

Abu Bakr

The First Caliph of Islam

Early Life

"No one has been a better companion to me than Abu Bakr," said the holy Prophet in his last sermon.

A great reward indeed! Abu Bakr had earned it. All his life he stood by the side of the Prophet. He did not care for his life. He did not care for his riches. He did not care for what others said about him. His only ambition was to serve the Prophet more than anyone else. The cost did not matter. The ambition was fulfilled. And Abu Bakr got his reward in full. The Messenger of Allah was well pleased with him. He gave him the first place among the Companions. Abu Bakr was to be the first man to fill the place of the Prophet. He was also to lie in eternal rest by the prophet's side.

Abu Bakr was two years younger than the Prophet. His parents named him Abdul Kaaba, which means the servant of the Kaaba. When he became a Muslim, the Prophet changed his pagan name to Abdullah. However, in early youth he had adopted the surname of Abu Bakr. He had come to be known by this name among people. Even to this day, the world generally knows him as Abu Bakr.

The name of Abu Bakr's father was Uthman, but he was known as Abu Qahafa. Salma was Abu Bakr's mother. She was also known as Umm-ul-Khair. Abu Bakr belonged to a branch of the Quraish.

From early years, Abu Bakr was known for good and upright nature. He was honest and truthful. He came of a noble family. These things won him respect among the people. His goodness also won him the friendship of young Muhammad (Peace be Upon him). The two became fast friends in early boyhood. The friendship was to prove lifelong and history-making.

When he grew up, Abu Bakr became a rich merchant. But he used to be very kind-hearted. When he saw someone in trouble, his heart melted. He did his best to help him. If his money could remove suffering, he did not care how much he had to spend. Once he gave away thirty-five dirhams out of his total fortune of forty thousand. He was so honest in his dealings that people kept their money with him. Above all, Abu Bakr had a sincere heart and a firm will. Nothing could stop him from doing what he thought was the right thing to do.

These great qualities were soon to serve the noblest cause known to the world. Abu Bakr was to become the strongest supporter of the Redeemer of mankind. He was to become the first among the Companions. He was to make Arabia and thereby the world safe for Islam after the Prophet has passed away.

Service to the Prophet

First among Men

Abu Bakr was always very close to the holy Prophet. He knew him better than any other man. He knew how honest and upright his friend had always been. So he was the first among men to believe in the Prophet's mission. He was the first adult male to accept Islam. After the first revelation, the holy Prophet told him what had happened at Mount Hira. He told him that Allah had made him His Messenger. Abu Bakr did not stop to think. He at once became a Muslim. Once the holy Prophet himself remarked, "I called people to Islam. Everybody thought over it, at least for a while. But this was not the case with Abu Bakr. The moment I put Islam before him, he accepted it without any hesitation."

Abu Bakr did more than that. As soon as he became a Muslim, he began to preach Islam to others. He had many friends. The friends knew that Abu Bakr was sincere and truthful. They knew he would never support a wrong cause. He called them to Islam and they became Muslims. Among them were men like Uthman, Zubair, Talha, Abdur Rahman bin Auf and Saad bin Waqqas. These men later became the pillars of Islam.

The holy Prophet called at Abu Bakr's house every day. The two sat down and thought out ways of spreading Islam. Together they went to people and places and delivered the message of Allah. Wherever the holy Prophet went, Abu Bakr went with him.

Risks His Life

The message of Islam made the people of Mecca very angry. The idols were their gods. The holy Prophet openly mocked at these gods. He declared they could do neither any good nor harm. Among the chiefs of Mecca was one Abu Jahl. He became the greatest enemy of the holy Prophet. He was always on the lookout to hurt him or even kill him, if he could. Abu Bakr kept an eye on this man, lest he should do a grave harm to Islam.

