

Life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}

*Adapted from the book Seerat Sayyedul Ambiyaa
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The Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} belonged to the tribe of Quraish, the leading tribe of Mecca which was a principal town of Arabia. The Quraish were descendants of Prophet Ibraheem^{as}, through his son, Prophet Isma'eel^{as}. The Ka`bah was rebuilt by Ibraheem^{as} and his son Isma'eel^{as} some 2,600 years before the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}.

His Family Background

At the time of the birth of prophet Muhammad^{sa}, the whole world seemed to be passing through a period of extreme moral and religious decline. The conditions in Arabia were specially worse. The Arabs suffered from extreme moral vices such as drinking, gambling, and brutal deeds during frequent and endless fights due to tribal rivalries.

Arabia at the Time of His Birth

Although the Arabs believed in a Supreme God and in the prophethood of Abraham^{as}, yet they worshipped many other gods in the form of idols. They had installed some 360 idols in the Ka`bah itself where the Arabs from all over Arabia used to come for their annual pilgrimage. However, they possessed some good qualities such as hospitality, sense of honour, bravery, and love for poetry.

Women enjoyed little status in the Arab society. Certain families had the savage custom of burying alive their baby girls. Slavery was common among them and the condition of slaves was full of misery and extreme hardships. It was among such people that the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} was born.

Some time before the birth of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, Abraha, Ethiopia's viceroy in Yemen, led an expedition against Mecca with the intention of destroying the Ka`bah. But his expedition completely failed. A large part of his army of 20,000 strong, which rode on elephants, was destroyed by an epidemic and their rotting bodies were eaten up by swarms of birds. This year is known as the Year of the Elephant. The Qur'anic Surah Al-Feel refers to the same event. (Al-Qur'an 105:1-6)

Abraha's Invasion of Mecca

Birth and Childhood (April, 571 A.D.)

The Holy Prophet Muhammad^{SA} was born in Mecca on April 20, 571 A.D. in the respected family, *Haashimite* of the tribe of *Quraish*. (*Seerat Khatamun Nibiyyeen, authored by Hadrat Mirza Bashir Ahmad^{RA}*)

His father, Abdullah, died some time before his birth. His mother, Aminah, had seen a vision, also some time before his birth. In this vision, an angel proposed to her the name Muhammad^{SA} for her child. Also, she saw that glittering lights, emitting from herself, spread all over the world. (*Seerat Ibne Hash-shaam*)

The young Muhammad^{SA} was brought up under the care of his grandfather, Abdul Muttalib, the chief of Mecca. He entrusted him to the care of nurse Haleema, as was the custom in Mecca. His mother died when he was about six years old, and just 2 years later, his grandfather also passed away.

Now, the young Muhammad^{SA} passed under the care of his uncle, Abu Talib. He already had a large family to support, and was by no means a rich man, yet he accorded great care and love to his little nephew. Muhammad^{SA} behaved in a calm, obedient and friendly manner in his years of upbringing.

Youth of Prophet Muhammad^{SA}

As Prophet Muhammad^{SA} grew to manhood, he won great respect for his excellent conduct. Soon he was known among his fellow Meccans as *Al-Ameen* meaning “The Trusty” and *as-Saadiq* meaning “The Truthful”. He used to assist his uncle in his day-to-day life, and when he was 12 years of age, accompanied him in a trade caravan to Syria.

He always tried to refrain from taking part in the quarrels of others, but was ever ready to help put an end to such quarrels. as a result of this, he became an active member of the famous association in which members undertook a pledge called *Hilful-Fadool*, to help the oppressed people and to restore their rights.

Marriage to Khadija^{RA} (595 A.D.)

Hadrat Khadijah^{RA}, a rich widow of Mecca, on hearing Muhammad^{SA}'s fame as an honest young man, employed him as her trade agent. In this capacity, he led some trade caravans to Syria and brought back considerable profits. Hadrat Khadijah^{RA} was much impressed and made a proposal of marriage to Muhammad^{SA} which was accepted. He was twenty-five when he married Hadrat Khadijah^{RA}, who was forty and had been twice widowed. She placed all her wealth at her husband's disposal. Muhammad^{SA} distributed a significant part of her wealth among the poor and chose a life of austerity for himself and his wife.

When the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} was about 35 years old, the Quraish decided to rebuild the Ka`bah. When the time came to replace the sacred Black Stone in its position, all the four leading families of the Quraish began to dispute as to who would have the honour to lift the Black Stone.

**Rebuilding
the Ka`bah**
(605 A.D.)

It was Muhammad^{sa} who managed to resolve this dangerous dispute. He spread out his cloak on the ground and placed the Black Stone on it. He then invited all the leading members of the Quraish to lift the cloak and carry the stone to its new place. Muhammad^{sa} then lifted the stone and placed it in position.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} was deeply troubled by the moral and spiritual decline of his people. He could see no way of rescuing them except with God's help. He formed the habit of retiring to a cave on Mount Hira, where he spent his time in prayers and meditation. This practice continued for ten long years until he was forty years of age. In the year 610 A.D., on one night of Ramadan, when he was busy praying, as usual, he saw someone in a vision who was commanding him to recite:

**The First
Revelation**
(610 A.D.)

إِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ ۝ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ۝
إِقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ ۝ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ۝ عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ ۝

Read in the name of thy Lord Who created; created man from a clot of blood. Recite! And thy Lord is the most Beneficent; Who taught man by the pen; taught man what he knew not.
(*The Holy Qur'an*, 96:2-6)

This was in fact the Archangel Gabriel who had brought to him the first Qur'anic revelation from God. This was evidently the start of his prophethood. He was afraid in view of this great responsibility from God. His wife Khadijah^{ra} gave him moral support and assured him that God would never leave him alone in his Divine mission.

