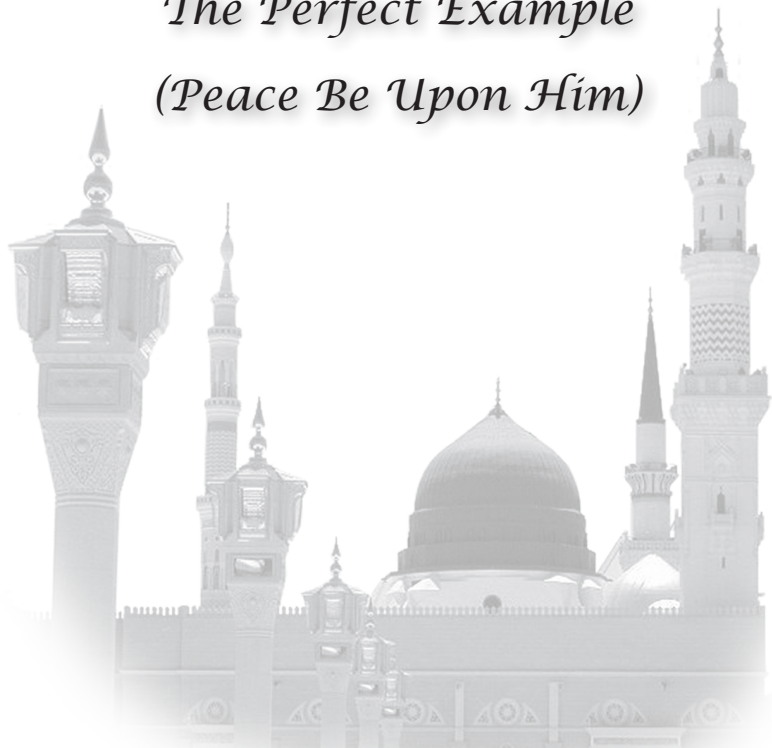


*The Prophet Muhammad:
The Perfect Example
(Peace Be Upon Him)*



﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ﴾

Published by

Al-Fatih Islamic Institute

HQ: Bilal Mosque, Airport Roundabout Damascus, Syria

P. O. Box: 8325

Tel: 00 963 11 544 2699

Fax: 00 963 11 544 8220

Website: alfatih.net

Dar Mohammad Al amin

Damascus, Syria

Tel: 00 963 11 222 0223

00 963 932562299

E-mail: dar-m-alamina@hotmail.com

دار محمد الأمين
للطباعة والنشر والتوزيع

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﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ﴾

[الأنبياء: 107]

﴿We have not sent you but as
a mercy towards all beings.﴾

[The Holy Qur'ān, 21:107]

﴿وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ﴾

[القلم:4]

﴿And you (stand) on an exalted
standard of character.﴾

[The Holy Qur'ān, 58: 4]

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Preface

It goes without saying that we live in an increasingly interdependent and multi-religious world. Being the second largest of the world's religions, and, more strikingly, the fastest growing one, Islam has become a living reality, and a major presence in much of the world.

More than a billion Muslims, black and white, red and yellow, live in the Middle East, and much of sub-Saharan Africa, central Asia, South and South-east Asia. Additionally, in many non-Muslim countries, Muslim populations constitute large minorities. Maybe it is not wrong to believe that almost in every place in this world, you are likely to come across a bearded Muslim, or a veiled woman

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or a mosque. For centuries, Western attitudes to Islam have always been very ambivalent. It is often looked upon with concern, contempt, or fear. Yet Islam has also been a source of inspiration and enlightenment for the West.

With the advent of Islam, and specifically with its phenomenal spread in the seventh century, the West felt a growing sense of alarm, and apprehension about the new rival. The Arabic proverb says, 'Man is the enemy of that which he does not know.' And the West, driven by sheer ignorance, launched a violent attack on this 'unknown' enemy, an attack on all fronts. On the cultural level, fanciful ideas and mythical images of Islam were created, or more accurately fabricated, to discredit the enemy. The bulk of these images targeted the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). Over the centuries, numerous efforts have been made to dehumanize his personality and to produce false images about him, in the hope



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of avoiding any thought of an objective study of his life. It is little wonder, therefore, that many years of degradation and contempt have spawned a growing sense of suspicion, hostility and popular misconceptions in the hearts and minds of both easterners and westerners.

It is not hard to see the pressing need for developing a mutual understanding between Islam and the West for a better tomorrow. The starting point, I believe, is to counter negative stereotypes, through offering a clear, true, and genuine image of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh); an image that draws mainly from authentic and reliable Islamic sources.

I recall here an example that shows how one can become ready, to a large extent, to shape, and reshape his ideas and perceptions of a particular idea, once his ignorance is replaced by knowledge, or more accurately, by ‘true knowledge.’

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I was preparing for my MA in Islamic Studies, at Markfield Institute of Higher Education, the academic wing of the Islamic Foundation, in the UK, when the Danish Cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad appeared in the media, generating so much rage across the Islamic World. Responding sensibly to these cartoons, the Islamic Foundation sent a book titled “Who is Muhammad?” written by the former Director General of the Islamic Foundation, the late Khurram Murad, to every elected MP and Peer in the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Denmark. The short book shows the great qualities of the Prophet Muhammad, and how he led an exemplary life. The Islamic Foundation received some letters of thanks from MPs and Peers in the UK as well as abroad. Over 130 responses were received by the Islamic Foundation. Here are some of them:

“It will have made a real contribution to community relations and inter-faith

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understanding”. Most Reverend John Sentamu, Archbishop of York.

“I welcome its publication at a time when there is much controversy and confusion surrounding the question of Islam and its founder”. Paul Goggins MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, the Home Office.

“I am most grateful to you for taking time this time and trouble to circulate this publication which I can see will do a great deal to dispel misunderstanding of the Islamic faith”. Dominic Grieve MP, Diversity Spokesperson, The Conservative Party.”¹

The Islamic Foundation felt that the proper way to create understanding, and tolerance was to present to the world who the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was. The Islamic Foundation is to be congratulated on this bridge-building attempt.

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This booklet tries to introduce a similar attempt. It refers to qualities, as well as significant facts about the life of the Prophet that need to be brought to the attention of the wider community for readers to realize and appreciate the potential impact that such qualities could have on personal and communal levels.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to all those who have generously offered me their important opinions and amendments, particularly Very Reverend Professor Iain Torrance, President of Princeton Theological Seminary, who read and revised the final draft. Many thanks are due to him, as well as others.

Bashar Bakkour

Damascus, Syria

10 / Feb/2009

bbakkour@mail2world.com

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The Western Image of Muhammad

No person has been so maligned and vilified as the Prophet Muhammad.

For over a thousand years, a great number of materials, based on fables and legends, were invented to discredit and ridicule Muhammad. For example, he was portrayed as a heretic, a sensualist, a grim figure, a cruel warrior, an impostor, and an anti-Christ who used magic to destroy the Church. ‘Mahomet’, or ‘Mammet’, meaning an idol, remained his title for many years.

Maxime Rodinson, speaking of the image of Islam, in particular of the Prophet during the Crusades, observes,

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The Crusades created a vast and eager demand for a full, entertaining and satisfying image of the opponents' ideology. The man in the street desired an image that would both show the hateful character of Islam by presenting it in crude terms... Thus, it happened that the Latin authors who, between 1100 and 1140, undertook to meet this need of the common man, directed their attention to Muhammad's life, with little regard for accuracy and, in R.W. Southern's words, gave a free rein to the 'the ignorance of the triumphant imagination'. Muhammad was a magician who had destroyed the church in Africa and the East by magic and deceit, and had made his success doubly sure by allowing sexual promiscuity. Legends from world folklore, from classical literature, from Byzantine stories of Islam, and even from Muslim sources (after vicious distortion by Eastern Christians), all these were made to adorn the image.²

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Regrettably, this bitter legacy is frequently and vividly recalled in Western consciousness. Taking no notice of Western democratic values and principles, people of mixed milieus seem to evoke, or reinvigorate offending, multi-shaped images. Unmistakably, the Danish cartoons fit in here.

