

Conquest of Mecca: A Case Study of Kindness and Forgiveness

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Abstract

The Conquest of Mecca by Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in 8 AH. /January 630 is the most important event in the life of Islam as the Holy Land “Ka’aba” was the birthplace of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). Different historians have narrated and praised it in various manners. Philip L. Hitti has mentioned this triumph in this manner: “Entering its great sanctuary Muhammad [PBUH]¹ smashed the many idols, said to have numbered three hundred and sixty, exclaiming, “Truth hath come, and falsehood hath vanished”. The people themselves, however, were treated with special magnanimity. Hardly a triumphal entry in ancient annals is comparable to this”.² Montgomery Watt, another great European historian, is also all praise for the Holy Prophet (PBUH) as is depicted in this paper. Martin Lings has mentioned this triumph by narrating different Quraish personalities who met or were treated by the Holy Prophet (PBUH) by presenting summary of the dialogues narrated by the 8th and 9th century Arabic historians.³ Thus all the historians of medieval and modern times praise the marvelous planning, skill and farsightedness on the part of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with which he accomplished the great task to conquer the city of Mecca which exhibits a high sense of dignity, peace and tolerance. This is also a great example in a sense that if a Treaty between the two rival States is broken by any party, as the Peace Treaty of Hudabiyah concluded between the Islamic State and the Meccan State in 6 AH for maintaining peace for a period of ten years did, the Islamic State is conscious enough to

give lesson to the other party who is responsible for not only the breaking its promise but killing of a number of people which could never be tolerated.

Key words: Holy Prophet (PBUH), Hazrat Ali, Macca, Madina, Treaty of Hudabiyyah, Banu Khuza'ah, Abu Sufyan, Holy Kaba

According to some Western historians, there is a problem with the medieval Muslim historians like Ibne Khaldun, Abdul Haq Muhaddas Dehlavi and others and that is they sometime repeat the events unnecessarily but their histories are full of details in the chronological form without much care for objectivity. The Modern British and European historians like P.K.Hitti, Montgomery Watt and others also have a problem and that is they believe in objectivity but provide very little details which is the need of the time. However, a proper middlediscourse along with the sequence of the events has been adopted in this article.

The Treaty of Hudabiyyah was concluded between the Quraysh of Mecca and Islamic State of Madina in 6 AH. Under this treaty both the parties were required to maintain peace for a period of 10 years. It was also concluded under this treaty that the tribes aligning with the one party were also to be respected by their opponents and not to fight with any of them. If any of the tribe aligning with any party was attacked, the Treaty would come to an end and there would again be a war-like situation. Banu Bakr, a tribe of Mecca, joined the Quraysh. Banu Khuza'ah, another tribe of Mecca, joined the Muslims.⁴ In 8 AH an incident occurred between these two tribes which resulted into war between the Muslims and the Quraysh.⁵ The incident was that once a person of Banu Bakr was speaking something derogatory to the honour of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Another person belonging to Banu Khuza'ah, who was present on that occasion, objected to this. Upon this the person of Banu Khuza'ah was beaten up by the men of Banu Bakr. This resulted into battle between Banu Bakr and Banu Khuza'ah in the precincts of Holy Ka'ba in which 20 people belonging to Banu Khuza'ah were killed. In this battle the Quraysh helped Banu Bakr. The news of this first reached Holy Prophet (PBUH) through Wahi, a revelation from God Almighty.⁶ A delegation

of forty persons led by Amr bin Salim from Banu Khuza'ah also came from Mecca to Madina and reported the matter to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) who felt very sorry for this loss of life and promised to come to Mecca at the earliest for the help of Banu Khuza'ah.⁷ Fearing retaliation from the Muslims, Abu Sufyan, who was leader of Quraysh after the death of Abu Jahl, came to Mecca to plead for avoiding revenge and war and to maintain treaty of Hudaibiya at all costs, a request which was turned down even by the important associates of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) including Abu Bakr, Umar, Abbas, Ali bin Abu Talib, and others. When Abu Sufyan met the Holy Prophet (PBUH), the request was turned down because in an incident involving the killing of a number of people could not be ignored by the head of the Islamic State. The party responsible for breaking the Treaty was to be punished. After Abu Sufyan's departure, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) ordered the Muslims to prepare for march on Mecca.⁸

