**Brief Story of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)**

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Heavens, the Earth, their contents and everything that exists. May peace and blessings be upon all His prophets and messengers, starting from Adam and culminating with His final slave and messenger Muhammad (Peace be upon them all).

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was born in the year 570 AC in the city of Mecca (in Saudi Arabia) and lived for 63 years. He received the first revelation at the age of 40 and his tenure lasted for 23 years. He passed away in Madinah (Saudi Arabia) after fully delivering the message that was revealed to him by Almighty God through the angel Jibreel (Ghebriel).

The greatness of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) lies in being successful in both the worldly and spiritual affairs. A successful leader usually does not have time for his house and a righteous man may not be successful in the worldly affairs. The case of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) remains unique because he was successful as a worldly as well as a spiritual leader. He was a husband, a father, a businessman, a leader and the final Messenger of Allah (Almighty God) to mankind; however, one role never influenced negatively the other. Allah (The Most Exalted) said about Prophet Muhammad: **“Indeed in the Messenger of Allah you have a good example to follow for him who hopes for (the meeting with) Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah much” (Qur’an 33:21).**

Let us look at the example of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the light of the above statement in the following 3 areas: Spiritual Leadership, Mercy to the world and Statesmanship.

**1. As a Spiritual Leader (Warner & Exhorter):**

Although it is very difficult to describe Almighty God without anthropomorphizing Him (by way of representation or making pictures of Him), Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) successfully taught his followers about God without any kind of representation whatsoever. He managed to permanently take away his followers from idol worship by teaching them the right concept of the Oneness of Almighty God. Allah (SWT) defining the mission of the Prophet says: **“Verily, We have sent you [O Prophet] with the truth (i. e. Islam), as a bearer of glad tidings (to the believers) and a Warner (to the unbelievers); and you shall not be held accountable for those who are destined for the blazing fire (Qur’an 2:119)**. In an almost similar message Allah says: **“And We have not sent you (O Muhammad!) except as a giver of glad tidings and a Warner to all mankind, but most of men know not” (34:28)**.

As the Prophet began to speak in the community, many were moved and their number was growing rapidly. His expression was commanding and deeply touching. What was so amazing in his speeches is that they were natural, the Qur’an says: **“And neither does he speak of his own desire. That [which he conveys to you] is but [a divine] inspiration with which he is being inspired” (53:3-4)**. He warned people about the consequences of pursuing evil and announced the good news to the pursuers of good. He enjoined what is right to the people under his care as well as to his followers and forbad them what is evil. He warned people not to disobey Allah and that everyone will be held accountable of their deeds; there will be reward for the good and punishment for the bad. The Prophet says: “Every one of you is a shepherd and will be accountable for his flock. The ruler is a shepherd and will be accountable for his community; a man is a shepherd of his family and will be accountable for them; a woman is a shepherd of her husband’s household and will be accountable for her charge; a slave is a shepherd looking after his master’s property and will be accountable for it. Indeed, every one of you is a shepherd and will be accountable for what is under their care.” (Bukhari). A person in a position of responsibility must not require his subordinates to do anything that is not permitted by Islam. If he does, then they must not obey him. He also said: “No one may be obeyed in what constitutes disobedience of God”. If a commander orders someone to do what is forbidden, that person must disobey the order. The Prophet sincerity and commitment to his mission won him the allegiance and even devotion of men of strong and upright character like Abu-Bakr and 'Umar. In his day and generation he was a social reformer, even a reformer in the sphere of morals. He created a new system of social security and a new family structure, both of which were a vast improvement on what went before. By taking what was best in the morality of the nomad and adapting it for settled communities, he established a religious and social framework for the life of many races of men. In both Meccan and Medinan periods Muhammad's contemporaries looked on him as a good and upright man, and in the eyes of history he is a moral and social reformer. Islam is not just a religion, but also a way of life, and as such, its dogma crosses over into other aspects of life besides faith. Its crossover into social etiquette, judicial service and legislative services naturally provided a foundation for the ascension of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) into the political stream of life.