The appalling and outrageous cartoons from Denmark's Jyllands-Posten, sparked uproar in the Muslim world. One cartoon depicted the Prophet Muhammad wearing a headdress shaped like a bomb, while another shows him saying that paradise was running short of virgins for suicide bombers.

Further, the thing that inflamed Muslim passions and grievances was the media justification of these cartoons as freedom of expression. In response to this nonsensical argument, John Esposito, a professor of Religion and International Affairs and of Islam-

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ic Studies at Georgetown University says,

What we are witnessing today has little to do with Western democratic values and everything to do with a European media that reflects and plays to an increasingly xenophobic and Islamophobic society. The cartoons seek to test and provoke; they are not ridiculing Osama bin Laden or Abu Musab al-Zarqawi but mocking Muslims' most sacred symbols and values as they hide behind the façade of freedom of expression.³

Then he quotes France's Grand Rabbi Joseph Sitruk's words:

We gain nothing by lowering religions, humiliating them and making caricatures of them. It's a lack of honesty and respect. Freedom of expression is not a right without limits.³

Probably, it is difficult for a non-Muslim to recognize the prime position, and the spiritual

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significance of the Prophet, who, through his words and deeds, exemplified the best what Islam teaches in theory.

For Muslims, the Prophet, like other prophets, represents the symbol of perfection of both the human person and the human society.



The Prophet Muḥammad

The Prophet's profile

The Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) was born in the year 570 in the town of Mecca. His father, ‘Abdullah died before his birth. The Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) was raised by his mother Āminah who entrusted her son at an early age to a wet nurse, named Ḥalīmah Al-Sa’diyyah. The Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) grew up among Ḥalīmah’s people, learning their pure Arabic.

When he was six, his mother passed away. Ḥalīmah returned to Mecca with the orphaned boy and placed him under the protection of his paternal grandfather, ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, who was the head of Muḥammad’s clan at the time. Upon ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib’s death, the Prophet Muḥammad, aged about eight, passed into the care of his paternal uncle, Abū Ṭālib.

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As the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) grew up, the people of Mecca recognized his righteous nature and absolute honesty, and they nicknamed him al-Ṣādiq (the truthful) al-Amīn, (the faithful). When he was a boy, he pastured sheep and goats, as most prophets had done. He wanted to help pay his keep, because his uncle was of modest means. In his teens, the Prophet sometimes travelled with Abū Ṭālib, who was a merchant, accompanying caravans to trade centers. On at least one occasion, he is said to have travelled as far north as Syria.

At the age of 25, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) married a woman named Khadījah bint Khuwaylid, a widow. Khadījah was 15 years older than Muhammad, and was a rich merchant of Mecca. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had managed some of her trade affairs. It was she who proposed marriage, because of Muhammad's honesty and char-

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acter. Khadījah remained his wife and his closest friend and companion all her life till her death 25 years later. She bore him six children.

As he approached the age of 40, Muhammad (pbuh) increasingly came to spend more and more of his time in retreat, in contemplation, worship, and prayer, in the Cave of Hira, near Mecca. It was here that one night, the Angel Gabriel appeared before the Prophet, imparting the first revelation.

And so he began the early period of his message in Mecca, which took thirteen years. Throughout this period, Muhammad (pbuh) and a small group of followers were first belittled, then ridiculed, then persecuted and finally physically attacked. Threatening their economic, social, and political interests, the new message shook the very foundations of the Meccan society.

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Ja'far Ibn Abī Tālib's following address, before the Negus, king of Abyssinia, describes the moral and social decadence of Arabia, prior to Islam, and also summarizes the essential teachings of the Islamic message,

O king, we were in a state of ignorance and immorality, worshipping idols, eating carrion, committing abominations. The strong among us would exploit the weak. We honoured no relative and assisted no neighbour. Then God sent us a Messenger, one of our people, whose lineage, truthfulness, loyalty, and purity were well-known to us. He called us to worship God alone, and renounce what we and our fathers used to worship. He commanded us to speak the truth, to fulfill our promises, to respect the ties of kinship and the rights of our neighbours, and to refrain from crimes and from bloodshed. Also, he ordered us to hold prayers, to fast, and to pay Zakat. We believed

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in him and followed him. Our people [meaning the Meccans], however, persecuted us and inflicted upon us great suffering. Therefore, we fled and came to live here under your protection.⁴

In 622, Muhammad (pbuh) and his few hundred followers travelled to Madīnah, a small oasis about 400 kilometers to the north of Mecca. The leaders there were suffering from a fierce civil war, and they invited the Prophet to act as their mediator. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) remained in Madīnah for the next six years, building the first Muslim community and gradually gathering more and more followers. Here he built the first mosque and here he continued to receive further revelations, as he had in the Cave of Hira. These revelations were memorized and written down by scribes and later would be codified as the Qur'ān, God's final word.

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The people of Mecca did not take Muhammad's new success lightly. Battles and skirmishes occurred between the two towns, of which the Muslims won the first (the Battle of Badr, March, 624), lost the second (the Battle of Uhud, 625), and withstood the third, (the Battle of the Trench and the Siege of Madīnah, April, 627). In March, 628, a treaty was signed between them, which Meccan allies breached a year later. By now, the balance of power had shifted radically away from the powerful Mecca, toward Muhammad(pbu) and the people of Islam. In January, 630, he marched on Mecca and was joined by tribe after tribe along the way. He and his army entered Mecca without bloodshed.

In the next three years, Muhammad (pbuh), who remained in Madīnah, consolidated most of the Arabian Peninsula under Islam. In March, 632, he returned to Mecca one last time to perform a pilgrimage, and

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tens of thousands of Muslims joined him. He returned to Madīnah and three months later on June 8, 632 he died there, after an illness of three days. He is buried in the Prophetic mosque in Madīnah.

Within a hundred years, Muhammad's teachings and way of life had spread from the remote corners of Arabia as far east as Indo-China and as far west as European Spain.



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The Prophet's Noble Characteristics

Equality

All people in the eyes of God are equal, regardless of colour, race, and religion.

﴿O people, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, so that you may come to know each other. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most godfearing of you﴾

[the Qur'ān, 49:13]

Asserting the right of equality, the Prophet says, 'O people! Verily, your Lord is One, and your father (Adam) is one. There is no

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superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab, neither a black over a white, or a white over a black except in piety and righteousness.’⁵

Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, a Companion of the Prophet, narrates that one day he was sitting with another companion of black complexion whom he addressed as: ‘O black man.’ When the Prophet heard of this, he was greatly displeased and warned Abū Dharr never to make scornful remarks to anyone, whoever he might be, and to accord equal treatment to all, adding: ‘No white man has any superiority over a black man.’⁶

Forgiveness

Muhammad (pbuh) never took revenge on anyone for personal reasons, nor did he return evil for evil, but he would forgive and pardon even his enemies, and treat them with honour and dignity. ‘My Lord has commanded me

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to forgive my aggressors, keep relations with one who has cut off relation with me, and to give to one who has deprived me.’ The Prophet says.

The people of Mecca would rebuke him, mock him, and abuse him. On account of their increasing suffering, the Prophet and his followers emigrated to Madīnah. After several years, the Prophet came back to Mecca victorious with an army of 10,000. On that glorious day, the Prophet addressed the Meccan people, ‘What treatment do you expect from me this day?’ They said, ‘We say well and we think well: A noble and generous brother, son of a noble and generous brother.’ The Prophet replied: ‘You are free from all fears today. May God forgive you.’⁷

By this outstanding ability to forgive and overlook, Mecca was conquered; a conquest of heart, not of the sword.

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There is no doubt that the noble Prophet, from the start, wanted to avoid bloodshed as much as possible. He was more interested in winning peoples' hearts than anything else. No wonder, almost all the tribes started to enter the fold of Islam.