By appointing Abuzar Ghaffari in his place as the Caliph of Madina, Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) departed for Mecca on 8 Ramazan 08 AH as head of Islamic Army consisting of about 10,000 persons. Some historians report that number of Muslim soldiers was 12,000. Quick decision was taken to march on Mecca in a very secretive and quick manner. Great "precautions" were made "to secure a large measure of secrecy".⁹ The forces were ordered to gather outside the vicinity of Medina. An attempt by a woman to go to Mecca to inform the Quraysh about these preparations by Muslims was foiled by Hazrat Ali on orders from the Holy Prophet (PBUH).¹⁰ Even all the outlet routes going outside and inside Medina were blocked by the Muslims appointed by the Holy Prophet (PBUH).¹¹

The Muslim Army encamped at the valley of Fatimah in Marras-Zahran which was about 10 miles away from Mecca¹². The Holy Prophet (PBUH) ordered lights to be posted outside every camp in order to create awe and fear amongst the hearts of the Quraysh. Abu Sufyan was secretly visiting all this during the night when Abbas, the uncle of Holy Prophet (PBUH), noticed him. Abbas brought him to his tent and in the morning presented him to Holy Prophet (PBUH). In the meeting with Holy Prophet

(PBUH), Abu Sufyan repented for his past deeds and became Muslim by reciting kalima. Upon this Holy Prophet (PBUH) forgave him for his past deeds against the Muslims and announced that he who takes refuge in the house of Abu Sufyan will also be forgiven. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) also announced that even that person who remains in his own house or lays off arms will also be forgiven. Abu Sufyan was allowed to leave for Mecca and inform about the decision of forgiveness given by the Holy Prophet (PBUH). In this way Abu Sufyan was honoured.¹³ Hazrat Abbas urged Abu Sufyan to go early before the arrival of Muslim forces in the city of Mecca. Upon this Abu Sufyan went early and thus addressed his nation: “O People of Quraish. Muhammad (PBUH) has reached on your heads. You will not be able to defend yourselves against his attack. Anyone who enters my home will be given protection and peace”. Other aspects of the peace accord with the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), as mentioned before, were also reported to the Quraish by Abu Sufyan. There was some resistance from Hinda bin Utba, wife of late Abu Sufyan, but soon silenced.¹⁴ All willingly accepted this peace accord given by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to Abu Sufyan.¹⁵

Mecca lies in the Valley of Ibrahim, surrounded by black rugged hills reaching heights of 1,000 ft (300 m) at some places. There were four entry routes to Mecca through passes in the hills. These were from the north-west, the south-west, the south, and the north-east.

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) divided the Muslim army into four columns: one to advance through each pass. The main column in which Holy Prophet (PBUH) was present was commanded by Abu Ubaida bin Jarrah. It was tasked to enter Mecca through the main Medina route, from the north-west near Azakhir. Holy Prophet's cousin Zubair bin Awam commanded the second column and it would enter Mecca from the south-west, through a pass west of Quda hill. The column entering from the south through Kudai was under the leadership of Ali bin Abu Talib. The fourth column under Khalid bin Walid was tasked to enter from the north-eastern side.

The tactic of the Muslim Army was to advance simultaneously from all sides targeting a single central objective. This would lead to a surprise attack on the enemy forces and prevent their concentration on any one front. Another important reason for this tactic was that even if one or two of the attacking columns faced stiff resistance and became unable to break through, the attack could continue from other flanks. This all-round attack was also meant to prevent the escape of any Quraysh personnel from the city to any side.