He did not limit himself to just words but went to a great extent to show mankind how to achieve what he was preaching and his message gained widespread appeal, not only in his own age but in succeeding centuries till today.

He gained men's respect and confidence by the religious basis of his activity and by qualities such as courage, resoluteness, impartiality and firmness inclining to severity but tempered by generosity. In addition to these he had a charm of manner, which won their affection and secured their devotion.

Ultimately, through his teaching the blessed Prophet of Allah (SAW) faithfully delivered the message entrusted to him. In turn, to this Ummah (i. e. the Muslims) he entrusted the charge of spreading the message of Islam.

**2. As a Prophet of Mercy to all the worlds**

The leadership of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was not only political but was also in the realm of morality and spirituality in which fields he conducted himself perfectly in situations of weakness as well as strength. His way of dealing in Mecca and Madinah indicates his great political leadership. The Prophet took great care of his people’s religious as well as economic needs. Not merely did he preach, but he was also concerned about their economic well-being and their safety. He made treaties and alliances with many tribes. He had great diplomatic skills. He taught the world diplomacy that was built on morality and honesty. He honored all his treaties and he defended his people. He was aware of the surrounding circumstances and made his people ready and alert.

The Quran states **“And We have sent you (O Muhammad!) not but as a mercy to all the worlds (mankind, jins and all that exists)” (Qur’an 21: 107)**. His attitude towards the poor, needy and orphans or weak is sufficient proof for this. He is indeed a mercy to the worlds in the way he dealt with people as well as the reforms (legislation) he made for the benefit of mankind. The first ever written constitution in the history of mankind was made under his guardianship in Medina; please see the Appendix to this paper for your reference.

He facilitated everything for everyone: if you are not able to pray standing up, you may pray sitting or even lying down. If you cannot fast the month of Ramadan you don’t have to; you don’t have to fast when travelling due to the hardship of the journey. You don’t have to go for Hajj if you don’t have the physical and financial abilities. When he was performing his prayer alone he made it too long but when he was leading Muslims in prayer he made it short knowing that some of them were old, weak or had something to attend to. What will you think of a ruling that makes a couple to forcefully remain married forever even if their characters and interests are not compatibles? The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) clearly legislated against such practices. Couples are free to divorce if they chose to do so.

He addressed everyone including his companions in the most beloved way and treated each one of them with dignity to such an extent that each one felt that he was the most beloved to him amongst all the others. He never turned down somebody whenever he was asked for something even if he was in need of it. The companions used to say that “Oh Prophet of Allah, when we are with you, we feel like surrounded by angels and full of inner peace; when depart from you, we feel empty”. He did not leave any out of his mercy: slaves, servants, orphans, women, children, rulers, animals, vegetation, etc.

It is a well-known fact that the Prophet was the supremely successful man in the entire human history (see the greatest 100 in History of humanity by Michael Heart). He was not just a hero, as Thomas Carlyle has called him; according to the Qur’an, he is the best example for all mankind (33:21, as already quoted earlier). He has shown us the way of achieving supreme success in this world as well as for the hereafter. The mark of the teachings of the great prophet is the profound attraction of his ideas for those to whom they are addressed.

**3. As Statesman par excellence & Teacher:**

As said previously, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was both a prophet of Almighty God (Allah) and a Statesman. His leadership was most comprehensive and dynamic. He was the model of virtue and spirituality. He was a noble and compassionate teacher, a guide, and a reformer. He never succumbed to any temptation. The people of Mecca tried to turn him away from his message and mission by offering him a great deal of money or anything that he wanted for himself but with one condition that he would give up his prophetic mission. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) very firmly, yet politely, turned down all their offers.