When 'Abdullah Ibn 'Ubayy, an arch-hypocrite, who did his utmost to destroy Islam from within, died, the Prophet gave his own robe to 'Abdullah's family to wrap him in for burial. He also wanted to perform the Janāza⁸ prayer for him, and to pray for his forgiveness, but God revealed to him that he should not pray for any hypocrite.⁹

Muhammad's forgiveness and pardon represent a mirror image of the following Qur'ānic verse:

﴿وَلَا تَسْتَوِ الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا
الَّذِي يَبْتَنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ﴾

[فصلت: 34]

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﴿Not equal are the good deed and the evil deed. Repel evil with that which is better. Then, he between whom and you there is enmity shall be as if he were a loyal friend.﴾

[41:34]

The Qur'ān, through this verse, advises Muslims to forgive and overlook people's mistakes and faults.

Generosity

“Blessed are those who can give without remembering and take without forgetting.” Elizabeth Bibesco.

“We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.” Winston Churchill.

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The generosity of the Prophet had no limits. Never did he turn anyone away empty-handed. Once he gave a man a large flock of sheep. Also, ninety thousand dirhems (silver coins) were brought to him which he gave to the needy.

Another time, a man came to him asking for something. The Prophet said that he had nothing with him, but he would take from someone else on his credit. His generosity manifested itself in various forms: offering gifts; paying off debts with, more money; paying back the debts of the dead; buying commodities with prices higher than prices set by sellers.

Every now and then, the Prophet reminded his Companions that charity does not decrease wealth, but rather it increases it.

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Gratitude

The Prophet showed deep gratitude to all those who had given him aid and support, or any sort of help.

Women who took care of him in his childhood were thanked and provided for. For instance, the Prophet was very grateful to Thwaybah, the first woman to suckle him immediately after he was born. When he conquered Mecca over sixty years later, he asked for her. When he heard that she had died, he also asked for her son. The Prophet wanted to extend his kindness to him. But he was told that he had died too. Ḥalīmah al-Sa'diyyah who suckled him visited him in Madīnah. When she came he rose to receive her, saying, 'My mother! My mother.' He showed her all the thankfulness and gratitude of a loving and obedient son. He also was kind to Shayma', Ḥalīmah's daughter and his

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suckling sister. After the battle of Hunayn, in which the tribe of Hawāzin was defeated, Shayma' was taken a prisoner by the Muslim army. She made her relationship with the Prophet known to them, so they took care of her. The Prophet received her and extended more kindness to her before she returned to her tribe with honour and dignity.¹⁰

The same degree of gratitude and love was given to Umm Ayman, the nurse who took care of the Prophet in his childhood. She remained close to him for the rest of her life. In his youth, the Prophet entered into partnership with a man called al-Sā'ib ibn abī al-Sā'ib. After many years, the Prophet met him; he welcomed him warmly, saying, 'Welcome my brother and partner, an honest and straightforward man.'

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Honesty and Truthfulness

Owing to his honest and fair dealings with all people, the Prophet became well-known and respected. He was known as Al-Şādiq (the truthful) and Al-Amīn (the faithful). There are a number of authentic reports asserting his honesty and truthfulness. A few are cited here:

1. Deep at heart, the chiefs of Meccan people had been aware of the strength and truthfulness of the Prophet's message. Fearing that their privileges and high standing would collapse if this message met with great success, they made a tempting offer to Muhammad (pbuh). Their spokesman said to him, 'No man in the history of the Arab nation has ever caused his community a problem like the one you have caused; you have insulted our forefathers, criticized our beliefs

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reviled our gods, ridiculed our sages and caused division within our community. Nevertheless, we offer you: if you have started this matter of yours in order to become rich, we will pay you from our money until you are the wealthiest among us. If it is honour that you are seeking, we are prepared to make you our leader and if you seek a kingdom, we will make you our king. On the other hand, if what you experience is some sort of evil spirit which you cannot control, we will seek medical treatment for you and will pay for whatever is required of us until you have been cured.' A very tempting offer indeed! However, the Prophet said to them, 'I am not after your money, and I do not seek a position or a crown. God has made me His messenger and revealed to me a book and instructed me to give you a message of good tidings and a warning. I have conveyed God's message to you as



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best as I could and I have given you good counsel. If you accept it from me, it will be good for you in this life and the life to come. If you turn it down, I will continue to preach it until God settles the issue between us.’¹¹

2. On another occasion and in response to his uncle’s plea to stop calling people to Islam, Muhammad’s answer was decisive and sincere: “O Uncle! I swear to God that if they [the Meccans] place the Sun in my right hand and the Moon in my left hand in return for abandoning my call, I will never desist until God brings it to triumph or until I perish defending it.”¹²

Humility

“Shall I tell you about the inhabitants of Paradise? They are very meek and humble persons. And shall I tell you about the inmates

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of Hell? They are very ignoble, uncivil and arrogant persons.”¹³

“A person shall not enter Paradise if he/she has, in their heart, a small atom’s weight of arrogance.”¹⁴ (Prophetic sayings)

Boasting, vanity, and arrogance are among the most hateful qualities to the Prophet. He never became a prey to such detestable manners. Instead, he lived humbly all his life. He did not behave towards others as if he was better than they were, nor did he spurn manual work.

He sat with the destitute and the needy in such a way that no one could recognize him. When he went to any assembly, he sat wherever he found a place.’

Speaking of the Prophet’s normal activity at home, ‘Ā’ishah, his wife, reports that “he

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did most of the household work like ordinary people. He sewed his clothes, mended his shoes and shirt, milked his goat and swept the house.”¹⁵

On one of his journeys, a few of the companions decided to slaughter a goat for a meal. They divided the work among themselves; one was to slaughter it, another to remove its skin, yet another to do the cooking. Muhammad (pbuh) said that he would collect the wood for cooking. His companions said that they would do his work as well. He replied, ‘I know that you will do it quite willingly, but I do not like to have an eminent position, for God does not like the one who considers himself superior to his companions.’

The Prophet, as reported by some Companions, never disdained to go with a slave or a widow to accomplish their tasks.

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Justice

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ ءَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا ءَعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ﴾

[المائدة:8]

﴿O believers, be steadfast in your devotion to God, bearing witness to the truth in all equity. And never allow your hatred of any people to lead you away from justice. Be equitable, that is nearer to godfearing﴾

[The Qur'ān 5:8].

According to the above verse, the Prophet as well as Muslims are ordered to act justly towards all of people. Throughout his life, the Prophet put the principle of justice in effect, and never departed from its path.

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For instance, it was reliably reported that a noble woman belonging to the tribe of Makhzum was found guilty of theft, and the Prophet had decided to have her hand cut off. Her relations requested Usāmah Ibn Zayd, for whom the Prophet respected and loved so much, to intercede for her, so that she would be released. The Prophet said to Usāmah, ‘Do you intercede concerning punishments prescribed by God.?’ Then the Prophet delivered a sermon saying, ‘Nations before you met their destruction because when the sons of nobility stole, they acquitted them, but when the poor and the weak stole, they punished them. By God, if Fātimah, my daughter, steals, I will cut off her hand.’¹⁶

Shortly before departing life, the Prophet made the following statements. ‘If I have ever beaten any of you on his back, let him come and avenge himself by beating me on my back. If I ever abused anyone, let him

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come and abuse me. I want to meet God with nothing held against me by any person.’¹⁷

It is abundantly clear that the Prophet was eager to assert that justice is the main characteristic of Muslim society.

Mercy

The Prophet is a living model of mercy to all mankind (family, followers, friends, enemies, young and old). Among his instructions to Muslims are the two following sayings, “The merciful are granted mercy by God. Show mercy to those on earth so that you are shown mercy by the One in Heaven.”¹⁸ And “God does not bestow His grace on those who do not show mercy to people.”¹⁹

Abu Hurayrah, a prominent Companion, reported that some people asked the Prophet

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to invoke a curse on the disbelievers. He said, 'I have not been sent to curse people but as a mercy to all mankind.'²⁰

The Prophet habitually met persecution and torture with forgiveness and tolerance, and would even pray for his enemies.