Holy Prophet (PBUH) emphasized on refraining from fighting unless Quraysh attacked. The Muslim army entered Mecca on Monday, 13 December 629 (20 Ramadan 8 hijrah). The entry was peaceful and bloodless on three sectors except for that of Khalid's column. The hardened anti-Muslims like Ikrimah and Sufwan gathered a band of Quraysh fighters and faced Khalid's column. The Quraysh attacked the Muslims with swords and bows, and the Muslims charged the Quraysh's positions. After a short skirmish the Quraysh gave ground after losing 28 men. Muslim losses were two warriors.¹⁶ When this matter was reported to Holy Prophet (PBUH), it was disliked, but Khalid explained that he did not attack, instead he was attacked. On this Holy Prophet (PBUH) forgave him.¹⁷

Idols cleared from Holy Ka'aba

There were about 360 idols in and around Ka'aba. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) ordered that these idols should be removed. The Muslim army acted on this order and cleared Ka'aba from all the idols. The idols fixed at Safa and Marwa were also removed. Holy Prophet (PBUH) himself entered Ka'aba along with Hazrat Ali, Hazrat Umar and some other companions. All the idols were removed and even paintings and miniatures from the walls of Ka'aba were also removed.¹⁸ During the demolition of idols the often-repeated words of God by the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and His Companions given in the Quran were that "the Truth had come and falsehood vanished".¹⁹ After clearing Ka'aba from all the idols Holy Prophet (PBUH) came out. By standing at the door of Ka'aba the Holy Prophet (PBUH) delivered his sermon which is briefly reported here:

First of all, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) praised and thanked God Almighty for giving him the honour and help to conquer Mecca and enabled him to clear the House of God from all the idols. Khalid bin Walid and his Army contingent was guarding the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and his associates at this time and blocking the huge number of people from approaching the Holy Prophet (PBUH). At this Holy Prophet (PBUH) asked the Meccan people: “What do you expect from me?”. The public answered with one voice: “We expect something good from you! We hope that you will forgive us and be kind on us!” Some elderly people said: “You are our brother. We expect brotherly treatment”. Thereafter, Holy Prophet (PBUH) thus addressed the people:

“I will treat you like my brother Joseph who treated his brothers with kindness and forgiveness. I announce that from today all traditions of the dark period have come to an end. We all are sons and daughters of Adam. No one is superior to any body, except that one who is God fearing and his behavior with the people is cordial and loving.²⁰”.

All this happened in the morning of 20 Ramzan 8 AH. Then Holy Prophet (PUUH) went to the house of sister of Hazrat Ali bin Abu Talib and stayed there for some time. Thereafter he visited other places of Mecca and came back to Ka’aba at about the time of Zuhar prayer and ordered Bilal to deliver Azan, call of the prayer, by ascending at the top of Ka’aba. In this way prayers were started at Ka’ba which are continuing till today.

On the second day (21 Ramzan) Holy Prophet (PBUH) delivered another address to the people in this way: “O People listen. When God created Heavens and the Earth, He also declared sanctity of Haram Ka’aba. This sanctity is to be maintained till the Day of Judgment. Killing, fighting and battle is not allowed in the land of Ka’aba. You have to maintain its sanctity till the last day”.²¹

Importance of this Conquest, the Events following this and the Lessons to be learnt

1. The greatest lesson is that Mecca which was homeland of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) where he was born and suffered most for thirteen years at the cruel hands of the Qureshi, and was forced to leave and come to Madina, entered this great holy city of Ka'ba victorious without resistance and opposition. However, some skirmishes occurred with the Muslim Army led by Khalid bin Walid for which the Holy Prophet (PBUH) felt sorry. This happened without any fault on the part of the Muslims. Instead, leader of Quraish Abu Sufyan became Muslim along with most of the people of Quraish. Upon this Abu Sufyan and other members of Quraish were forgiven and pardoned. Not only this but the people residing in their houses were also forgiven. The people who laid arms before the Muslims were also forgiven. This was a marvelous example of kindness and forgiveness happened for the first time in any part of the world.
2. This Conquest revealed the marvelous strategy on the part of Holy Prophet (PBUH) that how a city is encircled from all the four corners in order to show to its inhabitants that there is no way to escape. It also showed to the enemies that there is no way out except to fight or surrender before the conquering Army who had advanced because of their moral superiority that they were not responsible for breaking the Treaty of Hudaibya concluded two years ago for the period of 10 years. It was the Quraish of Mecca who broke the treaty and violated it. Even when the Islamic forces entered the city and they surrounded the population and the Holy Ka'aba, no one was killed for the purpose of maintaining the sanctity of the Holy house. Still no harsh terms were announced that even if the persons surrendering their arms or who remained inside their houses were to be forgiven and given protection by the Holy Prophet(PBUH) without

any conditions. Thus, this all showed the highest kind of moral behavior not only on the part of Holy Prophet (PBUH) but also on the part of all the soldiers and commanders of the Islamic Army.