As his number of followers grows, so did the opposition. Some people opposed to his message challenged him by asking for miracles. Tribal leaders decided that the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his followers must be removed as they refuse to give up their claims to a Unique God. They see in his call a threat to their seasonal trades around the Kaaba where they used to have an annual gathering to reaffirm attachment to the belief of their ancestors (i. e. indulge in idol worship).

As a political leader the Prophet (PBUH) unified the Arabian Peninsula, established a great state whose capital was Madinah, defeated his enemies. He was a skillful and a courageous political leader. His enemies could not scare or intimidate him. He never initiated a war, but when he was attacked he was firm and decisive. He always emphasized peace and harmonious relations.

To the divided clans of Madinah, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) offered a vision of unity and solidarity. He unified all (Jews, Christians and Muslims) under a unique state without fight or any form of compulsion. He allowed the Jews and the Christians to freely practice their religions in the newly founded State. He led army of expeditions (battle of Badr and Uhud) but not without setting strict guidelines to the troops: that they should not harm non-combatants (women, children, elderly, animals, trees, etc). His troops fought with confidence that Allah (SWT) was guiding them and they were victorious.

By breaking the idols in the Kaaba during the conquest of Mecca, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was at the same time breaking the tribal system and setting the stage for a new era of a united community that quickly spread in the whole of the Arabian Peninsula before stretching worldwide. The Muslims then first turned North (Syria), then West (to Egypt) to establish an empire larger than the Roman and the Byzantine Empires. He built brotherhood and established the bounds of friendship with Jews and Christians by marrying their women who later on reverted to Islam. He formed military alliances instead of engaging in unnecessary battles.

Sound institutions and sound policies will not go far if the execution of affairs is faulty and fumbling; he had great wisdom in choosing men to whom to delegate administrative tasks. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)’s teachings fell in like with those of past revelatory prophets like Abraham, Moses and Jesus, and thus never actually spoke of Islam as being a new religion with new dogma, nor preached it under that pretence. He preached Islam as a restoration of the Abrahamic archetypal religion, as well as the perfection of the two other major monotheistic religions, Judaism and Christianity; whose teachings were believed to have been corrupted over time. He used the advantage he had as a prophetic political leader to negotiate treaties and resolutions that were beneficial to all and thus further enhance the influence of Islam on non-Muslims in the Arabian Peninsula. His strategy worked so well that within the span of a few years, he was not only able to get the majority of the Arab population to convert to Islam, but he was also able to gain further political control. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) lived the life of a poor man although he was able to live as a king. He built an empire without palaces and guards. The more one reflects on the history of Muhammad and of early Islam, the more one is amazed at the vastness of his achievement as an illiterate leader.

By studying the life of the Prophet (saw), we can derive some very important principles of leadership, which he followed. Indeed, the Prophet was a positive thinker in the full sense of the word. All his activities were result-oriented; he completely refrained from all such steps as may prove counter-productive.

**1st Principle: To begin from the possible**

This principle is well explained in a saying of Aisha, She said: “Whenever the Prophet had to choose between two options, he always opted for the easier choice” (Al-Bukhari). To choose the easiest option means to begin from the possible and one who begins from the possible will surely reach his goal.

**2nd Principle: To see advantage in disadvantage**

In the early days of Mecca, there were many problems and difficulties. At that time, a guiding verse in the Qur’an was revealed. It said: **“With every hardship there is ease, with every hardship there is ease” (Qur’an 94:5-6).** This means that if there are some problems, there are also opportunities at the same time. And the way to success is to ignore the problems and avail the opportunities.

**3rd Principle: To change the place of action**

This principle is derived from the Hijrah. Hijrah was not just a migration from Mecca to Madinah. It was to find a more suitable place for Islamic work, as history proved later on.

**4th Principle: To make a friend out of an enemy**

The Prophet was repeatedly subjected to practices of antagonism by the unbelievers. At that time the Qur’an enjoined upon him the return of good for evil. And then, as the Qur’an added: **“You will see your direst enemy has become your closest friend” (Qur’an 41:34)**. It means that a good deed in return of a bad deed has a conquering effect over your enemies. And the life of the Prophet is a historical testimony of this principle.

