one dialogue sheds most valuable light on the Prophet’s ability to understand and communicate the point of view of the other party.

After the conquest of Makkah, the large Muslim army that now comprised many recently converted fighters and chieftains of the Quraish won a decisive victory against the Hawazin at Hunain. When it came time to distribute the large booty, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) bestowed a large share of the booty to the recently converted Quraish chieftains. This caused some resentment among the Ansaar. Upon hearing of their dissatisfaction, the Prophet asked the Ansaar to gather for a meeting with him. His address to this group of Ansaar confirms that the Prophet was a master orator. I reproduce his entire speech here: “I have been told that you are angry with me. Didn’t I come to you when you were astray and Allah guided you? You were poor and Allah gave you wealth. Weren’t you foes and Allah made you love one another?” “Yes,” they said, “Allah and His Messenger are better and more gracious.” Then he said: “What prevents you from replying to the Messenger of Allah, O tribe of Helpers?” They said, “What should be the reply, O Messenger of Allah, while to the Lord and to his Messenger belong all benevolence and grace.”



The Prophet again said: “But by Allah, you might have answered and answered truly, for I would have testified to its truth myself: ‘You [Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)] came to us belied and rejected and we accepted you; you came to us helpless, and we helped you; you were a fugitive, and we took you in; you were poor and we comforted you.’ You Helpers, do you feel anxious for the things of this world, wherewith I have sought to incline these people into the Faith in which you are already established? Are you not satisfied, O group of Helpers, that the people go with ewes and camels while you go along with the Messenger of Allah to your dwellings. By Him in Whose Hand is my life, had there been no migration, I would have been one of the Helpers. If the people were to go through a valley and passage, I would go through the valley and passage of the Helpers. Allah! Have mercy on the Helpers, their children and their children’s children.”

The audience wept until tears rolled down their beards as they said: “Yes, we are satisfied, O Prophet of Allah with our lot and share.” Then the Prophet left the gathering and the people also dispersed. This remarkable episode shows the Prophet’s dramatic ability to understand an opposing point-of-view and, in fact, express it better than the other party. In so doing, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was able to develop a nuanced appreciation of the grievance felt and to address that grievance in the most effective manner. The Prophet’s rhetorical approach here showed that he possessed a sharp intellect. He was able to rationally analyze the win-win historical relationship between himself and the Ansaar showing that both parties had benefited tremendously. He explained why he had been more generous to the Quraish: “to incline these people into the Faith in which you are already established”. He then invited the Ansaar to go home to Madina with the Prophet of Allah while the Quraish went to their homes with “ewes and camels.” No wonder the Ansaar wept till their beards became wet.

## **Creation of Physical Infrastructure to Help in Communication**

The Prophet very intelligently created physical infrastructures in Makkah and Madina to assist in the regular communication of his message. In Makkah, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had started preaching Islam privately in 610 AD and publicly in 612 AD. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) adopted the residence of Arqam (known as Dar-e-Arqam) as the headquarters of Islam in 613 AD. Muhammad’s own residence was at a distance from the Ka’aba and not suitable for regular congregations of Muslims. Arqam’s house was on Safa Mountain and very close to Ka’aba which was actually visible from this house. The Ka’aba was the gathering place of pilgrims from all over Arabia. Therefore, Dar-e-Arqam provided easy access to people who were interested in learning about Islam. Moreover, Muslims could come and go without being watched effectively. The Prophet needed an easily accessible gathering place for the growing group of Muslims to get together on a regular basis. In the Dar-e-Arqam, not only were the Muslims able to offer their prayers, they also obtained continuous instruction from the Prophet, were able to communicate with each other, and developed into a close-knit community as a result. Thus, Dar-e-Arqam became the physical nucleus of the persecuted Muslim community in Makkah.

Muhammad’s migration to Madina had been a tough twenty day journey on camel back. Upon his arrival at the little village of Quba, which was at the outskirts of the territory of Madina, the Prophet set about the construction of a mosque there. Masjid-e-Quba was to become the first mosque of Islam in the emigration period. The Prophet proceeded in this way at each of the three stages of his journey. When he left Quba, the Prophet headed toward Madina and halted at noon, prayer time, in the Ranuna valley, where he performed the first Friday prayer with his Companions: there again, he began construction of a mosque. When he finally arrived at the centre of Madina, many people wanted to have the honor of being his hosts. However, he let his camel, Qaswa, travel at her own pace. Qaswa finally settled down near an empty piece of barren land that belonged to two orphans. The Prophet paid the price due to them and started construction of a mosque at that site. This mosque eventually became known as the Masjid-e-Nabvi and it also included apartments for the Prophet and his wives. The building of these three mosques



points to the dramatic importance the Prophet placed on the creation of a physical infrastructure to enable the Muslims to offer prayers and to gather regularly for learning more about Islam.

The Masjid-e-Nabvi was Islam's first gathering place in Madina. It housed the Prophet's residential chambers and included a small area of residence for Muslims who had devoted their lives to Understanding and propagating Islam (known as the Ashab-e-Suffa, literally the people of the bench). The Masjid-e-Nabvi also served as a conference room, a meeting place, an embassy and a public prayer hall. The Masjid-e-Nabvi was technically the second university of Islam – Dar-e-Arqam being the first. The roles these two physical infrastructures played in the propagation of Islam should not be underestimated.

The Masjid-e-Nabvi served as a university. Through daily teaching sessions, the Prophet continuously imparted knowledge and guidance to whosoever came to ask him a question about the new faith, the new rituals and the new social charter introduced by Islam. He provided continuous direction and encouragement to the faithful. He provided the faithful with rulings on various points of conduct. The Masjid-e-Nabvi became a court of appeal for the whole body of Muslims.

## **Training of Trainers**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) spent a great deal of his time on training the trainers. He must have been keenly aware that he had to train a large number of teachers to propagate the message of Islam far and wide. While he was himself available to anyone who wished to talk to him; it would have been physically impossible for him to impart instruction to all tribes of Arabia that requested it. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) chose proactive and devoted followers as his instructors. He took great care that they themselves understood the message of Islam clearly, had command over the Arabic language and had pleasant personalities. One is reminded of the excellent work done by Jafar bin Abi Talib in the court of Negus of Abyssinia and by Musa'ab bin Umair in Yathrib before the arrival of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) there.

In the early Makkan period, the Prophet was mindful that he needed to focus narrowly on a few converts and impart them in-depth Understanding of Islam. His first converts were going to be his first teachers and emissaries. It was most important that he create a small but most committed and devoted team of believers. In the first three years, the Prophet focused on a small group of followers. He was mindful of the dangers and upheavals ahead. He decided to concentrate on discreetly giving a solid education to a small group, who he knew would face criticism, rejection, and most probably exclusion. It was this very group who were later to remain steadfast in the face of difficulties and persecution thanks to the quality of their spiritual education and the sincerity of their involvement. From the beginning, the Prophet had given priority to quality over quantity, and preferred to concern himself with the nature of the hearts and minds he addressed rather than their number.

During the Madina period, the Suffa companions formed the training vanguard of Islam. They devoted their lives to the study of Islam at the Prophet's feet and provided invaluable service as scribes and trainers. The Suffa Companions had consecrated their lives exclusively to prayer and spiritual discipline. They had neither wives nor children. They lived lives of piety, chastity, prayer and learning. Abu Huraira, the great compiler of Ahadith (the sayings of the Prophet), is perhaps the best known of the Suffa companions. The Suffa companions spent their days and nights in a shed in the mosque in Madina (the Masjid-e-Nabvi). With their single-minded devotion to learning Islam, the Suffa companions constituted the vanguard of Islamic teaching. The Prophet encouraged this institution and supported it continuously. He sent several of the Suffa companions to friendly tribes to teach them about Islam. In those days, news travelled only as fast as the messenger carrying the news. Hence the Suffa companions were a very important change management instrument utilized by the Prophet.

While in Madina, the Prophet was in the habit of sending his companions upon request to such areas and tribes that requested assistance in Understanding Islam. These companions explained Islam to the pagans, called men to the true faith, guided the Muslims in the performance of religious functions and helped find new political allies for Islam. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had sent such men to Abyssinia and to Yathrib while he was still living in Makkah. However, this practice was fraught with danger. On at least two occasions, the Muslim teachers the Prophet sent upon request were actually killed by their hosts.

In the tenth year of Hijra and after his return from the Hajj pilgrimage, the Prophet sent Muadh ibn Jabal to Yemen as a judge. Allah's Messenger (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) worked very hard, with patience and perseverance, to train a class of very high quality teachers who would be most effective in disseminating the message of Islam far and wide. By this time, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had imparted to his companions both the knowledge and the confidence required to go ahead and observe the world and its vicissitudes, certain that they now had the spiritual and intellectual training to remain faithful to the message of Islam.

## **Consistent Message**

Throughout his prophetic life, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) communicated a most consistent message to the Arabs: (a) Believe in the oneness of God and believe in the Prophet as Allah's messenger; (b) Perform the religious rituals prescribed by Islam. The Prophet communicated this message most consistently throughout his life. Once he had become the most powerful religious leader in all of Arabia, dozens of Arab tribes flocked to Madina to negotiate the terms of their submission to Islam. However, the Prophet never negotiated away the basic tenets of Islam.

We see this consistency in communication in the Prophet's regular dealings with friends and foes. We take an example here from his handling of the Hudaibiya negotiations with the Quraish in 628 AD. This is a unique situation in Islam because of the following reasons: (a) The Prophet decided to go on a minor pilgrimage to Makkah at a time of war with the Makkans; (b) Many of his followers decided not to go with him because of the extreme danger involved; and (c) The Quraish of Makkah would be taken by surprise by this action and could have reacted either way. When it became apparent to the Prophet that the Quraish would resist the Muslim entrance to Makkah, he was most quick to take the initiative and negotiate a way out of the impasse. We see the Prophet convey a most consistent message to everyone involved in this venture.

He began this communication exercise upon arrival at Hudaibiya where his camel knelt and refused to budge. When a fellow traveler pointed out that the camel had refused to get up, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) replied: "It has not refused and such is not its nature, but the One who restrained the elephant from Makkah is keeping it back. Today, whatever condition Quraish make in which they ask me to show kindness to kindred I shall agree to." The Prophet was clearly laying the groundwork for a negotiation with the Quraish and preparing the minds of his companions for concessions he planned to make to the Quraish.

After the Prophet had rested a little, Budayl bin Warqa Al-Khuzai came to him with some men of the Khuza tribe and asked him his intentions. The Prophet told him that he "had not come for war but to go on pilgrimage and venerate the sacred precincts." Then the Quraish sent Mikraz bin Hafsa to the Prophet. Again, the Prophet gave him the same reply.

Then the Quraish sent Hulays bin Alqama of the Kinana tribe to negotiate with the Prophet. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) knew him to be a religious man and instructed his companions such: "This is one of the devout people, so send the sacrificial animals to meet him so that he

can see them!” Hulays was most impressed by this march of the camels and became convinced that the Muslims had arrived only to perform a pilgrimage. He returned to the Quraish without even meeting with the Prophet. The Prophet had succeeded in conveying his consistent message without even uttering a single word on this occasion. When the Quraish were still not impressed, Hulays, who was a chieftain of the Kinana tribe, became angry with them and a schism started emerging in the ranks of the Quraish. He said: “You men of Quraish, it was not for this that we made an alliance and agreement with you. Is a man who comes to do honor to God’s house to be excluded from it? By Him, who holds my life in His hand, either you let Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) do what he has come to do or I shall take away the black troops to the last man.” The Prophet’s strictly peaceful intentions were bound to impress those chieftains who were religiously inclined since Makkah was considered a city of peace (haram) for all pilgrims. A schism could have easily appeared in the ranks of the Quraish.

The Quraish then sent Urwah bin Subayad who tried to threaten the Prophet with dire consequences if he did not return immediately: “Quraish have come out with their milch-camels clad in leopard skins swearing that you shall never enter Makkah by force. By God I think I see you deserted by these people (here) tomorrow.” Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) told him what he had told the others, namely that he had not come out for war but to perform a pilgrimage. The Quraish then sent forty or fifty men with orders to surround the Prophet’s camp and attack with stones and arrows. The Muslims caught them and brought them to the Prophet. The apostle forgave them since he was not in there to wage war but to perform a pilgrimage.

Eventually, the Quraish sent Suhayl bin Amr to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) to negotiate an agreement with him. The Prophet then sat down with Suhayl bin Amr to negotiate the terms of an agreement with the Quraish (this is covered in detail in the Section on Effective Use of Pledges, Agreements and Treaties). Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) then called representatives of the Muslims and the Quraish to witness the document so created. He agreed not to perform the minor pilgrimage now but to return for this purpose the next year.

We see that during these difficult negotiations with the Quraish, the Prophet gave them a consistent message of peace and eventually came up with a peaceful resolution to a difficult situation.

## **Effective Communication through an “Open Book” Life**

The Prophet knew that he had to communicate through personal example. He was constantly being watched by friends and foes. His friends and followers wished to follow in his foot-steps – his Sunnah. His oral commandments, his Ahadith, were being recorded and put into practice. The Prophet lived in the broad daylight of history. His life was an open book. It had to be, if Quranic teachings were to be properly understood and strictly followed by the faithful. Time and again, the Quran gave instructions to the Prophet about his own conduct, about his household and about his personal life. He kept his companions fully aware of such Islamic injunctions. His close companions saw that both his personal and public lives communicated Muhammad’s high levels of piety, righteousness and religiosity.

The Prophet was an inside-outside communicator. His private and public life were a mirror image of each other. Many of his companions had a direct access to his private life and were able to observe it firsthand. His living quarters were a part of the Masjid-e-Nabvi and his personal habits, daily routines, private practices and even his house-hold management have been well-documented by many sources. His open life-style was a tremendous boost to his ability to communicate effectively with the people around him. People were able to see that he lived what he preached and that he had no hidden agendas of any kind. His friends and foes were able to observe his life over an extended period of twenty-three years at very close quarters. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was keenly aware that he was an example to his followers. Hence, he followed an “open book” life to assist in communicating his message.

## **Employment of Poets and Ambassadors**

The Arabs were connoisseurs of good poetry and poets travelled all over Arabia to participate in poetry contests. At the annual festival of Ukaz outside Makkah, poets from all over Arabia used to gather in their pursuit of the coveted first prize. The winning poetry was written up on parchments and hung from the curtains of the Ka'aba for a period of one year. This helped pilgrims who used to gather at the Ka'aba from all over Arabia to appreciate and enjoy the finest Arabic poetry. Quality poetry was a great means of communication as it directly affected the heart and mind of the Arab listener. Poets had always been crucial in defining and celebrating the identity of the Arab tribe and they could ruin a tribe or chieftain's reputation as efficiently and thoroughly as the media can today. Adverse poetic propaganda could be as devastating and humiliating in Arabia as a major military defeat.

During the Makkah period, poets did great damage to the cause of Islam by composing poetry that made fun of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and Islam. Many of these poets were on the payroll of the Leading Quraish chieftains who encouraged the composition of poetry that belittled the Prophet and the new religion so that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) would have difficulty attracting new converts. The new religion being propagated by Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was most dangerous for the Quraish as it challenged the established Arab customs and would weaken the leadership and political interests of the Quraish – the sponsors of many of the Leading Arab poets. This explains the vehemence of the poet's attack on the Prophet and Islam. However, with his growing influence in the Madina period, the Prophet was able to employ many poets in the service of Islam. Hassan bin Thabit is generally considered the first poet of Islam for respected for the high quality poetry he composed in the service of Islam.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) employed ambassadors and emissaries to communicate the message of Islam to far-off lands. He chose ambassadors wisely. Generally, he preferred to send young men who were loyal to him, had travelled widely and were familiar with the language of the host country. Some of Muhammad's emissaries were non-Muslims. The Prophet was quite egalitarian in his choice of ambassadors and could choose non-Muslims to communicate on his behalf in certain situations.

## **Neutralizing Opposing Communication**

In cases where the opposing communication became too damaging, the Prophet was not averse to employing effective means of neutralizing such communication. A few Arab poets hostile towards Islam were murdered by bands of young devout Muslims. Such events are discussed in some detail in the Section on Use of Guerrilla Tactics During Military Campaigns. Not only did this exterminate the source of opposing communication, such actions also discouraged other opposing forces from taking a stand against Islam. Over time, Arab media became friendly towards Islam. In the absence of a well-communicated hostile message in the later Madina period, the message of Islam effectively permeated the hearts and minds of the remaining Arabs. On the occasion of the conquest of Makkah, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had ordered that Abdullah bin Hilal bin Al-Khatal, Sara and two other singing girls should be executed for composing and reciting poetry against Islam. While Abdullah bin Hilal bin Al-Khatal was killed; it seems that lives of some of the singing girls were spared by the Prophet.

## **Preservation of Written Records**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was a messenger of Islam for all peoples and all times. The Quran makes this clear time and again. Since the Prophet had a very long-term perspective, he

was keenly aware of the need to leave substantial written and oral records for posterity so that they would be able to obtain guidance from original sources. The first communication of Islam is the Quran itself. On every occasion he received revelation, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) narrated it to his followers so that they could write down these verses and also commit them to memory. The Prophet took great pains to distinguish the exact words of the revelation from his personal dialogue. He encouraged Muslims to memorize the verses of the Quran and to write them on carefully preserved and protected parchments. Towards the end of his life, he took the time to gather a number of the memorizers of the Quran to check and ensure consistency in their memorization.

In addition, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) himself insisted on documenting his important decisions. Nearly three hundred of his documents have come down to us, including political treaties, military enlistments, assignments of officials and state correspondence written on tanned leather. Thus, we know a great deal about his life down to very minute details: how he spoke, sat, slept, dressed, walked; his behavior as a husband, father, friend; his attitudes towards women, children, slaves and animals; his business transactions, his stance towards the poor and the needy; his military strategies and achievements; his exercise of political authority and negotiating style; and his personal habits, likes and dislikes.

A team of forty-five scribes worked with the Prophet continuously to ensure his commands were preserved in writing. For instance, Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her), the Prophet's beloved wife, is the source of more than 2,000 traditions (Ahadith) about the Prophet. Preservation of original records has been a great source of communication in Islam throughout the centuries. The Prophet continues directly to communicate with Muslim through the Quran, his Sunna, and his Ahadith to this day. This helps explain why schisms of a fundamental nature have eluded Islam to date.

## **7. REWARD LOYALTY AND PUNISH TREACHERY**

Although the Prophet spoke softly and was kind-hearted, he knew very well how to discipline his followers. He could be angry if he discovered that someone had tried to cheat him or had reneged on commitments made to him. While he was quick to pardon his enemies if they embraced Islam or expressed remorse, he could also seek revenge if faced with treachery or hardened resistance. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) hated treachery and attempts by people inside and outside the Islamic community aimed at damaging its unity and cohesion.

Throughout his life, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) displayed a generosity of spirit that was unmatched by most of his contemporaries. He was extremely kind-hearted and went to great pains to alleviate the pain and suffering of the poor, the travelers, the orphans and widows. Most of Islam's injunctions in the Makkah phase have to do with social responsibility of the rich towards the poor, of the healthy towards the sick, of the well-settled towards the travelers and the well-endowed towards the orphans and the widows. Even in his early youth, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was known for his generosity towards his friends.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was quick to reward his followers with favors and gifts. For instance, as he marched out to meet the Quraish at the Battle of Uhud, he gave the banner of the Khazraj to Hubab bin Mundhir. Hubab bin Mundhir had been part of the Muslim army at the Battle of Badr. Hubab had advised the Prophet that the Muslim army should encamp around the largest well and should destroy the other wells in the area. This eventually was a key strategic advantage enjoyed by the Muslims in this battle.

In the early years of Islam, many Muslims gave their lives for the protection and growth of their faith. Such loss of human life was of great concern to the Prophet. The Prophet continued to remember his loyal followers who had given up their lives for Islam. He cared for their widows and orphans and exhorted other Muslims to do the same. There are numerous incidents from his life that illustrate this point very well. We narrate one incident from the end of his life. One day, when he was suffering from the illness that took his life, he came out of Aishaa's quarters with his head bound up and sat on the pulpit. Ibn Ishaq reports that the first utterance from him was a prayer over the men of Uhud asking God's forgiveness for them and praying for them a long time." Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) never forgot his friends, especially those who had sacrificed for Islam.

The Prophet was deeply concerned with motives, behavior and action. He rewarded loyalty and perseverance and abhorred disobedience, treachery and timidity. We find many examples of this in his biography. The day after the Battle of Uhud, the Prophet decided to pursue the Quraish contingent that was still loitering around in the vicinity of Madina. He asked Bilal to announce to the Muslims of Madina that the enemy had to be pursued. However, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) announced "but none shall go out with us save those who were present at the battle of yesterday." He did not wish to provide an opportunity to any of the hypocrites or the non-believers to prove their credentials now that the hard battle had been fought already which had resulted in serious loss of life for the Muslims.

### **The Prophet Rewards the Companions Who Were With Him at Hudaibiya**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) decided to go to Makkah to perform an Umra (the minor pilgrimage) in 628 AD. This was after he had fought three battles with the Quraish of Makkah. He called together the Arabs and neighboring Bedouin to march with him, fearing that the Quraish would oppose him with arms or prevent him from visiting the Ka'aba, as they actually did. Ibn Ishaq reports that



“many of the Arabs held back from him, and he went out with the emigrants and Ansaar and such of the Arabs as stuck to him.”

The Prophet was dismayed at the small size of the Muslim contingent that volunteered to go with him. This was clearly not a military campaign with any prospects of winning spoils. Moreover, this Muslim contingent was not well armed for a military campaign (each Muslim male pilgrim carried a sheathed sword and nothing else) and could easily have been cut down by a large Makkan army.

On the completion of the negotiations with the Quraish, the Prophet sacrificed the sacrificial animals and had his head shaved. These rituals are associated with the Minor Pilgrimage which, technically, had not been completed since the Prophet had agreed to return without visiting Makkah and had agreed to come back next year to perform the Lesser Pilgrimage. Muhammad’s companions were slow to emulate his example because most of them were disappointed with the terms of the Hudaibiya Agreement. They were really looking forward to performing a major Islamic ritual and to meeting their extended family members in Makkah. The Prophet knew how to reward total loyalty. This is illustrated by the following anecdote from Hudaibiya narrated by Ibn Ishaq: “Some men shaved their heads on the day of Hudaibiya while others cut their hair. The apostle said: ‘May God have mercy on the shavers.’ They said, ‘The cutters, too, O apostle?’ Three times they had to put this question until finally he added ‘and the cutters.’ When they asked him why he had repeatedly confined the invocation of God’s mercy to the shavers he replied: ‘Because they did not doubt.’”

Upon their return from Hudaibiya, the Prophet decided on a military campaign against the rich Jewish tribe of Khaibar. Khaibar was the stronghold of the richest Jewish tribe of Arabia. However, he explicitly forbade any Muslim who was not with him at Hudaibiya from taking part in this military campaign. The Prophet proceeded on this military campaign despite the fact that he could have put forth a much larger army if he had allowed Muslims, in general, to participate in this dangerous military campaign against the much stronger and well-fortified army of Khaibar. The Muslims were famously victorious in their campaign against Khaibar and returned with vast booty. Ibn Ishaq narrates as follows: “[Booty from] Khaibar was apportioned among the men of Hudaibiya without regard to whether they were present at Khaibar or not.” Thus the Prophet knew very well how to reward his loyal companions.

## **High Esteem in Which the Prophet’s Followers Held Him**

At Hudaibiya, the Prophet conducted many rounds of negotiations with emissaries of the Quraish. The narration of Urwah ibn Masud when he returned to the Quraish is remarkable in his assessment of the Prophet’s position. He expressed his views in the following words: “I have been to Chosroe, Caesar and the Negus in their kingdoms, but never have I seen a king treated so lovingly by a people like Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) among his companions. If he makes ablution, they do not let water fall on the ground. If a hair of his body falls they vie with each other to take possession of it. There is no possibility of them abandoning him!”

An anecdote relating to the murder of the Prophet’s companion, Zayd bin ad-Dathinna, near Makkah also illustrates this point. Zayd was taken captive by treachery at Al-Raji and brought in chains to Makkah. The Prophet had sent him along with five other Leading companions to teach the Quran and Islam to the tribe of Hudhayl. However, the Hudhayl killed three of them and took three to Makkah to be sold there. Safwan bin Umayya bought Zayd to kill him in revenge for his father Umayya bin Khalaf. A large number of the Quraish gathered outside the haram to witness the killing of Zayd. Abu Sufyan asked Zayd: “I adjure you by God, Zayd, don’t you wish that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was with us now in your place so that we might cut off his head, and that you were with your family?” Zayd answered, “By God, I don’t wish that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) now were in the place he occupies and that a thorn could hurt him, and that I were sitting with my family.”



Abu Sufyan used to say, “I have never seen a man who was as loved as Muhammad’s companions loved him.”

### **The Case of Hind and Wahshi**

Hind was the wife of Abu Sufyan who had contracted with a black marksman, Wahshi, to kill Hamza, the Prophet’s uncle, at the Battle of Uhud and win his freedom as a result. Wahshi single-mindedly pursued Hamza at the Uhud battlefield and pierced Hamza with a well-aimed javelin. Hind then cut open the belly of Hamza’s corpse, took out his liver and devoured it to satisfy her thirst for revenge for the killing of her father and brother on the hands of Hamza at the Battle of Badr in single combat. After the conquest of Makkah, Hind came to the Prophet veiled and in company of other women. This group of ladies of the Quraish accepted Islam and then Hind disclosed her presence. The Prophet forgave her but asked her not to show her face to him since she reminded him of his dead uncle. The Prophet also forgave Wahshi who accepted Islam and made valuable contributions to Islam’s cause in later years.

### **Gifts to Others Made the Prophet a Poor Man**

The Prophet was a master gift giver. He gave away virtually everything to the extent that when he died, his personal possessions were a few gold coins that he instructed Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her) to give in charity upon his death. It is most interesting to note that the very first true teaching of the Quran is the following: “As for the orphan, do not oppress him, and as for the beggar, scold him not.” The Quran repeatedly and consistently endorses gift giving and charity.

### **Gifts of Booty to Strengthen the New Quraish Converts in the Cause of Islam**

When the time came to distribute the booty after the victory at Hunain, the Prophet was surprisingly generous to the newly converted notables of Quraish. Anas narrated the following saying of the Prophet that probably dates to this battle: “I give to Quraish people in order to attract their hearts and let them adhere to Islam, for they are near to their life of ignorance [i.e. they have newly embraced Islam and it is still not strong in their hearts].” He gave them the following large gifts:

Individual	Clan	Major Gift
Abu Sufyan	Abd Shams	100 camels
Yazid b. Abi Sufyan	Abd Shams	100 camels
Muawiyah b. Abu Sufyan	Abd Shams	100 camels

Hakim b. Hizam	Asad	100(300) camels
An-Nudayr b. Al-Harith	Abd ad-Dar	100 camels
Usayd b. Harithah	Zuhrah	100 camels
Al-Ala b. Jariyah	Zuhrah (halif of)	100 camels
Makhramah b. Nawfal	Zuhrah	50 camels
Al-Harith b. Hisham	Makhzum	100 camels
Said b. Yarbu	Makhzum	50 camels
Safwan b. Umayya	Jumah	100 (or more) camels
Uthman (Umayr) b. Wahb	Jumah	50 camels
Qays b. Adi	Sahm	50 camels
Suhayl b. Amr	Amir	100 camels
Huwaytib b. Abd al-Uzza	Amir	100 camels
Hisham b. Amr	Amir	50 camels
Al-Aqra b. Habis	Tamim	100 camels
Uyaynah b. Hisn	Ghatafan	100 camels
Al-Abbas b. Mirdas	Sulaym	50 camels
Malik b. Awf	Hawazin	100 camels

Source: Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad ﷺ at Madina*, pages 73-74.

These men came to be known as al-mu'allafah qulubu-hum "those whose hearts are (or are to be) reconciled." This refers to the fact that these were recent converts to Islam and their faith needed to be strengthened by rewarding them excessively for their recent contribution for Islam.

Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her) reported that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was always in full control of his temper and he never seemed angry unless it was necessary. He never got angry for himself nor did he avenge for himself. It was for Allah's sanctity and religion that he would be angry.

After the victory against the Jews at Khaibar, Zainab (May Allah be pleased with her), wife of Salam Ibn Mashkam, invited the Prophet and his companions to a feast. Zainab (May Allah be pleased with her) poisoned the food she prepared. The Prophet "took a morsel and then held back his hand." However, he did not punish Zainab (May Allah be pleased with her) except when his companion, Bishr Ibn Bara died because of this poisoning incident.

## **Treatment of Arab Poets that Maligned Islam**

The Prophet was well-known for his kindness and lenience. One such example was his giving free liberation to the poet, Abu Azzah, after the latter's capture at the Battle of Badr. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) pardoned him and liberated him when Abu Azzah promised not to compose verses against Islam. However, he did not keep his word and continued to participate in anti-Islamic activities. Therefore, when Abu Azzah was captured again on the occasion of the Battle of Uhud, the Prophet condemned him to capital punishment.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was genuinely disturbed by the vicious poetry of a number of poets who composed verses against Islam and against him. His followers meted out the appropriate punishments in a number of such cases. After the Battle of Badr, two such poets, Asma bint Marwan and Abu Afak were assassinated by Muslims without any resulting blood-feud. A little later, Ka'b bin al-Ashraf, a vicious poet who traced his lineage to the Tayyi tribe through his father and to the Jewish tribe of Banu Nadir on his mother's side, was also killed by a contingent of Muslims. Ka'b bin al-Ashraf had composed verses against the Prophet and had, in fact, travelled to Makkah to rouse the Quraish against him. On his return to Madina, he was deceived by a group of five Muslims who killed him as a way of pleasing the Prophet by removing a thorn from his side. Such measures made it clear that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was not a man to be trifled with.

On the occasion of the capture of Makkah, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) instructed his commanders when they entered Makkah only to fight those who resisted them. However, he gave them names of a few individuals who were to be killed even if they took sanctuary in the Ka'aba. However, the Prophet eventually granted clemency to most of these individuals when some of them converted to Islam and in some cases where their relatives requested forgiveness from the Prophet.

## **The Prophet's Expulsion of the Jewish Tribe of An-Nadir Allowed Him to Make the Emigrants Financially Comfortable in Madina**

When the Prophet forced the Jewish tribe of An-Nadir to leave Madina in 626 AD (in the 4th year AH), they left all their immovable property to him. Ibn Ishaq writes that "[the An-Nadir] left their property to the apostle and it became his personal property which he could dispose of as he wished. He divided it among the first Emigrants to the exclusion of the Ansaar, except that Sahl bin Hunayf and Abu Dujana Simak bin Kharasha complained of poverty and so he gave them some." The Prophet was acutely aware of the extreme poverty of the Muhajireen who had left their homes, belongings and businesses in Makkah in order to migrate to Madina with him. His expulsion of the Jewish tribe of An-Nadir served manifold purposes including the following: (a) it removed a competitive centre of power from Madina; (b) it allowed Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) to provide basic financial stability to a number of his followers; and (c) it weakened the position of Abdullah bin Ubbayy who was a confederate of the Banu Nadir and who had earlier dreams of being crowned king of Madina before the Prophet's arrival in the city.

## **Treatment of the Jewish Tribe of Banu Quraizah**

The Jewish tribe of Banu Quraizah had dramatically weakened the Muslim position during the Battle of Ahzaab through their treacherous withdrawal of support. Had they launched an attack on the Muslim rear, they actually could have succeeded in cornering the Muslims against the very trench the Muslims had dug to protect themselves. On the very day the Quraish invaders left Makkah, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) asked every Muslim to gather for the afternoon prayers at Banu Quraizah. The Prophet set out at the head of three thousand infantry men. He explained to the Muslims

the attempts of the Banu Quraizah to side with the Quraish. The Muslims laid siege to the fortress of the Banu Quraizah. Eventually, the Jews accepted defeat. The Prophet suggested that Saad bin Muadh, a former ally of the Banu Quraizah, give the verdict. Saad bin Muadh decided that all able-bodied men of Banu Quraizah should be killed, the women and children should be taken as prisoners and their wealth be divided among the Muslim fighters. This judgment was accepted by Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and was carried out.

The severe punishment of the Jewish tribe of Banu Quraizah after their treachery at the Battle of Ahzaab (627 AD) has to be analyzed in light of their treachery and breach of faith. The treachery of the Banu Quraizah was confirmed and it became evident that they had reneged on their commitment under the Meesaq-e-Madina (the Constitution of Madina) to join with the Muslims in defending the city of Madina from all invaders. In fact, they had connived with the Quraish attackers to open a second front against the Muslims of Madina. Even in such a clear case of treachery, the Prophet did not himself take the decision. He let the confederate leader of the Banu Quraizah, Saad bin Muadh, to decide their fate. Saad bin Muadh proclaimed that all men of the Banu Quraizah should be slain and their women, children and belongings should accrue to the Muslims. This decision was swiftly carried out. It, naturally, became a lesson to all other tribes around Madina and helped ensure that the tribes adhered to the covenants they had made with the nascent Islamic state of Madina.