Hadrat Khadijah^{ra}, then took the Prophet^{sa} to her cousin, Waraqa bin Naufal, a Christian. He had studied some of the holy books of the previous prophets. That is why, on hearing the account from the Prophet, he said: "*The angel who descended on Moses, I am sure, has descended on you*" (Bukhari). Waraqa was evidently referring to the prophecy mentioned in the Bible (Deuteronomy 18:18).

Start of Preaching and the First Believers in Islam

(610 A.D.)

After his proclamation as a prophet of God, the Holy Prophet^{SA} started preaching secretly. Hadrat Khadijah^{RA} was evidently the first person to declare faith in him. Then his freed slave, Zaid^{RA}, his cousin, `Ali^{RA} (about eleven) and his childhood friend, Abu Bakr^{RA} accepted Islam. These were followed by Hadrat `Uthman bin `Affaan^{RA}, Hadrat Abdur-Rahman bin `Auf, Hadrat Sa`ad bin Abi Waqqaas, Hadrat Zubair^{RA} bin al-`Awwaam, Hadrat Talhah bin `Ubaidah^{RA} and more.

The preaching in secret continued for about three years. Then, under divine guidance, the Holy Prophet^{SA} started preaching openly and to his own tribe Quraish. He advised the people of Mecca to worship only one God, set free all the slaves, and be kind to the poor. The poor and the slaves of Meccans were attracted to the Islamic teachings which established their rights in the society. However, the rich and their chiefs, rejected his message and started persecuting and torturing the new converts, especially the slaves. Among these, were `Umar bin Hash-shaam (called Abu Jahal), Abu Lahab (Prophet's uncle), Abu Sufyaan and many others.

Emigration to Abyssinia (Habshah)

(615 A.D., 5 A.P.)

In the fifth year of the Prophet's mission (5 A.P.), when tyranny towards the Muslims reached its climax, he advised his followers to seek refuge in a foreign land, when a small party of Muslims (14 men and women) migrated to Abyssinia. There, they were given refuge by the Christian King named Negus (Najashi), despite opposition from the Quraish.

Next year, another group (101 men and women) of Muslims emigrated to Abyssinia, where they stayed peacefully until the Holy Prophet's emigration to Medina.

The Muslims Besieged

(617 A.D., 7 A.P.)

In the sixth year after prophethood (A.P.), two highly influential persons — Hadrat Hamzah^{RA} and Hadrat `Umar bin Khattaab^{RA} embraced Islam. This important event brought high support to the Muslims. However, the Quraish took it as a turning point for the spreading of Prophet's influence.

They decided to punish the whole Hashimite clan (Muslims and non-Muslims). They were besieged in the valley of *Sha`b-Abi-Talib* and their complete boycott was declared. The Holy Prophet^{SA} and some other Muslims were among them. During this period all supplies of food were cut off.

This terrible situation lasted for three years.

In this year, both his wife Khadijah^{ra} and his uncle Abu Talib passed away one after the other. The Holy Prophet^{sa} was much grieved due to these two great personal losses, and called this year “The Year of the Grief”.

The Holy Prophet^{sa} was even more disturbed when he saw that, in Mecca, nobody paid attention to his preaching at that time. He decided to go to Taa’if, a small town near Mecca, for preaching his message. There, too, he faced an extremely difficult situation — vagabonds and street boys pelted him with stones and drove him out of the town.

The Holy Prophet^{sa} did not lose heart and continued his preaching. During the season of Hajj, he met twelve newly converted Muslims from the city of Yathrib, at a place called `Aqaba. They all took an oath at the Prophet’s hands, called the First Pledge of `Aqaba (621 A.D.)

During the next Hajj season, another group of 73 people from Yathrib took an oath at the Prophet’s hands and invited him to come to Yathrib. This oath is called the Second Pledge of `Aqaba (622 A.D.)

After the second pledge of `Aqaba, the Muslims in Mecca started to migrate to Yathrib, as advised by the Holy Prophet^{sa}.

In the end, when only the Holy Prophet^{sa} and some of his companions were left in Mecca, the Quraish decided to kill the Holy Prophet^{sa}.

The Quraish failed in their desperate efforts to arrest the Holy Prophet^{sa}, who escaped Mecca in the company of Hadrat Abu Bakr^{ra} and took refuge in cave *Thaur* and later, safely reached Yathrib on 27 June, 622 A.D.

The Islamic Calendar, called the *Hijrah* (from emigration), dates from the above event. Also, Yathrib changed its name to *Medina-tun-Nabi* (The city of the Prophet) and later it was shortened to *Medina*.

On his way to Medina, the Prophet^{sa} stayed at Quba (a village near Medina) for a few days. There, he laid the foundations of the first mosque ever built by the Muslims.

The Year of the Grief and Visit to Taa’if

(619 A.D., 10 A.P.)

The Pledges of `Aqaba (621-622 A.D., 12-13 A.P)

Hijrah (Emigration) to Medina

(June 622 A.D:
Start of the 1st Year of Hijrah)

The Islamic Calendar, the Hijrah