**5th Principle: To turn minus into plus**

After the Battle of Badr, about 70 of the unbelievers were taken as prisoners of war. They were educated people. The Prophet announced that if any one of them would teach ten Muslim children how to read and write he would be freed. This was the first school in the history of Islam in which all of the students were Muslims, and all of the teachers were from the enemy ranks. Here I shall quote a British orientalist who remarked: “He faced adversity with the determination to writing success out of failure”.

**6th Principle: The power of peace is stronger than the power of violence**

When Mecca was conquered, all of the Prophet’s (PBUH) direst opponents were brought before him. They were war criminals, in every sense of the word. But the Prophet did not order to kill them. He simply said: “Go, you are free”. The result of this kind behavior was miraculous, they immediately accepted Islam.

**7th Principle: Not to be a dichotomous thinker**

In the famous battle of Muta, Khalid bin Walid decided to withdraw Muslim forces from the battlefield because he discovered that the enemy was proportionately outnumbered. When they reached Madinah, some of the Muslims received them by the word “(O deserters!)”. The Prophet (PBUH) said “No”. They are “men of advancement”. Those Medinan people were thinking dichotomously, either fighting or retreating. He said there is also a third option, and that is to avoid war and find a time to strengthen yourself. Now history tells us that the Muslims, after three years of preparation, advanced again towards the Roman border and this time they won a resounding victory.

**8th Principle: To bring the battle in one’s own favorable field**

This principle is derived from the battle of Hudaibiyya. At that time, the unbelievers were determined to engage Muslims in fighting, because obviously they were in an advantageous position. But the Prophet (PBUH), by accepting their conditions unilaterally, entered into a pact. It was a ten-year peace treaty. Until then, the meeting ground between Muslims and non- Muslims had been on the battlefield. Now the area of conflict became that of ideological debate. Within two years, Islam emerged as victorious because of the simple reason of its ideological superiority.

**9th Principle: Gradualism instead of radicalism**

This principle is well established by a Hadith of Al-Bukhari. Aisha says that the first verses of the Qur’an were related mostly to heaven and hell. And then after a long time when the people’s hearts had softened, the specific commands to desist from adultery and drinking were revealed in the Qur’an. This is a clear proof that for social changes, Islam advocates the evolutionary method, rather than the revolutionary method.

**10th Principle: To be pragmatic in controversial matters**

During the writing of Hudaibiyyah treaty, the Prophet (PBUH) dictated these words: “This is from Muhammad, the Messenger of God”. The Qurayshi delegate raised objections over these words. The Prophet promptly changed the word and ordered to write simply Muhammad, son of Abdullah.

These were the principles through which the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) gained that success which has been recognized by historians as the true success. (Source: Khan, Muhammad W. [1998] “Prophetic Principles of Success” Minaret, September issue, pp. 8–9).

Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) was a man of great patience and resolution. There are many lessons for us to learn from his life. The most important aspect of his leadership was that he was always honest and truthful. Even his enemies could not find any flaw in his honesty and truthfulness. The most beautiful example of this we find in the conversation between Heraclius, the Emperor of Byzantium, and Abu Sufyan who was a bitter enemy of the Prophet at that time. This conversation took place in the year 628 AC when Heraclius received a letter from the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him).

Heraclius was on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem when he received this important letter. After receiving the message, the Emperor sent for his chief of police and told him to search the country for a man from the same tribe as the one who claimed to be a prophet. Abu Sufyan, a leader of the Quraysh, who was a bitter enemy of the Prophet at that time, happened to be trading in Gaza with some of his companions from Makkah. The Emperor’s search party found them there and they were immediately taken to Jerusalem.