### **Treatment of Three Companions Who Did Not Join for the Tabuk Campaign**

Three Leading companions of the Prophet, Kaab bin Malik, Murarah bin Ar-Rabi Al-Amiri and Hilal bin Umayyah Al-Waqifi, did not join the Prophet for the Tabuk campaign in 630 AD. They did not have any valid excuses and were probably simply afraid of the hardship and the dangers entailed. Upon his return from the Tabuk campaign, the Prophet asked Kaab bin Malik about the reasons for his staying behind. Kaab bin Malik spoke the truth stating that “there is no valid excuse for me. By Allah, I never possessed so good means, and I never had such favorable conditions for me as I had when I stayed behind.” The Prophet required that these three companions should keep away from him, and decreed that no companion should speak to them until God pardoned them. When the pardon was received, the community was overjoyed with relief especially the three companions. This event delivered a profound teaching, since it showed how serious it was to selfishly prefer to manage one’s own affairs rather than commit oneself, body, soul and possessions, to the defence of the Muslim community.

After the Year of the Deputations, some men of Qays of Kubba of Bajila came to visit the Prophet. They were suffering from an epidemic and enlarged spleens. The Prophet told them to visit his slave, Yasar, and drink milk from the Prophet’s own camels. When these men recovered from their illness, they killed Yasar and stuck thorns in his eyes and drove away with Muhammad’s camels. On learning of this development, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) sent Kurz bin Jabar in pursuit who brought them back to the Prophet. Ibn Ishaq reports that the Prophet then had their hands and feet cut off and eyes gouged out.

## **8. DEVELOPMENT OF FOLLOWERS INTO LEADERS OF THE ISLAMIC STATE**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was a unique individual in world history. Not only did he start propagating the religion of Islam in 610 AD in Makkah; he also, more than anyone else, ensured its evolution into a highly successful world religion within a period of 23 years. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) could not have accomplished all he did without his harnessing the capabilities of his companions and followers. Among his close group of companions, there were many talented and charismatic figures. Quite a few were leaders of large and influential Arab tribes. A number of them were his close relatives. It is interesting to note here that, of the four first caliphs of Islam who took over after Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), the first two were his fathers-in-law (Abu Bakr and Umar) and the last two were his sons-in-law (Uthman and Ali). This is not to argue that he did not designate his trusted aides to take over strategically important responsibilities. Quite the contrary, time and again, he trusted many of his companions with very sensitive leadership assignments both of political and military nature.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was very close to a number of his companions. He treated his first cousin, Ali bin Abu Talib, almost like a son and gave the hand of his most loved daughter, Fatimah, to Ali in marriage. Abu Bakr was his closest friend and companion. It seems that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) met with Abu Bakr daily for many years till his death. Abu Bakr was the one friend who accompanied Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) on the most dangerous journey from Makkah to Madina with the Quraish chieftains thirsting for Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)'s blood. Abu Bakr was the Prophet's closest friend and confidante. Umar ibn Al-Khataab, who later became the second caliph of Islam, was also a staunch and loyal friend. His conversion to Islam, in fact, had strengthened the new religion. His steadfast loyalty to the Prophet was a source of great strength for Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and for Islam. Uthman ibn Affan was another close aide of the Prophet. Though much younger than the Prophet himself; nevertheless, he enjoyed Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)'s trust and affection. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) married his daughter Ruqayyah to Uthman. After Ruqayyah's death about the time of Battle of Badar, the Prophet married his other daughter Umme Kalsoom to Uthman. Among women, the Prophet remained very close to and loved his first wife Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her). Later, among his younger wives, he remained very fond of Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her), the daughter of Abu Bakr.

Just before his demise, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) asked his closest friend and companion, Abu Bakr, to lead the prayers in the Masjid-e-Nabvi when he was sick and could not lead the Muslims in prayers. However, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) did not appoint a leader to replace him after this death. Ibn Ishaq records that Umar reported that the Apostle did not appoint a successor and attributed the following words to the Prophet of Islam from his last days: "If I appoint a successor, one better than I did so; and if I leave them (to elect my successor) one better than I did so." This made it clear to the Muslims that the Prophet had not appointed a successor. The Prophet had a large group of followers in his life-time that included the earliest group of Muslim converts from Mecca, the Ansaar of Madina, the Quraish chieftains who eventually accepted Islam, and many Arab chieftains belonging to other Arab tribes.

The Prophet was a great human resource manager. He was always most interested in evaluating the capabilities of his followers and continuously tested and trained them to enhance their skill-sets. We find that during the many expeditions and battles, he often assigned different individuals to handle the affairs of Madina in his absence. He entrusted different followers with leadership of the Muslim forces in battle. Naturally, this allowed the Prophet to assess the leadership, managerial and martial capabilities of a large

number of his companions. This critical information helped him decide on the most effective use of human resources in the later years and was probably a major factor in his later success.

The first expedition from Madina that was commanded by Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) himself was the raid on Al Abwa twelve months after the migration to Madina. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) appointed Sa'ad bin Ubadah as his vice-regent in Madina during his absence. Two or three months later, the Prophet left on an expedition to Ushayrah in the district of Yanbu. On this occasion, he left Abu Salamah ibn Abd al Asad as his vice-regent in Madina. When it came time for the Muslims to march on Badr a second time, the Prophet appointed Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul to govern Madina in his absence.

It is true that at the very end of his life, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) asked his closest friend, Abu Bakr, to lead the prayers at the mosque in Madina, in his stead. In fact, the Prophet while suffering from the strong fever and headache that eventually took his life, also offered his prayers behind Abu Bakr. As the last prophet, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) could have no successors. In fact, he had to be extremely careful that the umma did not really feel that he had somehow endowed any one individual with any special powers or privileges after him.

The year 624 AD is noteworthy in history because it marks an end of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)'s exclusive reliance on the Ansaar of Madina for defensive and aggressive military manoeuvres. From this time on, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)'s entourage started including men from the west and south-west of Madina. These were the territories that had been visited by the Muslim forces during 623 AD. Some of these men looked after camels for Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). One at least was thought sufficiently capable to be left in charge of Madina on certain occasions when Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was absent on an expedition. This point is important because Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) would have been extremely careful not to choose a man from Aws or Khazraj as his deputy in Madina given the recent bloodshed among the two tribes before Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)'s arrival in Madina. It was therefore sound political strategy to choose a capable outsider as the administrator in his absence. These outsiders were closely attached to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) himself and would always support him regardless of the politics around Madina. Some of these were officially given the status of "Emigrants" while others may rather have been regarded as persons protected by the "clan" of Emigrants.

Thus Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) continuously expanded his base of support and was not overly reliant on any one individual or any one clan over an extended period of time. This was most important since the Prophet was keenly aware of power politics and knew that some of his supporters may not be able to handle excessive power too well. During the Madina period, the Prophet felt the need to grow the ranks of the small Muslim community there. He needed to develop a critical mass of Muslims in the area as well as to infuse fresh blood, vigour and vitality in the Muslim ranks. The Immigrants from Mecca felt proud of their emigration to Madina because this act had been a great sacrifice on their part. Now, the Prophet extended the honor: he explained that it was not restricted to only the Meccan Muslims, but was open to any and every non-Madinan Muslim, until further orders. It became even incumbent on non-Madinans who embraced Islam to leave their land and come to settle in Madina. Hamidullah indicates that this obligation lasted till the conquest of Mecca in 630 AD. This policy of the Prophet was carried out with religious fervor which led to an appreciable and dramatic increase in the Muslim population of Madina. The recently arrived Muslims were neither from Makkah nor from Madina. As such, they were loyal followers of the Prophet himself and were ready to obey the Prophet's orders irrespective of the risks involved. Hence they provided Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) with a third group of loyal supporters. This group also vied for favor with the Prophet.

Sa'ad bin Ubadah carried the flag of the Ansaar on the occasion of the conquest of Mecca and he led the Ansaar contingent. When he passed by Abu Sufyan, he said: "Today will witness the great fight; you cannot seek sanctuary at Ka'aba. Today will witness the humiliation of Quraish." This was totally contrary to the Prophet's explicit directions who immediately replaced Sa'ad by his son Qais. Wielding tremendous power over hundreds of thousands of people seems to have come naturally to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). We can see this demonstrated in his negotiations with the many groups of tribal elders that came to see him in Madina from far off lands after his conquest of Makkah. However, many of his followers would have been over their heads.

The Prophet's unique and innovative approach to human resource development can be seen in his appointment of Usamah bin Zaid ibn Harithah to lead the large Muslim army against the Byzantine forces in Al Sham. This was to be the last military campaign planned by the Prophet himself as he soon succumbed to illness and died shortly thereafter. However, he had ordered the mobilization of a large army and commanded it to march on Al Sham (Syria). He had ordered a number of the elders of Islam including Abu Bakr and Umar to accompany this large Muslim army. Usama bin Zaid, whom Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had chosen to lead the army, was then a young man hardly twenty years of age. His appointment and precedence over the elders of Islam caused quite a stir among the people. Ibn Ishaq narrates that "people had criticized the leadership of Usama, saying, 'He has put a young man in command of the best of the Emigrants and the Helpers.'" However, the Muslims deferred to the better judgment of the Prophet. The Prophet, undoubtedly, sought to place Usamah ibn Zaid in the same command in which his father fell in the campaign of Mu'tah. The Prophet had wanted to give Usamah cause for pride in victory tantamount to a reward for the martyrdom of his father.

It would be fair to argue that the Prophet kept a number of his companions vying for his favor. He was loved by his companions and followers and he took care to let them take turns in sharing major responsibilities and in proving their mettle as able administrators and commanders. The Prophet's instruction to Abdur-Rahman bin Samurah is quite illuminating: "Do not ask for position of authority. If you are granted this position without asking for it, you will be helped (by Allah) in discharging its responsibilities; but if you are given it as a result of your request, you will be left alone as its captive." The fact that he did not develop a well-established chain of authority under him (except in military campaigns) means that he could easily overturn what others may have considered an established line-up of senior companions. Thus, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) very effectively created a meritocracy around him. While he developed a very powerful human resource around him, he did not like to be lobbied for specific positions of power and authority. When two cousins of Abu Musa Ashari approached the Prophet and asked to be appointed governors of some land, the Prophet told them "By Allah we do not appoint someone to this post who seeks it or someone who contends for it." Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was eager to take advice from different companions. Sometimes, slaves and recent converts to Islam (such as Salman Farisi at the Battle of Ehzaab) provided advice that was appreciated and accepted by the Prophet.

The following list provides the names of deputies appointed by Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) for various undertakings. This list is taken from Montgomery Watt, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) in Madina and is based on references from Ibn Hisham and At-Tabari, along with one or two others, and does not claim to be complete. This list shows the large number of deputies employed by Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) to undertake various activities for the Muslim community. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)'s employment of such a broad talent pool indicates that he was able to test the strengths and weaknesses of his companions in real situations requiring leadership. He was thus able to train them for bigger and better responsibilities in later periods.



Name of Leader	Clan	Area	Remarks
<b>Sent To The South</b>			
Al-Muhajir bin Abi Umayyah	Quraysh-Makhzum	Sana	Went later in the caliphate of Abu Bakr
Ziyad bin Labid	Ansar-Bayadah	Hadramawt	Also sent to the district of Muawiyah
Ali bin Abi Talib	Quraysh-Hashim	Najran	To collect sadaqat and jizyah
Muadh bin Jabal	Ansar-Salimah	Himyar	To teach in the Yemen and Hadramawt
Abdallah bin Zayd	Ansar-Bal Harith	Himyar	
Malik bin Ubadah	Hamdan	Himyar	
Uqbah bin Namir	Hamdan	Himyar	
Malik bin Murrah ar Ruhawi	Madhij	Himyar	
Shahr bin Badham	Persian	Sana	Sent as governor
Amir bin Shahr al-Hamdani		Hamdan	
Abu Musa	Abdullah bin Qays	Marib	

Khalid bin Said bin Al-As	Quraysh-Abd Shams	Bet. Najran & Rima	
At-Tahir bin Abi Halah	Tamim	Akk and Ashar	
Yala bin Umayyah	Tamin	Al-Janad	
Amr bin Hazm	Ansar-An-Najjar	Najran	
Ukkashah bin Thawr Al-Ghawthi	Sakasik, Sakun		
Abu Sufyan bin Harb	Quraysh-Abd Shams	Juarash (Yaman) & Najran	
<b>Sent To The East</b>			
Al-Ala bin Al-Hadrami	Conf. of Quraysh-Abd Shams Al-Bahrayn		
Al-Aqra	Tamim	Musaddiq for Hajar (Al-Bahrayn)	

In the Neighbourhood of Madina		
Al-Walid bin Uqbah	Quraysh-Abd Shams	Al-Mustaliq, repulsed
Adi bin Hatim	Tayyi	To Tayyi and Asad
Malik bin Nuwayrah	Tamim	To collect sadaqat of Banu Hanzalah of Tamim
Az-Zibriqan bin Badr	Tamim	To half of Banu Saad of Tamim
Qays bin Asim	Tamin-Minqar	To half of Banu Saad of Tamim
Buraydah bin Al-Husayb	Aslam	Collected tax of Aslam & Ghifar, called Aslam to Tabuk
Ka'ab bin Malik	Ansar-Salimah	Variant for above
Abbad bin Bishr	Ansar-Abdal-Ashal	Collected tax of Sulaym and Muzaynah, summoned Aslam
Rafi bin Makith	Juhaynah	Collected tax of Juhaynah, summoned tribe with brother
Amr bin Al-As	Quraish-Sahm	Collected tax of Fazarah
Ad-Dahhak bin Sufyan	Kilab	Tax of Kilab
Busr bin Sufyan	Kaáb	Tax of Kaáb, summoned Ka'ab along with Budayl b Warqa
Nuaym bin Abdallah	Quraish-Adi	Variant for collector-from Ka'ab
Ibn Al-Lutbiyah	Azd	Tax of Dhubyan
Uyaynah bin Hisn	Fazarah	Sent to collect tax of Tamim
Qudai bin Amr	Udhrah	Over Asad

*Source: Montgomery Watt, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) at Madina, pages 366-368/*

The Prophet did not appoint a successor to lead the Muslim community after his passing away. After some tense deliberations between the Ansaar and the Muhajireen in Madina, the Muslims eventually decided to declare their loyalty to Abu Bakr, the Prophet's closest companion. The sensitivity of the moment was tremendous as major schisms could easily have developed in the Muslim ranks if the leadership issue had not been amicably resolved in a timely fashion. Abu Bakr, the first caliph of Islam, appreciated fully well that he held the leadership of the Muslim community as a trust. This fact is very well illustrated from the first speech he delivered to the Muslim community of Madina immediately after his selection (by oral acclaim in the hall of Banu Saida) as the first caliph immediately after Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)'s death. Abu Bakr said: "I have been given authority over you but I am not the best of you. If I do well, help me, and if I do ill, then put me right. Truth consists in loyalty and falsehood in treachery. The weak among you shall be strong in my eyes until I secure his right if God will; and the strong among you shall be weak in my eyes until I wrest the right from him. If a people refrain from fighting in the way of God, God will smite them with disgrace. Wickedness is never widespread in a people but God brings calamity upon them all. Obey me as long as I obey God and His apostle, and if I disobey them you owe me no obedience."

## **9. Muhammad's MARRIAGES AND HOUSEHOLD MANAGEMENT**

Muhammad's marriages have been a source of constant debate among scholars and historians. At one end are Western writers many of whom have painted the Prophet as a voluptuary who courted and enjoyed female companionship. In fact, the large number of Prophet's marriages (which were eleven, by most counts) is interpreted by many Western critics as indication that the Prophet was above the law himself since ordinary Muslims are restricted to a maximum of four marriages. In addition, many historians make Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) into a colorful character who was given to carnal pleasures of life.

Several European historians and biographers of the Prophet point to Surah Al-Ahzab of the Quran which seems to award the Prophet carte blanche in his marital relations: "We have made lawful to you ... women who give themselves to you and whom you wished to take in marriage. This privilege is yours alone, being granted to no other believer... You may put off any of your wives you please and take to bed any of them you please" [The Quran, 33:50]. Quite a few Muslim historians have also commented on his virility which, for them, is only a sign of the Prophet being a perfect man.

Exhibit 9 provides summary information on the Prophet's marriages and provides the names of his wives, their approximate ages at marriage (where this writer was able to gather this information) and the approximate dates of marriage.

### **First wife: Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her) bint Khuwaiyid – 595 A**

Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her) bint Khuwaiyid was the Prophet's first wife. Tradition reports that she was forty years old when she married Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) in 595 AD. At this time, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was only twenty-five years old. They both remained married till her death in 619 AD. The firstborn, a boy named Qasim, lived only two years; then came Zainab (May Allah be pleased with her), Ruqayyah, Umme Kulthoom, Fatima and at last Abdullah, who also died before the age of two. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) remained in a monogamous marriage relationship with Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her) for twenty-four years. The Prophet did not marry any other woman during Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her)'s life-time although this was quite a common custom in Arabia at that time. It is also worth noting that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) made no use of Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her)'s wealth (other than to give alms to the poor) and maintained his business as a merchant and trader.

### **Second wife: Sauda bint Zamaa – 619 AD**

His second wife, Sauda, was nearing forty when he married her to provide a mother for his four daughters who were very young at that time. Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her) had died leaving Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) to care for their very young children. Sauda was one of the early converts to Islam and had left Makkah with her first husband, Sakran, for Abyssinia at the instructions of the Prophet. In Abyssinia, Sauda's husband somehow converted to Christianity. However, Sauda resisted the temptation and returned to Makkah. The Prophet honored her by taking her as his wife in 619 AD after Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her)'s death. Sauda was the sister-in-law of Suhayl bin Amr, who was chief of the Amr clan of the Quraish. Suhayl bin Amr was to be the Makkan chieftain who successfully negotiated the Hudaibiya agreement with the Prophet in 628 AD which is covered more fully in an earlier section of this book. Sauda took good care of the Prophet's household and his young children.

### **Third wife: Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her) bint Abu Bakr – 623 AD**

Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her) was daughter of Muhammad's closest friend and companion, Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr later became the first caliph of Islam. Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her) was to become the Prophet's favorite wife (next to Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her) in his esteem). She played a significant part in the early history of Islam and was to become the major source of the Prophet's sayings.

### **Fourth wife: Hafsa bint Umar – 625 AD**

Hafsa was the daughter of the Prophet's close companion, Umar bin al-Khattab who later became the second caliph of Islam. Hafsa was the seventeen-year-old widow of Khunays, an early convert to Islam. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) married her in 625 AD, after the death of her husband at Badr. She was a close friend of Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her) and died in about 670 AD.

### **Fifth wife: Zaynab (May Allah be pleased with her) bint Khuzaymah – 626 AD**

Zaynab (May Allah be pleased with her) bint Khuzaymah belonged to the tribe of Amir with which Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had been trying to foster closer relations. She was also the widow of Muhammad's cousin Obaydah, who was killed at Battle of Uhud. She was about thirty year old when Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) married her, but she died eight months after the marriage.<sup>356</sup>

### **Sixth wife: Umm Salamah bint Umayyah ibn al Mughirah – 626 AD**

Umm Salamah was the widow of Abu Salamah who had died in 625 from wounds received at Uhud. Both she and her former husband, though Muslims of long standing, belonged to the clan of Makhzum, the clan of Abu Jahl, and one of the chief centers of opposition to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) at Makkah. This marriage was at the very least a way of providing for an important Emigrant widow, but it may also have been designed to help Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) to reconcile the Makkans. She was twenty-nine years old when Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) married her. She survived Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him).

### **Seventh wife: Zaynab (May Allah be pleased with her) bint Jahsh – 627 AD**

This was to be the most controversial marriage of the Prophet. Zaynab (May Allah be pleased with her), who was actually Muhammad's cousin, was earlier married to the Prophet's adopted son, Zayd ibn Harithah. European historians generally recount the story of the Prophet's visit to Zayd's house to meet him where he came face to face with the beautiful Zaynab (May Allah be pleased with her) instead. European biographers write that the Prophet was smitten by her beauty and that Zaynab (May Allah be pleased with her), who was unhappy with Zayd in any case, told Zayd of the same. Zayd then divorced Zaynab (May Allah be pleased with her) and the Prophet married her after her "waiting period" was over.

## **The Wisdom Behind the Prophet's Marriage To Zainab (May Allah be pleased with her)**

The practice of adoption was firmly rooted in Arab society; therefore, it would be difficult to change. Adoption here refers to the practice of not only taking in a child and rearing him, but also changing his name and ascribing him to his adoptive parents instead of to his real parents. As an example, Zaidi (May Allah be pleased with him) was born Zaid ibn Harithah, or Zaid, the son of Harithah; but once the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) adopted him, his name changed to Zaid ibn Muhammad, or Zaid, the son of Muhammad.

Nothing was revealed about this practice in Makkah or during the first few years after the Prophet's migration to-Madinah. But then Allah (SWT) revealed Verses in which He I forbade the practice of adoption, making it clear that an adoptive father's claim that his adopted son is his real son does not change the fact that his adopted son is really the son of somebody else. Allah (SWT) said:

*Allah (SWT) has not put for any man two hearts inside his body. Neither has He made your wives whom you declare to be like your mothers backs, your real mothers. [Az-Zihar is the saying of a husband to his wife, 'You are to me like the back of my mother,' i.e., You are unlawful for me to approach.], nor has He made your adopted sons your real sons. That is but your saying with your mouths. But Allah says the truth, and He guides to the (Right) Way' (The Quran 33:4)*

In the next Verse, Allah (SWT) commanded that they should henceforward be ascribed to their real fathers:

*Call them (adopted sons) by (the names of) their fathers, that is more just with Allah. But if you know not their fathers (names, call them) your brothers in faith and (your freed slave). And there is no sin on you if you make a mistake therein, except in regard to what your hearts deliberately intend. And Allah is Ever Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful' (The Quran 33:5)*

In an authentic Hadeeth, `Abdullah ibn `Umar said, `Verily, Zaid ibn Harithah was the freed slave of the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), and the only name we would call him by was Zaid ibn (son of) Muhammad, until (Verses of the) Qu'an was revealed (about that): `Call them (adopted sons) by (the names of) their fathers, that is more just with Allah.'

Allah (SWT) also made it clear that, even if one does not know his real parents, one still does not have an excuse to say that he is the son of his adoptive parents. In such a situation, if a man raises a child that is not his own, that child is not his adopted son, but his brother (in faith) and his Maula (Maulaa has many meanings; it can mean a freed slave, but here it may refer to a lifelong bond of loyalty that child should show to the man who raised hi)

Other revealed texts dealt with the problem of adoption from the perspective of the adopted son. Allah (SWT) forbade adopted sons from ascribing themselves to anybody other than their true fathers - on purpose. The sin of ascribing oneself to other than one's true father is a very grave sin indeed, for the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said, `Whoever claims that someone other than his (real) father is a father or ascribes himself to other than his Mawaalee (the people who freed him, or to whom he owes loyalty), then upon him is the curse of Allah, the angels, and all of mankind. Allah (SWT) does not accept either compulsory or voluntary deeds from them.'

A father-son relationship is established only through sexual contact between a man and his wife, or between a man and his female slave. Therefore, one may not be ascribed to either one's adoptive father or to the man who perpetrated adultery or fornication with one's mother. The Prophet(Peace and Blessings



of Allah be upon him) said, 'A son is ascribed to the bed, and for the fornicator is the stone.'[1] The meaning of this Hadeeth is as follows: Children that are born as a result of sexual relations on a correct bed, meaning as a result of sexual relations that are based on a correct marriage contract or on a man owning a slave, are ascribed to their fathers. As for fornication and adultery, they do not merit making a person become ascribed to the man who perpetrated illegal sex with his mother.

The practice of adoption, which was common and deep-rooted in Arab society, was practically, and not just theoretically, terminated when the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) married Zainab (May Allah be pleased with her). This is because Zaidi was not really the Prophet's son, which made Zainab (May Allah be pleased with her) lawful for the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) once Zaidi divorced her. Had Zaidi really been the Prophet's son, the Prophet's marriage to Zainab (May Allah be pleased with her) would of course not have taken place. Therefore, their marriage made it known to people that adoption was not a legitimate practice, meaning that one does not become a man's son through adoption; instead, his true father was and always will remain his father, to whom he must ascribe himself. In the following Verse, Allah (SWT) confirmed the wisdom behind the Prophet's marriage to Zainab (May Allah be pleased with her):

*So that (in future) there may be no difficulty to the believers in respect of (the marriage of) the wives of their adopted sons when the latter have no desire to keep them (i.e., they have divorced them). And Allah's Command must be fulfilled. (The Quran 33:37)*

Disbelievers and ignorant people who blindly follow them try to circulate false narrations, in which a great lie is fabricated against the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him): that he (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) desired Zainab (May Allah be pleased with her) bint Jahsh after Zaidi (May Allah be pleased with him) married her and that, once Zaidi (May Allah be pleased with him) found out about that, he divorced her so that the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) could marry her. Nothing, however, could be further from the truth.

In the Quran, it is established that the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) would admonish Zaidi (SWT) and order him to keep his wife, in spite of their disagreements, and to fear Allah (SWT). Furthermore, as Imam Ibn Al-Arabe pointed out, the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had seen Zainab (May Allah be pleased with her) on numerous occasions prior to the legislation of the Hiaab. He (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was raised with her, and she with him, which meant that he (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) saw her frequently. How can it be, then, that he (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) took a liking to her only after she got married? The claim is false, baseless, and refuted by the Quran and authentic narrations. The Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), in terms of his character, was far above having such a base attachment

## **Eighth wife: Juwayriya – 628 AD**

Juwayriya was the daughter of Harith ibn Abu Dirar, the chief of the Mustalik tribe (a branch of the Khuzah), and the widow of a man of that tribe. She was captured during Muhammad's expedition against the Mustalik. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) ransomed her from a citizen and married her in January 628 AD. She was twenty-two years old at that time, and "full of grace and beauty." The news of the Prophet's marriage to Juwayriya spread fast. This made the Mustalik tribe into the Prophet's in-laws. The Muslims who had earlier captured many of the Mustalik as captives now released them. Ibn Ishaq notes: "When the Prophet married her a hundred families were released. I do not know a woman who was a greater blessing to her people than she."

### **Ninth wife: Umm Habibah – 628 AD**

Umm Habibah was the daughter of Abu Sufyan, an influential leader of the Quraish in Makkah. She had converted to Islam and left for Abyssinia at the instructions of the Prophet with her husband, Ubaidullah. However, for some reason her husband converted to Christianity and decided to stay on in Abyssinia. Other historians maintain that Ubaidullah died in Abyssinia in 628 AD. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) decided to marry her, and this marriage was performed by proxy before the ruler of Abyssinia. She joined Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) in Madina in 628 AD. She was thirty-five years old at this time.

### **Tenth wife: Safiya – 628 AD**

The Prophet married Safiya after he had captured the Jewish settlement of Khaibar. She was the wife of Kinana bin Al-Rabi, a member of the Jewish clan that lived in Khaibar. Her husband had been killed during the battle. She was to become a close friend and ally of Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her). She died in 672 AD.

### **Eleventh wife: Maimunah – 629 AD**

Maimunah was the daughter of Harith, sister of Umm Al-Fazal and sister-in-law of Abbas, Muhammad's uncle. She was a widow of twenty-six whom Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) married her in 629 during his pilgrimage to Makkah. She survived him, dying at the age of eighty-one. She was the aunt of the famous Khalid bin Walid, who had recently converted and was later called "the Sword of Allah."

### **Mariyah the Copt, 628 – 629 AD**

Mariyah was a Coptic slave gifted to the Prophet by Al-Muqawqis, ruler of Egypt, as was the custom at the time. She gave birth to the Prophet's son, Ibrahim, who died in Madina while still a child in January 632 AD.

### **Raihanah bint Zayd, 627 AD**

The Prophet accepted Raihanah bint Zayd originally of the Jewish tribe of Banu Nadir in his household in 627 AD when the women and children of the Banu Quraizah were taken as slaves. Raihanah bint Zayd had escaped the exile that was imposed upon her wealthy tribe of Banu Nadir by marrying into the other Jewish tribe of Madina, the Banu Quraizah. When this tribe also fell before the Muslims, she passed to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) as part of his booty. Ibn Ishaq notes that she stayed with the Prophet until she died. The apostle had proposed to marry her and put the veil on her, but she said: "Nay, leave me in your power, for that will be easier for me and for you." Ibn Ishaq chronicles that she eventually converted to Islam which gave the Prophet great pleasure.

### **Wisdom behind the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) marriages**

Of the Prophet's wives, Khadijah bint Khuwaylid and Zaynab (May Allah be pleased with her) bint Khuzaymah died during the Prophet's lifetime. When he died, the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) left behind nine wives. Of all the Mothers of the Believers with whom the Messenger (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) consummated marriage, Aishah (May Allah be pleased with



her) was the only virgin whom he married. The others were widows and divorcees. Islam called the wives of the Prophet Ummahat al-Mu'mineen or "Mothers of the Believers."

The Mother of the Believers Khadijah bint Khuwaylid was the first of the wives of the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and the dearest to him. He lived with her until she died, and he did not take a second wife whilst he was married to her. Sawdh, who was his second wife in Makkah, was an old woman. This clearly indicates that the motive for the Prophet's marriages was not a desire to have many women, because if that were the case he would have hastened to marry many women when he was young.

After his migration to Madinah, the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) married the remainder of his wives for social, personal and tribal reasons, all of which served the interests of the Islamic state. These marriages enabled the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) to strengthen his relationship with the most prominent Companion who supported him in his struggle to spread the call of Islam, Abu Bakr, `Umar bin-Al-Khattab, and `Uthman bin Affan, who married two of the daughters of the Prophet. As for Ali bin Abi Taalib, he also became the son-in-law of the Prophet through his marriage to Fatimah. Abu Sufyan, a Quraish notable, also became related by marriage to the Prophet, and in one way or another that reduced the man's enmity toward the Islamic state. The Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) married Juwayriyyah bint al-Harith and that played a role in strengthening ties between the Muslims and the tribe of Banu Mustaliq, after there had been war and conflict.

This indicates that these relationships by marriage led to a strengthening of bonds between the emerging Islamic state and other Arab tribes, and it facilitated a resolution of some of the conflicts and disputes in an atmosphere where the Arabs still laid a great emphasis on the importance of respecting lineage and family ties.

Whilst affirming the importance of these considerations in understanding the marriages of the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) after the Hijrah, it is certain that he was keen to fulfill his marital duties toward his wives in an atmosphere of love, care and compassion, within the framework of his unique situation which dictated that he spend the vast bulk of his time in conveying the message of Islam to the world and establishing the first Islamic state and defending it from its many enemies.

Moreover, the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was not a king and his wives did not live in royal palaces. His status in the eyes of his companions was great indeed, and they loved him more than they loved themselves, but he did not use this status to live like a king. He never showed any interest in the luxuries of this world. One of two months would pass without cooking fires being lit in his house, and for days at a time he would tie a rock to his stomach because of hunger. Most of his nourishment came from dates and water.

How frustrated the enemies of Islam, past and present, become when they are reminded of some of these facts. They have always tried and are still trying to make his marriages grounds to criticize him and criticize Islam, although they never object if a man betrays his wife and has relationships with dozens of women as mistresses. These opponents always try to ignore the important social and political reasons for most of the marriages of the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), and they try to use them to criticize his character and portray him as a mere pleasure-seeker.

But their efforts are bound to fail when the seeker of knowledge or researcher studies the life of the Prophet and sees that he never paid any attention to physical pleasure at any stage of his life, either when he was young or when Quraysh offered him wealth and kingship and whatever he desired in return for giving up the call of Islam, or when he became the head of state in Madinah and the leader of Arabia. Even

then he continued to live the life of the poor, although he could have been the richest king of his time if he had wanted to. Moreover, plural marriage was a widespread custom in Arabia at that time and it is still common nowadays in many non-Muslim tribal societies, especially among many African tribes where a man may have dozens of wives.

The Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)) treated the women whom he married kindly, and by means of some of his marriages he strengthened ties with his companions and with other tribes and states. He set a good example of the righteous husband who treats his wives in the best manner, despite his exceptional circumstances as a Messenger whom his Lord had chosen to convey the message of Islam to the whole world. His conduct was undoubtedly that of the Prophets, leaders and great reformers; this is the path to which the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)) adhered at every stage of his life, and he set an example for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Hence, everyone attested to his nobleness, generosity, humility, compassion, courage and selflessness. The Quran testifies in a comprehensive verse:

*“And verily, you (O Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)) are on an exalted (standard of) character.” (The Quran 68:4)*

## DIPLOMATIC & MILITARY STRATEGIES

We have decided to consolidate the Prophet's diplomatic and military strategies in one section because many of these strategies tend to flow into each other. The Prophet's diplomatic and military skills are most visible in the Madina period since he laid the foundation of the first Muslim state there. Therefore, a detailed study of this ten year period is most important in order to appreciate the Prophet's skillful and artful use of diplomatic and military strategies.

We can trace the expansion of the Muslim state's territory and influence by studying the diplomatic moves of the Prophet, his success at negotiating pacts of friendship with many Arab tribes and his successful military campaigns of this period. The activities during this crucial ten year period can be summarized as follows:

First Year of Hijrah: Foundation of the city-state of Madina; zone of influence (or of friendship) in the region between Madina and the coast of Red Sea, special relations with the Juhainah tribe.

Second Year of Hijrah: Strengthening of the ties towards the south and south-west of Madina, through defensive alliances with the Banu Damrah. The Prophet himself led a punitive expedition to Qarqarat al-Kudr, to the east of Madina, on the territory of the Sulaym and the Ghatafan.

Third Year of Hijrah: Several expeditions took place towards the Najd, to the east of Madina – at Dhat Ar-Riqa, at Qaradah, etc.

Fourth Year of Hijrah: The Prophet arranged and dispatched expeditions to the east of Madina – as far as Farid, in the Najd.

Fifth Year of Hijrah: The Prophet sends an expedition to the extreme north of Arabia – as far as Dumat al-Jandal. Another expedition is sent to the south – to Muraisi (not far from Makkah) against the Mustalik. The Islamisation of these latter extended the Islamic territory to the borders of Makkah.

Sixth Year of Hijrah: The Prophet organized expeditions against the Najd, to the East of Madina. Another expedition was sent against Usfan and another against Kura al-Ghameen, in the suburbs of Makkah.

Seventh Year of Hijrah: Annexation of Khaibar, Wadi al-Qura and Fadak in the north of Madina. Other expeditions were sent to the Najd. The Islamic state annexed Bahrain and Oman, in the east and south-east of the Arabian Peninsula.

Eighth Year of Hijrah: The Muslim forces occupy Makkah and the territory further south, in the coastal region of Tihama several expeditions in Palestine (Mutah, Dhat-Atlah).

Ninth Year of Hijrah: The Muslim forces annexed the southern regions of Yemen, etc, and also northern regions from Dumat al-Jandal to Palestine (Maqna, Ailah, Jarba, Adhruh, etc.). This year is known as the "Year of the Delegations" for the swift conversion of large swathes of Arabia to Islam. The Prophet received delegations from all parts of Arabia. The occupation and submission of the Peninsula and a few regions of the south of Iraq and of Palestine is completed.

Tenth Year of Hijrah: A few mountainous regions from Yemen to Aden surrender to Islam definitely. During the pilgrimage of the Prophet to Makkah, he addresses a gathering of more than one hundred thousand followers from all over Arabia.

Eleventh Year of Hijrah: The Prophet passes away in the third month of this year.

We discuss below the major diplomatic and military strategies of the Prophet. We begin with a discussion of diplomatic strategies and follow up with Muhammad's (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) military strategies. Since the Prophet was quite versatile in his choice of martial tactics, we also discuss his various military campaigns for a detailed review of his military strategies.

# DIPLOMATIC STRATEGIES

## 1. UNDERSTANDING OF BALANCE OF POWER CONSIDERATIONS

### The Concept of Balance of Power in International Relations

In international relations, a balance of power exists when there is parity or stability between competing forces. As a term in international law for a 'just equilibrium' between the members of the family of nations, it expresses the doctrine intended to prevent any one nation from becoming sufficiently strong so as to enable it to enforce its will upon the rest. Balance of power is a central concept in the neo-realist theory of international relations.

The basic principle involved in a balance of political power is as old as history, and was familiar to the ancients both as political theorists and as practical statesmen. In its essence it is no more than a precept of commonsense, born of experience and the instinct of self-preservation. More precisely, the balance of power theory has certain key aspects that have been agreed upon throughout the literature on the subject. First of all, the main objective of states, according to the balance of power theory is to secure their own safety, consistent with political realism or the realist world-view. Secondly, states reach equilibrium because of this objective of self-preservation. States, by trying to avoid the dominance of one particular state, will ally themselves with other states until equilibrium is reached.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was the first Muslim believer in real politics. He understood very well balance of power considerations. In parallel with his military campaigns, the Prophet was also most active on the diplomatic front. He was always most interested in avoiding unnecessary bloodshed. However, the following over-arching goals seem to have dictated his diplomatic strategies:

1. Expansion of his own sphere of influence in and around Madina
2. Outward expansion of the borders of the Muslim state of Madina
3. Convincing Madina's neighboring tribes to befriend him and Islam
4. Eventually isolating and encircling Makkah from the outside
5. Weakening the Quraish leadership from the inside
6. Finally, conquering Makkah without much bloodshed

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) began preaching Islam in 610 AD when he was forty years old. He continued his mission over the next twenty-three years till his death in 632 AD. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) experienced tremendous ebb and flow during his preaching career and his success was far from certain. On several occasions, his own life and the development of Islam were severely endangered. However, he succeeded beyond the wildest expectations of anyone around him and eventually united all of Arabia under his religious, political and military leadership. A good deal of his political and military success resulted from his sharp understanding of balance of power considerations.

In his diplomatic and military strategies and in his political life, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) showed a keen appreciation of balance of power considerations. This skill of the Prophet may have had its roots in his observation of the internal politics of the Quraish in Makkah. The

Quraish were the pre-eminent family of Arabia of the time in terms of business acumen, political power, religious superiority and international exposure. However, there had been a considerable ebb and flow in the relative power positions of the different clans of the Quraish in the three generations that they had lived a settled life in Makkah. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) personally participated in the Battle of Fijar in his youth which was a military struggle among various Quraish clans and other affiliate tribes. He also experienced first-hand the declining position of his own clan of Hashim relative to the other Quraish clans. This early education in power politics probably made him quite sensitive to balance of power considerations.

## **The Prophet's Calculated Decision to Send Muslims to Abyssinia for Protection**

The Prophet's sharp Understanding of balance of power considerations and of the world stage led to his decision to send a number of Muslim families to Abyssinia for protection in 615 AD – five years after the beginning of Muhammad's Prophethood and two years after the beginning of his public call. By this time, the humiliations and insults being meted to the Muslim community by the Quraish of Makkah had become very harsh. The persecution was no longer aimed only at the most vulnerable members of the Muslim community; it now extended to the notable lights of the community including Abu Bakr. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was himself protected by his uncle Abu Talib. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) came up with a very original and novel solution to this predicament. He decided to send many of his followers to Abyssinia especially those without any form of formal protection in Makkah. The Prophet handed a letter addressed to the Negus to his cousin, Jafar at-Tayyar which stated: "I am sending my cousin Jafar to you. Offer hospitality to him and his companions on arrival. Treat them well and do not be stubborn in this regard." Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) instructed the Muslims who had agreed to emigrate to Abyssinia: "If you went to the land of the Abyssinians, you would find there a king under whose command nobody suffers injustice. It is a land of sincerity in religion. You would remain there until God delivered you from what you suffer at present." As a result, a number of Muslims immigrated to Abyssinia. In all, about a hundred people left Makkah at this time including eighty-two or eighty-three men and close to twenty women.

The Prophet was fully cognizant of the political and military might of the Negus. He seems to have understood and appreciated the Negus's style of governance despite the fact that the Negus was a Christian king. He concluded that the Muslim community that would flee to Abyssinia would be allowed to make a home for themselves there. He also seems to have correctly calculated the Negus would stand up to any pressure the Quraish might try to bear on him for the return of these emigrants. Hamidullah notes that the historian Suhayli writes that the Negus of Abyssinia was once obliged to live in Arabia in order to escape from the clutches of his uncle who was a tyrant. He lived in Badr, a place where the Quraish caravans halted on their way to and from Syria. It is quite possible that the Prophet who also travelled in these caravans might have met him personally in Badr. Thus, the Prophet's rather unique diplomatic foray helped safe-guard the Muslim community. The majority of these Muslims stayed in Abyssinia for about fifteen years, until the successful conclusion of the Khaibar expedition (in 630 AD), at which point they joined the Prophet in Madina.

## **The Prophet Uses Balance of Power Considerations to Convince the (Previously Warring) Tribes of Madina to Form One Body Politik**

Almost as soon as the Prophet had settled down in Madina, he began the long and difficult process of molding the disparate groups of Muslims and non-Muslims now living in Madina into a community. He first created a bond of brother-hood between the Emigrants and the Ansaar so that the Emigrants could develop basic means of sustenance and livelihood. The Prophet then sent for representatives of all the

groups of the Muslims and Jews of Madina. Anas narrates that the meeting took place in the house of his father. The Prophet addressed this assembly along the following lines: “You are divided at present into various tribes which are completely independent of each other with the result that in the event of one being attacked by an enemy from without, the rest of you remain neutral and one tribe alone has to face the collective might of the invader. This could lead to defeat and the final destruction of all tribes, one by one, if they fight the enemy severally. Wouldn’t it be better if all of you join to form a single government so that the enemy knows that it would have to face the collective might of all the tribes of Madina? Here, then, is a treaty which will provide safety from the enemy and will help improve the economic and social conditions of all the signatories.” This proposal was eminently reasonable and most, if not all, tribal groups of Madina readily accepted it. The Prophet’s proposal, his wording and his use of balance of power considerations was simply brilliant and made it very easy for him to unite the (previously warring) tribes of Madina into one body politik with a collective military strategy. He convinced the tribes of Madina that any foreign invader could easily use a policy of “divide and conquer” against them and, if they did not pool their resources and form a collective foreign and military policy, they were easy picking for a smart foreign military force.

### **Muhammad’s First Alliances with Tribes Neighboring Madina**

Once the Prophet had convinced the Muslim, pagan and Jewish tribes of Madina to join together as a city-state with a common defense, he proceeded to seek alliances with the tribes in Madina’s neighborhood. Such a strategy, if successful, could provide dividends on a number of fronts: (a) it could help develop a second line of defense against any possible invader; (b) it could help weaken the Makkan strong-hold on international trade as Madina was on the important North-South trading route; (c) it could help weaken the resolve of the Quraish to engage in a military adventure against the nascent Muslim state of Madina; and (d) it would help expand the circle of influence of the Muslim state which could have helped convince other tribes to also join the city-state of Madina. The Prophet went first to the north at a distance of three or four days’ journey from Madina, and succeeded in making a military alliance with the non-Muslim tribes. The treaty clearly stipulated that it had nothing to do with religious affairs and that it was exclusively a military arrangement. It was agreed that the contracting parties would help each other in the event of an attack by a third party. After his initial success in the north, the Prophet proceeded to the south where non-Muslim tribes agreed to sign a similar pact with him. He then made for the east and sought alliances with the tribes there. Documents of some five to seven alliances signed with different tribes are still available.

### **The Prophet’s Focus on Enhancing the Perceived Power of the Islamic State in Madina**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was quite aware of the fine distinction between actual power and perceived power. While he worked incessantly on increasing his personal power and the power of the Muslim community, he was also acutely sensitive to perceptions of power and perceptions of weakness. He knew full well that deterrence and victories resulting from perceived power of the Muslims were much better than hard-won victories on the battle-field. Naturally, news of Muslim victories and the valor of the Muslims on the battle-field helped him neutralize threats from other potential enemies. However, as a corollary, signs of Muslim weakness encouraged his enemies to plan against him and, worse, to band together against the Muslims.

The Muslim defeat in the Battle of Uhud in the fourth year after Hijrah (626 AD) presented the Prophet with a very difficult strategic and political landscape. The balance of power had now shifted dramatically in favor of the Quraish. The defeat at Uhud had had manifold consequences, not the least of which was the Muslim loss of prestige in the sight of the neighboring tribes, who now viewed them differently and



considered them vulnerable. The Muslims were seen as weakened, and many expeditions were being organized against them to try to take advantage of that situation. As for Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), who was sometimes warned of planned attacks on Madina by his agents or affiliates, he would send his men – in groups of 100 to 150 – to the various tribes to pacify them or prevent an aggression. The year after the Uhud defeat was taken up with such low-intensity local conflicts. The Quraish were determined to force the balance of power decidedly in their favor. However, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) shrewdly countered them move-by-move. In many cases, he took pre-emptive action to strengthen the political and military defences of the Muslim community in Madina. He focused on tribal alliances in his circle of influence in and around Madina and countered the Quraish moves in a timely manner. This amounted to a kind of chess game between the Quraish leaders and Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) - both parties knew that a full-scale military confrontation lay ahead of them.

The people of Makkah did not conceal their desire to eradicate the Muslim community from the Arabian Peninsula. They sensed that ultimate victory over the Muslims was in their reach and wished to deal a final blow to the nascent Islamic state in Madina. They accelerated the pace of negotiations with neighboring tribes to form a grand alliance against the Muslims. The Quraish situation was all the more difficult because the most direct commercial routes to the north, leading to Syria and Iraq by the coast, were still watched over and controlled by Madina. The Quraish, therefore, felt that they had to take swift and dramatic action in order both to take advantage of the Muslim state's fragility after defeat at Uhud and to liberate the routes that their caravans needed to take to go north.

In a sense, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) remained interested in power politics throughout his life. He had a voracious appetite for news about his enemies and his friends. He developed a large intelligence network to bring him news of developments around Madina and around Makkah. He developed multiple channels of information and intelligence and was always keen to corroborate any important news that reached him. He was most interested in alliance formations and worked hard to increase his own circle of influence by negotiating friendship treaties with tribes all over Arabia. He also exerted pressure (both of diplomatic and military nature) on other tribes not to align with the Quraish.

Ibn Ishaq attributes a most perceptive comment to the Prophet at the end of the Battle of Ahzaab which had proved a failure for the Makkans. Despite gathering more than ten thousand fighters to attack Madina, the Makkans utterly failed to defeat the Muslim state of Madina. At the end of the hostilities and after he had dispatched the Jewish tribe of Banu Quraizah, the Prophet told his followers: "Quraish will not attack you after this year, but you will attack them." The Prophet could see that the tide had now turned once and for all. The strength of the Quraish had been broken and the balance of power now decidedly favored the Muslims. The Prophet could see this very clearly. His evolving foreign policy and military tactics after this date reflected his understanding of the changing balance of power considerations which were now decidedly in his favor.

The execution of the men of the Jewish tribe of Banu Quraizah can also be understood better in light of balance of power considerations. After the retreat of the large Makkan confederate army, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) felt it most important to send a strong message to his confederates in the Arabian Peninsula. He also wished to remove a source of constant weakness from within Madina. The Banu Quraizah were guilty of breach of contract and treason. If their covenant with the invading Quraish had succeeded, the Muslim community of Madina would have been attacked from inside and outside Madina and might have perished as a result. The events surrounding the treatment of the Banu Quraizah are covered in another section. Sa'ad bin Muadh, a confederate of the Banu Quraizah, pronounced the judgment that all Banu Quraizah men should be executed while the women and children were to be considered war captives. This judgment was immediately carried out which led to the death of 600 – 900 men of the Banu Quraizah.

The news of the Muslim's two-fold victory spread like a wild-fire throughout the Arabian Peninsula. It radically transformed perceptions and power balances. Not only had the Muslims resisted an army more than ten thousand strong, they had also shown unfailing determination. The fate meted out to the Banu Quraizah men delivered a powerful message to all the neighboring tribes that betrayals and aggressions would henceforth be severely punished. The message had been heard: such a situation never occurred again while the Prophet was alive.

## 2. EFFECTIVE USE OF INTELLIGENCE NETWORKS

The Prophet employed a very sophisticated intelligence network to keep him updated on major developments around him. He had a very keen eye and chose informers very intelligently. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) always had support of a network of helpers and supporters who kept him well-informed of intrigues and plans being hatched against Islam. This ability to get timely and important information proved invaluable to the Prophet. In the Madina period, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) would routinely send out expeditions and they would come back to him with information about the enemy. He was also in the habit of sending out advance parties and spies so that critical and timely information regarding the affairs of his enemies was known to him.<sup>383</sup> Based on receipt of intelligence from different sources, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) would decide on his course of action and / or make real time changes to his military and diplomatic strategies and expeditions.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was aware of the need for a constant and regular source of information about the enemy's movements and plans. Therefore, he organized a very comprehensive system to obtain the necessary information. He sent scouts, reconnoitering patrols, and fighting patrols into the surrounding areas and into enemy lands according to his needs. An intelligence service was set up to gain information about the enemy plans, strength and movements. For this purpose, it was necessary to go into enemy territory and mix with their people so they could discover their secret plans.

At the beginning of the Madina period, the intelligence available to the Prophet was of medium quality. In the case of five of the first eight military missions before the Battle of Badr, the caravans of the Quraish had already left by the time the Muslim missions arrived. The Muslims missed finding their targets because the target caravans had already left the area by the time the Muslims arrived there. However, with time, the Prophet developed more refined sources of intelligence. While the sources do not discuss it much, we can infer that the Prophet's ability to gather accurate and timely information about his immediate environment and about his distant enemies must have deterred many of his potential enemies from working against his interests. Knowledge is power and the Prophet hated operating in an information vacuum. He was an avid collector of information on tribal politics and rivalries and military manoeuvres. Over time, life became more and more difficult for the caravans of the Quraish operating towards the north. The Prophet was able to gather timely information about their routes and his forces were able to interfere successfully with their operation thus serving a severe economic blow to the Quraish.

In dealing with the various tribes of Arabia, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was brilliant at using inside information about their strengths and weaknesses. Although a few Arab tribes were led by strong leaders, many tribes had competing centers of power within them in the form of cousins, brothers or uncles competing for leadership of the tribe. There was also ebb and a flow in these leadership rivalries because the balance of power within these tribes was fluid and dynamic. The Prophet had a fine-tuned Understanding of these leadership rivalries since he often had to choose among these competing claimants to power. For instance, in his dealings with the Jewish tribe of Banu Qainuqah of Madina after the Battle of Badr, he received very valuable information from Abdullah ibn Sallam, who, before he converted to Islam, had been one of the notable men of Banu Qainuqah and was very familiar with their ways and of their hatred of the "new Arab Prophet." The Prophet agreed to peace treaties with many adjoining tribes that provided him valuable information about the movements of the trade caravans and forces of the Quraish.

## **Battle of Badr**

At the time of Battle of Badr, the Muslims captured two water-carriers of the Quraish and subjected them to harsh corporal punishment. The water-carriers eventually lied about Abu Sufyan's caravan which had already escaped by leaving the Makkah road for the Red Sea route. The Prophet was displeased with the Muslims who had tortured the water-carriers. Through his gentle manner, he was able to learn about the number of Makkan soldiers, their exact location and the names of some of their notables. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) seems to have been an excellent interrogator himself. The Prophet was offering his prayers while the two Makkan soldiers were being interrogated by Muslims. On finishing his prayers, he interrogated them himself. "Who are you?" he asked. "We are men of the Makkan army," they answered. "And what is your number?" they were asked. "We do not know," they answered and they were right. "How many camels are daily sacrificed to feed your men?" "Nine on one day and ten on the other," they answered. The Prophet deduced that their number would be between nine hundred and a thousand because one camel is enough to feed a hundred persons. In fact, their total number was 950. They were asked questions about the names of chiefs who led various wings of the army – the right, the left, the centre, etc.<sup>384</sup> The Prophet was familiar with all the names and could easily deduce their relative strengths and weaknesses. This interrogation aided the Prophet immensely in his war planning for Badr.

## **Battle of Uhud**

After the Muslims had faced heavy losses at Uhud, the Prophet instructed the Muslims to light hundreds of large bonfires at night to give the Quraish the impression that the Muslims were a strong force ready for battle in the morning. The Quraish were over-awed and departed for Makkah. An excellent example of the use of intelligence was during the Battle of Ahzaab when the Prophet used Nuaim bin Masud, a leader of Ghatafan who had secretly accepted Islam, as a double agent by sending him to the Banu Quraizah and the Quraish to sow seeds of disunity and distrust between them which killed the burgeoning alliance between these two against the Muslims.

At the end of the Battle of Uhud, a large number of Muslims had been either killed or seriously wounded in the fighting. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) himself had sustained injuries. However, as the Makkan army receded from the battle-field, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was quick to send Ali bin Abu Talib to track the movement of the Makkan army. He sent Ali off on this very important reconnaissance mission with the following instructions: "Pursue them and see what they are going to do, and what they intend. If they dismount horses and ride on camels' backs, this means that they are leaving for Makkah; but if they ride horses and lead camels un-mounted, they are headed for Madina. By the One, in Whose Hand my soul is, if they attack Madina, I would march to them there and I would fight them."<sup>385</sup> Ali tracked the Makkan army and found them mounted on camels. They were returning towards Makkah so the danger to Madina had been averted for the moment. Ibn Ishaq notes that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had given the following further instructions to Ali at this time: "Whatever they [the Quraish] do, keep silent about it until you come to me." This incident is a great example of the Prophet's sagacity and effective use of intelligence. In case the Quraish were heading for Madina city, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) did not want Ali to announce this to his fellow Muslims which could have caused panic in the Muslim ranks. He wanted Ali to keep quiet and to come to him with the news so that the Prophet could have devised an effective defensive strategy.

## **Return from Dumat al Jandal Expedition without Reaching the Destination**

In the summer of 626 AD, the Prophet decided to march against Dumat al Jandal, an area situated at a fortnight's journey to the north of Madina which had become hostile to the movement of Madinan trading caravans to Syria. The caravans of the Madeenite foodstuffs coming from Syria and Mesopotamia passed through Dumat al Jandal. Ukaidir, the chief of Dumat al Jandal suddenly started hindering this traffic that was vital to Madina. This hostile action of the Dumat chieftain was an act of war against the Muslim state of Madina and the Prophet urgently responded to this threat. Ibn Hisham reports that contrary to his usual habit, the Prophet turned back after having travelled half way and hastened to return to Madina. A few weeks later, Madina was besieged by the large army led by the Quraish of Makkah (known as the Battle of the Trench). It is not exactly clear who provided the valuable intelligence to the Prophet which made him return to Madina in such great haste. It is possible that the Prophet may have been informed by the Fazarites whose territory he had to cross on his way to Dumat al Jandal. It is also possible that the Prophet's allies, the Khuza, who lived in the Makkan region might have become aware of the Makkan intentions and travelled to him to give him this critical intelligence. Either way, Muhammad's excellent intelligence network enabled him to return to Madina in time to organize a successful defence of the city from a large and well-organized Makkan onslaught.

In 628 AD, when the Prophet was on his way to perform the minor pilgrimage (Umra) he sent scouts from Khuza tribe to bring him information about the movements of the Quraish. Based on this intelligence, the Prophet altered his course by saying: "Khalid Ibn Walid is at Kuraa Al-Ghameen, so take the road to the right"<sup>387</sup> The Prophet was heading a party of unarmed pilgrims to Makkah at this time. It was most important for him and for his party of pilgrims to avoid a military confrontation with the Quraish. He needed to move quietly and surreptitiously in order to avoid alerting the Quraish. Had the Quraish figured out his movements in time, they could have engaged the Muslims in battle and exterminated them. It was most important for this party of pilgrims to enter the sacred precincts of Makkah undetected and undiscovered. Since the Quraish were the custodians of the Ka'aba shrine, it would have been most inappropriate for them to engage in battle with the Muslims once they had entered the sacred territories as pilgrims. The Prophet accomplished his goals through careful intelligence gathering.

The Prophet hid his intentions to invade Makkah in 629 AD even from his closest companions and his beloved wife, Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her). He told her simply to be ready for a journey. When he was about ready to move, he sent an advance fighting force headed by Abu Qatadah bin Rabi in the direction of Edam, a short distance from Madina in order to confuse his enemies and their informers in Madina about his true intentions and goals.<sup>388</sup> Even this small advance team did not know that they were being used as decoys. During the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet asked his men to light thousands of spaced-out bonfires at night to convince the people of Makkah of the overwhelming force of the Muslim army. On entering Makkah, the Prophet instructed his army to enter the city through a narrow mountain pass which impressed upon the citizens of Makkah the fact that any resistance would be futile as the Muslim army looked overwhelmingly large as it took a long time to enter the city.

After the capture of Makkah, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was concerned about the news of martial developments coming out of Hunain which was on the way to Taif. He sent Abdullah ibn Abu Hadrab Al-Aslami to verify the news. He came to Hunain as a spy, stayed with the army for several days and gathered very important military information about the enemy's strengths, weaknesses and plans. Al-Aslami stayed with the Hawazin for a few nights and came back to provide the intelligence he had gathered to the Prophet in private. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) shared Al-Aslami's insights with his companions and decided to march on Hunain for a pre-emptive strike.

### **3. PROJECTION OF POWER THROUGH INCREASING SIZE OF HIS CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE<sup>390</sup>**

Muhammad's message of Islam was meant for all of mankind. It was, therefore, his duty to deliver the message to as many people as he could. Since Muhammad's message was universal in nature, in a certain sense the whole world was within his circle of concern. He was keen to employ all of his resources and intellectual powers to bring a large swathe of Arab society under the umbrella of Islam. Exhibit 5 shows the geographic position of the Arab tribes in the Prophet's lifetime. One is able to appreciate the expanding influence of the Prophet of Islam by following the geographic progression of his campaigns.

#### **Proactive Approach Towards Increasing the Number of Muslims in Madina**

The Prophet was keenly aware of his precarious position in Madina in the early part of his arrival there. While he was clearly the leader of the small Muslim community in Madina, he was beset with opposition from the Jewish tribes, the hypocrites from within the Muslim ranks, the hostile attitude of many neighboring tribes and the incessant pressure from the Quraish of Makkah. The Muslims were still a small minority in the region. The Prophet considered it necessary to increase the number of Muslims in Madina. For this purpose, the Prophet began attracting towards Madina those Muslims who were dispersed here and there. He adopted a unique method to accomplish this end. The Emigrants from Makkah (the Muhajireen) were proud of the fact that they had emigrated to Madina in the cause of Islam. Muslims who left their homes and businesses for the sake of Islam clearly had made a great sacrifice. The Prophet now further extended this honor. He explained that it was not restricted to only the Makkian Muslims, but was open to any and every non-Madinan Muslim, until further orders. The Prophet even made it incumbent on non-Madinan Muslims who embraced Islam to leave their land and come to settle in Madina. Muhammad Hamidullah writes that this obligation lasted till the conquest of Makkah in 630 AD. Carried out with ardor and elasticity, this policy gave appreciable results. So only nine months after the Prophet's arrival in Madina, concrete proofs were observable as the Muslim ranks continued to swell.

Muhammad's policy of attracting Muslims to Madina proved a great success. The Muslim community grew dramatically and the Islamic polity gained tremendous human capital. The Prophet's dying words on this subject shed light on the success of this policy. When he was suffering from the severe headache and pain that eventually took his life, he instructed his people thus: "O Muhajireen, behave kindly to the Ansaar, for other men increase but they in the nature of things cannot grow more numerous. They were my constant comfort and support. So treat their good men well and forgive those of them who are remiss."

#### **Friendship Agreements with Adjoining Tribes**

The Prophet aggressively courted the friendship of various tribes around Madina with the intention of increasing the security and independence of the nascent Muslim state in Madina. Madina's Muslim population and geographic frontier were both expanding at a steady clip. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) took the initiative of seeking military alliances with the tribes around Madina. These tribes included the Juhainah in the north; and Damrah, Guitar and Mudlij in the south. This strategy of the Prophet served the twin purpose of surrounding Madina with friendly neighbors and making it difficult for the Makkans to launch effective military campaigns against the Muslims.

## **Letters to World Leaders**

In his early letters to world leaders in which he encouraged them to accept Islam, the Prophet was clearly focused on his circle of concern. The year was 629 AD and this was the time when the Prophet had already negotiated a peace treaty at Hudaibiya with the Quraish of Makkah that now let him focus on other tribes of Arabia and beyond. He was a Prophet for all times and for all peoples. No wonder he was concerned about the conversion of non-Muslims in far-off lands.

## **Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)' Diplomatic Strategies Provide Dividends after Battle of Ahzaab**

After the Makkan failure at the Battle of Ahzaab (also known as the Battle of the Ditch or the Battle of the Confederates), Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) presided without open opposition over a society of Muslims in Madina, with a certain number of Jews remaining in a more or less autonomous dependent relation to the various Muslim clans. Among the tribes outside Madina, most were pagan. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) increasingly required them to accept Islam as a condition of entering into friendship treaties with the Muslim state of Madina. However, many of the tribes on the Syrian road were Christian and in the oases, mostly Jewish. From these new allies, there were few conversions to Islam. Many of the oases dwellers had continued to be incorrigibly inimical and were now reduced to dependence by military expeditions. Since they opted not to embrace Islam, they handed over a portion of their agricultural produce to the Muslim state in Madina as jizya or cost of protecting them from outside attacks. However, some Christian-oriented Bedouin tribes who were willing to work with Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) were accorded, it seems, a status as equal allies. However, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was always acknowledged as the commander-in-chief of the joint enterprise.

Therefore, increasingly in the Madina period, Muhammad's society came to include both Muslim and non-Muslim elements in varying levels of membership. These different levels of membership entailed different costs and benefits to the member of the community with clear incentives to the member to become a fully-functional and active Muslim member of the Umma. The Muslim community that had begun as a local voluntary association in Makkah had, by now, evolved to become much more than a tribe of the faithful. Hodgson notes: "[The Muslim community] was becoming a more complex and extensive society of heterogeneous elements, more fully organized than had been the Makkan system (both religiously and politically); the political structure which Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was building for it was by now clearly a state, like the states in the nations round about Arabia, with an increasingly authoritative government, which could no longer be ignored with impunity." The Prophet's success is evident from the fact that, by now, he sent out envoys, who taught the Quran and the principles of Islam, collected the zakat, and probably arbitrated disputes among the new believers and the new confederates. Clearly, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was laying the foundations of a community much larger than Madina itself. In fact, he was sowing the seeds for a supra-national community of believers that would grow much beyond Arabia itself.

## **Treatment of Makkah after Conquest**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) projected his power through enlarging the circle of his influence. One of the best ways to understand this is by reviewing his treatment of Makkah over time. As has been discussed in other sections, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) belonged to Quraish, the Leading family of Makkah. He spent his childhood and youth in Makkah. He married Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her), a noblewoman belonging to the Quraish, in Makkah and eventually became a successful and respected trader of the city. People from all parts of Arabia



venerated the Ka'aba shrine, had their idols there and circumambulated the shrine for major pilgrimage (Hajj) and the minor pilgrimage (Umra) even before the arrival of Islam. Once he had called others to Islam, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) continued to venerate the Ka'aba shrine as it was also to be the nucleus of Islam. During the Madina period in 623 AD, the Prophet started praying facing the Ka'aba. Earlier, the Prophet had prayed facing the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. This was a major development within Islam as it enabled the Muslims to lay primary claim to the Ka'aba. After the conquest of the Ka'aba by the Muslims under Muhammad's leadership in 629 AD, the Prophet gradually strengthened Islamic control over Makkah. The Muslim power over Makkah grew over time. We can see this increase in the Prophet's power in how he dealt with (a) the leaders of the Quraish (who had to-date been his major adversaries); (b) the performance of the Hajj; and (c) the non-Muslims in Makkah.

Immediately after the conquest of Makkah had been completed, the Prophet announced a general amnesty for all residents of Makkah including his erstwhile enemies. He then cleansed the Ka'aba of all idols and idol images before he performed his circumambulation. Once Makkah had been captured, the Prophet "cleansed" the city in gradual stages. He initially allowed the pagans to live within the precincts of Makkah and also allowed them free access to the Ka'aba. In the first year after the capture of Makkah, the Prophet allowed the Muslims and non-Muslims alike to perform the Hajj. In the second year, the Prophet deputed his closest friend, Abu Bakr, to lead the Muslim contingent to the Hajj pilgrimage. After Abu Bakr's departure, the Prophet sent his cousin, Ali, with a special message that had to be proclaimed to all pilgrims in Makkah that year. On the day of the sacrifice, Ali arose and proclaimed the Islamic order that from that year on, no polytheist could perform the pilgrimage and no naked person could circumambulate the Ka'aba shrine. Further, the non-Muslims were given a period of four months either to convert to Islam or settle outside of Makkah's precincts as Makkah was now to become a sanctuary for Muslims alone. In this regard, any and all groups, clans or tribes of non-Muslims that had agreements or treaties with the Prophet had "four months from the date of the proclamation to return to their place of safety or their country; afterwards there was to be no treaty or compact except for one with whom the apostle had an agreement for a period, and he could have it for that period." A natural result of this proclamation was that the non-Muslims living within Makkah's precincts converted to Islam en masse thus dramatically strengthening the cause of Islam.

