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Before His Prophethood

In Mecca – Before The Prophethood

The Birth

Over fourteen hundred years ago, Muhammad (S) was born to Abdullah and Aminah. He was born in Mecca (*Mecca*), the famed town of the Arabian Peninsula. According to the local calendar, it was Monday, 17th *Rabi-ul-Awwal*, 571 (there are, however, some differences with the dates, although this date is widely accepted by most people) of the Christian Era (C.E.). This year is also known as the Year of the Elephant (*Amul Feel*).

The Name

The grandfather of the Prophet, Abdul-Muttalib named him Muhammad, which means "The Most Praised One". He said, "I wanted Allah to praise him in Heaven and I wanted people to praise him on Earth."

His surname was Abul Qasim after the name of his eldest son Qasim as per the Arab custom; also ibn Hashim.

Year Of The Elephant

The Year of the Elephant was celebrated in Arabian history. It was known as the Year of the Elephant because that year, Abraha, the vice-regent of Ethiopia in Yemen attacked Mecca with an elephant (or elephants) to destroy the *Ka'bah*. Abraha had made a grand temple in *Sana'a*. He wanted to divert all the attention from the *Ka'bah* to his Cathedral.

Abraha assembled a huge army, which was to be led by himself, on the back of an elephant. He first sent a detachment of horse to the outskirts of Mecca. They plundered the inhabitants there and sent everything back to Abraha. This included 200 camels that belonged to Abdul-Muttalib. Abraha then sent a messenger to Mecca with the message that the Abyssinian army had not come for war, but only to

destroy the *Ka'bah*, and if bloodshed was to be avoided, the inhabitants of Mecca should to send their leader to the Abyssinian camp. Although Mecca had no leader after the division of responsibilities between the two clans, Abdul-Muttalib was considered the greatest authority in Mecca.

Therefore, Abdul-Muttalib and one of his sons went to the Abyssinian camp. When Abraha saw him, he was so impressed by his appearance; he rose from his seat to greet him. He sat beside him on the carpet and asked the interpreter to inquire if he had any favor to ask. Abdul-Muttalib replied that he wanted that his camels be returned to him. This answer surprised Abraha and said he was disappointed that the camels meant more to Abdul-Muttalib than his religion. Abdul-Muttalib replied, "I am the lord of the camel, and the temple likewise has a Lord who will defend it."

The next day, Abraha and his army go ready to march towards Mecca. The elephant of Abraha was to lead the army from the front, but the elephant would just not move. Finally, they decided to first march toward Yemen then turn back. At this, the Elephant rose immediately but no sooner were they facing Mecca that the elephant once again knelt. This was a clear sign for Abraha to turn back, but he was blinded by his personal ambition. It was too late now. Above, a great wave of darkness swept over them from the direction of the sea. The air above their heads, as high as they could see was full of birds. These birds moved like swifts, each carrying three pebbles, one in its mouth, and one between the claws of each foot. The birds pelted the army of Abraha with these pebbles, piercing even their coats of armor. Each pebble killed the man it struck, and the flesh began to rot. The plan was a complete disaster. Abraha's army was routed. Thus, Almighty Allah saved Mecca and the Holy Ka'bah. This incident gave the people of Mecca more respect than before. They came to be known as "the people of God".

Offspring Of The Two Slaughtered

The Prophet (S) said, "I am the offspring of the two slaughtered." It because both Ishmael son of Abraham (peace be upon them) and father of the Prophet, Abdullah son of Abdul-Muttalib, were offered for slaughtering but Almighty Allah arranged an alternative for them and rescued them.

The Situation Of Arabia At The Time Of The Prophet

At the time of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad (S), two great prophetic religions were practiced in the environs of Arabia – namely Judaism and Christianity. Both of these religions were born from the basic teachings of Islam as taught by Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them). However, the original teachings were lost, and these religions were born.