Heraclius called them into his court and he had all the senior Roman dignitaries around him. He called for his translator, who translated Heraclius’ questions and said to them, “Who amongst you is closely related to the man who claims to be a prophet?” Abu Sufyan replied, “I am the nearest relative (amongst the group) to him.”

Heraclius said, “Bring him (Abu Sufyan) close to me and make his companions stay behind him.” Abu Sufyan added, “Heraclius told his translator to tell my companions that he wanted to ask me some questions regarding that man (the Prophet) and that if I told a lie they (my companions) should contradict me.” Abu Sufyan added, “By Allah! Had I not been afraid of my companions labeling me a liar, I would not have spoken the truth about the Prophet.”

The first question Heraclius asked me was, “What is the status of his family among you?” I replied, “He belongs to a good (noble) family amongst us.” Heraclius further asked, “Has anybody else amongst you ever claimed the same (that is, to be a prophet) before him?” I replied, “No.” He said, “Was anybody amongst his ancestors a king?” I replied, “No.” Heraclius asked, “Do the nobles or the poor follow him?” I replied, “It is the poor who follow him.” He said, “Are his followers increasing or decreasing (day by day)?” I replied, “They are increasing.” He then asked, “Does anybody amongst those who embrace his religion become displeased and renounce the religion afterwards?” I replied, “No.” Heraclius said, “Have you ever accused him of telling lies before his claim (to be a prophet)? I replied, “No.” Heraclius said, “Does he break his promises?” I replied, “No. We have a truce with him but we do not know what he will do.” I could not find the opportunity to say anything against him except that. Heraclius asked, “Have you ever had a war with him?” I replied, “Yes.” Then he said, “What were the outcomes of these battles?” I replied, “Sometimes he was victorious and sometimes we were.” Heraclius said, “What does he order you to do?” I said, “He tells us to worship Allah and Allah alone and not to worship anything along with Him, and to renounce all that our ancestors had said. He orders us to pray, to be chaste, and to keep good relations with our kith and kin.”

After this conversation it is reported that Heraclius said:

“I asked you about his family and your reply was that he belonged to a very noble family. In fact, all the Messengers come from noble families amongst their respective peoples. I questioned you whether anybody amongst you ever claimed such a thing, your reply was in the negative. If your reply had been in the affirmative, I would have thought that this man was following the previous man’s statement. Then I asked you whether anyone from his ancestors was a king. Your reply was in the negative, and if it had been in the affirmative, I would have thought that this man wanted to take back his ancestral kingdom. I further asked whether he was ever accused of telling lies before he said what he is now saying, and your reply was in the negative. So I wondered how a person who does not tell a lie about others could ever tell a lie about Allah. I then asked you whether the rich people followed him or the poor. You replied that it was the poor who followed him. And in fact all the Messengers are followed by the poor in the beginning. Then I asked you whether his followers were increasing or decreasing. You replied that they were increasing, and in fact this is the way of true faith, till it is complete in all respects. I further asked whether there was anybody, who, after embracing his religion, became displeased and discarded it. Your reply was in the negative, and in fact this is (the sign of) true faith when its light enters the hearts and mixes completely. I asked you whether he had ever betrayed. You replied in the negative and likewise Messengers never betray. Then I asked you what he ordered you to do. You replied that he ordered you to worship Allah and Allah alone and not to worship anything along with Him and forbade you to worship idols and ordered you to pray, to speak the truth, and to be chaste.

If what you have said is true, he will very soon occupy the place underneath my feet and I knew it (from the scriptures) that he was going to appear, but I did not know that he would be from among you, and if I could reach him I would go immediately to meet him and if I were with him, I would certainly wash his feet.”

May Allah (SWT) accept this from us and keep us safe from the punishment of hell-fire.

**For further clarification and follow up, please contact:**

**Dawah Committee Kowloon Masjid:** **km.dawahcomm@yahoo.com.hk** **or**

**M. Ali:** **poukou@gmail.com**