On an occasion, some Companions came to him and said: 'O Messenger of God! The tribe of Daws have committed disbelief and disobeyed your commands. Pray to God against them!' Contrary to the people's expectations, the Prophet said: 'O God! Guide Daws and let them come to us.'²¹

The Prophet's trip to al-Tā'if (a mountainous town about 110 kilometers from Mecca) again demonstrates infinite mercy. As he set out, the Prophet was full of hope that the people of al-Tā'if would

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respond favourably to the call to Islam which had been rejected by most of the Meccans. Contrary to his hopes, the people gave him the worst response. Bleeding from head to toe, battered and exhausted, the Prophet was faced with a choice. Should he or should he not seek to destroy the people who had just humiliated him by having their teenagers and servants chase him out of town while throwing stones at him? And what was his crime? All he wanted to do was to share his message and seek to benefit his people.

Regrettably, the people of al-Tā'if proved just as cruel and intolerant as his own people. Not only did they ridicule his message, but they turned their youths against him as well. In the face of this misery, the Angel Gabriel was sent and presented him with an option: the whole town could be destroyed, by God's Will, for their arrogance and hatefulness.

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The Prophet could have done it. He could have asked that those children who pelted him with stones be destroyed along with their intolerant parents, but he didn't.

Out of mercy and compassion, he told the Angel not to destroy the people of al-Tā'if. Instead of cursing the children of this town, he prayed for their salvation.

As for slaves, the Prophet strongly enjoined the duty of kind and generous treatment upon them. He says, 'Those whom God has made your dependents are your brothers, servants and helpmates. Anybody whose brother has been made subservient to him ought to feed him with the food he eats and clothe him with the clothes he wears; he ought not to command him to do that which he is unable to do. And if it becomes necessary to do so then he should help him in doing the job.'²²

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Mercy extended to Animals

The Prophet's mercy encompassed not only human beings, but also animals. The Prophet forbade his companions to keep animals hungry or thirsty, or to disturb or to overburden them. If he saw any animal over-loaded or ill-fed, he would rebuke the owner and say, 'Fear God in your treatment of animals.'

Furthermore, the Prophet advised Muslims to be kind and considerate even at the time of slaughtering animals for food. He asked them to slaughter animals with the sharpest weapon, causing minimum pain and suffering to the animal. He also forbade them to sharpen the weapon in front of the animal or when the animal was ready for slaughter. These preliminaries ought to be done before the animal was brought for slaughter.

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Kindness to animals and putting them at ease are meritorious acts. In this context, the Prophet relates to his companions the story of the prostitute who had once seen a dog walking to and fro in front of a well on a very hot day. His tongue was hanging out because of his thirst. She used her shoe to give him water to drink. So, God forgave her because of her mercy.²³

With this image, the Prophet draws an opposite one saying that cruel behaviour to animals may cause God's punishment. He relates that 'A woman was sent to Hell because of a cat. She imprisoned her and neither fed her nor set her free to feed upon the creeping things of the earth.'²⁴

Similarly, the Prophet gives a warning that 'Whoever kills a sparrow or anything bigger than that without a just cause, God will hold him accountable on the Day of Judgement.'

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The listeners asked, ‘O Messenger of God, what is a just cause?’ He replied, that he will kill it to eat it, not simply to chop off its head and then throw it away.²⁵

In another report, a companion said, “We were travelling with the Prophet when we saw a small bird with two chicks. We took the chicks away. The bird came over us lowering her wings and flying close to the earth. When the Prophet came over, he asked, ‘Who has taken the chicks of the bird? Give her back her chicks.’”²⁶

Once a companion saw some people practicing archery using a hen as a target. He said, ‘The Prophet cursed the one who makes a living thing a mere target.’²⁷

Mildness and Gentleness

“Gentleness never accompanies anything without enhancing it, nor is it ever removed

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from anything without demeaning it.”²⁸
“Verily, God is gentle, and loves gentleness in all affairs.”²⁹ “He who is deprived of gentleness is deprived of all goodness.”³⁰
(Prophetic sayings)

Gentleness and kindness are a hallmark of the Prophet’s life. The Prophet, with his unique gentle approach, would handle serious and difficult matters, changing their difficult nature to an easy and soft one.

A few examples are cited

1. A young man came to the Prophet, and said, ‘O Messenger of God! I need your permission to commit adultery.’ So, people rebuked him. The Prophet asked the young man to draw near and said to him, ‘Would you like it (adultery) to happen to your mother?’ He said, ‘No, not at all’ Then the Prophet said, ‘Neither do people like

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it to happen to their mothers.’ Again, the Prophet asked him, ‘Would you like it to happen to your daughter?’ The young man answered, ‘No, of course not.’ Then the Prophet said, ‘Neither do people like it to happen to their daughters.’ Once again, the Prophet asked the young man, ‘Would you like it to happen to your sister.’ The answer was negative too. Then the Prophet said, ‘Neither do people like it to happen to their sisters.’ Then the Prophet put his hand on the young man and prayed, ‘O God! Forgive his sin, purify his heart, and guard his chastity.’ Deeply affected by the Prophet’s prayer, the young man never had a desire towards committing adultery again.³¹

2. A bedouin urinated in the mosque. The Companions rushed to beat him. But the Prophet asked them to leave him alone, to let him finish and to pour water over the

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place where he has passed urine. Then, the Prophet gently and calmly explained to the bedouin that the mosque is a place of worship. After the bedouin had left, the Prophet said to his companions, ‘You ought to make things easy, not difficult, for people.’³²

3. Once a bedouin came to the Prophet asking something from him. The Prophet granted his request then said, ‘Have I treated you well?’ The bedouin said, ‘No, and you have not been kind either!’ The Prophet’s Companions who were present felt very angry and wanted to punish the man. The Prophet, however, motioned them to leave him alone. He then went into his house, sent for the bedouin and gave him something over and above his original request. He then asked him, ‘Have I treated you well?’ The bedouin said, ‘Yes, indeed. May God reward you well.’ The

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Prophet then told him, ‘When you said what you said you made my Companions feel angry with you. Would you now like to tell them what you have just told me so that they hold nothing against you?’ The bedouin said, ‘I will.’ The following day the bedouin came and the Prophet said, ‘This bedouin said yesterday what you heard. We gave him more and he claimed that he was satisfied. Is that so?’ The bedouin said, ‘Yes, indeed.’ The Prophet then said to his Companions, ‘My affair with this bedouin is similar to that of a man who had a she-camel which ran loose. Other people rushed to try to catch her but they managed only to make her run wild. The owner then appealed to them to leave him alone with his she-camel as he was gentler to her and knew her temperament. The owner then went towards her, having picked something to feed her with. He approached her gently



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until she responded and sat down. He then saddled her and mounted her back. Had I left you alone when the man said what he said, you would probably have killed him and he would have gone to Hell.’³³

More strikingly, the Prophet’s inclination to ease and gentleness appeared even in the bestowing of names. Sa’īd ibn al-Mysayyib reported that the Prophet once asked his father what his name was, since ‘al-Mysayyib’ was his nickname. The father answered, ‘Hazn’ [which means rough and difficult]. The Prophet said, ‘No, you are ‘Sahl’ [i.e. plain and easy]. The father said, ‘I will never change a name given to me by my family.’ Sa’īd comments, ‘As a result, we have always had a trace of hardness in our characters.’ Also, it is reported that the Prophet changed the name of a woman from ‘ĀṢiyah [meaning disobedient] to Jamīlah [meaning pretty].³⁴

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Moderation

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) practiced moderation in all matters, religious and mundane ones, and instructed Muslims to follow a similar pattern.