The Arabs believed in the concept of a supreme deity as originally taught by their progenitor Abraham. Most of the Arabs had become polytheists while a minority amongst them turned towards the religions of their cousins, i.e. Judaism and Christianity. The *Bait-Al-Haraam* in Mecca, which had been reconstructed by Abraham for Allah's worship, had been filled with 360 images and idols by these polytheists.

Most of the Arabs at that time were illiterate and drenched in pagan practices. The society was oppressive and full of vice. Women had no place in society. They did not inherit any wealth and were used by the men merely for their pleasure. In fact, upon the death of a man, his sons used to inherit all of his wives as well along with his wealth. Birth of girls in a family was considered to be a curse and below the dignity of the family. Thus, the "honorable" Arabs used to bury their newborn baby girls alive. The Arabs used to indulge excessively in wine, gambling, and poetry. Having mastery over the language was considered one of the greatest pastimes, and the best form was poetic.

The Arabs led immoral and oppressive lives. Slavery was rampant, and the slaves were treated worse than animals. The weak and poor were oppressed by the strong. There was no security of life, property and honor. The tribes would fight till death over the smallest problems.

Besides all these defects in their society, the Arabs possessed some good qualities too. They were courageous, wise, and especially generous towards their guests. They honored them and were very hospitable towards them. They were also great equestrians.

In His Childhood

Muhammad (S) in his childhood used to tend the sheep. He never did anything mischievous. He did not take part in any of the silly games played by other children of his age.

The Journey To Syria

Muhammad (S) was growing up in the affectionate care of his uncle, Abu-Talib, when at the age of twelve he accompanied him on a business trip to Syria. When their caravan reached *Busra* in Syria, a Christian monk, who was called Buheira invited them to dinner. Abu-Talib, and his caravan had passed this way many times before but have never been asked in by the monk. All members of the caravan went to dinner except Muhammad who stayed behind, probably to look after the camels and their baggage. Buheira insisted on Muhammad's joining in the dinner. When he did, Buheira asked him a few questions, and Muhammad answered precisely and to the point.

When Buheira heard the answers given by Muhammad, he recognized that Muhammad was going to be a prophet in the future. He told Abu-Talib that Muhammad would become the master of all human beings. Allah will send him with a Message, which will be a mercy to all beings. He also advised Abu-Talib to take care of him lest the Jews should harm him. Therefore, Abu-Talib sent him back to Mecca.

Marriage To Khadijah

Muhammad (S) traveled to Syria second time at the age of twenty-five years as a merchant for Khadijah daughter of Khuwailid (peace be upon her) who was a prestigious tradeswoman of Mecca, to do her business. Then her friend Nafeesah negotiated with Muhammad on behalf of Khadijah for marriage.

Khadijah preferred him for marriage because of his truthfulness and good conduct. Therefore, she helped Muhammad and comforted him in troubles, during their cohabitation. They had developed an intimate relation between them during the twenty-five years of their conjugal life and He did not marry any woman as long as she was alive.

The Federation Of Virtuous

Since the death of Muhammad's grandfather, authority in Mecca was divided among the ten senators who constituted the governing body of the Arabian Commonwealth. There was no such accord among them as to ensure the safety of individual rights and property. Though family relations afforded some degree of protection to citizens, yet strangers were frequently exposed to persecution and oppression. In many cases, they were robbed, not only of their goods but even of their wives and daughters. At the instigation of the faithful Muhammad, an old league, which is called "League of the Virtuous", (*Hilf al-Fudul*) was revived with the object of repressing lawlessness and defending every weak individual – whether Meccan or stranger, free or slave – against any wrong or oppression to which he might be the victim within the territories of Mecca.

Although Muhammad was young, he joined this association, which comprised of the elderly, together with his uncles and showed an affirmative response with his vote. This shows that he had possessed mature thoughts since he was very young, that he was disgusted by cruelty, and had a reputable standing among his tribe.