In the third year, the Prophet himself led the Muslims to perform the Hajj. Most historians agree that more than 100,000 Muslims joined him for Hajj in that year. Therefore, in year three after the conquest of Makkah, Makkah had already been cleansed of all non-Muslims. The transformation of Makkah from the Arabian capital city to the Muslim capital city was now complete. Despite the fact that Makkah had been captured by Muslim forces in 629 AD, the Prophet adopted a gradual approach and showed tremendous patience in completing this important transformation of Makkah in a three year period.

## **4. ATTACK THE NERVE CENTRE OF THE ENEMY TO OBTAIN MAXIMUM LEVERAGE**

During the Makkah period, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was busy doing the groundwork which would eventually lead to the establishment of Islam as a world religion within one hundred years. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) spent the first few years of his Prophethood in inviting friends and family to the new faith. Once he had gathered a core group of supporters and converts around him, he invited the general public of Makkah to the new faith. In his thirteen years of preaching Islam in Makkah, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) met with mixed success. While he was able to develop a core group of converts, some of who were the notables of the city, most Quraish chieftains and even ordinary Makkan citizens remained unmoved. In fact, the resolve of the Quraish against the nascent new religion eventually hardened considerably. When Muhammad's (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) wife, Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her), and his uncle, Abu Talib, died in quick succession, he lost his two key supporters.

The protection Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had continued to enjoy from his clan eventually yielded to direct confrontation with Abu Lahab, who had become the de facto leader of the Prophet's clan of Banu Hashim. Thus a series of setbacks forced the Prophet to consider and eventually migrate to Madina.

It was in Madina where the Prophet finally founded the first Islamic state. When he migrated to Madina in 622 AD, the Prophet was 53 years old. He must have known that time was now not on his side. In fact, he lived for only another ten years. He had to move at a rapid pace if he was to make Islam the dominant religion in Arabia and if Islam was to develop a world outlook.

Almost as soon as the Prophet had moved to Madina, he lost no time in launching raiding parties against the trade caravans of the Quraish. Madina lay on the important Syrian route and is north of Makkah. The Prophet quickly developed defensive and military alliances with the tribes around Madina in order both to protect his own flanks and in order also to project his own power. Naturally, this served the purpose of making the trade caravans of Quraish more vulnerable and also made the Quraish of Makkah more isolated over time.

Makkah lived on trade and its economy was based on international commerce. Muhammad's migration to Madina and flexing of his military muscle effectively shut down the Makkan trading route to Syria. By cutting the Quraish trade route as he did, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had practically imposed a blockade on the Quraish which would soon destroy their place and influence in Arabia.

This could have been Muhammad's response to the Quraish for the three years he and his family had earlier spent being blockaded in the valley of Sheb Abi Talib (between 617 AD and 619 AD). The three years of economic and social blockade had culminated in the death of his dear uncle Abu Talib and his beloved wife Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her). Quraish had imposed severe hardships on the Muslims and had forced them to migrate out of Makkah leaving their homes and families behind. It is reported that when the Prophet's blockade of the Quraish trade became effective, Safwan ibn Umayyah advised the Quraish in the following words: "Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and his companions have spoiled our trade. What shall we do with him and his companions if they do not remove themselves from the coastal area? The Muslims befriended the tribes who inhabited the coastal regions and most of these have even joined their party. What shall we do with ourselves? To live in Makkah devoid of trade is tantamount to eating up our capital funds and then starving. Our whole life in the city, therefore, depends on our summer trade with al-Sham [Syria] and our winter trade with

Abyssinia.” This dialogue in Makkah shows the effectiveness with which the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had leveraged his small military presence into a virtual blockade of the important Syrian trade route of the Quraish.

After the Battle of Badr, the Quraish were afraid to follow their usual route to Syria, so they went by the Iraq route. Some of their merchants went out, among whom was Abu Sufyan, carrying a great deal of silver which formed the larger part of their merchandise. They hired a man from the Banu Bakr tribe to conduct them by that route. Upon learning of this new development, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) sent Zaid who met them at an oasis and captured the caravan with its contents. The men of the Quraish managed to run away with their lives. Zaid then brought the spoils to the apostle in Madina. Ibn Ishaq reports that Hassan bin Thabit taunted the Quraish for taking the Iraq road thus:

*You can say good-bye to the streams of Damascus, for in between  
Are swords like the mouths of pregnant camels who feed on Arak trees  
In the hands of men who migrated to their Lord  
And His true helpers and the angels,  
If they go to the lowland of the sandy valley  
Say to them, “There is no road here”.*

The anecdote above shows that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was very effective in curbing Makkan trade and, over time, put tremendous financial pressure on Makkah. These attacks on Makkan nerve centre – its dominance of trade in Arabia – eventually led to the capitulation of Makkah.

The Prophet was keenly aware of balance of power considerations. He understood very well how to receive maximum leverage from his limited martial strength against the much better financed and armed Quraish. In this regard, Sun Tzu of China comes to mind who wrote his formidable treatise The Art of War probably in the fourth century BC. Sun Tzu would have applauded many of the martial strategies pursued by the Prophet some ten centuries after him. For instance, the fact that the Prophet reached the wells of Badr before the Quraish army on the occasion of the Battle of Badr and the fact that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) chose the terrain of Uhud for the Battle of Uhud would have been appreciated by Sun Tzu. In Chapter 6 of The Art of War, Sun Tzu makes the following observations which are exactly in line with the martial strategy of the Prophet: “Generally, he who occupies the field of battle first and awaits his enemy is at ease; he who comes later to the scene and rushes into the fight is weary. And therefore those skilled in war bring the enemy to the field of battle and are not brought there by him.”

At Badr, before the start of battle, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) astutely accepted the suggestion of Hubab Ibn Al-Mundhir of Khazraj to station the Muslim army around the largest water well and destroyed the other water wells in the area. This put the Quraish army at a serious strategic disadvantage and might have proved their undoing. Water was perhaps the most strategic resource during battle in the arid desert landscape around Madina.

Prior to the arrival of the very large Makkan army at the Battle of Ahzaab, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had the crops harvested early to deny the Makkan army free and easy

access to food for themselves and fodder for their horses. Further, the trench itself neutralized the strategic advantage the Makkans would have enjoyed with their 600 horse strong cavalry.

## MILITARY STRATEGIES

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was practically the first teacher of military science in Islam. He spent considerable time in planning his war strategies, tactical moves and military operations. He actively sought advice from his companions and remained most interested in the military training of his companions both as strategists and as fighters. He executed his plans and accomplished his objectives with great precision and success, fought the enemy with great skill, wisdom and ingenuity and defeated them on all fronts, completely destroying their morale and military strength. He developed his own war strategy and adopted his own techniques of tactical maneuvering to defeat the enemy plans and tactics.

All his strategic moves and tactical operations were based on reality and the practical needs of the time and place and were executed with great wisdom and intelligence. He introduced several military innovations in Arabia and a number of his military strategies and tactics took his enemies by surprise. Hodgson has called Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) “the prophet armed” which scarcely distinguishes him from a number of other prophets, beginning with Moses.

During the ten years that the Prophet lived in Madina (from 622 AD to 632 AD), he organized seventy-four expeditions of various kinds and sizes. This roughly translates into one expedition every seven weeks and shows the dramatically high level of military activity precipitated by the Prophet during the Madina period. The size of the military campaigns varied considerably ranging from a raiding party of a few horsemen to a pitched battle with no fewer than 12,000 participants. Of these seventy-four expeditions, the Prophet himself led the Muslim forces on twenty-seven occasions. According to Ibn Ishaq, the Prophet himself participated in the following twenty-seven military campaigns:

1. The Raid of Al-Abwa (also known as Waddan)
2. Buwat (in the direction of Al-Abwa)
3. Ushayra in the valley of Yanbu
4. The first fight at Badr in pursuit of Murz bin Jabir
5. The great Battle of Badr
6. Banu Sulaym (until he reached Al-Kudr)
7. As-Sawiq in pursuit of Abu Sufyan bin Harb
8. Ghatafan (which is also known as the raid of Dhu Amar)
9. Bahran (a min in the Hijaz)
10. The Battle of Uhud
11. Hamra ul Asad
12. Banu Nadir
13. Dhatur- Riqā of Nakhil

14. The last Battle of Badr
15. Dumatul Jandal
16. The Battle of the Trench (Battle of Khandaq)
17. Banu Quraizah
18. Banu Lihyan of Hudhayl
19. Dhu Qarad
20. Banu Al-Mustaliq of Khuza
21. Al-Hudaibiya
22. The Battle of Khaibar
23. Pilgrimage
24. The Conquest of Makkah
25. The Battle of Hunain
26. The Siege of Al-Taif
27. The Battle of Tabuk

According to Ibn Ishaq, the Prophet actually fought in nine of the above twenty-seven engagements:

- (1) Badr;
- (2) Uhud;
- (3) Al-Khandaq (also known as the Battle of Ahzaab);
- (4) Quraizah;
- (5) Al-Mustaliq;
- (6) The Conquest of Makkah;
- (7) Hunain; and
- (8) Al-Taif.

Despite the high level of military activity, the loss of life in military campaigns on both sides was actually surprisingly small. The Prophet was most reluctant to shed blood and most of his military expeditions actually resulted in no loss of life on either side. Even in his major military campaigns and battles, surprisingly few individuals on both sides lost their lives. This can be seen in Exhibit 8. The Prophet expended great effort in winning over allies through diplomatic channels. He waged war only in cases where the cost benefit calculation favored military engagement. On a few occasions, he waged war on a

pre-emptive strike basis. On other occasions, he had to fight hard to win. He preferred presenting his adversaries with a *fait accompli* by showing up with an overwhelmingly large force.

Strategy in military terms refers to the practical utilization of all the available resources of a nation in achieving its objective by military means. If a conflict of interest exists, there is great merit in solving the problem through communication and compromise. However, if such an approach has either been exhausted or is somehow not available, the only possible solution may lie in the military field. Many factors, directly or indirectly, influence the nature, scope and time of such a decision. This subject has been studied in great detail by military strategists around the world.

Sun Tzu was perhaps the greatest military strategist in history. Although he lived in fifth century BC in China, the treatise he wrote entitled *The Art of War* remains compulsory reading in military academies and diplomacy and military strategy courses around the world. *The Art of War* is the earliest of known treatises on this subject but has never been surpassed in comprehensiveness and depth of understanding. According to Sun Tzu, the following are the basic principles of war which form the backbone of military strategy:

1. Supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting.
2. The highest form of generalship is to obstruct the enemy's plans; the next is to prevent the junction of the enemy's forces.
3. Military tactics are like water; for water in its natural course runs away from high places and hastens downwards. So in war, the way to avoid what is wrong is to strike what is weak. Water shapes its course according to the ground over which it flows; the soldier works out his victory in relation to the enemy whom he is facing.
4. Rapidity is the essence of war; take advantage of the enemy's unreadiness, make your way by unexpected routes, and attack unguarded spots.

Sun Tzu believed that the moral strength and intellectual faculty of man were decisive in war, and that if these were properly applied war could be waged with certain success. Never to be undertaken thoughtlessly or recklessly, war was to be preceded by measures designed to make it easy to win. The master conqueror frustrated his enemy's plans and broke up his alliances. He created cleavages between sovereign and minister, superiors and inferiors, commanders and subordinates. His spies and agents were active everywhere, gathering information, sowing dissension, and nurturing subversion. The enemy was isolated and demoralized; his will to resist broken. Thus without battle his army was conquered, his cities taken and his state overthrown. Only when the enemy could not be overcome by these means was there recourse to armed force, which was to be applied so that victory was gained:

- a. In the shortest possible time;
- b. At the least possible cost in lives and effort; and
- c. With infliction on the enemy of the fewest possible casualties.

The above paragraph can easily have been taken from a biography of the Prophet. As we will see below, the Prophet used all of these strategies in his military campaigns.



Carl Von Clausewitz (1780 – 1831) was another great military strategist of Prussian descent. He is famous for defining war as “merely the continuation of a country’s policy by other means.” According to Von Clausewitz, there are five elements which constitute military strategy:

Psychological and moral elements.

The size, composition and organization of military force.

The relative positions and movements of forces and their geometric relationship to obstacles and objectives, i.e., the geometry of situation.

The terrain of the region.

The supply channel.

He specially mentioned the importance of surprise, public support, and the greatness of moral force. He also emphasized the significance of having a better position with regard to the terrain of the area of fighting. A critical weather factor may enhance or detract from an advantageous position. However, the fundamental elements of strategy remain the same.

Other military experts<sup>409</sup> have expressed their support for a policy of war strategy based on the following factors:

1. Economy of forces;
2. Security;
3. Rapidity of movement;
4. Surprise;
5. Offensive action;
6. Mobility;
7. Exploitation of success;
8. Reinforcement of failure;
9. Unity of command; and
10. Morale (the ability of the commander and the quality of men).

The US Government has compiled the opinions of great military commanders in the form of principles of war as follows: “Offensive, economy of force, movement (i.e. mobility), unity of command, surprise and security.”

## **The Prophet’s Military Strategies**

Once the Prophet had decided to engage in military manoeuvres, he mobilized all the available resources in men and material and put his war strategy into action to achieve his objectives. Based on our study of

history, we are in a position to define the Prophet's military strategy in the following words: "to break the military resistance of the enemy with minimum loss of life on both sides". His war strategy was based on a realistic study of the strength of the enemy in men and material, their war strategy and plans, geographical factors, the terrain of the surrounding areas where most of the battles were likely to be fought and, above all, their military morale.

The Prophet employed a number of creative strategies to win many battles. However, not all of his military expeditions resulted in bloodshed. In fact, most of his expeditions were aimed at a show of force to the Prophet's neighbors in Madina with the aim of developing strategic alliances with them. Other expeditions of the Prophet had the explicit aim of disrupting the trade routes of the Quraish – their major life support system. It was important for the Prophet that the tribes that neighbored Madina develop military alliances with Madina whereby they do not aid and abet the Quraish but, in fact, join with the Prophet in joint defence of Madina against any possible invasion from the Quraish.

One can discern the Prophet's military strategy from the instructions he gave to Usamah ibn Zayd ibn Harithah, the twenty year old he had chosen to lead the very large Muslim army against the Byzantine Empire in 632 AD – just before the Prophet's demise. Usamah's father had fallen in the earlier campaign of Mu'tah. We quote here from Muhammad Husayn Haykal: "Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) commanded Usamah and his army to enter the approaches of Al Balqa and al Darum in Palestine, in the vicinity of Mu'tah where his father had fallen. He also commanded him to fight the enemy in the early hours of dawn, to fight them fearlessly, and to shower them with fire. He also commanded him to surprise the enemy, never to let the news of his advance reach them beforehand. Once victory was achieved, Usamah was to return home quickly and not to extend his stay in those lands."

In these instructions, one can discern the following important elements of the Prophet's military strategy:

1. The Prophet had a sharp Understanding of geography, terrain and natural resources available in a battlefield. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) always planned beforehand how the Muslim army could obtain strategic advantage from an intelligent geographic placement in the battle field. The Prophet did not leave to chance the matter of entry into a battlefield and the positioning of the Muslim army. Even in case of far off lands, the Prophet had studied and discussed the terrain with his companions and travelers who knew the area. His goal was for the Muslim army to take the initiative, arrive first at the chosen location for battle, take control of any important resources available at the battlefield (such as water wells, fodder for animals and fruit trees) and let the enemy then arrive to face a well-provisioned Muslim army.
2. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was sensitive to the psychological aspects of warfare. He deployed human resources in battle with the aim of getting maximum impact from limited resources. His exhortation to his forces to fight to the last and prevail sent a powerful message through the rank and file. He showered his successful commanders with praise and gifts and was not averse to ostracizing the weak and the timid in his military forces. For instance, he ordered Usamah ibn Zayd ibn Harithah to face the enemy in the vicinity of Mu'tah where Osamah's father had fought valiantly and died a martyr. The symbolism of the Prophet's command could not be lost on Usamah or on the Muslim forces.
3. The valor and courage of the Muslim forces was legendary. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had actively propagated the belief in the overall superiority of the Muslim forces since they fought with valor and discipline and were not afraid to take on much larger foes. This had started with the first pitched battle fought by slightly more than 300 Muslims against the Makkan army of more than 1,000 in 624 AD at Badr. The Muslim fighters were more disciplined than their adversaries and their unity of command was never in dispute. The Muslim fighters were driven by goals much larger than

simple inter-tribal conflict. Thus Muslims from far off lands and disparate socio-economic status could fight next to each other.

4. The Prophet tried his best to preserve the element of surprise and tried to present his enemies with overwhelming force. It was important for the Muslim forces to project overwhelming force (for instance by staging night bonfires at distances on the battlefield to deceive the enemy into believing that the Muslim army was much larger than its actual size). The element of surprise was an integral component of the Prophet's martial planning and military strategy. He was known to send out advance parties as decoys in a direction different from his actual war path. He often did not let his actual plans be known to many people. He was quite aware that the Quraish had friends in Madina who could be sources of valuable information to their friends in Makkah.

5. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was always anxious to have his forces leave the area they had won quickly after victory. He did not wish his commanders and comrades to take root in the new territories. He liked the administrative and jizya (protection levy) arrangements to be concluded quickly and for the Muslim armies to revert to their bases as quickly as possible. He did not wish his forces to go native and wanted them to preserve their fighting spirit and valor and not take root in the newly occupied territories.

Von Clausewitz has astutely observed that war is the continuation of foreign policy by other means. This precept seems to apply to the Prophet's approach to warfare as well. He propagated the universal message of Islam through peaceful means in Makkah for more than thirteen years. The thirteen years of preaching in Makkah did not result in the wholesale conversion of the Quraish to Islam and the Prophet decided to migrate to Madina. Subsequently, the establishment of the Muslim state in Madina and the military campaigns (both defensive and offensive) that ensued were a broad continuation of his propagation of the message of Islam. The Prophet applied his highest capabilities, invested his personal time and devoted the growing resources of the small Muslim community to the development of an effective military strategy.

As has been noted above, in the ten years that the Prophet lived in Madina (from 622 AD to 632 AD), he organized seventy-four expeditions of various kinds and sizes. This roughly translates into one expedition every seven weeks. Al-Waqidi assigns seven of the seventy-four expeditions to the first eighteen months after the migration to Madina. The important point to note here is that the Prophet took the offensive. Rather than expending great effort at organizing trading caravans aimed at selling Madina's produce in other cities (which had earlier been a specialty of the Prophet and could have enriched the inhabitants of Madina considerably), the Prophet immediately set about increasing his military power and prowess. From our perspective, the Prophet was not in a reactive mode in his military campaigns. Rather, he was in a proactive mode. He had the vision and the sagacity to know that he would have to grow his military strength in order to face off any potential military threat from the Quraish. Whether we consider his military campaigns as reactive ploys or pre-emptive strikes misses the point. We find him a military strategist who had the ability to see beyond the here and now and plan for the future.

The Prophet's sharp Understanding of warfare and active interest in military training of his companions can be gleaned from the following anecdote: Once during military training, the Prophet asked his companions about the ideal strategy to be adopted during battle. One of his companions, Asim bin Thabit, stood up with his bow in his hand and replied: "When the enemy is a hundred yards away, we will use our bows and arrows; when the enemy comes closer, we will fight with our spears; when the spears break, we will have a hand to hand combat with our swords." The Prophet approved of this answer and said: "Doubtless, this was the way to fight a battle. Whoever wishes to take part in a battle should adopt the strategy of Asim bin Thabit."

Below we present a few anecdotes from the Prophet's life that shed light on key aspects of his military strategy.

## **Effective Military Response to Abu Sufyan's Raiding Party**

After the defeat of the Quraish at the Battle of Badr; Abu Sufyan, a Leading Quraish chieftain, promised to return to Madina to avenge their defeat. When Abu Sufyan raided Madina to show that Makkah was not down and out, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) gave a counter-display of his power by pursuing him with at least 200 men. The resolve and military strength of the Prophet persuaded Abu Sufyan not to confront the Muslims and he made his escape to Makkah without facing the Muslim army.

## **Expulsion of the Jewish Tribe of Banu Qainuqah from Madina**

It has been discussed earlier in Section on Effective Use of Pledges that all three Jewish tribes of Madina were eventually banished from the city. The first Jewish tribe to be banished were the Banu Qainuqah. Several considerations precipitated their forced departure from Madina. Most historians concur that a trivial quarrel between some members of the Banu Qainuqah and a few Muslims eventually led to their expulsion from Madina. However, a key consideration in the Prophet's mind must have been the Banu Qainuqah's alliance with Abdullah bin Ubbaiy, the powerful Madinan chief who was a serious rival of the Prophet in influence over the city. The Banu Qainuqah were the weakest of the three Jewish tribes because they were comprised mostly of craftsmen and traders. Abdullah bin Ubbaiy had become a Muslim but continuously tried to exploit opportunities to weaken the Prophet's position in Madina. He maintained a degree of independence and influence in Madina which made him dangerous for Islam. The removal of the Banu Qainuqah from Madina served the triple purpose of curtailing Jewish power in Madina, neutralizing the alternative leadership threat from Abdullah ibn Ubbaiy and enriching the impoverished Muslims through the acquisition of considerable booty. It is pertinent to note that the Banu Qainuqah were the weakest of the three Jewish tribes of Madina and were the first to be dispatched from the city. This also shows the Prophet's uncanny ability to choose his enemies judiciously. He believed in expending limited resources to gain maximum military and diplomatic leverage against his enemies.

## **Restoring the Balance of Power After Losses at the Battle of Uhud**

Despite the very serious loss of life on the Muslim side at the Battle of Uhud and with Muslim survivors either wounded or extremely tired; Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was intent on pursuing the Makkan military contingent out of the Madina outskirts. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) did not want the Makkan army to come back for a second attack which might have crippled the Muslims who were in dire straits at this time. He, therefore, launched a display of force and resolve which convinced the Makkan contingent to retreat to Makkah. The Muslims spent three whole days in the open, challenging their enemy to return and engage them in battle.

The heavy loss of Muslim life during the Battle of Uhud was a great blow to the Muslim morale. It also created serious difficulties for the Prophet in the form of waning of the Muslim influence in and around Madina. The Madenese non-Muslims derided the Muslim loss of life in battle and asked: "If the Battle of Badr was a sign from God proving the veracity of Muhammad's prophet-hood, what was the sign of the Battle of Uhud?" The Prophet responded very intelligently to this disconcerting state of affairs. First and foremost, he took special care to keep himself abreast of all important developments in and around Madina. Simultaneously, he prepared himself for recapturing and re-establishing Muslim power and reputation. The Prophet organized two separate campaigns to control some of the tribes that were rising against Islam.

The Prophet sent Abu Salamah ibn Abdul Asad as the head of an expeditionary force comprised of one hundred and fifty fighters. This force travelled by night and lay low during the day in order to surprise their enemies – the two brothers Tulayhah and Salamah, leaders of the Banu Asad, who were raising a force to attack Madina. This Muslim force marched by night along un-trodden paths and managed totally to surprise the enemy. The enemies were defeated and Abu Salamah returned to Madina with considerable booty and renewed Muslim prestige.

The Prophet also sent Abdullah ibn Unays on a secret mission to deal with Khalid ibn Sufyan ibn Nubayh al Hudhali who was arousing people at Nakhlah or Uranah against Madina. Abdullah ibn Unays travelled alone and met up with Khalid under the pretext that he wished to join Khalid in his campaign against Madina. Abdullah ibn Unays asked Khalid to walk with him to discuss certain matters. When Khalid had walked a distance away from his men, Abdullah ibn Unays killed him and returned to Madina. This single-handed campaign had the effect of neutralizing the threat from the Banu Lihyan tribe for some time.

The above two expeditions show that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was adept at extracting small but important victories in times of need in order to restore the balance of power in Madina. In fact, the Prophet proactively worked on increasing Muslim influence in and around Madina. As history shows, his campaign was a resounding success.

## **Reduction of the Jewish Tribes of Yathrib**

Almost immediately after his arrival in Madina, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) penned an agreement with the various tribes of Madina in which they all agreed to defend each other against any outside attack and agreed not to help any outsider in attacking Madina. This rather straightforward agreement proved the undoing of the Jewish tribes of Madina that were always an alternate source of power there.

The Prophet's growing strength and use of force can be seen in how he treated the three Jewish tribes of Madina that abrogated the peace treaty with the Muslims at different times. In 623 AD (the second year after his arrival in Madina), a trivial quarrel led to the expulsion of the Banu Qainuqah from Madina. The Prophet allowed the Banu Qainuqah to leave Madina with all of their belongings. In 626 AD (the fourth year after Muhammad's migration to Madina), the Banu Nadir were also expelled from Madina because the Prophet announced that they had planned to assassinate him when he was visiting them with his companions. In 627 AD (the fifth year after Muhammad's migration to Madina), the Banu Quraizah were found to be conniving with the invading force of the Quraish during the Battle of Ahzaab. The outcome was the mass execution of the men and the enslavement of the women and children. Thereafter, the Jews ceased to be a power in Madina.

The brilliant treaty Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) negotiated with the Jews helped him neutralize their ability to develop a second source of power in Madina. This treaty helped him gain comprehensive political and military control over the city and its adjoining territories while also eliminating a dangerous potential friend of the Quraish from his area of control. As an adjunct, this treaty also helped the Prophet marginalize Abdullah bin Ubbaiy by taking away the props of his power in Madina one by one.

## **Expeditions to Bring the South-East of Madina Under Muslim Influence**

After the Battle of Badr in early 624 AD, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) personally led three expeditions against tribes to the east and south-east of Madina. This was virgin territory for Muslims and these very important expeditions were meant to impress these tribes with the

Muslim seriousness of purpose and ability to defend them against any aggression. As a means of deterring these neighbors from joining forces with the Quraish in the future against the Muslims, these expeditions were quite successful.

## **Proactive Increase of Muslim Influence Between Battle of Uhud and Battle of Ahzaab**

The Battle of Uhud had been inconclusive for both sides. While the Muslims had suffered as many as seventy-five casualties during this battle, the Makkans had utterly failed to uproot Islam from Madina. Essentially, the Battle of Uhud had left the task unfinished for both sides. After a two year hiatus, both sides met once again during March 627 AD at the siege of Madina. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had been quite busy militarily during the two year period between the end of the Battle of Uhud on March 23, 625 AD and the start of the siege of Madina on March 31, 627 AD. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was acutely aware of the inevitable showdown to come. He was busy shoring up his defences and building new alliances. It must have been quite apparent to him that the Muslim power was on the rise and that the power of the Quraish was on the wane. However, the Quraish could put together a much larger army and had serious financial muscle. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had succeeded in increasing his area of influence around Madina. The result was that the Makkan confederacy that approached Madina in March 627 AD was not as large as it would have been otherwise. A number of tribes around Madina that had previously been allies of the Makkans had refused to join the Makkans in this expedition.

## **Battle of Khaibar**

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) continued to assess the military situation and had a keen eye for the enemy's weaknesses. After the siege of the Khaibar strongholds had been inconclusive for a few days, the Muslim forces caught an enemy spy who provided valuable information to the Muslims about the relative strengths of each of the Jewish strongholds. After receiving this information, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) decided to focus the Muslim energies on first going after a fort that was not well-guarded and also contained a large quantity of weapons stored in large cellars including some catapults that had been stored there for a long time. The Muslim forces focused their assault on this fortress and captured it. It was partly the catapults they obtained here that made the other fortresses fall one by one. Thus, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was able to score small victories as a means of building up morale and as aids in achieving comprehensive military success.

# 1. CONTROL OVER “MEDIA”

Throughout his life, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was keenly aware of the influence of media over human beliefs and behaviors. At this time, news travelled only as fast as a horseman. Naturally, media in the seventh century AD was comprised mostly of (a) word-of-mouth communication; (b) poetry in motion (i.e. travelling poets who either sang the praise of or condemned their subjects); (c) information carried by and received from pilgrims and trading caravans from far off lands; (d) information obtained from intelligence agents dispatched for the explicit purpose of collecting information; and (e) letters and emissaries sent to tribal chieftains, governors and kings. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was a proactive user of media. He worked hard to employ effective media in the service of Islam. He was also keen to neutralize media arrayed against him.

The Prophet exercised significant control over media. All of his intelligence-gathering was a private affair. His standing instruction to his ambassadors, emissaries and intelligence agents was to share positive news with all present. However, news of any adverse developments was to be shared with the Prophet alone in private or in garbled language.

## Poetry as Media

The Arabs of that time were great connoisseurs of fine poetry. Accomplished poets were in great demand throughout Arabia and won praises, gifts and rewards from discerning listeners all over the peninsula. The annual fair of Ukaz outside Makkah celebrated great poetry. A poetry competition was held every year at this fair and poets and listeners converged on Ukaz from all over Arabia. The winner was showered with valuable gifts and praise. The winning poetry was written on parchments and hung from the walls of the Ka'aba for a period of one year so that the visiting pilgrims from all over Arabia could also read and appreciate fine poetry.

A very important function of poets was dissemination of information (or disinformation) since very limited means of information exchange were available at that time. News travelled as fast as a trading caravan or a wandering poet. Poets also sang the praises of a clan's ancestors or made fun of the cowardice of an enemy clan in battle. Arab poets sang the praises of their patron tribes and generous tribal leaders. Folklore built up about the valor, gallantry, hospitality, and great ancestry of particular tribes. Gifted poets could incite a mob to bloodshed and even cause wars.

The Prophet was extremely sensitive to the power the poets wielded over the Arab populace. He expended great efforts at using poetry and poets in the service of Islam. Hassan bin Thabit became a poet whose services in the cause of Islam were much appreciated by the Prophet. Hassan bin Thabit was from the Khazraj clan of Madina. He was to become the chief poet of Islam.

Whenever possible, all efforts were also made to neutralize the threat from poets who used their skills against Islam. Two of the most note-worthy pagan poets, Ka'ab bin Al-Ashraf and Sallam Ibn Abul-Huqayq (also known as Abu Rafi), were killed by Muslim youths belonging to the Aws and Khazraj respectively. The Aws and the Khazraj competed with each other to show their loyalty to the Prophet and these two killings were one way for them to rid the Prophet of some of his hardened and dangerous enemies.

## Prophet Preached Islam to Visiting Pilgrims in Makkah

Annual fairs and pilgrimages provided the perfect staging posts to disseminate information to a wide audience. The Prophet was in the habit of meeting the visiting pilgrims in Makkah and he routinely



explained Islam to them and invited them to Islam. Not only was the Prophet able to explain Islam to the visiting pilgrims, he was also able to gather crucial information from them about the Arab tribes all over Arabia. It was in one of these meetings with twelve pilgrims from Yathrib (later renamed Madina-tul-Nabi or the “city of the Prophet” which was later abbreviated to simply Madina or “the city”) where the Prophet’s discourse on Islam struck a chord. This chance meeting with visiting pilgrims in 720 AD eventually led to the Prophet’s migration to Madina in 722 AD and was a true turning point in Islamic history.

## **Unsuccessful Preaching Trip to Taif of 619 AD**

After the death of his uncle Abu Talib and his beloved wife Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her) in 619 AD, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had become very dejected. His preaching in Makkah by now had hardened the resolve of his opponents who had been further emboldened by the death of Abu Talib who had been the prime protector of the Prophet. At this time, without telling anyone, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) undertook a trip to the city of Taif where he solicited the support of the tribe of Thaqif after calling them to Islam. When they refused, he asked them not to spread the news of their refusal to his enemies that they might not rejoice at his failure. The Prophet intended to minimize the damage to his reputation that would inevitably result from the news spreading to Makkah.

## **Victory at Battle of Badr**

The Prophet routinely sent messengers to neighboring areas of Madina. This served many purposes such as (a) informing the adjoining tribes about positive developments of Islam in Madina so as to help them submit to Islam or at least develop friendly terms with the Muslim community; (b) counter any negative propaganda that may be emanating from Makkah against the Prophet and Islam; and (c) keeping the Prophet apprised of material developments in the area that could have an impact on his future plans. The Battle of Badr was a great victory for Islam since it was the first battle between the Muslim community in Madina and the mighty Quraish of Makkah. In this battle, a few more than 300 Muslims had soundly defeated a Makkan army comprised of more than 1,000 warriors. The Prophet was quick to use this victory as a means of consolidating his position in the area by disseminating this information far and wide. Ibn Ishaq reports that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) sent “Zaid bin Harithah to the lower quarter and Abdullah bin Rawahah to the upper quarter to tell the Muslims of Madina of God’s victory and of the polytheists who had been killed.”