It is reported that the Prophet approached a companion, called Sa'id while he was performing his ablution, and said to him, 'What is this wastefulness?' Sa'id answered, 'Is there wastefulness in water?' 'Yes,' said the Prophet. 'Even if you are beside a flowing river.'³⁵

Excessiveness in worship is not recommended. Rather, striking a balance is to be sought. Once the Prophet said to a companion, named 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr Ibn al-'Ās, 'I heard that you fast all day and stay up all night in prayer. Is that true?' He answered, 'Yes, it is.' Then the Prophet told him, 'Do not do that. Fast and break your fast. Sleep and get up (for worship), for your body

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has a right over you, your eyes have a right over you, your wife has a right over you, and your visitors have a right over you.’³⁶

In a similar vein, it is reported that once, three people came to the home of the Prophet, asking his wives about his worship. When they were told of it, they felt that their own worship was less than expected. Then one of them said, ‘How can we compare ourselves to God’s Messenger when God has already forgiven him any sin that he might have committed and any which he may commit in the future.’ Hence, one of them declared, ‘I shall spend all the night, every night, in prayer.’ The second said, ‘As for me, I shall fast every day of my life.’ The third one said, ‘I shall stay away from women and will never get married.’ The Prophet went to them and said, ‘Are you the ones who said so and so. You should know that I am the one who fear God most among you. Nevertheless, I fast on some days, and abstain

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from fasting on others; I pray, but I also go to sleep; and I do get married. Whoever abandons my path does not belong to me.’³⁷

Moderation is required even in food and drink. Advising his followers in this respect, the Prophet said, ‘There is no worse vessel for the son of Adam to fill than his own stomach. But if he must fill it, then let him allow one third for food, one third for drink, and one third for air.’³⁸

Simplicity

Ease is the main feature of the life of the Prophet Muhammad(pbuh). His wife ‘Ā’ishah reports that ‘whenever faced with a choice, the Prophet would always choose the easier of the two alternatives.’³⁹

The Prophet would eat whatever was served of food, and never slighted any sort of

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food whatsoever. Sometimes, he would sleep on a mattress, sometimes on a simple animal skin. Occasionally, he would sleep on a rough mat, or on the cold earth with nothing under him. He sometimes used a bed; a plain one at times and covered with a black bedspread at other times.

There are numerous Prophetic traditions encouraging the adoption of an easy and gentle attitude in various matters of life. As for religious matters, the Prophet says, ‘This religion is of an easy nature. Anyone who pulls hard against it shall be the loser.’⁴⁰ ‘Do not be hard on yourselves lest it should be made hard for you. A Former community chose to be hard and it was made harder for them.’⁴¹ Elsewhere, he says, ‘A rider driving hard without taking a rest neither reaches his destination nor keeps his transport.’⁴² ‘Make things easy, not difficult, for others.’⁴³ Concerning social dealings, the Prophet says,

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‘May God have mercy on any person who is tolerant when he buys, sells, and asks for his rights.’⁴⁴ ‘A believer is gentle and friendly.’⁴⁵

Wisdom

Muhammad’s wisdom was acknowledged by the people of his time. Once, while repairing the Ka’bah, various clans of the Quraysh disputed violently as to who should have the honour of placing the Black Stone [a stone placed at one corner of the Ka’bah] in its place. As they were about to get engaged in a battle, a man suggested that the first person to enter the mosque be asked to arbitrate in the dispute, and whatever judgement he made was to be accepted by all. The suggestion was met with unanimous approval. By coincidence, the first man to enter the mosque was Muhammad (pbuh). He had not yet received the revelation. As they saw him, they expressed their pleasure.

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Muhammad (pbuh) asked them to bring a garment and to select a representative from each clan. Then, he placed the Black Stone on the garment, and asked the representatives to lift the garment jointly. Following this, he placed the Black Stone in its appointed spot with his own hands. By such prudent and remarkable judgement every clan was happy and satisfied.

The Prophetic Etiquette

It was normal practice for Muhammad (pbuh) to greet others with a cheerful face. ‘It is part of kindness to receive your brother with a smiling face.’⁴⁷ He said, The Prophet was always the first to greet another and would not withdraw his hand from a handshake till the other man withdrew his. If he turned to speak to someone, he never inclined partially towards him but would turn his whole body and address him face to face. When he sat in the

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company of his companions, he sat with them without occupying any distinctive position. He would serve his guests himself. Whenever he received a delegation, he would wear his best clothes, and tell his Companions to do likewise. Everyone sitting in the Prophet's company felt that he was being treated with the utmost respect and honour.

It is instructive to know that Islamic etiquette, derived from the Prophet's sayings and actions, covers a wide variety of mundane and religious affairs, such as conversation, supplication, gatherings, sleeping, buying and selling, travelling, marriage, eating and drinking, greeting, clothing, going to the bathroom, visiting the sick, even joking. In every one's daily life, the Prophet is always ready with enlightening guidance and helpful advice.

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Muhammad and Children

The Prophet displayed compassion and love towards children. He would take them in his arms and embrace them. Once, he was hugging his beloved grandson, Al-Hasan. ‘Aqra’ Ibn Hābis who saw him said, ‘I have got ten children but I have not kissed any of them.’ The Prophet answered: ‘Mercy is not granted to one who is not merciful.’⁴⁸

Anas, a Companion, reports that ‘whenever the Prophet passes by a group of boys, he would smile and greet them.’ If the Prophet was prostrating, and his grandson was on his back, he would remain in this position, so as not to disturb the child.

And if he was in prayer, and heard a child crying, he would be filled with pity and mercy for the mother who would feel distressed by her child’s crying. Therefore,

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the Prophet would shorten the prayer. He says, ‘Sometimes I enter prayer and I intend to prolong it, but then I hear a child crying. So, I shorten my prayer thinking of the distress of the child’s mother.’⁴⁹

Speaking of the intimate relationship between the Prophet and his daughter, ‘Ā’ishah reports: ‘Whenever Fātimah came into the room, the Prophet would stand up, welcome her, kiss her, and offer her his seat. And whenever he came into the room, she would stand up, take his hand, welcome him, kiss him, and offer him her seat. When she came to see him during his final illness, he welcomed her, and kissed her.’

Muhammad and his Companions

The Prophet used to sit with his companions like an ordinary man. Whenever any stranger came to see him, he could not at first recognize



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the Prophet till he was introduced to him. He would joke with them. There are many reports about jokes exchanged between the Prophet and the Companions.

Encountered by various problems and troubles, the Prophet would consult his Companions, notably those of sound advice and judgment, so as to arrive to the best possible solution. (see **Muhammad and Democracy**)

Muhammad and Neighbours

A neighbour, Muslim and non-Muslim, holds a special status in Islam. Time after time, the Prophet placed emphasis on the significance of treating one's neighbours kindly. He said, 'Whosoever believes in God and the Last Day let him be kind to his neighbour.'⁵⁰ Also, he said, 'The Angel Gabriel advised me continuously to take

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care of my neighbour until I thought that he [Gabriel] would make him an inheritor.’⁵¹

Causing any sort of harm, or ill-treatment to a neighbour is strictly forbidden. In this context, the Prophet said, ‘Whosoever believes in God, and the last Day, he must not cause harm to his neighbour.’⁵² He even went further, warning, ‘By God, he is not a believer! By God, he is not a believer! By God, he is not a believer.’ It was asked, ‘Who is that, O Messenger of Allah?’ He said, ‘One whose neighbour does not feel safe from his evil.’⁵³

In another saying, the Prophet states that it is improper for a faithful Muslim to let his poor neighbour go hungry, while he has abundant food. ‘He is not a perfect believer, the one who sleeps on a full stomach, while he knows that his neighbour is hungry.’⁵⁴ The Prophet said.

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Repelling a neighbour's evil conduct with patience, and good manner, is something meritorious. The Prophet himself used to have a troublesome neighbour who was Jewish. The neighbour would throw his garbage at the Prophet's door! One day, seeing no garbage at his door, the Prophet asked people about his neighbour. He was told that his neighbour was sick and in bed. So, the Prophet (pbuh) went and visited his Jewish neighbour to wish him well. So touched was the Jewish neighbour that he later converted to Islam.

Muhammad and Previous Prophets

“The parable of me and of previous Prophets is that of a man who built a house excellently and completely, apart from the space of one brick which he did not place. The people started to walk around the building, admiring it and saying, ‘If only that brick were put in

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its place.' I have come to complete that brick, and I am the seal of the Prophets. ”⁵⁵ “All the Prophets are paternal brothers, even though their mothers are different.”⁵⁶ (Prophetic sayings).