Of course, this individual, who was a symbol of compassion and mercy, was going to rush to help the oppressed and facilitate the positive endeavors on this matter before he was assigned the responsibilities that came with his prophet-hood. He had been sent for “completing high ethics”. In that case, he would partake in every endeavor that was a means of upholding high ethics.

In fact, after he was appointed as a Prophet, he expressed his contentment at having joined the association with the following statement: “I was also there when the oath was affirmed. In my opinion, that oath is more pleasant than owning red-haired camels. If I am summoned to it during the Islamic era, I will accept it.”

This word of the Messenger of Allah is also a criterion for the believers today: To help the societies and organizations that struggle against oppression and all kinds of immoralities, no matter under what name and how. No matter what form it takes, wrongdoing is unacceptable. It does not matter whether the person being wronged is a Muslim or a non-Muslim, a pious man or a sinner, a rich man or a poor man; whoever he is, others in society must come to his help.

A Muslim must strive to have a positive effect on society, to be a person who is remembered for the positive influence he has on the events that take place during his lifetime. Muhammad (even prior to receiving revelation) was known for his many positive contributions to society, to the degree that

everyone in Mecca called him by the name *Al-Amin* (The Trustworthy One). People's hearts were attracted to him when he was still at a very young age, and that attraction, in addition to love, continued to grow throughout his entire life, but especially during the years of his Prophethood.

The Black Stone

When Muhammad (S) reached thirty-five years, he settled by his judgment a grave dispute, which threatened to plunge the whole of Arabia into a fresh series of its oft-recurring wars.

In rebuilding the Sacred House of the *Ka'ba* (in A.D. 605), the question arose as to who should have the honor of raising the black stone, the holiest relic of that House, into its proper place. Each tribe claimed that honor. The senior citizen advised the disputants to accept for their arbitrator the first man to enter from a certain gate. The proposal was agreed upon, and the first man who entered the gate was Muhammad. His advice satisfied all the contending parties. He ordered the stone to be placed on a piece of cloth and each tribe to share the honor of lifting it up by taking hold of a part of the cloth. The stone was thus deposited in its place, and the rebuilding of the House was completed without further interruption.

This is how Muhammad succeeded in uniting the ever-fighting and ignorant Arabs with his honesty, justice, and noble character.

Ali, Under The Care Of Muhammad

Muhammad (S) took part in the public acts and was helpful to the needy and the helpless. His uncle Abu-Talib had fallen into distress through his endeavors to maintain the old position of his family. Muhammad went to his uncles Abbas and Hamza with a proposal. He said to them, "Look, your brother Abu-Talib has a big family. Let us go to him and ask him to permit us adopting some of his children."

Finally, Ja'far and Talib were adopted by Hamza and Abbas whereas Ali was brought up under the care of Muhammad when he was at the age of six. In this manner, the foundation of the moral and spiritual education of this intelligent child was based near the Prophet of Islam, the greatest educator of humankind.

Ali's mental faculties were to that extent that he believed in the Prophet at the age of 13, therefore he, on the contrary of the other companions of the Prophet, had never worshiped idols and never shared in unreasonable demands, oppressive treatments and unfair acts of chieftains.

In The Cave Hira

Muhammad (S) had been accustomed to secluding himself in the cave *Hira* in Mount *Nour*, a few miles from Mecca. To this cave, he used to go for prayer and meditation, sometimes alone and sometimes

with his cousin Ali. He would return to his family at Mecca, whenever he wished and then go back again, taking with him the necessities of life. It was during one of those retirements and in the still hours of the night, that Angel Gabriel came to him to tell him that he was the Messenger of Allah sent to reclaim a fallen people to the knowledge and service of their Lord. Muhammad was now approaching his fortieth year.