## **Battle of Uhud**

The Battle of Uhud was a test of Muslim leadership and fighting spirit. At a difficult time during the battle, the Quraish were successful in killing Mus’ab bin Umair who resembled Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). At this, Ibn Qamiah raised the shout: “Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) has been killed.” This caused Muslim fighters’ hearts to sink. However, Ka’ab bin Malik recognized the Prophet and shouted: “O folks of Muslims, be cherished! Allah’s Messenger is here.” But Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) signaled to him to stop lest his position be located by the idolaters. The Quraish thought that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had been killed and Abu Sufyan began a search for his body on the battlefield. The Muslims around Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) did not deny the news of his death in obedience to Muhammad’s own commandment designed to prevent any new onslaught by the Quraish against him at a time when the Muslim position was very weak during the fighting.

## **Battle of Ahzaab**

During the Battle of Ahzaab, rumors reached the Prophet that the Jewish tribe of Banu Quraizah was about to abrogate their agreement of mutual defensive assistance with the Muslims and was about ready to join the Quraish against the Muslims. This would have been a grave development for the Muslim community of Madina that would be forced to fight on two fronts in such a case. On hearing this rumor, the Prophet called the two Sa'ads (Saad bin Muadh and Saad bin Ubadah) of Aws and Khazraj to him together with Abdullah bin Rawahah and Khawwat bin Jubayr, and having told them the rumor, he told them to go and see if the report was true or not. "If it is true give me an enigmatic message which I can understand, and do not undermine the people's confidence; and if they are loyal to their agreement speak out openly before the people." The Prophet clearly wanted to control the flow of any bad news and wished to exercise control and caution as he dealt with a potentially serious adverse development.

In a sense, even many of Muhammad's closest companions were left guessing about his internal deliberations. The Prophet himself possessed the most sensitive and most critical information. For instance, if he sent out scouts to gather information, very few of his closest aides would be aware of this development. On many occasions, the Prophet sent out expeditions by giving a sealed letter of instruction to the leader of the expedition with the explicit command to open the letter after two or three days of travelling in the specified direction. This served the twin purpose of keeping the mission totally secret and of ensuring compliance with the instructions by the members of the expedition (who would probably not refuse the mission in order to avoid coming back to Madina to face the ridicule of the city). The Prophet had to resort to this type of secrecy to avoid providing critical information to people such as Abdullah bin Ubaiy who typically did not miss a chance to sow seeds of internal discord in the Muslim ranks. There were several others in Madina who passed on information to the Quraish of Makkah on a regular basis.

## **Capture of Makkah**

In 629 AD, the Prophet ordered the Muslims to complete preparations for war but did not tell them who he intended to attack. Even Abu Bakr and Umar who were very close to the Prophet had no idea who and where the Prophet intended to attack. As the preparations for an attack were being made, the Prophet also issued an order to keep these preparations totally secret. His goal was that the news of martial preparations should not reach outside Madina.

In Madina itself, rumors started flying around. Some held the view that the Prophet intended to confront the Roman army, whereas others opined that the Prophet wanted to punish the clan of Banu Salim which had continually created trouble for the Muslim state of Madina. No one was totally sure that the Prophet intended to go for the capture of Makkah at this time. The Prophet's control over media was a great asset and weapon he employed very effectively in this case. The appearance of the Muslim army outside Makkah took a large part of the Makkah population by surprise and many Makkans felt that any attempts at this late stage to regroup in defence of Makkah would be futile.

We have seen through the above examples, that the Prophet was a great manager and deployer of media. Not only could he use media to his great advantage, he also knew how and when to control the flow of negative information. He was keenly aware of the importance of spreading positive news about Islam and controlling and silencing the negative media that is bound to surround any burgeoning new religion. He himself was the central repository of critical and sensitive information. He employed a wide array of information sources to enable him to triangulate accurately the diplomatic and military state-of-affairs around him at all times. In his own mind, he was in a constant state of battle readiness during the Madina period. He knew very well that any show of weakness on the part of the nascent Islamic state in Madina would cause the Makkans to pound on him with vengeance and viciousness. Muhammad (Peace

and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was the guardian of this community in Madina and knew that any ill-preparedness could be seriously punished by his adversaries. Muhammad's awareness of the power of media and his success in deploying media to Islam's advantage were sources of great power for him and played a critical role in his eventual success.

## **2. CAPTURE OF MAKKAH WAS THE OVERARCHING GOAL BECAUSE OF ITS STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE AND POTENTIAL DOMINO EFFECT**

In the time of the Prophet, Makkah enjoyed a unique place in world geography. The Arabian Peninsula existed at the confluence of the three great continents of Asia, Europe and Africa and as a centre of their actions and reactions. Arabia knew better than any other country the inhabitants and customs of these three continents. In fact, in the old days, people used to call Makkah “the navel of the Earth.”

Makkah was located approximately equidistant from the three spheres of power around Bedouin Arabia. Midway between Syria and the Yemen, it was about equally distant from the long arm of the Sasanian power to the northeast. Hodgson remarks that “perhaps only at such a distance from the agrarian lands could so thoroughly independent and Bedouin a system have arisen.”

Even in pre-Islamic days, Makkah was popularly known as “umm al-Qura” (the mother of towns). Makkah was a desert kingdom which had somehow remained sheltered from ravenous, plunderous and covetous conquerors. Makkah is geographically situated in a valley surrounded by high barren mountains. One can access Makkah only through narrow mountainous passages which made defence of the city relatively easy and conquest very difficult.

Trade and commerce were the only means of subsistence in this parched desert and traders from far off lands could bring their wares to Makkah and sell them in safety and under protection. A few Arab towns at that time hosted an annual fair each. However, four annual fairs were held in the suburbs of Makkah each year: Mina, Majannah, Dhul-Majaz and Ukaz. While some trading towns in Arabia enjoyed one month of sanctuary for all visitors; Makkah enjoyed three consecutive months of sanctuary for all visitors: the eleventh, twelfth and the first month of the Arab year.

As a city-state, Makkah was well-organized on an oligarchic basis. The important “ministries” were held by the ten most-noteworthy families of the Quraish. Thus, the power and administration in the city was jointly held by many senior members of the ten Leading families of the Quraish. Important decisions affecting the city were taken collectively by this “council of ministers” which, in its own turn, was guided by frequent meetings of the “parliament” (Dar an-Nadawah, translated as the house of public deliberations) of all adult citizens of Makkah.

It is important to note that it had been Muhammad’s great-great-grand father, Qussay, who had pioneered the transformation of Makkah from an Arabian back-water into the heart of the territory. Prior to Qussay, several other towns in Arabia such as Taif and Sana’ in Yemen also boasted religious sanctuaries and festivals. However, Qussay was most astute and brilliant in combining religious festivals with trading facilities and cessation of hostilities in catapulting Makkah above all other cities of Arabia. Richard Bulliet has argued that “the only reason for Makkah to grow into a great trading centre was that it was able somehow to force the trade under its control.” By inextricably linking the religious and economic life of the city, Qussay and his descendants developed an innovative religio-economic system that relied on control of the Ka’aba and its pilgrimage rites to guarantee the economic, religious, and political supremacy of a single tribe, the Quraish. Qussay established the Dar an-Nadwah and organized the Makkan city-state on a sound footing. He imposed the annual tax of Rafadah on the inhabitants of the town, mainly to come to the help of pilgrims and visitors of the fairs of Makkah. It is also he who gave an urban look to the town by replacing the tents by houses built of stone.

The Prophet consistently looked at Makkah as the prize. He spent more than thirteen years in Makkah trying to convert the city’s notables to Islam without much success. Even when he was leaving for

Madina, he remarked: “O Makkah, you are most cherished to me. However, your inhabitants do not let me live here.”

The Immigrants were known to remember Makkah very fondly even though Makkah was a barren desert compared to the fertile and green oasis of Madina. Many Immigrants were known to cry late into the night as they remembered Makkah very fondly. A fever afflicted many of the Immigrants on their first arrival in Madina. Bilal, the freedman of Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her)’s father, Abu Bakr, was known to sing the following song of homesickness for Makkah:

*Shall I ever spend a night again in Fakhkh*

*With sweet herbs and thyme around me?*

*Will the day dawn when I come down to the waters of Majannah?*

*Shall I ever see Shama and Tafil again?*

Ka’aba was the central seat of Islam. Throughout the ages, Muslims have believed that Islam had been originally founded by Prophet Ibrahim and he gave this name to the faith he preached. The Quran says: “It was he [Ibrahim] who gave you the name of the Muslims” With the passage of time, the children of Prophet Ibrahim had taken to idol worship. With all that they still turned to the Ka’aba, the relic of their great ancestor, as a place of worship and the common heritage of all the Arabs.

It is amusing to note that even some intelligent Makkan notables were very keenly aware of the important role Makkah was bound to play in the development of Islam even at the time when the Quraish were vehemently opposed to the Prophet’s preaching Islam in Makkah in the early years of his prophethood. The comments of Utba bin Rabia to the Quraish notables upon his return after a discussion with Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) are quite telling in this regard: “Take my advice and do as I do, leave this man [Muhammad r] entirely alone for, by God, the words which I have heard will be blazed abroad. If (other) Arabs kill him, others will have rid you of him; if he gets the better of the Arabs, his sovereignty will be your sovereignty, his power your power, and you will be prosperous through him.”

Within the first two years of his migration to Madina, the Prophet had launched eight raids against trade caravans of the Quraish. This high level of aggressive activity resulted in the Battle of Badr – which was precipitated because the Prophet led a Muslim contingent of more than 300 to find Abu Sufyan’s caravan in 624 AD (the second year of Hijra).

With the changing of the Qibla to Makkah in 623 AD, the second year after Hijra, the Muslims had even more cause to yearn for the day they would control Makkah and be able to pray in the Ka’aba and perform Hajj and Umra pilgrimages. The Prophet’s foreign policy in the Madina period seems to be focused on the capture of Makkah.

In a certain sense, the capture of Makkah must have been the over-arching military goal of the Prophet. While he had had success in building a new moral order at Madina and had been able to defend it against the Quraish attacks; Madina was still a small oasis (one among many in Arabia) that did not compare in importance and prestige with Makkah. The nomadic Bedouin tribes spread all over Arabia formed the bed-rock of Arab society at this time. While the Bedouin tribes near Madina had, over time, begun to owe allegiance to the Prophet himself and some of them had professed Islam; they knew full well that the Islamic moral order was new and in competition with several moral orders within Arabia and was in contrast to the Makkan world order. Hodgson writes that “in a society where the Bedouin set the moral

norms of all, a single oasis could not long maintain, by itself, quite contrary standards...So long as the Makkan system still stood on its pagan foundation, any other system in the area was precarious. If Muhammad was to create a totally responsible moral environment for his Muslims, he must Islamize the Makkan system itself.”

## **The Muslim State in Madina was Really a Makkan State in Exile**

The Prophet’s concept of the city-state of Makkah was that the pagan Quraish were only its de facto rulers but de jure the state belonged to the Muslims. As such, the Muslim state in Madina was really a Makkan state in exile. During the battle of Badr, when the Prophet heard that the standard of the Quraish was carried by a pagan belonging to the family of Abd-d-Dar, he handed over the Muslim standard to Musa’b bin Umair who was of the same family. It was Mus’ab’s family that had inherited in Makkah the function of carrying the flag. The Prophet chose Musa’b to carry the Muslim flag in the Battle of Badr saying: “We must recognize the rights of this family more than the pagans of Makkah do.”<sup>431</sup> At the same time, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) asked Umar to be his messenger to the Quraish. Umar’s family had been the hereditary ambassador of the Makkan oligarchy. At Hudaibiya in 628 AD (6 AH), the Prophet again asked Umar to be his messenger to the Quraish. When Umar declined for personal reasons, the Prophet asked Uthman bin Affan to carry his message to the Quraish. Later, the Prophet appointed Khalid ibn Al-Walid the Commander of the Muslim cavalry after he had embraced Islam since this was the position he had held in Makkah. Similarly, at the time of the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet declined the request of his uncle, Abbas, to keep the keys of the Ka’aba. He restored the keys to their former keeper who had become a Muslim.<sup>432</sup> Such incidents lead us to believe that the Prophet considered his state in Madina the rightful Makkan state in exile.

The Agreement of Hudaibiya in March 628 AD presents us with a very interesting problem: this was a ten year peace treaty between the Makkans and Muslims at a time when the Prophet was 59 years old. Did the Prophet give up his goal of capturing Makkah when he signed this agreement? Considering the high level of discipline in the Muslim ranks and the divisions within the ranks of the Quraish, a strong argument can be made that the Prophet knew that this agreement will not last for a long time. The Quraish were divided and one or another Makkan clan would have run foul of the Hudaibiya agreement in the short-run. One can recall the internal disunity of the Quraish at the occasion of Battles of Badr and Ahzaab. For instance, of the large Makkan contingent that had arrived at Badr to provide protection to Abu Sufyan’s caravan; two clans, Zuhrah and Adi withdrew completely from the battlefield on learning that Abu Sufyan’s caravan was safe.<sup>433</sup> Doubtless they felt that Abu Jahl and his friends would stand to benefit the most from Muhammad’s defeat. Perhaps, they did not wish to take part in a military campaign that may have actually strengthened Abu Jahl’s clan in Makkah. They may also have detested the idea of shedding the blood of their relatives and erstwhile neighbors unnecessarily. In any case, the Treaty of Hudaibiya gave the Prophet a valuable opportunity to focus his energies on other tribes of Arabia knowing that his Quraish flank was protected.

The Prophet must have been keenly aware of his need for professional management as and when Islam became successful in Arabia. The Prophet must have cherished Makkah for its religious supremacy as the Ka’aba was situated there. However, he must also have looked at the sophisticated and educated elite of Makkah – the most cosmopolitan city in Arabia – with the eye to converting them to Islam’s cause and then employing them as his lieutenants. Immediately after the conquest of Makkah, the newly converted Quraish were very active in the administration of the Islamic empire, management of the state affairs, warfare in the cause of protection and expansion of the Islamic polity, conducting trade with the rest of the world, and ambassadorial positions to reach out to other major cultures of the world. Only Makkah had the human resource depth to provide Islam with large numbers of high quality administrators, ambassadors and generals. Islam’s later history provides ample testimony in this regard.

## **Change of Qibla from Jerusalem to Makkah in 623 AD**

After sixteen months of offering prayers in Madina while facing Jerusalem, the following verse was revealed to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him): “Turn thy face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you are turn faces towards it.”<sup>434</sup> In Makkah, the Prophet had prayed with his face towards the Muqam-e-Ibrahim or the Site of Abraham, which faced towards Jerusalem. In the first sixteen months when Muslims prayed facing Jerusalem, this satisfied the Jews as they felt that Islam recognized the longstanding of their faith and was following closing in their foot-steps. The changing of Qibla to Ka’aba angered them and confused some Muslims as well.

### **The changing of the Qibla at this juncture served the following important strategic purposes:**

1. The treaty with the Jews had already been negotiated and agreed; now Islam would follow a decidedly distinct path to glory.
2. The daily prayers facing Makkah would remind every Muslim of his claim to the Holy Land. It was now not logical for the Muslims to leave their Qibla at the mercy of non-Muslims.
3. The fact that infidels prayed in Ka’aba and many of them performed the Hajj while naked would also probably anger many Muslims and make them wish to ‘cleanse’ the Ka’aba.

The change of Qibla happened after eight military expeditions: four of which had been dispatched by Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and four that had been personally led by him. The change of Qibla happened after the successful Nakhlah mission when a team of twelve Emigrants led by Abdullah bin Jahsh had successfully intercepted a Quraish caravan between Makkah and Taif – the heart of the Quraish territory far away from Madina. This had been a very daring raid of the Muslims who, thus, served notice to the Quraish of their intentions to reclaim the Ka’aba.

## **Lenient Treatment of Makkan Prisoners of War**

Unlike the Arab custom of meting out harsh treatment to prisoners of war, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) began the practice of holding them to ransom. Historians argue that after the Battle of Badr, perhaps fifty to seventy of the Quraish fighters were taken prisoner.<sup>435</sup> Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) ordered that the Makkan prisoners should not be harshly treated and should be held for ransom. This is an early indication of the Prophet’s stance towards his erstwhile enemies from Makkah. In the long-term, he wished to convert them to his cause. In the short-term, this policy would strengthen the financial condition of the struggling Muslim community in Madina. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) needed the administrative abilities of the Makkans on his side for Islam to flourish in the long-term. Therefore, his goal was the conversion of the Quraish to Islam and not their total destruction.

## **The Prophet’s Diplomatic Efforts after the Truce of Hudaibiya Aimed at Winning the Hearts and Minds of Ordinary Makkans**

After the truce of Hudaibiya, Makkah was engulfed by a severe drought. The area controlled by the Yamamah tribe had traditionally been the bread-basket for Makkah. However, now that the Yamamah tribe had embraced Islam, the leader of the tribe had banned all trading activity with the Makkans. This caused very serious hardship for ordinary Makkans. The Makkans now requested the Prophet to intercede with the Yamamah chieftain to remove trade restrictions on the Makkans. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) consented and instructed the Yamamah tribe to trade with the Makkans.



In addition, the Prophet sent five hundred gold coins to Makkah to be distributed to the poor and the destitute. This gesture of good-will went well with the poor in Makkah.

When the famine in Makkah became quite serious, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) sent a large supply of delicious dates of Madina to Abu Sufyan and asked him to supply leather to him as barter. Abu Sufyan was disinclined to engage in this trade. However, the ordinary people of Makkah came to know of this possible barter and forced Abu Sufyan to accept this trade.

## **Conduct During Capture of Makkah**

During the capture of Makkah, Sa'ad bin Ubadah led the Ansaar contingent into town. On seeing Abu Sufyan on the road-side, Sa'ad bin Ubadah remarked: "O Abu Sufyan! Today is the day of a great battle and today (what is prohibited in) the Ka'aba will be permissible [i.e. bloodshed in the holy precincts of Makkah]." Ibn Ishaq has paraphrased Sa'ad bin Ubadah's language in the following words: "Today is a day of war. Sanctuary is no more."

When Abu Sufyan inquired with the Prophet whether Sa'ad bin Ubadah's statement was a statement of Muslim policy, the Prophet remarked: "Sa'ad told a lie, but today Allah will give superiority to the Ka'ba and today the Ka'aba will be covered with a (cloth) covering." The Prophet immediately relieved Sa'ad bin Ubadah of his command and in his place appointed his son to lead the Ansaar contingent.<sup>441</sup> Another source attributes the following remarks to the Prophet upon entry into Makkah: "The honor of Makkah shall increase today, and its sanctity will in no way be violated, as it is there that the Qibla of Islam is situated." The Prophet announced a directive that complete peace and order should prevail in the town.

Rafiq Zakaria notes that after the capture of Makkah and "in his hour of supreme triumphs, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) did not allow a house to be plundered or a woman to be molested. He told the Muslims that everyone who joined their fold, irrespective of the past, was a brother. He issued a general amnesty and, except for four people guilty of treason, all were pardoned."

## **Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) Expected the Men of Quraish to Command the Muslim Community After Him**

The Prophet's remarks to a man of the Ansaar as recorded in Sahih Al-Bukhari are very telling. Hadith number 1562 is quoted verbatim here: "Narrated Usaid bin Hudair: A man from the Ansaar said, "O Allah's Messenger! Will you appoint me as you have appointed so-and-so?" The Prophet said, "After me you will see others given preference to you; so be patient till you meet me at Al-Haud (the tank of Al-Kauthar) (on the Day of Resurrection)." This Hadith clearly implies that, after the capture of Makkah, the Prophet fully expected the Quraish (and not the Ansaar) to become the leaders of Islam. By welcoming the Prophet of Islam in Yathrib, the Ansaar had provided protection to the small Muslim community and had allowed the kernel of the Islamic state to take root in the oasis of Yathrib. With the growth of the Islamic state to all corners of the Arabian Peninsula and beyond, the cosmopolitan Makkans with their international connections, experience in trade and commerce, and command over foreign languages would become the chieftains who would lead Islam.

## **Domino Effect of the Capture of Makkah**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was most sensitive to the unique position of Makkah in the Arabian Peninsula. Makkah was not only the religious capital of the peninsula; it was also the business, cultural and social nucleus of the Arab society. The capture of Makkah by the Muslim forces was the turning point in the dramatic expansion of Islam inside and outside Arabia. This is the reason why

the year after the conquest of Makkah is known in Islamic history as “The Year of the Deputations” because Arab tribes from far and wide came to see the Prophet to submit to Islam. Ibn Ishaq makes the following profound observation: “In deciding their attitude to Islam the Arabs were only waiting to see what happened to this clan of Quraish and the apostle. For Quraish were the leaders and guides of men, the people of the sacred temple, and the pure stock of Ishmael son of Abraham; and the Leading Arabs did not contest this. It was Quraish who had declared war on the apostle and opposed him; and when Makkah was occupied and Quraish became subject to him and he subdued it to Islam, and the Arabs knew that they could not fight the apostle or display enmity towards him they entered into God’s religion...coming to him from all directions.”

## **Speech of Abu Bakr After the Death of the Prophet**

The conquest of Makkah was a pivotal moment in Islamic history. The Prophet had planned for this event in more than fifteen years of preaching Islam. Even during the Madina period, his eyes were set on Makkah. It is true that the Muslim expeditions were sent far and wide in all directions. However, this activity was a prelude to the peaceful capture of Makkah in 629 AD. One of the best indications of this fact comes from the speech delivered by Abu Bakr on the very day the Prophet passed away in 632 AD to a gathering of the Ansaar and the Muhajireen. The leadership of the Islamic community was at stake since the Ansaar had also laid down their claim to leadership of the community after the death of the Prophet. Abu Bakr addressed this most important gathering in the following words:

*‘You (O people of the Ansaar) are worthy of all of the good things you have said about yourselves. Nonetheless, only the people of Quraish have a right to the caliphate: they are the best among all Arabs in terms of both their lineage and their homeland. (As a leader) for you all I am pleased with either of these two men, so pledge allegiance to whichever of them you want.’ He then took the hand of Abu ‘Ubaidah ibn Al-Jarraas... Abu ‘Ubaidah said, ‘By Allah, for me to have my neck struck (with a sword, so long as that does not make me sinful, is more beloved to me than for me to become leader over a people who have in their midst Abu Bakr - unless my soul, at the moment of death, whispers evil thoughts to me (thoughts of my life being spared, so that I can remain alive and become the first caliph of the Muslim nation), thoughts that I do not have right now.’ Someone from the Ansaar said, ‘I am a person who is recognized for my sound views, and I am well respected among my people (so listen to that I have to say): let us choose a leader from among us, and a leader from among you, O people of the Quraish.’ People began to argue and voices were raised. In order to quell their disagreement, I said, ‘Extend your hand, O Abu Bakr.’ He extended his hand, and I pledged allegiance to him. The Muhaajireen also pledged to follow him, after which the Anssar did the same.’ (Bukhari: 6830).*

*According to the narration of Ahmad, Abu Bakr said, “And you indeed know that the Messenger of Allah said, ‘Were the people to travel through one valley, and were the Anssar to travel through another valley, I would travel through the valley of the Ansaar.’ And you indeed know, O Sa’ad, that the Messenger of Allah said while you were sitting down (and listening to him), ‘The people of the Quraish are in charge of this matter (i.e., of the caliphate): all righteous people are followers of their righteous people, and all evildoers are followers of their evildoers.’ Sa’ad said, “You have spoken the truth. We are your ministers, and you are our leaders.”*

*(Musnad Ahmad 1/) and Al-Khilaafah Wal-Khulafaa page 50).*

### **3. DEVELOPMENT OF CODE OF CONDUCT TO BE FOLLOWED DURING WAR**

The Prophet abhorred indiscriminate killings and warfare. Although his life in Madina was interspersed with military expeditions and wars, he took great care to limit collateral damage. He also discontinued the prevalent Arab practice of killing all prisoners of war and mutilation of dead bodies. Most observers fail to notice how few combatants were killed in the major battles that took place during the Prophet's lifetime. Exhibit 8 shows the number of Muslims and non-Muslim combatants and deaths during battles in the Prophet's life-time. In the eight major battles during his life-time in which a total of more than 42,000 Muslim soldiers participated, only 250 non-Muslims and 150 Muslims were killed.

#### **Ban on Children Fighting in Wars**

The Prophet instituted a ban on Muslim children fighting in wars. Many Muslim youths were eager to participate in battles. However, he insisted on their exclusion from military campaigns. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) instituted this policy despite the fact that the Muslims were often out-numbered in these battles. For instance, during the Uhud campaign, the Prophet sent back under-aged Muslim fighters even though the Muslim ranks had been considerably weakened by the last-minute withdrawal of Abdullah Ibn Ubbaiy with three hundred of his followers from the battle-field. He noticed six Muslim youths, between the ages of twelve and sixteen, had mingled with the army. He immediately sent back four of them, who were too young, but agreed to keep two boys of fifteen and sixteen who proved to him on the spot that they were better marksmen and fighters than many grown men. The choice, in such a situation, was a difficult one, but the Prophet repeatedly insisted that children be kept away from battle areas, both as soldiers and as potential victims.

#### **Avoidance of Unnecessary Bloodshed**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was most keen to avoid bloodshed even when he was engaged in military campaigns. He routinely instructed his commanders and his armies not to spill blood unnecessarily. In many cases, the Prophet used overwhelming force to convince his enemies to give-in and not to resist unnecessarily. In many cases, he was willing to give better terms to his enemies partly in order to avoid bloodshed. A great example comes to us from his treatment of the tribe of Fadak. After Muhammad's successful campaign against the Khaibar, the men of Fadak sent a peace proposal to the Prophet. They offered him peace on the condition that they be allowed to work on their land and keep half of the produce. The Prophet could easily have marched on Fadak and taken control of the area and his enemies. However, rather than engage in bloodshed, the Prophet accepted the peace terms offered by the tribe of Fadak.

After the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet sent out his troops to the adjoining territories to invite the local inhabitants to Islam. He instructed his troops not to indulge in any bloodshed and to propagate Islam by peaceful means. However, the Muslim party led by Khalid bin Al-Walid that had been sent by the Prophet to the territory of the B. Jadhima ("the lower part of the flat country") ended up killing some non-believers. The Prophet was most dismayed to learn of this unnecessary bloodshed. Ibn Ishaq narrates that when the news of these killings reached the Prophet; he raised his hands to heaven and said, "O God, I am innocent before Thee of what Khalid has done." Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) then sent his cousin Ali with blood-money to the tribe and paid their claims.

Within ten years of the Prophet's arrival in Madina, the city had become capital of the vast and expanding Islamic empire. Hamidullah calculates the area of this state, based on historical evidence, as no less than three million square kilometers. In other words, the average expansion during ten years was some 845

square kilometers per day. In ten years, less than two hundred and fifty non-Muslim men were killed. The number of Muslim casualties was much less. The maximum casualties (70 Muslims killed) were incurred during the battle of Uhud largely due to their own fault. The average of all casualties including those of the enemy was less than two a month over a period of ten years. This was a lesson for contemporary rulers for it provided a practical example of avoiding unnecessary bloodshed by the Prophet.

## **Lenient Treatment of Christians**

Quite a few historians have repeatedly argued that the Prophet was harsh in his treatment of Christians. The historical facts point in the exact opposite direction. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was adamant in his defence of non-combatant Christians and followers of other faiths. After his victory at Najran, the Prophet declared: "To the Christians of Najran and neighboring territories, the security of God and the pledge of His Apostle are extended for their lives, their religion, and their property. To the present as well as the absent and the others besides there shall be no interference with their faith or their observances, nor any change in their rights or privileges; no bishop shall be removed from his bishopric, nor any monk from his monastery, nor any priest from his parish, and they shall continue to enjoy everything great and small as heretofore; no image or cross shall be destroyed; they shall not oppress or be oppressed; no tithes shall be levied from them, nor shall they be required to furnish provisions for the troops."

## **Treatment of Non-Combatants during Military Campaigns**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) developed a strict code of conduct which had to be followed during warfare by his armies. Muslim fighters were explicitly forbidden to kill the elderly, women and children during battle. Furthermore, the Muslim fighters were also forbidden to kill an enemy who accepted Islam just prior to being killed. Several instances have been recorded where the Prophet expressed his displeasure when a Muslim warrior killed his pagan enemy even when the pagan had uttered the shahadah (oral expression that illustrates submission to Islam) just prior to being killed. Even though the pagan would have done so to save his life, the Prophet still did not approve of such killing.

## **Treatment of Enemy Dead and Prisoners of War**

The Prophet issued strict orders that the corpses of enemy combatants that had perished on the battle-field should not be mutilated at all. This had been an abhorrent Arab practice before the arrival of Islam. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) ordered that the enemy combatants should also be given proper burial. The Prophet required that the bodies of the living and the dead had to be respected. No torture or mutilation was ever to be accepted or promoted, in the name of respect for creation and for human being's dignity and integrity.

The Prophet followed strict procedures about the treatment of prisoners of war. Upon leaving a battle-field, the Prophet typically distributed the prisoners of war evenly among the Muslim soldiers so that the burden of their upkeep was equally divided. Each soldier was responsible to cloth and feed his prisoner. Many Muslim soldiers were known to eat little themselves and give the large portion of their meal to their prisoners. Sir William Muir, one of the most hostile biographers of the Prophet, observes about the Makkans who were taken prisoners by the Muslims after their victory at the Battle of Badr: "In pursuance of Mahomet's [sic] command, the citizens of Medeena and such of the refugees as possessed houses received the prisoners and treated them with much consideration." Muir quoted a prisoner who vouched that "the men of Medeena made us ride while they themselves walked, they gave us wheaten bread to eat when there was little of it, contenting themselves with dates."

## **Veneration of Religious Scriptures of the Enemy**

The Prophet always showed great regard for the religious books of the Christians and the Jews. This becomes clear from an incident that took place after the conquest of the Jewish stronghold of Khaibar. When the Muslim army was leaving Khaibar for Madina, a Jewish rabbi noticed that some Muslims had taken with them, as spoils of war, copies of the Torah. The rabbi protested to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), who ordered the Muslims to return every copy of the sacred book, and apologized for their misdemeanor. Commenting on this, Dr. Israel Welpenson, a Jewish scholar, wrote: "The event shows what a high regard the Prophet had for their [Jewish] scriptures. His tolerant and considerate behavior impressed the Jews, who could never forget that the Prophet did nothing which trifled with their sacred scriptures. The Jews knew how the Romans had, when they captured Jerusalem in 70 BC, burnt their scriptures and trampled them underfoot. The fanatic Christians persecuting the Jews of Spain had likewise consigned their scriptures to fire. This is the great difference we find between these conquerors and the Prophet of Islam."

## **Respect for Enemies' Religious Call to Prayers during Battle**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) respected his enemies' religions during battle. Ibn Ishaq records as follows: "When the apostle raided a people he waited until the morning. If he heard a call to prayer, he held back; if he did not hear it he attacked." On the occasion of the raid on the Jewish stronghold of Khaibar, the Prophet waited for dawn before attacking the first fort. Although the Muslim army had arrived at Khaibar in the thick of the night, the Prophet waited till dawn to attack. "We came to Khaibar by night, and the apostle passed the night there; and when morning came he did not hear the call to prayer, so he rode [forward]."

## **The Prophet Introduced a Ban on Killing of Women**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) abhorred wonton bloodshed and was most displeased at the killing of innocents. He took strong exception to the murder of children, women and the elderly. He had given explicit instructions to his armies and his lieutenants never to engage in unnecessary bloodshed. This would be alien to his nature and to the nature of Islam. Quite often, his lieutenants risked injuries to their own persons but remained true to the Prophet's injunction. A great example comes to us from Ibn Ishaq from his narration of the murder of the Jewish poet, Sallam Ibn Abul Huqayq (also known as Abu Rafi). A few young Muslims of the Khazraj decided to murder Abu Rafi while Abu Rafi was stationed in the Jewish stronghold of Khaibar. When they left Madina on their expedition, the Prophet forbade them to kill women and children.<sup>462</sup> When the Muslims finally made their way into Abu Rafi's house and killed him, "his wife shrieked...one of our number would lift his sword against her; then he would remember the apostle's ban on killing women and withdraw his hand; but for that we would have made an end of her that night."<sup>463</sup> Similarly, during the campaign against the Hawazin at Hunain after the capture of Makkah, the Prophet reprimanded Khalid bin Al-Walid for having killed a woman of the enemy tribe.