As these two above sayings clearly indicate, the Prophet came to complete the journey of preceding Prophets. Islam, therefore, is not a new religion. It rather represents the ‘original’ as well as the final revelation of the God of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. The Message Muhammad received has a dual mission: to recapitulate the teachings of those prophets who had preceded him, and, on the other hand, to reform erroneous thoughts and incorrect beliefs that infiltrated the texts, and thus altered and distorted the original, pure revelation.

Preceding doctrines and principles of monotheistic religions reappear in Islam in

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pure, full and final form, free from any sort of distortion or alteration, whether minor or major.

Muhammad and Democracy

Adversaries of Islam, both in the media and political circles, portray it as inherently anti-democratic. They turn a blind eye to the fact that the Qur'ān (fourteen centuries ago) spelled out explicitly the principle of *Shūrah*, which means that issues are to be decided by joint deliberation and consultation. The practical applications of this principle in the earliest days of Islam qualify it to be considered a forerunner of modern democracy.

Muhammad (pbuh), when speaking as a Prophet, is to be obeyed without the slightest reserve, because he conveys and explains religion as received from God. But outside this area, Muhammad (pbuh), as he himself

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made it clear, is an ordinary human being who does not foretell the future, or claim to have more knowledge than other people in their respective areas of speciality. Therefore, his views on matters not related to faith are subject to review and amendment. On many occasions, Muhammad (pbuh) consulted his companions, listened to their advice, and put it into effect. On the battle of Badr, the first military encounter between Muslims and their enemies (the Meccan people), the Prophet drew a military plan for the deployment of his troops. One of the Companions asked the Prophet, ‘Are we encamping here because of a divine order, so that we have to abide by it without question, or is it an opinion of strategy and plan?’ When the Prophet answered that it was the latter, the companion offered an alternative plan of deployment. Immediately, the Prophet accepted his advice and adopted his plan. The outcome was a great victory.⁵⁷ A few years later, the enemies dispatched a



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large army to attack the Muslims in Madīnah. The Prophet was in favour of remaining at Madīnah and meeting the enemy there, while the majority preferred to march out and engage in battle with the enemy at Mount Uhud. The Prophet yielded to the majority opinion in compliance with the principle of *Shūrah*. Once again, after some years, the enemies of Islam formed a coalition in the hope of wiping out the Muslims. When the Prophet knew of the coming threat, he consulted his Companions on the best way to defend Madīnah. After lengthy discussion, both the Prophet and Companions agreed on the brilliant idea of Salmān al-Fārisī, the Persian companion of the Prophet, who suggested digging a moat round Madīnah, so that the attackers would be physically prevented from breaking in. The idea was a novel one, a new trick unknown in Arabia before. The Prophet hurriedly gave orders to implement the plan. On attempting to attack Muslims and break

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into Madīnah, the Quraysh and its allies were shocked and baffled.⁵⁸

Muhammad's stance to Non-Muslims

How does Muhammad see people of other religions? What sort of treatment does he give them? The answer is drawn from the following historical facts

1. The Prophet spent thirteen years in Mecca, calling everyone to the new message. Due to increasing persecution, he and his followers had to migrate to Madīnah. The Prophet acted as a religious and a political leader therein. Aiming to effect better relations among the different groups in Madīnah, he drew up a constitutional document defining the obligations and responsibilities of every group within the Muslim community, and outlining the nature of its relations with the Jews.

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The Jews, as the document stipulates, are regarded as citizens within the new-born Islamic State. They enjoy religious freedom and state protection. On the other hand, they are requested to back Muslims against any potential enemy and never plot against them or threaten the security of the Muslim state.⁵⁹

2. A similar agreement was made between the Prophet and the Christian delegation of Najran, (a city located in Saudi Arabia). According to its terms, Christians enjoyed the protection of their lives, property, lands, faith, churches, and all their possessions.⁶⁰
3. Asserting the sanctity of life and property of a non-Muslim who lives in the domain of Islam, the Prophet said, ‘On the day of Resurrection I shall dispute with any one who oppresses a *Mu‘āhid* (a non-Muslim

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granted, for a certain period of time, the pledge of protection by Muslims), or violates his right, or puts a responsibility on him which is beyond his strength, or takes something from him against his will.’ On another occasion he states, ‘Whoever killed a *dhimmi* (a non-Muslim citizen, mainly of the people of the Book who are subject to a poll tax, in return for Muslim protection) shall not smell the fragrance of Paradise though its fragrance can be smelt at a distance of forty years (of travelling).⁶¹

4. Once a funeral procession passed by the Prophet. As a gesture of respect, he rose. Thereupon someone remarked, ‘O Messenger of God, it is a funeral of a Jew.’ He replied: ‘Is it not a soul?!’⁶²

This highly-civilized posture conveys the message that a human being, irrespective of

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religion, colour, and race, is essentially dignified and revered, and that the very idea of difference, be religious or otherwise, is something that is ought to be respected and treated as such.

Muhammad and the Jews

It is indisputable that the relation between the Prophet Muhammad and the Jews of Madīnah was characterized by considerable strain and mistrust, as well as various clashes.

Critics, in particular orientalist, took this issue as the best opportunity for attacking the Prophet, portraying him as a cruel figure, with no emotions or mercy.

In his book 'Islam: The Straight Path,' John Esposito gives a useful and accurate summary of the Prophet's relation with the Jews. He says,

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Muhammad looked at the Jews and Christians of Arabia as natural allies whose faiths had much in common with Islam. He anticipated their acceptance and approval. When the Islamic community was established at Madīnah, Muslims, like the Jews, had faced Jerusalem to pray. However, the Jewish tribes, which had long lived in Madīnah and had political ties with the Quraysh, tended to resist both religious and political cooperation with the Muslims. They denied Muhammad's prophethood and message and cooperated with his Meccan enemies. While the constitution of Madīnah had granted them autonomy in internal religious affairs, political loyalty and allegiance were expected. Yet the Jewish tribes were accused of breaking such pacts. After each major battle, one of the Jewish tribes was accused and punished for such acts. Muslim perception of distrust, intrigue, and rejection on the part of the Jews led first to exile and later to warfare. After the battle of Bader, the Banū Qaynuqā'



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tribe and after the battle of Uḥud, the Banū al-Nadīr, with their families and possessions, were expelled from Madīnah. After the battle of the Ditch in 627, the Jews of Banū Qurayẓah were denounced as traitors who had consorted with the Meccan. Therefore, the men were massacred; the women and children were spared but enslaved. However, it is important to note that the motivation for such actions was political rather than racial or theological.⁶³

It should be known that the Prophet's treatment of the Jews presents a just penalty for their treacherous acts, and cunning stratagems. Had they remained faithful to their allegiance, they would have enjoyed peace, protection, respect and security, as were promised by the Muslim State. It is the very right of every person, group, nation, or state to seek self-defence, by taking all possible measures, against a disloyal ally who has broken his pledges and promises.

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It is worth mentioning that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) never took a stand against the Jews because they were merely Jews. For example, it has been cited earlier that the Prophet, out of respect, stood up to a Jewish funeral procession which passed by him. When he was asked why he did that, he replied: ‘Is it not a soul?!’

On another occasion, the Prophet, after the battle of Khaybar, got married to the daughter of Huyayy ibn Akhtab, one of the chiefs of the Jewish tribe of al-Nadīr who were expelled from Madīnah, because of their assassination attempt to kill the Prophet when he came to them seeking their support, according the terms of the pact, concluded between them in Madīnah. The Prophet hoped that his marriage to Safiyyah would mark a new, friendly and healthy relation with the tribe al-Nadīr. Surprisingly, when the Prophet died, his armor was mortgaged to a Jew for thirty Sas⁶⁴ of barley.⁶⁵

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More surprisingly indeed is the following story whose among players was a Jew. It was reported that a shield belonging to a companion, called Rifā'ah was stolen and suspicions were raised about a man, named Tu'mah. The shield owner reported this to the Prophet, saying that Tu'mah had stolen his shield. When the thief realised what was happening, he took the shield and put it in the home of a Jew called Zayd Ibn al-Samīn. Then he informed some people of his clan of what he had done, confirming that if a search was mounted, the shield would be found in the Jew's home. They immediately went to the Prophet and said, 'Messenger of Allah, our kinsman is innocent, and the one who stole it was so and so. And we request you to declare our kinsman's innocence in public. When the Prophet realised that the stolen article was found in the Jewish man's home, he declared Tu'mah's innocence in public, showing his sympathy for him.' Afterwards,

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several verses were revealed acquitting the Jew and convicting Tu'mah with his clan.