One day the holy Prophet was saying his prayers in the Kaaba. He was totally lost in the thoughts of Allah. Abu Jahl and some other chiefs of Mecca were sitting in the courtyard of the Kaaba. "I must finish with Muhammad today," said Abu Jahl. So saying, he took a long piece of cloth. He put it around the holy Prophet's neck. Then he twisted it hard. He was going to strangle the Messenger of Allah to death. The other chiefs looked on and laughed.

Abu Bakr happened to see this from a distance. He at once ran to the help of the Prophet. He pushed Abu Jahl aside and took off the cloth from around the holy Prophet's neck. Thereupon Abu Jahl and other enemies of Islam came down upon Abu Bakr. They beat him very much. Indeed, the beating was so severe that Abu Bakr fell down senseless. He was carried home. He could not regain his senses till after several hours. And when he did come to himself, the first question he asked was, "Is the Prophet un-hurt?" Abu Bakr did not care for his own suffering. He was glad that he was able to save the Prophet's life. Abu Bakr knew full well that if any harm came to the Prophet, the only hope of mankind would be gone. This made him risk everything he held dear, for the safety of the Prophet and for the spread of his message.

Liberation of Slaves

As years went by, the people of Mecca became more and more hard upon the Muslims. They made life difficult for them. Muslim slaves who had non-Muslim masters were the worst sufferers. They could not run away from their cruel masters, nor would they give up their faith. The heartless masters tried all kinds of torture to make them give up Islam. They made them lie, all naked, on burning sand. Then they put big stones on their chests. The poor slaves silently bore this all. They had no way of escape. Some of them found escape only in death.

Abu Bakr's wealth came to the rescue of many helpless Muslim slaves. He bought them from their inhuman masters and set them free. Bilal, the negro, was one of such slaves. He was the slave of Omayya bin Khalaf. Omayya was a heartless man. He would strip Bilal of all clothes, make him lie on the burning sand at mid-day and then lash him mercilessly. Despite this torture Bilal would go on saying, "Allah is one! Allah is one!" One day Abu Bakr happened to pass by. He was greatly moved by the sight. "Why are you so cruel to this helpless man?" he asked Omayya. "If you feel for him, why don't you buy him?" retorted Omayya. So Abu Bakr at once bought Bilal at a heavy price and set him free. Bilal afterwards became the well-known "Muazzin" [one who gives the call for prayer] at the Prophet's Mosque.

Migration to Abyssinia

When Muslims found life difficult at Mecca, they thought of going to some other land. With the permission of the holy Prophet, a part of them went to Abyssinia. here they lived in peace. So many more Muslims followed them.

Being the first man to go over to Islam, Abu Bakr had brought upon himself the special anger and hatred of the Meccan chiefs. Soon he felt hard pressed and asked permission of the Holy Prophet to go to Abyssinia. The permission was granted and Abu Bakr set off on his journey.

On the way he met the chief of Qara, Ibn-ud-Daghna. "What place are you bound for, Abu Bakr?" he asked.

"The people of Mecca have cast me out," replied Abu Bakr. "I am going to Abyssinia. There I will be able to worship the Lord the way I want to."

"A man like you should not be cast out," said Ibn-ud-Daghna. "You help the poor. You are kind to those in trouble. You are so nice to your guests. I will take you back to Mecca on my own responsibility."

So Abu Bakr ws back at Mecca. Ibn-ud-Daghna declared to the people that Abu Bakr was under his protection, so no one was to harm him. The Meccans said that they would let Abu Bakr alone, only if he did not preach his faith publicly.

Abu Bakr could not act on this condition very long. Soon he was preaching Islam as openly as ever. The Meccans complained to Ibn-ud-Daghna. He requested Abu Bakr not to make his position difficult. To this Abu Bakr replied, "I do not need your protection. Allah is enough for me."

The Title of "Siddiq"

In the tenth year of his mission, the holy Prophet had the Miraj of Ascension. One night the angel Gabriel came with the word that Allah the Almighty wanted the holy Prophet to come all the way up to the highest heaven. The holy Prophet undertook the journey.