## **Sparing Lives of His Enemies during Battle**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was quite benevolent and did not like unnecessary bloodshed. For instance, he spared the life of Hind, Abu Sufyan's wife (who had successfully deployed her slave Wahshi to kill Muhammad's beloved uncle Hamza at the Battle of Uhud), when she accepted Islam after the conquest of Makkah (as part of a contingent of women of Quraish after having hid her persona behind a veil). At the conquest of Makkah, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) announced that all Makkans who took sanctuary within their own homes and locked



their doors or those who assembled in the house of Abu Sufyan would be spared. He spared the lives of many sworn enemies of Islam on this occasion.

After the Muslim victory at Khaibar in 628 AD, the Prophet arranged and sent a number of small expeditions to the North to pacify Bedouin tribes hostile to Muslim interests. A small Muslim contingent of thirty was cut down by the Banu Murra who had been attacking the Jewish settlement at Fadak which was now under Muslim protection. After this set-back, the Prophet sent a larger Muslim contingent of two hundred to defeat the Banu Murra and their confederates. Usamah bin Zayd was a seventeen year old member of this Muslim army. The Muslim army gained over its enemies and Usamah began a hot pursuit of a Bedouin fighter. When Usamah had over-taken the Bedouin and was ready to kill him, the Bedouin uttered the shahadah (“There is no God but Allah...”) as a precursor to converting to Islam. However, Usamah ignored this and killed the man. On his return to Madina, Usamah was haunted by guilt and approached the Prophet with this story. The Prophet expressed severe disapproval and asked Usamah: “Usamah, did you kill him after he had said ‘There is no god but God’?” Usamah clarified that the Bedouin had simply wanted to avoid being killed. The Prophet retorted: “Did you split his heart open to know whether he was saying the truth or lying?” The Bedouin’s profession of faith required that Usamah should not kill him. If he was sincere, his life should obviously have been spared. If he was not, his exclamation amounted to an appeal for peace and clemency. In such a case, his life should also have been spared.

## **Excusing Muslims from Fighting**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was most Understanding in excusing Muslims from engaging in fighting when presented with a fair reason. He excused Uthman from fighting in the Battle of Badr on learning that Uthman’s wife was ill. However, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) gave a portion of his own booty to Uthman on his successful return to Madina, as if Uthman had actually participated in battle. Similarly, Abu Umamah had left his mother seriously ill, so as not to miss the Badr campaign. On learning of this, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) ordered Abu Umamah to return to Madina immediately.

In addition, the Prophet seems to have a solid grasp on the reality of warfare logistics. He seems to have appreciated that many battles are actually won or lost not on the battle-field itself but in the timely provision or non-provision of critical material and supplies to the soldiers. The following saying of the Prophet illustrates this point very well: “By Him in Whose Hand Muhammad’s soul is, if it were not to be too hard upon the Muslims, I would not lag behind any expedition to fight in the Cause of Allah, but I have neither abundant means to provide them conveyance (horses) nor all other Muslims have it, and it will be hard on them to remain behind when I go forth (for Jihad).”<sup>467</sup> This saying demonstrates that, to the extent possible, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) liked to field a well-provisioned and well-armed force and reduced the number of the fighting Muslims to match the resources available to him.

## **Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) Forbade Unnecessary Killing of Animals**

In addition, the Prophet did not like even animals to be killed unnecessarily and also forbade the destruction of orchards, crops and fruit trees belonging to the enemies. It is recorded that he ordered his army not to disturb a bitch and her puppies as the Muslim army was marching on Makkah. In fact, he posted a soldier at that location to make sure that the bitch and her puppies were spared.

## **Sparing Material Possessions of Non-Combatants during Battle**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) abhorred indiscriminate pillage and plunder during battle. He was keen to protect the person and property of non-combatants and innocent bystanders. After the capture of Makkah, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) decided to march on the Hawazin. He was told that Safwan bin Umayya, the Makkan chieftain who had not yet converted to Islam, had some armor and weapons that could be useful for the Muslim army. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) asked Safwan for the armor and weapons. Safwan asked the Prophet: “Are you demanding them by force, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)?” The Prophet replied: “No, they are a loan and a trust until we return them to you.” Safwan bin Umayya indicated that, in such case, he had no objection to the loan and provided a hundred coats of mail with sufficient arms to the Muslim army.

## **Avoiding Harm to Crops and Plants**

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) forbade destruction of crops, trees and plantations during military campaigns. The Prophet organized or participated in eighty-seven military campaigns in the Madina period. Historians record only two occasions when the Prophet actually damaged crops during a military campaign. He did this as a way to bring these two military campaigns to a quick resolution which actually proved beneficial to both enemies as it led to no or minimal bloodshed during the campaigns. The first incident took place during the siege of the Jewish tribe of Banu Nadir. The events leading up to this military campaign have been covered in another section. When the Muslim army advanced on their strong-holds, the Banu Nadir took refuge in their fortress which was promptly besieged by the Muslims. After a ten day siege, the Prophet ordered the tallest palm trees of the Banu Nadir that were visible from inside the fort to be cut down. The palm trees were the city’s most valuable resource. In cutting them down, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was trying to convince the Banu Nadir that if they kept up their resistance, nothing of value would be left in the city. The second such occasion is recorded by Ibn Ishaq during the siege of Taif which took place after the conquest of Makkah. The events surrounding this military campaign are covered in detail in another section. After the unsuccessful siege of the Thaqif tribe of Taif which had lasted for twenty days; the Prophet ordered his companions to cut down the vineyards belonging to them. Ibn Ishaq records that these vineyards were promptly cut down by the Muslim army. The consumption of intoxicants such as liquor is prohibited in Islam and this destruction of the Thaqif vineyards can be understood in that context.

In the eleventh year after Hijra, the Prophet arranged a military campaign against the northern territories. He chose the young Usama bin Zaed, whose father Zaed had been killed in the earlier northern campaign, to lead the Muslim forces. However, the Prophet was taken ill and eventually succumbed to his illness and passed away while the Muslim force was all set to leave for the military campaign. It fell to Abu Bakr, who was chosen the first Caliph of Islam after the Prophet’s death, to give the final marching orders to Usama bin Zaed. Abu Bakr reminded Usamah of the Prophet’s strict code of conduct during battle: “Do not kill women, children, and old people...Do not stray from the right path. Never mutilate. Do not destroy palm trees, do not burn houses and corn fields, do not cut down fruit trees, and do not kill livestock except when you are compelled to eat them... As you move on, you will meet hermits who live in monasteries and serve God in seclusion. Leave them alone; do not kill them and do not destroy their monasteries.” In a few sentences, Abu Bakr synthesized the Prophet’s teachings on this subject.



## **4. VERSATILE AND OPPORTUNISTIC APPROACH TO MARTIAL TACTICS**

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) used a great deal of creativity in his approach to martial tactics. He had the uncanny ability to do an unbiased and rational appraisal of the military landscape. However, he was dynamic in his approach and constantly reassessed the battle realities and instructed his companions to change their tactics and strategies to fit the evolving situation. He chose his military strategies after weighing the strengths and weaknesses of the enemy he faced at any particular moment.

In the three major military campaigns against the Quraish, the Prophet adopted three unique and distinct military strategies. At Badr, the small Muslim army gathered around the largest well and destroyed the smaller wells. At Uhud, the Muslims had made strategic use of Uhud Mountain to safeguard their rear. At the Battle of the Trench (Ahzaab), the Muslims adopted a foreign defensive strategy of digging a trench to protect the most vulnerable sections of Madina city from the invading confederate onslaught.

The technique of waiting and keeping the enemy at a distance adopted during the Battle of the Trench had the aim of simply wearing the enemy out. This defensive strategy adopted by the Prophet was perfect in the given circumstances since (a) the crop cycle was complete and the invading army could lay their hands on minimal food and fodder for their animals; (b) the Madina winter was setting in and the invaders were not used to the frigid cold weather which descends on Madina at such a time; and (c) the invading force was comprised of a disparate group of fighters with varying levels of patience and loyalty to the Makkan cause. A war of attrition was bound to test their patience and cohesion and lead to emergence of fissures in their ranks rather quickly. Such inventiveness in military strategy is revealing in the manner in which the Prophet taught his companions both deep faith and the exploitation of intellectual creativity in all circumstances: they had not hesitated to borrow a foreign war technique, suggested by a Persian, and adapt it to their situation in Madina. The Prophet proactively tapped into human wisdom and genius and was most keen to deploy human excellence in the service of Islam. As he forcefully stated: “[Human] wisdom is the believer’s lost belonging; he is the most worthy of it wherever he finds it.”

The commentary below is not meant to be exhaustive. It is simply meant to provide the reader with a flavor of the various martial strategies adopted by the Prophet during different military campaigns.

### **Military Training and Manoeuvres**

The Muslim state of Madina did not first have a standing army. The Prophet had proclaimed that jihad was the duty of every adult Muslim. The adults of the entire Muslim community thus became the potential army of Islam. However, during peace time, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) arranged for regular military training of adult Muslim men. Races of horses, camels, donkeys and men were organized. Wrestling matches were held. Training in archery was imparted. Prizes were awarded to various winners in all events. The army remained in a state of readiness during peace time. Its efficiency and effectiveness was determined by the depth of its faith and the strength of its training.

The Prophet always took care to ensure that the morning sun did not face the soldiers directly when the attack was to be launched at dawn. The sun should shine at the back so that the enemy had the disadvantage of facing it. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was also deeply interested in meteorology. He took good care to ensure that the direction of the wind was favorable to the Muslim army and caused no impediment to the maneuverability of the soldiers. They should not have to fight against the wind.

## Preserving the Element of Surprise

The Prophet was aware of the importance of surprise attacks and of their adverse effects on the psychology of the adversary as well as on the military unity of the enemy. A successful surprise attack and easy victory strengthened the fighting spirit of the Muslim forces. This further enhanced the importance of secrecy as well as of the speed and mobility of the forces in action. His enemy was often taken by surprise when they suddenly saw his forces at their gates. The victory at Khaibar, the strongest Jewish stronghold in Arabia, can partly be attributed to the high level of surprise and secrecy employed by the Prophet. In order to keep his movements secret from his enemy, he followed circuitous or opposing routes to confuse his enemies about his true intentions. Farmers of Khaibar who were coming out of their gates to attend to their crops were taken aback to see him and his forces at dawn and ran back into their castles, shouting “Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) has come.”

On his departure from Makkah for Madina at the time of his migration in 622 AD, he first rode towards Taif which was in the opposite direction. In six of his major campaigns, his enemy was completely surprised to see his forces. In nine of his small expeditions, he took the enemy by surprise while they were quite unprepared for fighting. His success in catching his enemy unprepared was so amazing that he had light fighting in only four of the seventeen small expeditions and real battle in only six of his major campaigns.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) generally took elaborate precautions to ensure secrecy. In the Madina period, sometimes a need arose to send a large expedition. On such occasions, the Prophet would make an appeal during his Friday sermon or he would summon an extra-ordinary meeting where he would announce the number of volunteers required. Hamidullah has observed that names and addresses of such volunteers were noted down by a secretary of the Prophet at such meetings. It was only later that they were intimated about the time and place where they were required to gather with their equipment. Thus, the general public was not informed of the true intentions of such military expeditions. On many occasions, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) gave sealed written instructions to the leader of his military expedition that the leader was supposed to open and read some days after departing from Madina and on arrival at a specific place. It is quite possible that only Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and one or two of his closest confidants such as Abu Bakr and Umar knew about the true military targets of a number of expeditions. The leader of the expedition would only know his true target after having travelled a few days from Madina thus minimizing the possibility that this news could travel back to Madina or forward to the enemy. Further, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) often sent the expeditions initially in the “wrong” direction. For instance, an expedition may leave on the Najd road (east of Madina) while its destination may really be due south of Madina. This was done to prevent the espionage system of his enemies from discovering his true intentions ahead of time.

Muhammad’s attack on the Banu Lihyan took place six months after the Battle of Ahzaab in 627 AD. The Prophet adopted a circuitous route to get to this area. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) wanted to avenge the deceitful murder of Muslims at the well of Al-Raji at the hands of Banu Lihyan. Although this expedition did not succeed in its mission, it is still illuminating to read Ibn Ishaq’s account of the route taken by Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him): “[Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)] made as though he was going to Syria in order to take the people by surprise. He went past Ghurab, a mountain near Madina on the road to Syria, then by Mahis, then by Al-Batra, then he turned off to the left and came out by Bin, then by Sukhayratul Yaman, then the track went by the Makkan highroad. He quickened the pace until he came down to Ghuran, the haunts of Banu Lihyan. Ghuran is a wadi (valley) between Amaj and Usfan extending as far as a village called Saya.”

## **Preserving the Element of Surprise On Occasion of Conquest of Makkah**

In 630 AD, the Prophet blockaded the gateways to Madina and posted armed men to ensure that no one entered or left the city. This was done to prevent the possibility of leakage of news about the preparations for a major military expedition. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) told the Muslims to prepare for a major expedition. At the same time, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) sent out messengers to his allies. The earlier practice had been that the allies used to contribute a contingent of volunteers who came first to Madina and then proceeded to the destination along with the bulk of the Muslim army. However, on this occasion, the leaders of the allied tribes were secretly invited to Madina. The Prophet met with them separately and told them of the impending expedition without disclosing the target. They were asked to be ready to proceed at a moment's notice without having to come to Madina. They were told that the Muslim army would pass through their territory where they could join the main force. They were to be ready just before the new moon of Ramadan rose.

None of the Prophet's companions, allies or even his wives knew his true ambitions with regards this large assembly of warriors. Even as this army marched away from Madina in early January 630 AD, they knew neither their enemy nor their destination. Was it to be Taif, the trouble-making tribe of Hawazin, Makkah, the Byzantine Empire or the Bani Kinanah tribe? The Prophet remained inscrutable, oblivious to his soldiers' inquiries. Even his beloved wife Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her) did not know that he was planning to conquer Makkah till the time of actual departure. She did not know the time and date of departure of the expedition nor was she aware of its destination.

A very eminent companion of the Prophet, Hudhaifah ibn Al-Yaman, is quoted by Al-Bukhari as saying that the Prophet, instead of proceeding south to Makkah, took to the north, creating the impression that a war with the Byzantine Empire was imminent. He then proceeded north-east and turned south-east travelling in a zig-zag manner with the result that nobody knew his plans. In so doing, he also collected the volunteer armies of his confederate tribes that were located in these areas. The companion states that until the expedition approached the hills of Makkah, the last halt, he did not know exactly where they were going.

Muhammad's success at preserving the element of surprise was so complete that the Quraish were not even clear about the origins of the invading army that had suddenly appeared outside Makkah. Ibn Ishaq records the following conversation between Abu Sufyan and Budayl on this occasion: "Abu Sufyan was saying, 'I have never seen such fires and such a camp before.' Budayl was saying, 'these, by God, are (the fires of) Khuza which war has kindled. Abu Sufyan was saying, 'Khuza are too poor and few to have fires and camps like these.'

## **Use of Overwhelming Force when Possible**

It is obviously true that the Muslim forces were out-numbered by their enemies in the first eight years after Hijra. The first three major battles of Islam saw small contingents of the Muslims and their confederates pitched against much larger forces amassed by the Quraish (see Exhibit 8). At the Battle of Badr in 624 AD, 313 Muslims had faced a 950 strong force of the Quraish and their confederates. At the Battle of Uhud in 625 AD, 700 Muslims had fought against a 3,000 member strong force of the Quraish and their confederates ably led by commanders such as Khalid bin Waleed and Abu Sufyan. At the Battle of Ahzaab (also known as the Battle of the Trench) in 627 AD, 3,000 Muslim and their confederates successfully defended Madina from the attacking force comprised of more than 12,000 members of the Quraish and their confederates.

Once the Muslims had achieved a critical mass (which happened sometime in year six after Hijra (equivalent to 628 AD), Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was able to use over-

whelming force against his enemies. He disliked shedding blood unnecessarily and would rather take his enemies without loss of life on either side. His bloodless conquest of Makkah<sup>481</sup> is a great example of his use of over-whelming force to break the strength and resolve of his enemies. He liked to overawe his enemies and projected power very effectively. For instance, he asked his soldiers to establish bonfires over an extended area at night during the Battle of Uhud and the conquest of Makkah in order to overawe the enemy.

At the conquest of Makkah, part of the reason why this was essentially a bloodless conquest was that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) divided his force into four contingents that entered the city from four different directions. This encircling movement into Makkah from all four directions must have been a serious psychological blow for Makkans who may have wanted to resist the Muslim advance. Furthermore, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) chose to enter Makkah through a narrow mountainous passage which made the Muslim force take a long time to enter the city and thus it appeared much larger than it actually was. This further broke the back of any possible Makkan resistance which led to a bloodless conquest of the city.

### **Use of Pre-Emptive Strikes**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had a very good information gathering system. He actively sought information from individuals and tribes that were friendly towards him. This helped him forestall any hostile moves by making pre-emptive strikes against his potential enemies. As soon as he would hear of a concentration of tribesmen threatening Madina, he would send out a rapid expeditionary force to check their advances such as the expedition he sent out to Qatar in June 625.

In December 627, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) set out at the head of an expeditionary force to attack the small Jewish tribe of Fadak on the Red Sea coast to the north-west of Madina. The reason for this attack was that the chief of the tribe was arming his men with the intention of attacking Madina at the instigation of his Makkan confederates. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) moved stealthily and surprised this small group with his overwhelming force. The Muslims faced little resistance, took many prisoners and also brought home considerable amount of booty.

### **Use of Guerrilla Tactics During Military Campaigns**

In his early days in Madina, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had to engage in guerrilla warfare because of the very meager economic and military resources at his disposal. One only has to remember how few horses the Muslims brought out to the first three battlefields to face the Quraish cavalry to understand the dire straits of the Muslim forces. During the Battle of Badr, the Muslims fielded two horses. During the Uhud campaign, the Muslim army consisted of one thousand fighters; a hundred of them armored. During the digging of the trench to protect Madina from the large confederate army of the Quraish during the Battle of Ahzaab, many Muslims resorted to tying stones around their stomachs to stifle hunger pain. Beginning with a very small (almost negligible) military strength, the Prophet had to employ great wisdom and farsightedness to reach his goal of overcoming the Quraish and converting them to the cause of Islam. He was focused on the peaceful conquest of Makkah as it was to become the true capital of Islam from a religious, administrative, political, economic and diplomatic perspective. In order to achieve his military objectives, the Prophet employed many creative martial strategies to strengthen his own position vis-à-vis his enemies.

A saying of the Prophet narrated by Umm Kulthum bint Uqbah sheds light on this aspect of warfare: “I never heard [the Prophet] giving permission of lying in anything except in three [matters]: war, conciliating between people and the conversation of man with his wife and the conversation of a woman

with her husband.”<sup>482</sup> The Prophet made very effective use of guerrilla tactics during his many military campaigns. No military commander wishes his enemies to know his true intentions, his true strengths and his true weaknesses.

## **Use of Guerrilla Tactics to Neutralize Islam’s Enemies**

The Jewish poet, Ka’ab ibn Al-Ashraf of the Banu Nadir tribe of Madina had composed poems against the Prophet. An Arab poet of the time could be a great source for good or evil depending on his orientation. This fact has been discussed in detail in the Control over Media section in Military Strategies. The Arabs enjoyed good poetry and Ka’ab used his poetic gifts in rousing Arabs against Islam. The Prophet eventually became very concerned about Ka’ab’s vociferous attacks on Islam and wondered aloud if Ka’ab could be stopped. He asked his companions: “Who is for me against the son of Al-Ashraf, for he hath done me great injury?”<sup>483</sup> A number of Muslim volunteers came forth to help the Prophet get rid of Ka’ab. However, they obtained permission from the Prophet to use guerrilla tactics in luring Ka’ab ibn Al-Ashraf out of the fortress. The volunteers then succeeded in luring Ka’ab out of his fortress under false pretences and killed him. Not only did this remove a loud voice of dissension; it also served notice to other poets not to speak ill of Islam and the Prophet. This helped extinguish alternative sources of information (and disinformation) and helped Islam propagate its message more effectively.

## **Use of Guerrilla Tactics During the Siege of Madina**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) made most creative use of his limited resources during the siege of Madina. When he was informed that the Jewish tribe of Banu Quraizah was thinking of breaking their pact with the Muslims and may attack the Muslims in their rear with full support from the Makkian attackers, he used informers and secret agents to neutralize this danger. A leader of the Ghatafan tribe, Nuaim bin Masud approached the Prophet and informed him that although he had accepted Islam none of his tribesmen or any other person knew of this development. He asked the Prophet to instruct him. At this, the Prophet said: “You are only one man, so create dissension [among the enemy] for us as much as you can.”

Nuaim bin Masud proved adept at sowing seeds of dissension among the enemies of Islam. He acted as a double agent without the Makkans and the Banu Quraizah finding out that he was in fact a Muslim. He first went to Banu Quraizah, being a friend of theirs, and advised them not to attack the Muslims unless the Quraish provide them with some hostages. He suggested this course of action as a guarantee so that the Quraish would then not dishonor this new-developed rapprochement with the Banu Quraizah by departing from Madina and leaving the Banu Quraizah to face the wrath of the Muslims with whom they were about to break their pact of mutual defence. When the Banu Quraizah had accepted his advice, Nuaim bin Masud then went over to the Quraish. He told the Quraish that the Banu Quraizah had already sent a message to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) regretting their recent antagonistic behavior towards the Muslims. Nuaim bin Masud told the Quraish that the Banu Quraizah planned to ask the Quraish for hostages as a form of guarantee but that their real intentions were to hand over these hostages to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) as a way of placating the Prophet’s anger and as a way of asking for his forgiveness for their deviance from their pact of mutual defensive assistance. When the Quraish then approached the Banu Quraizah, they found the Banu Quraizah asking for hostages. This confirmed to the Quraish that Nuaim bin Masud had given them sound advice. This nascent and potentially most dangerous military alliance between the Quraish and the Banu Quraizah therefore did not materialize.



## **Policy of Divide and Conquer**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) used a policy of divide and conquer to his great advantage in the Madina period. The early Muslim military history shows us that the Muslims faced much larger forces that were both better armed and better financed. In a military situation that generally favored his adversaries, the Prophet chose his military strategies carefully. He was innovative and flexible in adopting military strategies that best suited him and gave him an advantage over his enemies. He was quick to obtain advice from his trusted aides and often accepted sound advice. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had a sharp eye for evolving tribal politics in Arabia. He was also a fine reader of personalities. His military strategies often reflected his ability to select a path of action that would divide his adversaries. The Quraish were a large tribe that was comprised of clans that, although shared a common heritage, were now divided among themselves because of competing and conflicting social, financial and military interests. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) used these differences among his adversaries to great military advantage.

The various clan leaders of the Quraish competed with each other for power and influence. Some were more powerful than the others. There was continuous internecine bickering and quarrelling in their ranks since there was an ebb and flow in the fame and fortune of different Quraish chieftains. This can be seen very well in how the Quraish approached the Battle of Badr. Prior to the Battle of Badr, when the Quraish arrived in the vicinity of Madina to safeguard the trading caravan of Abu Sufyan they discovered that Abu Sufyan's caravan had eluded the Muslims. At this juncture, the Zuhrah and Adi clans of the Quraish withdrew completely and did not advance to Badr to fight the Muslims since they saw no reason to engage the Muslims in battle now that the Abu Sufyan caravan was safely out of reach of the Muslims. It is also quite probable that they felt that Abu Jahl and his friends would stand to gain most from the destruction of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and the Muslims.

Through the logical and innocuous looking Meesaq-e-Madina (the Constitution of Madina), Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was actually able to divide the three Jewish tribes of Madina (certainly in the fate that awaited them) and was able to pick his fights with them at his own convenience. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) must have known that the Jews were disunited among themselves and were not the best of warriors. They were commercially very successful and quite wealthy. However, they did not have a long history of warfare and were known to capitulate under pressure.

After his success at Badr, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was quick to gain further strategic advantages from the enhancement of his military status. Two persons who had written poems against Islam – Asma bint Marwan of Umayyad bin Zed clan and Abu Afak of Banu Amr Banu Awf clan were both killed by Muslims. The fact that no blood-feud followed shows the growing power of the Muslims in Madina and probably testifies to the Prophet's accurate Understanding of the political landscape in Madina.

The biggest immediate strategic advantage Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) obtained at Madina after his victory at the Battle of Badr was the banishment of the Jewish tribe of Banu Qainuqah after a small dispute that had led to the death of a Muslim. The Banu Qainuqah were besieged for a fortnight, and, when they surrendered, sent away from Madina. The major consequences of this important event were that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) removed an alternate source of power in Madina, weakened the position of the other two Jewish tribes of Madina (the Banu Nadir and the Banu Quraizah) and also weakened the position of Abdullah bin Ubbaiy in Madina who lost perhaps as many as 700 of his confederates because of the exile of Banu Qainuqah.

During the Battle of the Trench, when the siege of Madina had lasted for many days, the Muslim ranks started showing the pressure. With an army more than ten thousand strong and a large number of confederates including the Banu Kinana, Tihama and Ghatafan; the Quraish had fielded a very large army indeed. Their aim was nothing less the annihilation of the Muslim state of Madina. After a siege that had lasted more than fifteen days, the situation became very serious for the Muslims. Fear was everywhere. Ibn Ishaq quotes a disaffected Muslim, Muattib bin Qusyahr: “Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) used to promise us that we should eat the treasures of Chosroes and Caesar and today not one of us can feel safe in going to the privy.”<sup>486</sup> When conditions became very difficult for the besieged Muslims of Madina, the Prophet sent an emissary to the leaders of the Ghatafan (who were confederates of the Quraish and part of the Makkah invading force) and offered them a third of the date harvest of Madina “on condition that they would go back with their followers and leave him and his men, so peace was made between them so far as the writing of a document. It was not signed and was not a definite peace, merely peace negotiations.” The Prophet then called the two Sa’ads and discussed with them the developing state-of-affairs and asked for their counsel with the following words: “It is something I am doing for your sake. By God, I would not do it were it not that I have seen the Arabs have shot at you from one bow, and gathered against you from every side and I want to break their offensive against you.” These words of the Prophet are one of the best summaries of balance of power and real politik considerations. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was keenly aware that he needed to break the strength of the invading force. He wanted to neutralize his enemy (who were much larger in number and overpowering in military strength) by sowing seeds of discord in their ranks.

The Prophet launched an attack on the rich Jewish stronghold of Khaibar immediately after his return from negotiating the ten year peace treaty with the Quraish at Hudaibiya. This treaty enabled the Prophet to focus his energies away from Makkah and the Quraish and onto other tribes of Arabia. The Prophet led a smallish Muslim army of 1,400 comprised almost exclusively of his companions who had accompanied him to Hudaibiya. He probably wished to enrich them and reward them for their steadfastness. The Muslim army moved surreptitiously and arrived in the area at night. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) then called upon a guide who knew the area well. The Prophet then promptly led the Muslim army to a position between two of the Khaibar fortresses. By doing so, the Prophet not only divided the Jews of Khaibar; he also made it most difficult for their allies, the Ghatafan tribe, to intervene in this battle. Thus, through an astute application of the divide and conquer policy, the Prophet divided his enemies and their allies. He did not let them form a united military stand against the Muslims. Rather, he chose his adversaries one by one by attacking the weakest Jewish citadels first. Not only did this make it easy for the Muslims to gain strength and confidence, it also weakened the resolve of their enemies.

On occasion of the conquest of Makkah, prior to the arrival of the Muslim army at the outskirts of Makkah, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was extremely busy in planning a peaceful takeover of Makkah. By this time, he was already married to Ume Habibah, daughter of Abu Sufyan, and Maimunah, the sister-in-law of Abbas. Both Abu Sufyan and Abbas were prominent Quraish notables and Abbas was Muhammad’s uncle. Therefore, two senior Quraish leaders were now related to him by marriage. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was busy in intense negotiations prior to his arrival at Makkah. He strived hard to show the Makkans that an armed struggle would be futile for them. He presented them with an over-whelming Muslim force that had arrived at Makkah without giving the Makkans adequate time to prepare for war. He was very successful in preserving the element of surprise. Abu Sufyan and Abbas, themselves leaders of the Quraish, played a critical role in softening Makkah resistance to the eventual Muslim takeover of Makkah in 629 AD.

## **Personal Valor**

We have discussed in detail the Prophet’s self-preservation instinct in an earlier section of this book. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was most careful in avoiding unnecessary



physical harm to his person. However, this does not mean that he was timid or weak. Quite the contrary, the Prophet deployed the most appropriate resources at his disposal to deal effectively with the threats in front of him. By the time he migrated to Madina as the religious head of a small community of Muslims, he had already gathered a few strong military commanders and brave soldiers around him. The Prophet actively increased the size of this military contingent which eventually became very large and eventually the largest military contingent in all of Arabia.

## **Personal Valor during Battle of Uhud**

During the Battle of Uhud, when the Muslims were retreating into the back of Mount Uhud, Ubaiy bin Khalaf called out to the Prophet to come and meet him in battle. “Where is Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)? Either I kill him, or I will be killed,” he cried out. Upon hearing him, the Prophet decided to meet him man-to-man. However, the Prophet was quite intelligent about this match. He took the spear from Al-Harith bin As-Simmah, one of his companions, and weighed it in his hands. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) observed that there was a gap between Ubaiy bin Khalaf’s armor and a part of his neck. He speared Ubaiy bin Khalaf in that spot in such a way that Ubaiy bin Khalaf fell off his horse and died because of this wound some days later.

## **Courageous Leadership during Battle of Ahzaab (Battle of the Trench)**

At the Battle of Ahzaab, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) himself was busy with digging the trench and had fastened a heavy stone around his belly so that he would not experience pangs of hunger. At Badr, he continuously exhorted his followers to face the over-whelming force of the Quraish. At Uhud, he decided on the military strategy with his close companions but seems to have decided on the placement of fifty archers led by Abdullah bin Jubayr on the hillock himself. One historian writes that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) instructed these archers not to leave their appointed posts even if they saw the Muslims being picked up and killed by birds.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) personally led the largest Muslim campaign of his life-time when he headed a Muslim force of more than thirty thousand to Tabuk to challenge the Byzantine Empire in 631 AD. This was to be the largest and best equipped Muslim army to be gathered during the Prophet’s lifetime. A camp was made outside Madina and Abu Bakr was put in charge of it until, when all was ready for the march, the Prophet himself rode forth and took command.

## **Taking Stand During Battle of Hunain**

At the Battle of Hunain, the Prophet found himself in a uniquely difficult situation during the thick of battle. His forces had fallen back at dawn when faced with a ferocious attack of the enemies. The skilled archers and warriors of the tribes of Banu Thaqif and Hawazin lay in ambush for the front ranks of the Muslim army. As soon as Khalid bin Waleed’s advance guard came into their range of attack they rained down arrows on the Muslim force. The Muslim advance force felt uprooted, and the enemy, taking advantage of the situation launched another strong attack. The Muslim army panicked and started to flee. Camels and horses with their riders started scampering in different directions. Only very few Muslim fighters remained in the battlefield.

In the midst of this retreating flood of Muslim warriors, the Prophet held his ground and called out to the Muslims: “Where to? Where to? Come back! Come back to me!” The Prophet called out to his men: “I am doubtless the Prophet of Allah Almighty; I am the son of Abdul Muttalib! See with your own eyes that I am standing here firm and determined, and I will not flee.”

The Prophet also reportedly commanded his uncle Abbas, who had a powerful voice, to call the Immigrants and the Helpers. Abbas's strong voice reached a majority of the Muslim troops: "O Ansaar, you who have opened their homes (for the Muslim immigrants) and helped the Prophet! O Muhajireen! O you have pledged your allegiance under the tree! Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) is still alive, charge forward with him. Abbas also repeated the call until the whole valley reverberated with its echo. Muslim hearts were immediately touched by the Prophet's call and their will strengthened. There and then from every corner and quarter came the resounding cry: "At your command! O Prophet". Muslim troops then returned to the battlefield with resolution and gallantry. Reorganizing themselves quickly, the Muslim soldiers now began to march shoulder to shoulder. The Prophet who was watching the situation with satisfaction proclaimed, "Now the battle has begun." The call of the Prophet and his valiant stand saved the day for the Muslims who returned to fight and were victorious.

## **Use of Crops and Plantations to Gain Advantage over the Enemy**

The Prophet was keenly aware of the crop cycle which sometimes dictated war strategy. For instance, at the time of the Battle of Uhud, the Muslims of Madina had not had the time to harvest their crops. The invading army of the Quraish was, therefore, able to feed themselves and their horses and camels upon the rich nutritious harvest of the Madina oasis that was ready to harvest but not yet harvested. This development had been quite painful for the people of Madina to watch. This partly explains why the Muslims decided to come out of their city strong-holds and meet their enemy at the foot of Mount Uhud, outside the city.