﴿ إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَا أَرَبَكَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَكُنَ لِلْخَائِبِينَ خَصِيمًا ۝١٠٥ وَاسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ۝١٠٦ وَلَا تَجِدُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ يَحْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ خَوَّانًا أَثِيمًا ﴾
[النساء: 105-107]

﴿ Surely We have sent down to you the Book with the truth, so that you may judge between the people by that Allah has shown you. So be not an advocate for the traitors; and pray forgiveness of Allah; surely Allah is All-forgiving, All-compassionate. And do not dispute on behalf of those who betray themselves; surely Allah does not love the guilty traitor ﴾

[4:105-107]⁶⁶

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These verses teach that justice is first and foremost; a top priority. Therefore, offenders, no matter who they are, should be brought to justice.

The question was not merely the acquittal of an innocent man who was the victim of a plot by a small group of people who wanted him to pay for a crime he did not commit. Although the acquittal of an innocent person is very serious indeed by God's standards, the question here was far larger. It is simply aimed at establishing a standard that cannot be tilted to accommodate desire, or support for one's kin and crony. It is a standard that is not swayed by feelings of love and hatred, regardless of the circumstances.⁶⁷

Muhammad and his Wives

The Prophet was the most caring and loving husband who attended to his family duties. Through his love, kindness, patience,

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and affection toward all his wives, he set an excellent example for husbands to follow. He would comfort his wives, wipe their tears, respect their emotions, listen to their words, care for their complaints, alleviate their pains, race with them, discuss matters with them, and consult them.

‘Ā’ishah reports: ‘Whenever the Prophet was alone with his family at home, he was the easiest of men, always smiling and laughing.’ Sharing with his wives the everyday housework, the Prophet sewed his clothes, mended his shoes and shirt, milked his goat and swept the house.

Concerning his late wife, Khadijah, the Prophet, in extreme faithfulness and undying love, frequently used to mention her paying tribute to her good qualities, that his young wife ‘Ā’ishah would get very jealous of her. ‘Ā’ishah said, ‘The

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Prophet hardly ever left the house without mentioning Khadījah and praising her. One day he mentioned her, and, as I was overcome by jealousy, I said, ‘Wasn’t she just an old woman that God has replaced with someone better?’ Angrily, he said, ‘No, by God. He has not replaced her with anyone better, for she had faith when others denied the truth; she believed me when others did not; she consoled me with her wealth, when others did not; and she was the only one among my wives through whom God granted me children.’⁶⁸

The Prophet’s faithfulness and kindness were even extended to Khadījah’s friends. ‘Ā’ishah reports that ‘Whenever the Prophet slaughtered a sheep, he would send a good share of it to women who had been Khadījah’s close friends when she was alive.’⁶⁹ Also ‘Ā’ishah reports that ‘An old woman came to Muhammad (pbuh)

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who smiled at her, and showed her much respect. After a period of time, the woman left. ‘Ā’ishah asked, ‘Why did you welcome this woman so warmly, in a way that you do not welcome anyone else?’ The Prophet replied, ‘She used to come and visit us when Khadījah was alive.’

Up to her death, Khadījah was always ready with sympathy, and consolation whenever the Prophet suffered from the persecution of his enemies or was tortured by doubts and misgivings. She stood by his side, reassuring him, lightening his burdens, and declaring her absolute trust in him. ‘You have nothing to fear; be calm and relax; God will not let you suffer humiliation, because you are kind to your relatives, you speak the truth, you assist anyone in need, you are hospitable to your guest and you help in every just cause.’ These are her reassuring words to the Prophet when he came to her terrified and overawed by



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the remarkable experience of the first divine revelation. It's no wonder that Khadījah deserved all this profound gratitude and high regard from her ever-loving husband.

As for 'Ā'ishah who reigns supreme in his heart, the Prophet showed great love and affection to her. Time after time, through his sayings and actions, he would display infinite love to her. He would wash in the same bowl as her, and drink from the same cup.

Once she asked him to what extent he would love her. He answered that his love to her is similar to a knot which is fastened in such a way that it is impossible to undo. Every now and then, 'Ā'ishah would enquire about the knot, and the answer would be that it was as strong as ever. When dying, the Prophet asked permission of his wives to be nursed in 'Ā'ishah's house. 'Ā'ishah was supremely happy because of that.

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Describing the final moments with her husband, she reports: ‘God caused the Prophet’s saliva to mingle with mine. My brother came in carrying a *siwāk* [a stick used as a toothbrush] in his hand. The Prophet looked at him and I realized that he wanted that *siwāk*. I asked him whether he wanted me to give it to him and he answered in the affirmative. I took it and chewed it a little to make it soft before giving it to the Prophet. He cleaned his teeth with it.’⁷⁰ Then he died with his head between ‘Ā’ishah’s chest and neck. It is worth noting, however, that this large proportion of love to ‘Ā’ishah by no means served as an obstacle to giving fair treatment and equal rights to his other wives.

Muhammad’s Liberation to Women

Prior to Islam, women were deemed inferior to men; they were deprived of their rights of inheritance. As a matter of fact,

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they were treated as a part of the deceased's inheritance. A man could marry a woman without her consultation. He could marry any number of women. The worst of all, an infant girl, being a financial burden, used to be buried alive by her father.

The position of women, however, with Islamic instructions, radically changed. Prophetic sayings liberating women, and granting them their rights, are in abundance; A woman is an equal to a man as a human being and as a partner in life. Together they share many duties, rights, virtues, and merits. The Prophet says, 'Women are twin halves of men.'⁷¹

Women are not to be forced to marriage without their consent. Ibn 'Abbas, a companion, reported that a girl came to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and told him that her father had forced her to marry

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without her consent. The Prophet gave her the choice of either accepting the marriage or refusing it. The dowry, a marriage gift, which is presented to her by her husband, is considered her full right.

In response to a question about the rights of a wife over her husband, the Prophet stated, ‘To provide her with food when you eat and with clothes when you dress. Refrain from slapping her on the face, insulting her, or deserting her except in the house.’⁷² Further, the Prophet placed a primary emphasis on respect, and kind treatment to the wife. He frequently instructed husbands to treat their wives with civility and courtesy. He even made the good treatment of a wife a standard, by which husbands should be assessed. ‘The best of you are those who are the most kind to their wives. And I am the best among you to my wives.’⁷³ ‘The most perfect believers, and who are the closest to me, are those



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who are the most kind and gentle to their families.’⁷⁴

The Prophet advises a husband that he must not hate his wife, and if he is displeased with one bad quality in her, then let him be pleased with one that is good in her.⁷⁵ Woman, as a mother, holds a lofty position in Islam. A young man asked the Prophet (pbuh): ‘Who of all people is most worthy of my kindness?’ The Prophet (pbuh) answered, ‘Your mother.’ The man asked: ‘Then who is next?’ The Prophet (pbuh) answered, ‘Your mother.’ The man asked again: ‘Then who?’ The Prophet (pbuh) answered, ‘Your mother.’ The man asked yet again: ‘Then who?’ And then the Prophet (pbuh) answered, ‘Your father.’⁷⁶

Moreover, a daughter can be a source of eternal bliss and happiness to her father, if he takes care of her and gives her a good upbringing. The Prophet says, ‘Whoever has

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three daughters and shelters them, provides what they need and shows compassion towards them, will certainly deserve Paradise. A man asked him, ‘And if they are two?’ The Prophet (pbuh) said, ‘Yes, even if they are two.’⁷⁷

Muhammad's Marriages

The Prophet's marriages provide a rich source of western criticism. A long series of allegations about his sexual perversion and promiscuous behaviour reverberated through the consciences and minds of a large number of western people. Prior to passing a judgement on this issue, one needs to be aware of several points.