3. Abdullah bin Khatal, a newly converted Muslim, was sent by the Holy Prophet (PBUH) to collect Zakat and Sadaqat from a tribe living in the vicinity of Madina along with an Ansari Muslim. He collected Zakat and Sadaqat, but while returning from the tribe to Madina killed the Ansari Muslim and fled to Mecca along with the collected Zakat and Sadaqat. When Mecca was conquered, he hid himself under the ‘ghilaf’, (curtain) of Ka’aba. When traced he was killed by the Muslim soldiers upon orders from the Holy Prophet (PBUH).²²
4. Abdullah bin Sarah, a cousin of Hazrat Usman bin Affan, the third Caliph of Islam, was one of the secretaries of Holy Prophet (PBUH) but he was expelled from Medina because he deliberately tampered the Quranic word “Hakeem” with “Aleem”. When Holy Prophet (PBUH) noticed this he was expelled Abdullah from Medina who went to Mecca. After the Conquest of Mecca, when he came to Holy Prophet for “bait” along with Usman bin Affan, the “bait” was refused. Upon the repeated requests of Usman bin Affan he was forgiven by the Holy Prophet (PBUH).
5. Ikrama bin Abu Jahl, was one of the greatest enemies of Islam amongst the Quraish. When he came to know of the victory of the Muslim Army in Mecca, he fled from Mecca, went to Jeddah and boarded a boat for Yemen. On the way his boat was caught with a storm in the sea. During the storm he along with his associates repented from their sins and promised with the God of Muhammad (PBUH) to become Muslims. He came back and went to Holy Prophet (PBUH) along with his wife. Upon entering the Tent of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) he asked

forgiveness and kindness which was granted. He along with his wife accepted Islam and later became one of the warriors of Islam. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) also forbade his companions not to taunt him for the sins of his father Abu Jahl. Martin Lings adds: “Then ‘Ikrimah spoke of the money he had spent and the battles he had fought to bar men from following the truth, and he said that he would henceforth spend the double of it and fight with doubled efforts in the way of God, and he kept his promise”.²³

6. He attained martyrdom in the Battle of Ajnadin during the Caliphate of Abu Bakr.²⁴
7. Safwan bin Umayya, was one of the greatest enemies of Islam amongst the Umayyads. He was also fearful about going to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) for accepting Islam. Umair bin Wahab, the companion of Holy Prophet (PBUH) was his close relative. Umair requested the Prophet (PBUH) to grant him two months for accepting Islam which were granted. However, Safwan accepted Islam when the Holy Prophet (PBUH) had gone to Hunain and Taif after conquering Mecca.²⁵
8. The Black Man called “Wahshi” who killed Holy Prophet (PBUH)’s uncle Hamza at the battle of Ohad in 3 AH was ordered to be killed by the Holy Prophet (PBUH), but he fled to Taif. When Holy Prophet (PBUH) conquered Hunain he came in the company of a group of Taif people and accepted Islam. Holy Prophet (PBUH) despite being hurt deeply by the killing of his dearest uncle, forgave him.
9. Hinda bin Utba was wife of Abu Sufyan. She also came to Holy Prophet (PBUH) along with other Quraysh women and accepted Islam. Even on learning that Hinda bin Utba was that woman who had mistreated the dead body of Holy Prophet (PBUH)’s uncle Hamza, forgave

her and became kind on her.²⁶ Actually, as Hamidullah narrates it, at the battle of Uhad “Abu Sufyan’s wife had split open his [Hamza’s] stomach and chewed his liver. Abu Sufyan saw this and said that he had not ordered the misdeed although he was happy”.²⁷ That is why Hamidullah terms Abu Sufyan as a clever man.²⁸

10. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) also declared that from henceforth the non-Muslims will not be allowed to enter the vicinity of the Holy Ka’aba. It was in this context that Sura 9: 28 in the Holy Quran was revealed to the Holy Prophet (PBUH).²⁹