The Quraish were not very successful in timing their next large attempt at defeating the Muslims. When they finally arrived at the outskirts of Madina with a large confederate force numbering more than ten thousand soldiers in 627 AD, the crops of Madina had already been harvested and safely stored in the Madina strong-hold. This was partly the reason why the Prophet decided to stay within the city and adopt a defensive strategy. When the Quraish arrived at the outskirts of Madina, they were surprised by the unique defensive strategy of digging a deep and wide trench at the weakest points around Madina. The army of the Quraish and their confederates was not prepared for a long period of siege. The agricultural fields around Madina provided them with no food and nutrition. Eventually, they receded from Madina without victory.

The Prophet used the crop cycle and plantations to his advantage on at least two occasions. When the Muslims attacked the strongholds of the Jewish tribe of Banu Nadir in August 625 AD, the Banu Nadir took refuge in their well-structured and well-provisioned forts. The Prophet ordered that the palm-trees belonging to the Banu Nadir should be cut down and burnt. Seeing this development, the Banu Nadir called out to the Prophet: "Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), you have prohibited wanton destruction and blamed those guilty of it. Why then are you cutting down and burning our palm-trees?" The Banu Nadir had been promised support by Abdullah bin Ubbaiy and his companions. When this support failed to materialize, the Banu Nadir lost heart and negotiated the terms of their expulsion from Madina.

On the occasion of the invasion of Taif after the capture of Makkah, we find the Prophet engaged in a most difficult siege. The people of Taif were rich and lived in strong fortresses that they defended very ably. They enjoyed very strong harvests and their agricultural produce was sold far and wide. After many days of a difficult siege (which had come after the relatively easy take-over of Makkah, a much larger city), the Prophet ordered the storming of the wall. A number of Muhammad's companions "went under a testudo and advanced up to the wall to breach it. Thaqif [the inhabitants of Taif] let loose on them scraps of hot iron so they came out from under it and Thaqif shot them with arrows and killed some of them. The Apostle ordered that the vineyards of Thaqif should be cut down and the men fell upon them cutting them down." It is possible that the destruction of the vineyards could have been in line with the Islamic

prohibition on wine-making and wine-drinking. Therefore, this particular incident is different from the Banu Nadir incident narrated above.

We can see above that the Prophet had a versatile approach to martial tactics. He wished not to prolong warfare and could employ creative means to bring warfare and murder to a quick end. If the Muslim siege of the Banu Nadir had become more extended, it is possible that the Muslim resolve and hatred of the Banu Nadir may have hardened even more. This could easily have led to the Banu Nadir getting much more difficult terms from the Prophet that could have included some loss of life on the Jewish side. Similarly, the Prophet's destruction of the vineyards belonging to the Tha'if could have served the dual purpose of softening the resistance of the Tha'if and also following the Islamic commandment against wine-making and wine-drinking.

## **5. PRACTICAL WISDOM DURING BATTLE**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was brave (for instance in his man-to-man combat with Ubayy bin Khalaf at Uhud) but not reckless (for instance, he did not himself challenge the notables of the Quraish to a dual at Badr and delegated the task to Hamza and Ali who were superior fighters). He made practical assessments of the military situation and made calculated decisions.

### **Practical Wisdom during Battle of Uhud**

During the Battle of Uhud, the Prophet's companion Mus'ab bin Umayr was killed by the Quraish. However, since Mus'ab bin Umayr resembled the Prophet in appearance, a clamor went out that the Prophet himself had been killed. This rumor was quashed by Ka'b ibn Malik who discovered that the Prophet was, in fact, alive and well. On making this discovery, he turned and shouted to those behind him on the slopes of Mount Uhud: "O Muslims, be of good cheer! This is the Messenger of God!" The Prophet motioned him to be silent so that the Quraish not discover that he was alive and not discover his whereabouts in the general melee. Ka'b ibn Malik then did not shout the good news again which spread from mouth to mouth. The Muslims who had become disheartened on hearing the rumor now rejoined battle with such a ferocity that the tables were turned on the Quraish who began to flee the battle-field in terror.

### **Practical Wisdom during the Battle of Trench**

During the Battle of Trench which essentially was a defensive battle, the Prophet had time on his side. He showed tremendous patience in dealing with his enemies in this battle. The Muslims dug a trench to defend the city from the invaders who arrived on the outskirts of Madina in the month of Shawwal in 5 AH. The Muslims numbered 3,000 warriors while the confederate troops numbered at least 12,000 and were also better armed and equipped. The Muslims then braced for a defensive strategy. It was perhaps not lost on the Prophet that the end of the month of Shawwal would lead to the months of the Truce of God. In these months, the pagans did not wage war. However, perhaps more important, these months brought a sea of pilgrims to the city of Makkah as these months were the months of peace in Makkah. The Makkans could not go away from their town at that period to miss the considerable revenues and profits to be enjoyed by trading with the pilgrims arriving in their city. To the Prophet's delight, Abu Sufyan, the leader of the Quraish and a consummate trader, lifted the siege to go home to Makkah. His confederate mercenaries then had no choice but to leave Madina at the same time. Thus, the Prophet simply waited out his enemies during the Battle of Trench. This might have been the reason why he adopted this novel strategy during this battle. He succeeded in avoiding a quick pitched battle with the Quraish and, instead, drew them into a long event-less siege of Madina.

### **Practical Wisdom during the Battle of Khaibar**

The Prophet undertook a courageous attack on the Jewish stronghold of Khaibar after the truce of Hudaibiya. The truce of Hudaibiya had essentially neutralized the military threat from the Quraish. The Jews of Khaibar lived comfortably in well-defended forts and their forces numbered ten thousand in all. They also sought the help of the Ghatafan tribe and promised the Ghatafan half of the date harvest of Khaibar for their military support. The Ghatafan's participation in this battle to support the Jews of Khaibar would have brought their total number to fourteen thousand. The Prophet probably had a meager force of fourteen hundred (or sixteen hundred) men only<sup>495</sup> since he had restricted participation in the Battle of Khaibar with its potential acquisition of immense booty (the Jews of Khaibar were the richest community in all of Arabia) to only those Muslims that had been his companions in the minor pilgrimage which had culminated at Hudaibiya a few months earlier. That minor pilgrimage was not a journey for the

faint-hearted because of the possibility the Quraish of Makkah could have attacked this group of unarmed pilgrims before they reached the sacred precincts of Makkah. The Prophet had meant to reward his loyal supporters who had gone with him on this pilgrimage by limiting the participation in the Khaibar expedition to them.

The Prophet marched swiftly to Khaibar and reached the proximity of Khaibar within two and a half days. The Prophet, in his sagacity, decided to take up a position that would put the Muslim army as a barrier between Khaibar and her allies of Ghatafan. With this end in view, the Prophet asked for a guide and marched surreptitiously during the night to reach an open space in front of the walls. The march had been so quiet and the night so dark that the inhabitants of Khaibar did not learn of the arrival of the Muslim army at their gates till dawn. This quiet arrival was probably one of three factors that led the Jews of Khaibar to decide not to come out as a united force to face the Muslims. The other two factors were the disunity in their ranks and their false pride in the strength of their strong-holds which had remained impregnable till this time.

### **The Unsuccessful Siege of Taif**

A great example of the Prophet's practical wisdom was the siege of Taif immediately after the conquest of Makkah where he decided to lift the siege of the city after more than twenty days of an unsuccessful assault on the strong Taif fortress. He told Umar to retreat. Upon hearing this, the Muslim fighters raised a clamor saying: "Shall we leave when we have not conquered it?" The Prophet replied: "Then start fighting in the morning." In the morning, they fought and were wounded and the Prophet said: "If Allah wills, we shall depart." Upon hearing this, they were pleased and they began to leave. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was quite amused at this development and laughed. Events of the morning had proved to his followers the sagacity of this decision to leave Taif without taking it. He knew that the people of Taif now were not a threat to the Muslims and will probably convert to Islam in due course, in any way. His action at that time was not popular with the rank and file of the Muslim army who could not understand how the victors of Makkah could not now take the smallish target of Taif. According to Ibn Ishaq, twelve companions of the Prophet lost their lives during the unsuccessful siege of Taif – seven from Quraish, four from the Ansaar and one from the tribe of Banu Layth.

### **Military Precautions Adopted During the Minor Pilgrimage of 629 AD**

While Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and his 1,400 companions were prevented from performing the minor pilgrimage (Umra) in 628 AD, they returned to Makkah the next year under the terms of the truce of Hudaibiya to perform a minor pilgrimage. The Prophet now returned to Makkah with 2,000 companions to perform the minor pilgrimage. The Muslim pilgrims had no weapons except swords which really formed part and parcel of their attire. On the Muslim entry into Makkah, the Quraish left Makkah for three days and ascended the hills around Ka'aba to watch the Muslims from a distance.

The Prophet observed precautions before entering Makkah. He appointed a cavalry of one hundred soldiers led by Muhammad bin Muslamah, at Marr-az-Zahran, in the vicinity of Makkah and ordered them to stay vigilant all the time. Muhammad bin Muslamah and his companions climbed a hill situated in Marr-az-Zahran from where they could watch Makkah. The Prophet's final instructions to Muhammad bin Muslamah were: "If you see the disbelievers attacking us, then come to our assistance, otherwise stay here till our return." Theodore Roosevelt, the legendary and highly successful American President at the turn of the twentieth century, once remarked that a major reason for his great success had been that he "spoke softly but carried a big stick." We see here that while focused on performing the minor pilgrimage, the Prophet was not oblivious to the need to protect and defend the large (and unarmed) Muslim contingent that had arrived in Makkah, a hostile city, to perform the pilgrimage.

## **Practical Wisdom during Battle of Hunain**

On their initial arrival at Hunain, the Muslim army was routed by the well-organized army of the Hawazin under Malik bin Auf. The enemies had arrived at the battlefield early and had hidden themselves in the bypaths, side tracks and narrow places of the wide and sloping valley. The enemies were fully prepared for the arrival of the Muslim army. The large Muslim army was very surprised and the majority of the Muslims fled in disarray. On witnessing the Muslim flight, the recently converted Abu Sufyan remarked: "Their flight will not stop before they get to the sea." Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), however, moved to the right and held his ground. He called out to his companions who quickly rallied around him. Very quickly, a group of loyal Muhajireen and Ansaar gathered around him. On realizing that the Muslims were not heeding his soft voice, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) called upon Al-Abbas to call out to the Muslims. He instructed Abbas to cry out loudly the following words: "O Ansaar, O comrades of the acacia tree" which was a reference to the Muslims who had been most helpful to him in trying times. The acacia tree was a reference to the Muslims who committed to a pact of mutual defence under an acacia tree during the strenuous negotiations at Hudaibiya. Finally, more than a hundred Muslims gathered around the Prophet. Ibn Ishaq reports as follows: "They were steadfast in the fight and the apostle standing in his stirrups looked down at the melee as they were fighting and said, 'Now the oven is hot.'"

## 6. SUMMARY

### OVERVIEW OF MILITARY, STRATEGIES DURING BATTLES OF BADR, UHUD, AFTER UHUD, BATTLE OF AHZAAB AND CAPTURE OF MAKKA

#### A. Military Strategies during Battle of Badr

The Battle of Badr took place in March 624 AD which corresponded to 17 Ramadan in 2 H.500 According to Ibn Sa'ad, 238 Ansaar and 86 Emigrants who took part in the Battle of Badr. According to Mubarakpuri, the Prophet led an army of 300 – 317 men that comprised of 82-86 Emigrants, 61 members of Aws and 170 fighters from Khazraj. He also had 2 horses and 70 camels. He moved south along the Makkah road and then turned left to Badr.

The very first martial tactics employed by the small Islamic state were remarkably well-organized and disciplined. The following are examples of the actions Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) took immediately prior to the Battle of Badr:

1. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) appointed a deputy in Madina before he left for the battle-field. This helped develop a clear chain-of-command in Madina so that critical decision-making in Madina was not hampered by developments on the battle-field.
2. The Prophet divided the Muslim army into different divisions and appointed a commander for each of these divisions. This developed a clear chain-of-command on the battle-field. In addition, it enabled well-chosen valiant Muslim commanders to lead their divisions and to monitor their soldiers very closely.
3. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) appointed Qais Al-Muzani to watch the rear of the Muslim army so that the Muslim contingent was not taken by surprise.
4. The Muslim army reached the battle-field of Badr first and took control of the largest well at Badr (and destroyed the other wells) before the army of the Quraish reached the battle-field. This was to become a great strategic asset for the Muslims. They enjoyed a true first-mover advantage, chose the terrain, gained control of a most strategic asset and shaped the martial encounter.
5. The Prophet spent considerable time on the formation of the Muslim army. This was essential if the small Muslim army was to have any hope of overpowering the three times larger army of the Quraish.
6. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) ordered the Muslim fighters to wait for instruction before engaging in warfare. The Muslim fighters were given clear instructions not to take any military action on their own and to wait for Muhammad's orders.
7. The Prophet instructed his army to wait for the enemy to come within range before they launched their arrows. The Muslims had very limited weaponry and equipment and Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) wished to optimize the use of the bows and arrows and spears of the Muslim army.
8. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) pointed out to his army that their most effective strength lay in practicing the art of rummi – the art of throwing. This covered all weapons of war including bows and arrows, javelins, spears and swords. A well-aimed arrow or javelin can turn the



course of a battle. The Muslims were commanded to ensure that they made the best use of their limited weapons and did not engage in indiscriminate rummi.

9. In the Battle of Badr, a special covered platform was erected for the Prophet at the rear of the place where the army was deployed. Considering the hilly terrain of Badr, this provided an elevated and covered vantage point to the Prophet to monitor military developments.

10. The rules and principles of warfare were promulgated and declared. Women, children, people not taking part in active warfare and all senior citizens were not to be killed or harmed in any way. Thus, the Prophet expressly forbade pillaging and rape which had been standard Arab military practices prior to Islam.

11. The Prophet continuously extolled the virtues of fighting in the way of Islam and encouraged the Muslims to show courage and valor. He also promised them God's succor if they held steadfast and if they exhibited discipline on the battle-field. Naturally, those Muslims who died on the battle-field were martyrs and were guaranteed a place in heaven. The Prophet also beseeched Allah to help the small Muslim army. Thus, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) took great care of the psychological aspects of warfare.

The above summary shows the Prophet to be a military strategist of the highest order. Great military strategists including Sun Tzu and Von Clausewitz would readily have commended these strategies which helped a small Muslim force rout a three times larger enemy force.

The Battle of Badr was a turning point in the history of Islam. The 313 Muslim warriors had defeated the three times larger army of the Quraish who fled the battle-field in total disarray. Seldom has such an insignificant conflict had such far reaching consequences. The moral effect, especially in Madina, can hardly be overestimated.<sup>503</sup> The effect on the Quraish was totally devastating. They faced the death of a large number of their leaders and were now forced to recognize the Muslims as a rising power in the region.

## **B. Military Strategies during Battle of Uhud**

The Quraish were anxious to avenge their defeat at the Battle of Badr. The Leading chieftains of the Quraish including Abu Sufyan, Ikrimah bin Abu Jahl, Safwan bin Umayyah and Abdullah bin Abi Rabi'ah gathered a great army numbering 3,000 and marched on Madina. They arrived in the vicinity of Madina on March 21, 625 AD.

### **Cerebral and not emotional approach to military strategy**

When news reached Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) of the arrival of the large Quraish army, he called a council of war. Given the overwhelming force of the Quraish and their confederates, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was of the opinion that the Muslims should avoid a pitched battle outside the city which would give the advantage to the much larger and better equipped force of the Quraish. He was more in favor of remaining in the centre of Madina where the strongholds and other buildings were close together and formed a natural line of defence. This would have substantially reduced the Makkan cavalry advantage and forced them to fight a guerrilla war comprised of house-to-house fighting in an unfamiliar city and terrain. However, several younger Muslims were strongly in favor of meeting the Quraish outside the city where the Quraish were already laying waste the Madina crops. They remembered too well the Muslim victory at Badr and felt confident that they will be able to repeat the same feat. The Prophet, on the other hand, was more circumspect and cerebral. His mental calculations of the enemy's strength had made him favor guerrilla tactics rather than

a pitched battle. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) eventually agreed to wage a pitched battle against the enemy with some reluctance.

Once the Muslim contingent had left Madina for Uhud, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) used secrecy to successfully place the Muslim army on the lower slopes of Uhud Mountain early in the morning of next day. The Muslim army was positioned in such a way that the enemy camp was between them and the main settlements of Madina. To protect the left flank of the Muslim army, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) stationed a party of fifty archers on a small hillock a little to the east.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had been wise in choosing his ground. He had in a sense left the main part of the oasis exposed to an enemy assault but had probably calculated that the enemy would decide to engage the Muslim force under his command rather than attack the oasis directly where they would have to engage in house-to-house combat. However, in receding to the base of the Uhud Mountain, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had now ensured that the enemy would have to advance through an open wadi (valley) to meet him and would, in fact, have to ascend the mountain slopes to engage in battle. This would make it difficult for them to make the best use of their numerical superiority and of their mounted cavalry because of the treacherous mountainous terrain. The discipline of the large Makkani force would be severely tested as they ascend the mountain slopes of Uhud to engage the Muslims in battle. Compared to the Makkani force, the Muslims were more agile and would be able to use their familiarity of the local terrain to engage in guerrilla warfare.

It is a great credit to Muhammad's military brilliance that when the Makkans arrived at Madina in March 627 to besiege Madina, they located part of their camp on the lower slopes of Uhud mountain to prevent the Muslims from taking up the advantageous position there which they had occupied during the Battle of Uhud.

After the Battle of Uhud, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) gathered his remaining force and pursued the Makkani army to deter them from making any further attacks on Madina. To make his demonstration of strength visible, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had summoned his men to collect wood throughout the day and lit many fires during the night to show the Makkans that his own force was much larger than its actual size. This discouraged the Makkans from turning back for another fight and they returned to Makkah.

It is a matter of some debate among historians as to why the Makkans, under the leadership of Abu Sufyan, did not press their advantage after the Muslims had been defeated at Uhud. Watt maintains that the Makkans did not attack Madina proper because the Muslim army was partially intact and there were some Muslim forces in Madina that had still not been engaged. Evidently, the Quraish did not feel strong enough to attack the Medeanese strongholds. Frantz Buhl suggests that the failure of the Quraish to follow up on Uhud resulted from their lack of statesmanly vision, which let them be satisfied with formal vengeance for Badr.<sup>504</sup>

Ultimately, the Battle of Uhud is remembered as a trial for all concerned. Ibn Ishaq sums it up such: "The day of Uhud was a day of trial, calamity, and heart-searching on which God tested the believers and put the hypocrites on trial, those who professed faith with their tongues and hid unbelief in their hearts; and a day in which God honored with martyrdom those whom he willed."

### **C. Military Strategies in the Tumultuous Period between Battle of Uhud and Battle of Ahzaab**

The period between the Battle of Uhud and Battle of Ahzaab was marked by a great deal of diplomatic and military activity. This is an important period since it illustrates many aspects of the Prophet's diplomatic and military strategies. In the months that followed the battle of Uhud, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) must have been acutely aware of his perceived weakness in the minds of the Quraish. He was fully aware that he quickly needed to strengthen his comparative position vis-à-vis the Makkans. Given that the balance of power had visibly taken an adverse turn for him, many Arab tribes now could either rise against him or collude against him. This period can easily be called a period of intrigues against Islam and the Prophet of Islam.

A map of the area around Madina illustrates the following point: the Ghatafan and Fazarah tribes lived to the north of Madina; the Banu Sulaym to the east, the Makkans, the Kinana and the Thaqif to the south. Since all of these tribes were originally friendly towards the Makkans; Madina was threatened on all three sides by hostile and entrenched forces.

After the Muslim loss at Uhud, the Muslim trade routes to the North were blocked by Ukaidir,

the chief of Dumat al-Jandal, a tribe that lived in the extreme north of Arabia at a fortnight's journey from Madina. Ukaidir's blockade of Madina trade meant that vital northern trade route to Syria and Mesopotamia was now effectively blocked. This was a most disturbing development for Madina in general and for the Prophet in particular. It was quite clear that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) himself would have to arrange an expedition to tackle this problem.

Muhammad's policy in the two years following Uhud was, as far as possible, to forestall hostile moves against Madina. This was a period of tremendous weakness for the Muslim polity. The Prophet wanted to make sure that he countered this perception among his adversaries and neighbors. The balance of power had shifted clearly in favor of the Quraish in this period and Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) deployed his immense diplomatic and military brilliance to counter this as quickly as possible. As soon as he heard of a concentration of tribesmen threatening Madina, he sent out an expedition to forestall any such threat. Such was the raid to Qatan against the Banu Assad with 150 men in June 625. Exactly a year later, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) himself led a similar raid to Dhat ar Riqa against Banu Anmar and Thalabah with a large force. The effect of these expeditions was to demonstrate the Muslim strength.

### **D. Military Strategies Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) Adopted During the Battle of Ahzaab**

The third major battle of Islam was the Battle of Ahzaab which is also known as the Battle of Confederates and the Battle of the Ditch (khandaq). Some historians call it the siege of Madina. This battle took place between January 3 and 24 in 627 AD which corresponds to 8-29 Shawal, 5H.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was keenly aware that the Quraish would make a serious effort to attack Madina after the inconclusive end of the Battle of Uhud. As news reached him of the attack plans being prepared by the Quraish, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) ordered the early harvest of the important grain crop around Madina. All of the crops were harvested early this year with the result that when the large Quraish army arrived at Madina, they had immense difficulty in securing pasture for their horses and food for their armies. The corollary on the Muslim side was that the grains were now safely stored in Madina for the inhabitants who also were spared the agony of seeing

the Quraish lay their fields waste. The Makkans' destruction of their outlying crops had been one reason why the Muslim army had had to come out to Uhud to fight with the Quraish. Now, with the crops harvested early and stored for use, the Muslims had the advantage compared to the Quraish and they could easily withstand the siege launched by the Quraish. The camels of the Quraish were left to subsist on the acacias of the Aqiq valley. Meanwhile, the camels of Ghatafan, confederates of the Quraish, were living on two kinds of tamarisk which grew in the thicketed parts of the plains near Uhud. However, there was nothing for the horses of either army except the fodder that they had brought with them.

The Makkan army comprised of about 12,000 men formed into three separate corps. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), on the other hand, could count on only about 3,000 men. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) called for a war counsel and evaluated various pieces of advice that were presented to him. He eventually settled on a novel approach to warfare when faced with this overwhelming force. He decided to take advantage of the peculiar landscape surrounding Madina by digging a trench. On the south, east and west, the oasis of Madina is surrounded by lava flows (large black lava rocks strewn all over a barren sandy landscape) that make it very difficult for people on foot, on camels or horses to move around freely. On the north, Madina is partially protected by a fair-sized hill known as Mount Sal which the Prophet decided to incorporate into the trench being dug by the Muslims. The geographic landscape and incorporation of Mount Sal into the plans for the trench allowed the Muslims to defend their city from higher ground than the invaders. This was a secondary but important source of advantage for the Muslim defenders of the city as the invaders were reduced to trying to jump the trench from lower ground. Exhibit 7 shows the peculiar geography of Madina at the occasion of the Battle of Ahzaab.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) asked for the work on the trench to begin as soon as he got news that the Makkan force had left Makkah. Perhaps he wanted the urgency to dawn on his compatriots before the defensive preparations could be started in Madina. The digging of the trench had included essentially all able-bodied Muslims in Madina and took six days of hard work. He divided the work among the various tribal groups and then developed a healthy rivalry among them about which group would complete the task first.

Muhammad's decision to dig a trench was brilliant since the trench neutralized the 600-strong cavalry of the Quraish. The ditch was so wide that even the fastest horse could not jump across it. It was also so deep that no man who fell in it could come out of it without help. The trench's depth was three to four yards. The Quraish horses were reluctant to approach the trench let alone try to jump over it. In fact, the trench presented the Quraish with a double predicament. Not only were their horses now useless; they also somehow had to feed these 600 horses in order to keep them alive. The Quraish were, therefore, reduced to trying to jump over the trench on foot and to uttering oral challenges to the Muslims that went largely unheeded by the defenders of Madina.

The siege of Madina lasted about a fortnight and ended in the utter failure of the Makkans to cross the trench and invade Madina. The Muslim victory at this battle had a great deal to do with the Prophet's sagacity. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had superior information and better secret agents. He chose a very creative defensive strategy that was new in Arabia which was uniquely suitable for the terrain around Madina. The invaders were unable to break the siege as they had not expected it and neither prepared for it. They were still stuck in their ways of pitched battles where their cavalry could have been a source of great advantage to them. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), however, refused to meet his adversaries on their turf.

## **E. The Prophet's Military Strategies in the Conquest of Makkah**

One has to appreciate that the Prophet changed his military strategies in light of the changing ground realities in Arabia. Beginning with a position of substantial military weakness compared to his adversaries, his choice of military strategies enabled the nascent Muslim state in Madina to gain in military, political and economic stature. He had an uncanny ability to gather information about his adversaries and their plans, to perform an unbiased assessment of his own military strengths and weaknesses, and then to develop military strategies aimed at the optimal utilization of his own military assets while neutralizing the capabilities of his enemies.

Despite the very large number of military expeditions initiated by him in his time in Madina, very few human lives were lost on both sides. This very important fact is often neglected or overlooked by historians critical of the Prophet's achievements. The Prophet abhorred unnecessary bloodshed and hated indiscriminate killing of the elderly, women and children.

The Prophet's conquest of Makkah in 629 AD presents us with a unique opportunity to review his military strategy at a time when he was gaining in military and diplomatic strength relative to his adversaries in Makkah. The following aspects of his military strategy can be appreciated as we review this military campaign.

### **1. Secrecy**

While it is true that Abu Bakr and Umar were Muhammad's closest companions and confidants in many respects, the Prophet kept many of his plans close to his own heart. This was especially true of his military campaign against Makkah in 629 AD when not even his beloved wife Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her) knew of his real military target. The Prophet had asked for military preparations and asked his companions to get ready for a long journey and a military campaign without telling them of his target. Thus, not only did he keep his companions guessing, he also neutralized the spy network of his enemies. The result was that when the Muslim army arrived at the outskirts of Makkah, most inhabitants of the city were taken by surprise. Ibn Ishaq points out that "when the apostle had reached Marr Az-Zahran, Quraish were completely ignorant of the fact and did not even know what he was doing." The potential military resistance from the Quraish was thus very effectively neutralized.

### **2. Use of overwhelming force**

The Prophet undertook his military campaign against Makkah at a time when he could gather overwhelming force against his enemies. A 10,000 strong Muslim force marched against Makkah. Ibn Ishaq notes that the Muslim force comprised of 10,000 men: "The Immigrants (Muhajireen) and the Helpers (Ansaar) went as one man; not one stayed behind". They were accompanied by the Sulaym tribe with either 700 or 1,000 men and the Muzaynah tribe with another 1,000 men. To put this figure in perspective, the Quraish had launched their largest unsuccessful campaign against Madina when they had arrived at Madina in 627 AD. The Quraish had gathered all of their confederates to launch this attack and their total force then had numbered 12,000. Between 627 AD and 629 AD, the Quraish had become considerably weaker and had lost friends at a great speed. While the Muslim power had grown since the Prophet's migration to Madina in 622 AD, the star of the Quraish had waned considerably in the same time period. In a sense, power at that time in Arabia had been a zero-sum game with the Muslims gaining strength at the expense of the Quraish of Makkah.

### **3. Early infiltration through Abu Sufyan and Abbas**

In a sense, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had been preparing for a take-over of Makkah ever since the time he received the first revelation. The Ka'aba shrine in Makkah had been founded by Ibrahim and the Prophet claimed lineage from him. Makkah was the religious, political, economic and administrative nucleus of Arabia and Islam had to flourish in Makkah before it could flourish in the rest of the world. Thus, the Prophet was always focused on Makkah as the prize. However, the extreme hostility of the Quraish had forced him to change his strategy. After thirteen years of preaching Islam in Makkah, the Prophet migrated to Madina to found the Islamic state there. This Islamic state eventually took over Makkah through a successful military campaign.

The Prophet's actual plans for a military takeover of Makkah had probably started at the time of Hudaibiya. Although he signed a ten-year non-aggression treaty with the Quraish at Hudaibiya, he must have known that the Quraish (or specifically, some part of the Quraish) would probably break this pact with him sooner or later. After all, the clan of the Quraish was comprised of a few powerful families that competed with each other for trade privileges, power and influence. Many of them were known to be feuding with each other. In the meantime, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) continued to strengthen his own position in Arabia by capturing Khaibar and negotiating treaties of friendship with other pagan tribes of Arabia. The Prophet was also successful at converting pagan Arabs to Islam. Thus, the growing ranks of the Muslims were also a source of great strength for the Prophet.

Since the inconclusive Battle of Ahzaab in 627 AD which had essentially left the status quo intact, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had accelerated his diplomatic maneuvering in Makkah. He had actively sought to win friends there. His marriage to Ume Habibah, the widowed daughter of Abu Sufyan in 628 AD, made Abu Sufyan his father-in-law. Abu Sufyan was a Leading Quraish notable who had earlier been most hostile to Islam. Further, he married Maimunah, the widowed sister-in-law of his uncle Abbas in 629 AD before the conquest of Makkah. This bound Abbas, the Prophet's uncle and a Leading light of the Quraish, to the Prophet through marriage. It is interesting to note that both of these marriages were consummated between the inconclusive Battle of Ahzaab in 627 AD and the conquest of Makkah in 629 AD. Both Abu Sufyan and Abbas were instrumental in turning the tide of hostility in Makkah towards Islam. The Prophet had also been generous to the residents of Makkah during a time of draught in the city when he had sent a large consignment of delicious dates of Madina to Makkah along with money to be distributed to the poor in Makkah. Thus, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was active in softening Makkah on various fronts even before the launch of his military campaign against the city.

### **4. Projection of power**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was most aware of the importance of projecting power. In Arab society at that time, perceived power was more important than actual power. For instance, a family or tribe that could not avenge its dead became marginalized as impotent and unimportant. The Prophet was most sensitive to this aspect of statecraft. He could not, and did not, let others believe that he had limited power at his disposal or that his influence was on the wane. Time and again, we see him sensitive to balance of power considerations. We find him quick to balance any perceived weaknesses with a show of force. Thus, we find him Leading a Muslim contingent on the outskirts of Madina challenging the Quraish the day after the Muslim defeat at Uhud in 625 AD. We also find him launching a successful campaign against Khaibar immediately after his return from Hudaibiya in 628 AD.

At the time of conquest of Makkah, the Prophet chose to divide the Muslim force in four contingents that entered the city of Makkah from four different directions. He also chose to enter the city of Makkah

through a narrow gorge so that the Muslim force took a long time to enter the city and appeared much larger than it actually was. The night before his entry into Makkah, the Prophet ordered his forces to spread out on the hillocks and plains surrounding Makkah and burn large bonfires so that the inhabitants of Makkah could be overawed by the size of the Muslim forces. All of these actions had the desired effect of breaking the back of any possible military resistance against the Muslim takeover of Makkah.

## 5. Conversion through

generous and forgiving behavior

As the Prophet entered the Makkah valley, he was most concerned to minimize unnecessary bloodshed. The standard of the Ansaar was carried by their chieftain, Sa'ad bin Ubadah. On seeing Abu Sufyan, he shouted: "Today is a day of slaughter, today the sanctity of the Sacred Mosque has been lifted, and today Allah has humbled the Quraish." Abu Sufyan went over to the Prophet and mentioned this to him. Upon hearing this, the Prophet replied: "Sa'ad is mistaken; this day is a day on which the Ka'aba will be venerated. Today, Allah has made Quraish mighty." The Prophet then took the standard of the Ansaar from Sa'ad bin Ubadah and handed it to his son, Qais.

Upon his arrival at the outskirts of Makkah, the Prophet announced a general amnesty for all inhabitants of Makkah who did one of the following:

- a. Entered the Ka'aba shrine and did not attempt to resist the Muslim army.
- b. Stayed inside their homes and did not come out to fight the Muslims.
- c. Congregated at Abu Sufyan's house and did not come out to fight the Muslims

It is important to note these announcements were actually made by Abu Sufyan to his fellow Makkans in the following words: "This is Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) who has come to you with forces which you can never resist, so whoever enters the house of Abu Sufyan will be safe...And whoever locks the door of his house will be safe and whoever enters the Mosque will be safe."

When the Muslim victory in Makkah was fully established, the Prophet went to the Ka'aba and cleansed it of all idols. Meanwhile, the Quraish gathered around the Ka'aba shrine to find out what the Prophet would do to them. On seeing them perturbed about their future, the Prophet said: "None has the right to be worshipped except Allah, alone, without partners; He has fulfilled His promise, helped His slave, strengthened His army and defeated the [pagan] confederates alone." He went on to ask the Quraish: "O people of Quraish! What do you think I will do with you?" They said: "Good, you are a noble brother, son of a noble brother." He said: "Then I say to you what Joseph said to his brothers: 'There is no blame upon you this day. Go, for you are free.'"