- Many biblical prophets practiced polygamy. Foremost among them are Abraham, Jacob, David, and Solomon. The last one used to have 700 hundred wives and 300 hundred concubines.

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- Polygamy was common practice in Arabian society. A man might marry as many women as he wished, without any condition or restriction. After its advent, Islam restricted the number to four as a maximum, and laid out conditions so as to ensure just treatment to all wives.
- The Prophet was not married until he was twenty-five years of age.
- From 25 to 50, the prime of his life, he was married to one wife, Khadījah, a widow, who was fifteen years older than he was. They both lived in happiness and fidelity until her death.
- Between the ages of 50 and 60 Muhammad took other wives. Most of them were taken for social and political reasons.
- ‘Ā’ishah, unlike the rest of his wives, was the only virgin.
- At the age of 60, God revealed to him a verse preventing him from marrying again until he died at the age of 63.

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From the foregoing discussion, one may deduce that Muhammad (pbuh) was far from being a lustful person obsessed by sex.

Epilogue

Presumably, the reader has now grasped, to some extent, sound and sufficient knowledge of the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (pbuh), who, through his sayings and actions, proved to be a perfect man, a perfect husband, a perfect father, a perfect leader, a perfect teacher, a perfect companion, etc. By all standards, he was and remains to this day a perfect role model for the whole of mankind.

In the words of Khurram Murad, "The Prophet brings light and peace to countless hearts and lives. They love him more dearly than their own selves. In him they find their greater source of inspiration and guidance. He is the ultimate norm and the

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Perfect example for them. Faith in him is their mainstay, and he is their chief source of support and comfort in all personal vicissitudes and tribulations. To him they also look to lead them through social and political turmoil. He has inspired them to greater and greater heights of spiritual and moral upliftment and civilizational achievements. And still does.”⁷⁸

May God's peace and blessing be upon him

﴿لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ

وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

[الأحزاب: 21]

﴿You have indeed in the Messenger of God a perfect role model.﴾

[The Holy Qur'ān 33:21]

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End Notes

- 1 - The Islamic Foundation Newsletter. July 2006, Number 26.
- 2 - Maxime Rodinson, *The Western Image and Western Studies of Islam*, p 13. For a short yet a good account of the image of the Prophet in Medieval time, see Buaben, Japal Muhammad. *Image of the Prophet Muhammad in the West*. (Leicester: the Islamic Foundation, 2002), Pp. 7-16.
- 3 - www.unaoc.org/repository/3840Muslims%20and%20the%20West%20A%20Culture%20. Access Date 4th, Jan, 2005
- 4 - Haykal, Muhammad Husayn. *The Life of Muhammad*, Trans. Isma'il Ragi al-Faruqi. (North American Trust Publications: USA, 1976), P. 99.
- 5 - Ibn Hanbal, no. 22391.
- 6 - See Ibn al-Altheer, no. 5888.
- 7 - See Lings, Martin. *Muhammad*. (London: Islamic Texts Society, 1991), P. 303.
- 8 - The prayer offered for a deceased person shortly before burial.

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- 9 - Al-Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*. (Cario: Dar al - Rayyan, 1987), no. 1269.
- 10 Salahi, Adil. *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*. (Leicester: the Islamic Foundation. 2002), P. 30.
- 11- Salahi, pp. 153-154.
- 12- Ibid: p. 96.
- 13- Al-Bukhari, no. 4918.
- 14- Ibn al-Altheer, no. 8210.
- 15- Ibn Hanbal, no. 25341, 26194.
- 16- Al-Bukhari, no. 3475.
- 17- Al-Tabarāni, *Al-Mu'jam al-Kabeer*. (Iraq: Wzarat al-Ma'arif, nd), no. 15119.
- 18- Ibn al-Altheer, *Jāmi' al-Usoul*. (Damascus, 1969) no. 2615.
- 19- Ibid: no. 2616.
- 20- Ibid: no. 8435.
- 21- Al-Bukhari, no. 2937.
- 22- Ibid: no. 30.
- 23- Ibid: no. 3467.
- 24- Ibid: no. 3482.
- 25- Ibn al-Altheer, no. 8419.
- 26- Ibid: no. 2633.

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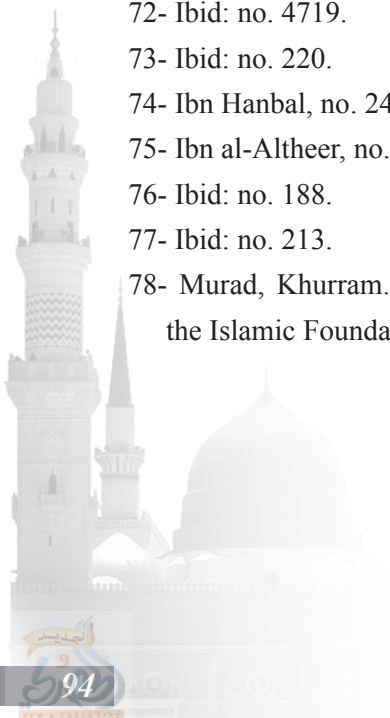
- 27- Ibid: no. 8416.
- 28- Ibid: no. 2636.
- 29- Ibid: no. 2637.
- 30- Ibid: no. 2638.
- 31- Ibn Hanbal, Ahmad. *Al-Musnad*. (Damascus: Dar al-Risalah, 1993-2001), no. 22211.
- 32- Ibn al-Altheer, no. 5054.
- 33- Qutb, Sayyid. *In the Shade of the Qur'ān*. Trans. Adil Salahi. (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation. 2004), Vol. 18, pp. 176-177.
- 34- Ibid: p. 176.
- 35- Ibn Hanbal, no. 7065.
- 36- Ibn al-Altheer, no. 87.
- 37- Ibid: no. 84.
- 38- Ibid: no. 5480.
- 39- Ibid: no. 8819.
- 40- Qutb, Vol. 18, p 175.
- 41- Ibid.
- 42- Ibid.
- 43- Ibid.
- 44- Ibid.
- 45- Ibid.

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- 46- Ibn al-Altheer, no. 8791.
- 47- Ibn al-Altheer, no. 4738.
- 48- Ibid: no. 2618.
- 49- Ibid: no. 3835.
- 50- Ibid: no. 4919.
- 51- Ibid: no. 4913.
- 52- Ibid: no. 4919.
- 53- Ibid: no. 4917.
- 54- Al-Hindi, *Kanz al-'Ummāl*. (Damascus: Al-Risālah, 1993), No. 24906.
- 55- Al-Bukhari, no. 3535.
- 56- Ibn al-Altheer, no. 6321.
- 57- Al-Mubarakpuri, Safiur Rahman. *The Sealed Nectar*. (Riyad: Darussalam, 2002), P. 195.
- 58- Ibid: p 273.
- 59- Read the full text of the document in Salahi, pp. 239-242.
- 60- Ibid: pp. 751-752.
- 61- Al-Bukhari, no. 6914.
- 62- Ibid: no. 1312.
- 63- Esposito, John. *Islam: The Straight Path*. (3rd ed) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), P. 15.

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- 64- A measure of capacity (3 kg. Approximately).
65- Al-Bukhari, no. 2916.
66- Qutb, Vol. 3, p 298.
67- Ibid: p 299.
68- Ibn Hanbal, no. 24864.
69- Ibn al-Altheer, no. 6668.
70- Ibid: no. 8530.
71- Ibid: no. 5309.
72- Ibid: no. 4719.
73- Ibid: no. 220.
74- Ibn Hanbal, no. 24024.
75- Ibn al-Altheer, no. 4723.
76- Ibid: no. 188.
77- Ibid: no. 213.
78- Murad, Khurram. Who is Muhammad? (Leicester: the Islamic Foundation, 1998). P. 6.



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