Stay at Mecca, Important Decisions and Accomplishments

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) stayed for 15 days in Mecca³⁰ and then departed to Hunain for further conquests. During his stay in Mecca the Holy Prophet (PBUH) heard certain law suits and made very important decisions some of which are reported here:

1. The case of theft by Fatima bin Aswad who belonged to a rich tribe of Mecca, Bane Makhzoom, was brought to the court of Holy Prophet (PBUH). After taking evidences the case of theft by Fatima was proved. On this Holy Prophet (PBUH) announced his judgment that hands of Fatima bin Aswad should be cut. Upon this the elders of Bane Makhzoom approached Osama bin Zaid, who was very close to Holy Prophet (PBUH) to request Holy Prophet (PBUH) to pardon Fatima or relax the sentence. When Osama requested Holy Prophet (PBUH) for this, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) got infuriated and addressed the people: “O people remember that the past nations were destroyed because when question of application of justice came in case of a rich person it was ignored, but law was strictly applied only in case of the poor and weak people. I swear by God Almighty if my daughter Fatima would have committed this sin her hands would have been cut.” On hearing this culprit woman’s hands were cut.

2. Holy Prophet (PBUH) sent Khalid bin Walid with 30 riders to destroy the idols of Nakhla, a country side of Mecca. Khalid went there and accomplished his job. On his return Holy Prophet (PBUH) asked him to report. As Khalid missed certain idols, he was again sent to demolish the remaining idols which Khalid performed successfully.
3. Holy Prophet (PBUH) sent Amar bin Aas to destroy idols lying in Sawa'a, another place of idol worship in the vicinity of Mecca. Amar went with his force and accomplished the work.
4. When Khalid bin Walid accomplished his first task of Nakhla, Holy Prophet (PBUH) sent him to Yalmalm, where Khazima tribe was residing. As head of 300 Ansari and Muhajireen soldiers, Khalid asked them to accept Islam. This news reached Bani Khazima who came out of their town along with their arms to meet Khalid. When Khalid asked them of their whereabouts, they answered that they have accepted Islam, regularly offer prayer and had constructed mosques in their areas. Khalid was not satisfied with their answer and counter questioned: "Then why have you come to us fully armed?" As Khalid was not satisfied with their answers, he asked them to lay their arms which was accomplished. Khalid ordered that their hands be bound around their necks and they were given in the custody of his soldiers. In the morning Khalid ordered that they all should be killed. The Ansar and Muhajir soldiers did not obey Khalid's orders but other soldiers obeyed him and killed about 100 persons. One person of Bani Khazima escaped to Mecca and reported the matter to Holy Prophet (PBUH) who was very sorry to hear all this. On this Holy Prophet (PBUH) sent Ali bin Abu Talib along with a small force. Ali paid diyat to the family members of the killed persons and repented on the actions of Khalid. In this way all the

inhabitant of Yalmalm became very happy and Ali successfully returned to Mecca. When Khalid reached Mecca and met Holy Prophet (PBUH), he was warned by the Holy Prophet (PBUH) not to be cruel on the conquered people. Khalid asked for forgiveness which was granted.

This paper is concluded by Montgomery Watt's following observation:

In this entire scenario one cannot but be impressed by Muhammad's faith in his cause, his vision and his far-seeing wisdom. While his community was still small and devoting all its energies to avoiding being overwhelmed by its enemies, he had conceived a united Arabia directed outwards, in which the Meccans would play a new role – a role no less important than their old role of merchants. He had harried them and provoked them; then he had wooed them and frightened them in turn; and now practically all of them, even the greatest, had submitted to him. Against considerable odds, often with narrow margins, but nearly always with sureness of touch, he had moved towards his goal. If we were not convinced of the historicity of these things, few would credit that a despised Meccan Prophet could re-enter his city as a triumphant conqueror.³¹

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- ²¹ Ibid., pp. 391-392.
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³⁰ Montgomery Watt terms it 15 or 20 days, See Watt, Muhammad at Medina, p.69.

³¹ Ibid. p. 70.