In the morning, after the ascension had taken place, the holy Prophet talked to people about the Miraj. This drew the jeers of his enemies.

"Look!" they howled out, "what nonsense he talks! Surely, now his followers too will laugh at him. Who is going to believe in such a midsummer night dream?"

The talk was going on when Abu Bakr came up. "Do you know, Abu Bakr, what news your friend has for you in the morning?" said one of the mean. "He says he was on the highest heaven last night, having a talk with Allah, the Almighty. Would you believe it?"

"I would believe anything that the Messenger of Allah says," replied Abu Bakr

When the holy Prophet learnt of this, he at once said, "Abu Bakr is the `Siddiq'." `Siddiq' is a person so sincere of heart that doubts never mar his love. Abu Bakr earned this title because of his faith was too strong to be shaken by anything.

Migration to Medina

When the Meccans were intent on putting out, once and for all, the light of Islam, Allah commanded the holy Prophet to move to Medina. In the burning heat of the midday sun, there was a knock at Abu Bakr's door. He ran to the door and found the Messenger of Allah standing outside. "I must leave for Medina tonight," said he.

"Will I also have the honor of going with you?" asked Abu Bakr eagerly.

"Of course," came the reply. "Set about getting things ready."

Abu Bakr was beside himself with joy. "I have been looking forward to this day for months," he exclaimed. "I have specifically kept two camels to carry us to Medina."

It was Abu Bakr who made all the arrangements for the historic journey. For three days he and the Prophet lay hidden in the Thaur cave. Abu Bakr's slave tended the flocks of goats near the cave all day and supplied them fresh milk for food. His son, Abdullah, brought news about what the Meccans were doing.

The Meccans were searching for the holy Prophet like mad hounds. Once they came right to the mouth of the cave. Abu Bakr grew pale with fright. He feared, not for himself, but for the Prophet. However, the holy Prophet remained perfectly calm. "Do not fear," he said to Abu Bakr, "certainly Allah is with us."

Of all the companions, Abu Bakr had the honor of being with the Prophet during the most critical days of his life. Abu Bakr knew full well what this honor meant. And he did full justice to the trust put in him.

Participation in Battles

Abu Bakr took part in all the battles that the holy Prophet had to fight. All his life, he fought bravely under the banner of the Prophet. At Ohud and Hunain, some of the men showed weakness. They forgot to do their duty. But Abu Bakr's faith never wavered. He always stood like a rock by the side of the Prophet.

At Badr, one of Abu Bakr's sons, who had not yet embraced Islam, was fighting on the side of the Meccan. Afterwards, when he became a Muslim, he one day said, "Father! at Badr you were twice under my sword. But my love for you held back my hand."

"Son!" remarked Abu Bakr, "if I had got that chance only once, you must have been no more."

When peace talks at Hudaibiya were going on, Abu Bakr sat by the side of the Prophet. During conversation, the spokesman of the Quraish ever now and then gave a jerk to the beard of the Prophet, after the Arab fashion. This was too much for Abu Bakr. He took out his sword and looked angrily at the man. "If that hand touches the beard of the Prophet again," he warned, "it will not be allowed to go back."

This amazed the Meccan agents. "What a change in Abu Bakr!" they whispered to one another. "He was known for soft-heartedness. How strong and firm he is now become! He is no longer the self-same Abu Bakr."

Tabuk was the last expedition of the holy Prophet. He was keen to make it a great success. He asked people to help the expedition with whatever they could. This time Abu Bakr beat all past records. He took all his money and household articles and heaped them at the Prophet's feet.

"Have you left back anything for your wife and children?" asked the holy Prophet.

"Allah and His Apostle are enough for them," replied Abu Bakr calmly. Those standing around were stunned. It was impossible to outdo Abu Bakr in the field of service to Islam.