Angel Gabriel (*Jibreel*) appeared to him and said, "Read!" However, as Muhammad was illiterate, having never received any instruction in reading or writing, he said to the angel, "I am not a reader." The angel took a hold of him and squeezed him as much as he could bear, and then said again, "Read!" Then Prophet said, "I am not a reader." The Angel again seized the Prophet, squeezed him, and said,

"Read! In the Name of Your Lord, Who has created (all that exists), has created a man from a clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood). Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous, Who has taught (the writing) by the pen, has taught man that which he knew not." (Qur'an; 96: 1-4).

The Prophet repeated the words with a trembling heart and felt as if the words had been engraved on his heart. On his way down from the mountain, he heard a voice from heaven saying: "O Muhammad! You are the messenger of Allah, and I am Gabriel." He then hurried to his house and told Khadijah what had occurred and that he is the prophet to the people. Then she went to her cousin Waraqa Ibn-Naufal, who was old and blind and who knew the Scriptures of the Jews and Christians, and is stated to have translated them into Arabic. When she told him of what she had heard, he cried out, "Holy! Holy! Verily, this is the *Namus* (The Holy Spirit), who came to Moses. Muhammad will be the prophet to the people."

Muhammad's Religion Before His Prophethood

Muhammad (S) followed the way of Abraham (peace be upon him). He believed in Monotheistic religion of Prophet Abraham who was great great great grandfather of Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, it is better to say he was Muslim!

"Islam" comes from the root word **س***salam*, which means peace. Islam also means Submitting. Anyone who submits his or her will, to Almighty Allah, is called Muslim. Qur'an says, ***"Indeed, with Allah religion is Islam."*** (Qur'an; 3: 19) or says, ***"Should anyone follow a religion other than Islam, it shall never be accepted from him, and he will be among the losers in the Hereafter."*** (Qur'an; 3:85) Islam here means surrender. Therefore, Islam is the religion of all the Prophets, starting with Adam and ending with Muhammad. All prophets had the same belief, which is Islam. Islam here means submitting to the will of Allah.

Islam (as the name of the last *Shariah*) is the continuation of Judaism and Christianity. Almighty Allah – the Sole Creator, Sustainer, Provider and Ruler of the universe – provided guidance for mankind and developed His Religion by sending about 124000 Prophets (peace be upon them all) to preach Islam to mankind.

Therefore, the religion with Allah is Islam, but Almighty Allah for each community had appointed a code of law and a path, like Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

The prophet of Islam as the last code of law (*Shariah*) was Muhammad and the Qur'an is the last heavenly Book revealed to him. It gives humans a complete code of life. It was revealed part by part, bit by bit in 23 years and Muhammad preached whatever was revealed to him.

In the other words, Almighty Allah had sent Prophets throughout the ages to different nations of people all over the world. Some prophets were messengers, which means they changed some rules for the people, but the creed has been one! That no one deserves worship except Allah. So the religion is one and Jesus, Moses, Abraham, and other prophets were all Muslims.

It is an obligation for Muslims (followers of Prophet Muhammad) to believe in all the prophets of Allah, starting with Adam and ending with Muhammad and must believe in all of the scriptures sent by Allah to His different Messengers. A Muslim must believe in every scripture mentioned by Allah in the Qur'an. They are as follows: The scrolls that were revealed to Abraham. The Torah that was revealed to Moses. The Psalms that were revealed to David. The Gospel that was revealed to Jesus. The Qur'an that was revealed to Muhammad.

At the same time, the Muslims do not consider the Bible that is presently in circulation in various editions and versions to be an accurate representation of the older scriptures that were revealed before the Qur'an. According to the Qur'an, people have changed these scriptures for their own worldly ends. What remains of them is a mixture of truth and falsehood.

So the Prophets, from Adam to Muhammad (peace be upon them) were all brothers in faith. They all called to the same truth. Different Messengers came with different sets of laws that Allah sent with them to govern the people, but the essence of their teachings was the same. They all called people away from the worship of created things to the worship of the Creator.

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