The Prophet's magnanimity stunned many of the Quraish who had genuinely feared for their lives and belongings. After all, most of them had fought against Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) with all of their might and had done their best to harm him. The Prophet's generosity resulted in mass conversion of the Quraish to Islam. In times to come, many of them became the stalwarts of Islam and made immense contributions to the growth of Islam beyond Arabia. It is quite possible that Islam may not have flourished far and wide beyond Arabia if the Quraish had not been generously pardoned by the Prophet on this occasion.



## **6. Alignment of military strategy with long-term political goals**

The conquest of Makkah shows us that it is most important to align military strategy with larger long-term political goals. The Prophet was never interested in Pyrrhic victories – winning of small battles and skirmishes at the expense of losing the overall war. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was focused on his overall goal – the propagation of Islam in Arabia and beyond and never lost sight of this goal. A peaceful takeover of Makkah was critical to his achieving this over-arching goal. He had suffered great personal losses at the hands of the Quraish. His beloved uncle Abu Talib and beloved wife Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her) had died in 619 AD after suffering deprivation at the hands of the Quraish. Many of his fellow-Muslims had been persecuted and killed by the Quraish. He had been forced into an exile. His beloved uncle Hamza had died at Uhud. However, the Prophet set aside all of these sufferings and acted in a most magnanimous manner. Now, he was the true Sayyed of all of Arabia and his writ could now be the law of the land. However, he never lost sight of his overarching goal and was not vengeful at this critical juncture. This paid great dividends in the cause of Islam in the long-term.

# **AN ABRIDGED BIOGRAPHY OF THE PROPHET (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)**

This section is not meant to provide a comprehensive biography of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). There are several excellent biographies of the Prophet available in bookstores that are also mentioned in the bibliography. This section merely provides a brief outline of the Prophet's life history. The goal is to introduce the newcomer to the Prophet's life story so that he can develop a mental framework for appreciating the Prophet's various strategies discussed in the earlier sections.

## **The Setting**

The immediate environment of Arabia at the time of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him).

At the time of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) in the seventh century AD, the Arab peninsula was truly a backwater. The vast Arabian Desert held no attraction for the Byzantine and Persian super-powers that existed and fought each other at the northern extremes of the Arab peninsula. Arabia held no attraction for the world powers who thought of the Arabs as uncivilized barbarians.

Arabia, at this time, was considered a God-less region and none of the more advanced religions, which were associated with modernity and progress, had managed to penetrate the area. The Arabs knew very well that the great powers of Persia and Byzantium were ready to use both faiths as a means of imperial control. The Arabs felt inferior, both religiously and politically. Until they managed to create a united Bedouin state and take their destiny into their own hands, they would still be vulnerable to exploitation and could even lose their independence, like the Arabs of the South. Since they realized that they must not allow themselves to be exploited by the great powers, so in order to avoid the fate of the kingdom of the South they remained strictly neutral in the struggle between Persia and Byzantium.

## **Religious influences from abroad**

The Arabian Peninsula housed several Jewish tribes and Christian settlements so they were generally familiar with concepts of monotheism. This was quite a contrast to their own multitude of gods and deities. The Arabs felt inferior to the "civilized" concepts of theology espoused by the Jews and Christians as they appeared sophisticated. Moreover, their increased exposure to civilized forms of cosmopolitan life also made them aware of an order in nature that seemed to be guided by one powerful hand.

## **Less developed social institutions**

Essentially, the Arabs of the Hijaz and Najd lived in a time warp when compared to their contemporaries to the north. Their social forms were tribal and nomadic in nature. The individual could not survive in the harsh Arabic climate without the support of a close knit network of clansmen. The Arabs, therefore, out of necessity had organized themselves into autonomous groups, on the basis of blood and kinship. To cultivate a communal spirit, the Arabs evolved an ideology called Muruwah. Muruwah meant courage in battle, patience and endurance in suffering, and a dedication to the chivalrous duties of avenging wrong done to the tribe, protecting its weaker members and defying the strong.

In pre-Islamic Arabia, the responsibility for maintaining the tribal ethic fell upon the Sayyed or the Shaikh. The Shaikh was the most highly respected member of his community, the figurehead who represented the strength and moral attributes of the tribe. Because the Arabs were wary of concentrating

all the functions of leadership in a single individual, the Shaikh had little real executive authority. Every important decision was made through collective consultation with other individuals in the tribe who had equally important roles: the Qa'id, who acted as war leader; the Kahin, or cultic official; and the Hakim, who settled disputes.

Even the cosmopolitan residents of Makkah (the centre of Arab religion and commerce) kept camels and thought of themselves as sons of the desert. The desert life was more suited to a nomadic course of life as it yielded limited agrarian benefits and suited mass movements in search of better oasis and pastures. Stanley Lane-Pool provides a worthy sketch of the Arab in his classic, *The Speeches and Table-Talk of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)*: "He lived the free aimless satisfied life of a child. He was supremely content with the exquisite sense of simple existence, and was happy because he lived. Throughout a life that was full of energy, of passion, of strong endeavor after his ideal of desert perfection, there was yet a restful sense of satisfied enjoyment, a feeling that life was of a surety well worth living."

## **Sudden transformation from nomadic to settled cosmopolitan life**

It is possible that Muhammad's great-great-great-grandfather, Qussay, was the first to establish an all-year settlement around the Ka'aba shrine. For reasons that are not totally clear, the Makkans' commercial enterprise expanded greatly from 550 AD through 600 AD. In fact, by 600 AD, Makkans controlled most of the trade taking place through western Arabia. Beside local products such as dates and grains and incense and myrrh from Yemen, the Makkans essentially connected India and Abyssinia with the Mediterranean markets of Syria. They were also now involved in mining enterprises in various parts of western Arabia. Trade must now have featured as the major activity of the Makkans.

This sudden and dramatic change must have caused an upheaval in social mores and values. This shift from nomadic pastoral life to settled cosmopolitan lifestyle essentially took place within two generations. Clearly, large chunks of Makkan society must have become the *nouvou riche* while, at the same time, many of the people in the city must have been 'left behind' by these sudden economic changes. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was very perceptive and sensitive to the changes taking place around him. He laid great emphasis on alms-giving, helping the poor and in maintaining puritanical moral values.

The wealthy cosmopolitan Arabs of Makkah at this time enjoyed trappings of wealth and power. They lived in large mansions around the Ka'aba shrine, their wives wore jewellery and expensive imported clothes on festive occasions, and they were served by slaves and concubines imported from Africa. The decline in social norms must have been quite evident to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) who belonged to the Hashim clan of the Quraish that was experiencing a waning of wealth, power and influence at this time.

## **Change from communal focus to individual focus**

The increasing importance of material wealth in Makkah meant that the old values of chivalry, hospitality, and clan-protection were giving way to economic and monetary considerations. The poets of old who used to sing praises of their tribal chiefs were now busy singing praises of rich city merchants!

## **Political landscape**

The Arabs were disjointed and disunited politically. Their tribal form of life precluded any concepts of Arab nationhood as most of these tribes were in a constant state of warfare with each other most of the

times. This internal disunity naturally led to internecine warfare that tore at the fabric of Arab society. The generally pagan culture coupled with historical emphasis on raids on each other's territory leading to blood feuds that could last for generations meant that the Arab society was continuously torn by strife. The traveler who traversed a landscape without the protection of a local chief or without belonging to a strong tribe was in grave danger of being murdered.

## **Military inadequacy**

The Arabs were keenly aware of the great war of supremacy between the Byzantine and Persian empires taking place to their north and south. They had seen the unfortunate and tragic fate of Dhu Nawas, the ruler of Yemen to their south, whose bid for Persian patronage ended tragically when his kingdom fell to the Jewish kingdom of Abyssinia in 525 AD. Eventually, king Chosroes of Persia invaded South Arabia which became a colony of Persia in 570 AD. The Arabs of Arabia learnt that they needed to remain strictly neutral in the ongoing struggle between the Byzantine and Persian empires. The Quraish of Makkah thrived because of their professed neutrality. Makkah became a sanctuary for traders and pilgrims from all over Arabia. By the beginning of the seventh century, they had become rich beyond their wildest dreams in the old nomadic days.

Karen Armstrong aptly summarizes the Arab situation at the time of the Prophet's arrival as follows: "The Arabs felt inferior, both religiously and politically. Until they managed to create a united Bedouin state and take their destiny into their own hands, they would still be vulnerable to exploitation and could even lose their independence, like the Arabs of the South. But there seemed little chance of a united Bedouin state. For centuries, the Arabs of the Hijaz and Najd had lived as nomads in tribal groups which were constantly at war."

# **Muhammad 's Life in Makkah before Revelation (571 AD – 610 AD)**

## **Muhammad's birth and early childhood**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was born an orphan into the Banu Hashim clan of the Quraish in 571 AD.

Muhammad's father, Abdullah, died before he was born. Most historians believe that he died in Yathrib on his way back from a trade journey to Syria. Abdullah had died at an early age of twenty-five and left very little wealth – five camels, a small number of goats, and a she-servant, called Barakah - to his wife. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), therefore, was born a poor orphan. An orphan enjoyed an extremely low status in Arab society. It is no coincidence that the very first directive verses of the Quran are the following:

*So as for the orphan, be not thou overbearing;*

*And as for the beggar, scold not;*

*And as for the goodness of thy Lord, discourse of it.*

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was born in Makkah on April 21, 571 AD. His lineage has been recorded as follows: Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) bin Abdullah bin Abdul Muttalib bin Hashim bin Abd Manaf bin Qussay.<sup>519</sup> As was the custom at that time, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was sent to the countryside to live with his Bedouin foster-mother, Halima bint Abu Dhuaib and stayed with her till he was about four or five years old. When he was six, Muhammad's mother, Aminah, decided to visit the grave of her husband in Yathrib. She set out on that journey of 500 kilometers with her orphan boy, and her servant, Barakah.<sup>520</sup> She stayed in Yathrib for a month and fell ill on the return journey. They were obliged to halt at Abwa, letting the caravan go since they were slowing down the caravan. Aminah succumbed to her illness at Abwa after a painful few days and the six year old orphan, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), now had the painful task of burying his mother in this far off land. His maid, Barakah, returned with Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) to the house of his grand-father, Abdul Muttalib, in Makkah.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was well-taken care of by his grand-father Abdul Muttalib. However, he also died within two years. After this time, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was initiated into the household of his uncle, Abu Talib, who had four sons of his own. Abu Talib was not well-off financially and could not provide a life of comfort for the young Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). Some historians state that the young Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) used to earn his keep by tending a flock of sheep and herding cattle.

When he was twelve years old, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) began to accompany his uncle on trade journeys outside Makkah, particularly to Syria. During one of these trips, he stopped at Bostra, where he met with a Nestorian monk, Bahira. Muslim historians maintain that Bahira was the first person to recognize that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was a prophet.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was scrupulously honest in his business dealings. He came to be known as As-Sadiq, the truthful one, and Al-Ameen, the trustworthy one. His reputation for integrity brought him an offer to run the business of a rich twice-widowed woman named

Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her) bint Khuwailid. After Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had successfully managed a few trade caravans for her, she offered to marry him. He accepted her hand in marriage. He was then twenty-five years old and she was forty.

## **Muhammad's path to self-actualization**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) continued to travel extensively to Syria, Yemen and Bahrain for business between 595 AD and 610 AD. But already his interest had begun to shift to the life of the spirit. Often, he would retreat to Mount Hira and meditate, pondering over the mysteries of nature, of life and death, of good and evil. The Quran later revealed: "Here in the cave, he often remained for nights, plunged in profoundest thought, deep in communion with the unseen yet all-prevailing God of the Universe."

## **Muhammad's Life in Makkah after Revelation (610 AD – 622 AD)**

One day, in the month of Ramadan, while meditating on Mount Hira, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) received his first revelation from God. He was utterly shaken. On his return home; however, Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her) comforted him in the following reassuring words: "You are kind and considerate toward your kin. You help the poor and forlorn and bear their burdens. You are striving to restore the high moral qualities that your people have lost. You honor the guest and go to the assistance of those in distress." She assured him that he had been chosen to serve as the Messenger and declared herself to be his first disciple. She was soon followed by his cousin, Ali, though he was still a teenager, then by Zaid, his freed slave, and then by Abu Bakr, his closest friend. They were the first Muslims. Slowly, the message began to spread. It was at that time conveyed in secrecy and privacy.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) could gather only thirty followers in three years. The Quraish, under the leadership of Abu Sufyan, who were the custodians of the Ka'aba where the idols were placed, were positively hostile to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and his message. They ridiculed him and his claim to prophet-hood. They were particularly angered by his denunciation of their idols and his insistence that there was only one God.

## **{The Prophet preaches in Makkah for thirteen years (610 AD – 622 AD)}**

The Prophet preached Islam in Makkah for thirteen years. He developed a number of converts. However, many Quraish chieftains refused to accept Islam and tried to impede his progress. In this time, Islam appealed mostly to his close family and friends and the underprivileged of the city

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and his family were spared intense persecution because of the protection they enjoyed from his uncle, Abu Talib, who was a noble of the Quraish and the head of the Hashim clan. However, many other Muslims, who had a more humble origin, were not spared. They were beaten, imprisoned, deprived of food and water, exposed to midday heat, and otherwise tortured. This prompted the Prophet to instruct a number of Muslims to migrate to Abyssinia in 615 AD. Then followed a long period (roughly three years) in which the Quraish imposed a social and business boycott on the Hashim clan. Henceforth, no one in Makkah was allowed to marry into, buy merchandise from, or sell goods (including food and water) to any member of Abu Talib's family, regardless of whether they were followers of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). Abu Talib's family had to take refuge in a valley and suffered considerable hardship. Their women and children were forced to live for months on leaves and dirty water. In 619 AD, the Prophet faced a most serious crisis when his beloved wife, Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her), and dear uncle, Abu Talib, passed away in the same year. Abu Talib was succeeded by his brother, Abu Lahab, who withdrew the clan's full

protection of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). These various losses made life unbearable for Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) in Makkah.

## **Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) visits Taif in 619 AD**

At this juncture, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) decided to visit Taif on a preaching visit to see if he would succeed in converting the prosperous residents of Taif to Islam. The Banu Abd-Yalil, the ruling family of Taif, had family ties with Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) through his maternal uncles. The relations between the two clans, Makkah and Taif, were always friendly. Furthermore, Abbas, the young uncle of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), who was very friendly with Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), exerted a strong influence in Taif since he was a banker and trade financier. However, this visit was to prove a total failure. The Prophet was heckled and pelted with stones. Dejected and injured, he returned to Makkah – but only after barely succeeding in receiving protection from Mu'tim of Nawfal clan.

## **Contacts with people from Yathrib (620 AD – 622 AD)**

As life was becoming increasingly difficult for Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) in Makkah where his life-support systems were being taken away one by one, a unique opportunity arose for him to seek a new life away from the stifling climate of Makkah. This started happening with the pilgrimage season in 620 AD. Among the pilgrims with whom Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) came into contact were six men from Yathrib, a small town some 500 kilometers north of Makkah. These pilgrims, who belonged to the tribes of Aws and Khazraj, were impressed with Muhammad's personality and his message. His message resonated with their peculiar state-of-affairs in Yathrib since they had a long history of bloodshed and disunity among themselves. Further, they felt intellectually and religiously inferior to the Jewish tribes of Yathrib who claimed that they were waiting for a prophet.

Next summer in the pilgrimage season of 621 AD, five of these individuals returned with seven more people from Yathrib. The twelve individuals represented most of the Arab clans settled in and around Yathrib. They told the Prophet that the Jews of Madinah had been predicting the arrival of a Prophet. It was their good luck that they had been granted a Prophet from amongst themselves. They previously had been told that they were inferior to the Jews and the Christians as those were the people of the Book, and they were not. They were happy to have a Prophet who had brought the Noble Quran to them.

These Muslims further told the Prophet that there had arisen a dispute among certain tribes in Madinah on the choice of a king. A well-known person, named Abdullah bin Ubbai of Madinah had been chosen to be their king. His investiture was so certain the jewelers in Madinah had been ordered to make a crown for him. However, many tribes of Madinah were against him. These people wanted a Prophet instead of a king to solve their differences. Upon his invitation, they made a pledge to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) to accept him as prophet and obey him and to avoid certain sins. This eventually became known as the First Pledge of Aqaba.

At the request of these twelve individuals, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) sent with them Musa'b bin Umair in order to preach Islam to the inhabitants of Yathrib. Musa'b bin Umair was a trusted lieutenant of the Prophet, was well-versed in the Quran, and was most diligent in performing his duties in Yathrib. With his efforts during the winter months, he won converts from nearly all the clans of Yathrib. More importantly, the new converts to Islam were of sufficient importance (these converts included luminaries such as Sa'ad bin Ubadah of Khazraj and Sa'ad bin Muadh of Aws) to make it certain that all the clans would publicly support an agreement with Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). Sa'ad bin Muadh was a Leading light of the Aws. When he had converted to Islam,



he called a meeting of his Aws clansman and asked them if they accepted his leadership. They replied: “[You are] our chief, the most active in our interests, the best in judgment and the most fortunate in leadership.” As a result of this meeting, the Aws clan “converted to Islam en masse.”

During the next pilgrimage season which fell in June 622 AD, seventy-five of these converts (seventy-three men and two women) converged on Makkah with the explicit aim of meeting with Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). The party met with Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) secretly during the v-hours of the morning. Before this important and clandestine meeting took place, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had brought into confidence his respected but pagan uncle, Abbas, who accompanied Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) to this secret meeting. It is interesting to note that it was Abbas, and not Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), who first addressed the recent converts from Yathrib. Abbas ensured that the people of Yathrib pledged to defend the Prophet’s life. The people of Yathrib pledged themselves not merely to accept Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) as the prophet and avoid sins, but also to fight on behalf of God and His messenger. This became known as the Second Pledge of Aqaba or the Pledge of War (Bait ul Harb). Given the non-martial nature of the first pledge, the first pledge was renamed the Pledge of Women (Bait un Nisa) or the Pledge of Defense!

### **The Prophet departs for Madina (622 AD)**

The Prophet first made sure that his followers left Makkah for Yathrib. He made them leave Makkah in small groups (and often in the night) so that their departure was not detected by the Quraish. Finally, when Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) discovered that a band of the Quraish was planning to kill him in his sleep, he left Makkah in the middle of the night. He was accompanied by his closest friend and companion, Abu Bakr. They first headed towards Taif which was in the opposite direction from Madina. This helped elude their pursuers who were motivated by the prize of one hundred camels announced by the Quraish for Muhammad’s capture. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and Abu Bakr reached the outskirts of Yathrib (which was later named Madina-tul-Nabi, or the city of the Prophet, later abbreviated Madina) on September 24, 622 AD which is considered the first day of the Hijra calendar used by Muslims to mark this important turning point in Islamic history.

## **Muhammad's Life in Madina (622 AD – 632 AD)**

In Madina, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was by no means an undisputed ruler, at least in the early years. However, by the time he died in 632 AD, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) had become the undisputed leader of all of Arabia. In Makkah, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was the inspired head of a religious sect; in Madina, he transformed the little Muslim movement into an incipient world religion.

Muhammad's first act in Madina was the construction of a mosque which was to serve many purposes. A part of the mosque served as his private residence while the mosque itself was a prayer hall, a meeting place, a conference room and a classroom.

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) then created a bond of brotherhood between the impoverished immigrants who had arrived penniless from Makkah (the Muhajireen) and their brethren in faith, the Ansaar. He then had drafted a Constitution of Madina (also known as the Meesaq-e- Madina) which was eventually agreed to by all the major tribes living in and around Madina. The Meesaq-e- Madina bound all parties to cooperate together for their mutual defence with Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) acknowledged as the undisputed chief arbitrator under God's guidance. Denny makes the following astute observation about the Constitution of Madina: "The... Constitution of Madina... transformed Yathrib's warring and fractious tribes and clans into a kind of super-tribe, bound together not by kinship but by a common religious faith. This was a revolution in the social and political history of Arabia and made possible the eventual unification of the whole peninsula under the banner of Islam."

### **Eight military missions before the Battle of Badr (622 AD – 623 AD)**

Soon after his arrival in Madina, the Prophet began organizing the Emigrants into small raiding parties. The Quraish were furious with Muhammad's success at leaving Makkah. In their fury, the Quraish confiscated the houses and material wealth of the Muslims who had escaped from their clutches. As a response, the Prophet organized small raiding parties with the aim of frightening the trading caravans of the Quraish. The eight military missions before the Battle of Badr were really raiding parties. They achieved their desired result and effectively cut-off the Syrian trade route of the Quraish.

### **The Battle of Badr (623 AD)**

A huge and rich caravan was reported to be en-route home to Makkah from Palestine. A large group of Helpers and Emigrants set out to intercept it at Badr under the Prophet's leadership. The Quraish caravan was under the leadership of the wily Abu Sufyan who had sensed trouble and asked for military help from Makkah. The Makkans immediately dispatched a force that was 950 strong. Muhammad's force of 313 was outnumbered about three times. However, in an amazing display of courage and initiative, the Muslim army fought and outfought the large opposing army. The Battle of Badr was a turning point in the history of Islam and made the religion a fast expanding religious movement.

### **The Battle of Uhud (625 AD)**

The Quraish had vowed to avenge their defeat at Badr and planned for this encounter for more than one year. The Battle of Uhud was a punitive expedition of the Quraish aimed at punishing the Muslims. Although the smaller Muslim army gained the upper hand in the beginning; some strategically placed Muslim archers left their stations in pursuit of booty. This allowed the Quraish cavalry led by Khalid bin Waleed to attack the Muslim rear. This caused great chaos in the Muslim ranks many of whom were

either slaughtered or fled the battlefield in disarray. The Prophet himself barely escaped although he was injured. Surprisingly, despite having the upper hand, the Quraish gathered their forces and left for Makkah. The Battle of Uhud, therefore, was a mixed result for both sides. The Muslims lost many of their leaders on the battlefield but the much larger Quraish army did not succeed in neutralizing them effectively.

### **The Battle of the Trench (627 AD)**

In 627 AD, an enormous force of up to twelve thousand men marched forth from Makkah to deal a death blow to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and his followers in Madina. The Madinans, under the leadership of Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), could only muster about three thousand defenders. However, a Persian convert to Islam, Salman Farisi, suggested to Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) that they dig a large trench so as to withstand a long siege. The peculiar geography of Madina lent itself to this unique line of defence. The Prophet liked this defensive strategy and thought it unwise to attempt to face the much larger Makkani army in a pitched battle. The Battle of Trench turned out to be a stalemate because the large army of the Quraish was not able to cross the trench. The Arabs did not have experience of trench warfare and also did not have the patience to outlast a well-entrenched but besieged enemy. The Makkans finally left after a futile siege of two weeks. This was to be their last serious attempt to gather their resources against Islam.

### **Treaty of Hudaibiya (628 AD)**

In the spring of 628 AD, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) led a contingent of some 1,400 Muslim pilgrims to Makkah to perform the lesser pilgrimage (Umra).<sup>528</sup> The pre-Islamic Madinans were accustomed to going to Makkah to perform pilgrimages. However, this was the first time that the young Muslim community of Madina had attempted it. The Makkans stopped the arriving Madina contingent at Hudaibiya, on the outskirts of Makkah and refused them entry into Makkah. After intensive negotiations, the Prophet decided to go back to Madina that year without performing the minor pilgrimage. He concluded a ten year peace treaty with the Makkans.

Although he returned home that year without making the pilgrimage, the following year he and the Madinans came back for the sacred rites under the terms of the treaty. This time, the Makkans vacated their city for three days to avoid any chances of an armed conflict. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) thus demonstrated his goodwill and his adherence to a sacred ritual structure that was now common to the pagans and the Muslims.

After the treaty of Hudaibiya, Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) could focus his resources on other parts of Arabia. Muslim forces captured the rich Jewish stronghold of Khaibar in 628 AD. The Prophet concluded peace treaties with several other pagan tribes.

### **Breach of Hudaibiya treaty and conquest of Makkah (629 AD)**

In 629 AD, Banu Khuzah, aligned with Muslims under the Treaty of Hudaibiya, were attacked without any provocation by Banu Bakr, who were affiliated with the Quraish. A few of the Banu Khuzah were killed by the Banu Bakr. Since the Banu Bakr were actively aided by the Quraish in this skirmish, this was effectively an abrogation of the Treaty of Hudaibiya by the Quraish. So the Prophet decided to attack Makkah. Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) assembled ten thousand men, an enormous force, and marched south. The Makkans sent a few scouts to gauge the strength of the Muslim army. Abu Sufyan, a Quraish notable and father-in-law of the Prophet, also came out to meet the Prophet. Upon his return to Makkah, he advised surrender. The Makkans laid down their arms and the Prophet

entered Makkah as a victor. Only a few Makkans resisted and the rest were allowed to go free under an amnesty, provided they adopted Islam. A few dissidents were put to death, but on the whole the conquest of Makkah was a bloodless affair. Likewise, it was a spiritual more than a military conquest, with no significant loss of face by the vanquished.

### **Battle of Hunain and siege of Taif (630 AD)**

Muhammad's troubles were still not over. The tribes of Hawazin and Thakif rebelled and attacked the Muslims at Hunain, about ten miles from Makkah. The Muslims fought back and routed the rebels. With this, the last nail in the coffin of paganism had been struck. The Prophet then besieged the pagan stronghold of Taif for more than twenty days. He decided to lift the siege of Taif without decisive victory since he felt that Taif would soon enter the fold of Islam anyway, which it soon did.

The victories at Makkah and Hunain forced the remaining pagan tribes of Arabia to face reality. These tribes now entered the fold of Islam and helped lay the groundwork for the expansion of Islam beyond the borders of Arabia. In fact, the Prophet himself led a large Muslim force of 30,000 to Tabuk to face off a large army sent by the Roman Emperor. For some reason, the Roman army left Tabuk. The Prophet waited in Tabuk for more than a month and then returned to Madina. The Prophet's prestige was now much enhanced and a large number of deputations visited him from all over Arabia to express their allegiance to him and to profess Islam.

### **Year of Deputations (631 AD)**

The ninth year of the Hijra (631 AD) is known as the Year of Deputations. The chronicles relate that Muhammad's war on idolatry and polytheism soon became known throughout Arabia, and his capture of Makkah clearly showed that he had the power to enforce his will.

Representatives of Arab tribes from all parts of Arabia, including the most distant provinces, came hurriedly to make peace, to acknowledge Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), to submit to his claims, to offer allegiance and to accept Islam. Moved, it is said, by the power of his personality, the sincerity of his utterances and the simplicity of his life, they voluntarily made their submission to him and acknowledged his spiritual and temporal authority.

### **Farewell pilgrimage and death of the Prophet (632 AD)**

The Prophet had a premonition of his approaching end. He, therefore, decided to go on a pilgrimage to the Ka'aba. He left Madina for Makkah in February 632 AD. He was accompanied by all of his wives and a large crowd of the faithful. This pilgrimage is called the "Farewell Pilgrimage." More than 100,000 Muslims accompanied him. After completing the rites, he addressed the assembled gathering from the top of a hill, Jabal-ul-Arafat, on March 7, 632 AD. He emphasized the egalitarian character of the Islamic brotherhood.

The Prophet then left for Madina and spent the last months of his life in Madina. Though tired and exhausted, he worked ceaselessly to organize the community, to settle the affairs of state, to sort out problems between various tribes and groups, and to put the state on a sound footing. He fell ill in May but continued his work. As his condition deteriorated, he had to be confined to bed. His younger wife, Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her), was in attendance. She tended him with great care. He told her to distribute among the poor the few gold coins that were lying in the house and breathed his last at noon on Monday, 8 June, 632 AD. Peace Be Upon Him.

## Muhammad's Household

The Prophet had a very egalitarian approach towards his wives and his household. His wives often bickered with each other and with him. The Prophet was kind and compassionate and not given to exercising authority over them simply because he was a man and they were women. He argued with them, cajoled them and convinced them. However, he was always steadfast about following the tenets of Islam.

His companion Jabir made the following perceptive comments about this: Inside, the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was sitting down, and his wives were gathered around him; they were extremely sad and reticent. `Umar wanted to say something that would lighten the mood and make the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) laugh, and so he said, `O Messenger of Allah, if you had only seen Bint Khaarijah (her full name was Jameelah bint Thaabit, and she ! was `Umar's wife; in this narration, `Umar was ascribing her to her forefathers) when she asked me for spending money; I stood up, went to her, and poked her in the neck.' Upon hearing `Umar say that, the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) laughed and said, `As you can see, they are all around me, asking me for spending money.

All of the Prophet's homes were simply built and simply adorned; and though this was the reality of his homes, his wives were human beings, and had human desires and human aspirations for worldly belongings. When the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) first arrived in-Madinah, apartments were built for him (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and his wives beside the Masjid. These apartments were in no way like the houses and castles of kings and rulers. (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). Like the Masjid, the Prophet's apartments were built from clay, mud, and stones; and the roofs were built from palm branches. The courtyard adjacent to the apartments was small, and the roof of the apartments was low, so low, in fact, that a tall child or young man could touch the roof with his hand. Al-Hasan Al-Basree said, `I used to reach the first part of the roof of the Prophet's apartment with my hand.' [(287)] Each apartment was equipped with two doors - an outer door and an inner door. The inner door led to the Masjid, thus giving the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) easy access to the Masjid for prayer or for other matters. [(288)]

The Prophet's close companion, Umar ibn al Khattab, made the following perceptive comments about this: "By God, in pre-Islamic days, we never gave consideration to our women. It was only after God had revealed in their regard what He did that we started to do so. My wife came once seeking to dissuade me from doing what I had planned to do. When I answered her that this was none of her business, she said: 'How strange of you, Umar ibn al Khattab! You refuse to be told anything whereas your daughter [Hafsah, wife of the Prophet] may criticize her husband, the Prophet of God - May God's peace and blessing be upon him - and do so strongly that he remains worried the whole day long.' Upon hearing this, I took my mantle and went straight to my daughter, Hafsah, and said to her: 'O my daughter, is it true that you criticize the Prophet of God and do so strongly that he remains worried the whole day long?' Hafsah answered: 'Indeed, I and his other wives do criticize him.' I said: 'You had better be warned that this will bring both the punishment of God and the wrath of His Prophet upon you. O Daughter, do not be deceived by that woman who became too proud of herself because of her beauty or Muhammad's love for her.' I left my daughter and went to visit Umm Salamah, another wife of the Prophet and a close relative of mine. Upon asking her the same question, Umm Salamah replied: 'How strange of you, O Ibn al Khattab! Are you going to interfere in everything, even in the Prophet's own domestic affairs?' Umar continued: "With this I was utterly rebuffed and I abandoned every thought I had entertained."

The Prophet treated his wives well. He met every wife in turn allotting a day to each. He also took each of them in turn on his journeys outside Madina. By his conduct, he set an example to Muslims in equality of treatment to their wives, which the Quran enjoins upon them. His wives lived with him in mud houses on a diet of water and dates. Very often there was nothing to eat in the house, but he told them that if they

wanted worldly luxuries and comforts, he would gladly release them from their marital bonds. However, all of them decided to stay with the Prophet.

## **Muhammad's Appearance**

Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) was of the middle height, rather thin, but broad of shoulders, wide of chest, strong of bone and muscle. His head was massive, strongly developed. Dark hair slightly curled, flowed in a dense mass almost to his shoulders; even in advanced age it was sprinkled with only about twenty grey hairs, produced by the agonies of his Revelations. His face was oval-shaped, slightly tawny of color. Fine long-arched eyebrows were divided by a vein, which throbbed visible in moments of passion. Great black restless eyes shone out from under long heavy eyelashes. His nose was large, slightly aquiline. His teeth, upon which he bestowed great care, were well set, dazzling white. A full beard framed his manly face. His skin was clear and soft, his complexion "red and white". His hands were as "silk and satin". His step was quick and elastic, yet firm as that of one who steps "from a high to a low place." His whole gait and presence were dignified and imposing. His countenance was mild and pensive. His laugh was rarely more than a smile.

Another physical description of the Prophet comes to us from Umm Mu'bad, in whose tent he stayed for a while on his way to Yathrib on occasion of his migration from Makkah. She described him to her husband: "Handsome features, bright face, lovable temperament, graceful, hair long and thick, voice clear, eyes black and large, silent with dignity, inclined to cordiality, graceful and captivating at a distance and very sweet and attractive when near, speech clear and words clear, neither more nor less than necessary, middle-sized, neither short so as to look insignificant nor tall enough to look unbecoming, a fresh thing of a beautiful plant, charming to look at and well-built."