The holy Prophet felt much pleased at this answer. He made Abu Bakr the standard-bearer of the expedition.

Abu Bakr's closeness to the Prophet and his boundless devotion to Islam won him universal respect. Not only was he the first man to accept Islam, he was also the foremost among Muslims to uphold the cause of Islam.

Agent to the Prophet

Mecca fell in the eight year of Hijra. Kaaba was, for the first time, in the hands of Muslims. It had to be cleaned of the traces of idol-worship and the silly practices of pagan days. Hitherto pagan Arabs had done absurd things at the time of Hajj. They went around the House of Allah naked. They did many other foolish and unclean things. All this had to be stopped.

The first Hajj under Islam fell in the ninth year of Hijra. The holy Prophet was too busy at Medina to lead the Hajj himself. So he sent Abu Bakr as his agent. He was to lead the Hajj in place of the Prophet. Ali was also sent with Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr read the Khutba (Sermon) of Hajj. Then Ali stood up and read out to the people the commandments of Allah concerning the idol worshippers. From that year on, they were forbidden to enter the Kaaba.

Ever since he came to Medina, the holy Prophet himself led prayers in the Prophet's Mosque. It was an unusually high office which the Messenger of Allah himself filled. During his last illness, the holy Prophet could no longer lead prayers. He grew too weak to go to the mosque. He had to appoint someone to act in his place. This honor also fell to the lot of Abu Bakr. Aisha, who was Abu Bakr's daughter and a wife of the holy Prophet, thought that the burden was too much for her tender-hearted father. She pleaded with the holy Prophet to excuse her father from this duty. But the holy Prophet did not change his mind.

Thus in the lifetime of the holy Prophet Abu Bakr came to fill the highest office under Islam. One day Abu Bakr was away on some business and Omar led the prayer in his absence. "This is not Abu Bakr's voice," remarked the ailing Messenger of Allah. "No one but he should lead prayers. He is the fittest person for this high office."

On the last day of his life, the condition of the holy Prophet became suddenly better for a while. It was early morning. Abu Bakr was leading the prayer in the mosque. The holy Prophet lifted the curtain of his door and fixed his gaze on the worshippers. They were busy in prayer under Abu Bakr's leadership. A smile lit up on the pale face of the holy Prophet. He let go of the curtain, as his weak hand could no longer hold it. But he was happy at the thought that he had chosen the best man to fill his place.

Abu Bakr Elected Caliph

A Critical Moment

The holy Prophet occupied a unique place among his people. He was everything to them. From warring ignorant pagans, he had made them a nation of peaceful, God-fearing people. They were "dead" as the Quran puts it and the holy Prophet had "raised them to life." So they rightly came to look upon him as the giver of life. Life without him seemed to be an empty thing.

The news of the Prophet's death came as a stunning shock to everyone. How could it be? He had been ill for some days, they all knew. But death was unbelievable. That simply could not be. A huge crowd gathered in the mosque. No one knew what to do. There was utter confusion. Omar was so overcome with emotion that he drew his sword and declared, "If anyone says that the Messenger of Allah is dead. I will cut off his head!"

Things were in this state when Abu Bakr entered the mosque. Finding the holy Prophet better that morning, he had gone a few miles outside of Medina, earlier in the day, but had come back on hearing the sad news. He took his stand in a corner of the courtyard and called out to the people. All eyes were turned towards him. Then he began his famous address:

"O people! If anyone among you worshipped Muhammad, let him know that Muhammad is dead. But those who worship Allah, let him know that He lives and will never die. Let all of us recall the words

of the Qur'an. It says, `Muhammad is only a Messenger of Allah There have been Messengers before him. What then, will you turn back from Islam, if he dies or is killed?'"

These words of Abu Bakr worked magic. In no time the confusion was gone. The words of the Qur'an swept of all doubts from people's minds. They got ready to face facts.

Election of Abu Bakr

The first problem before the people was the election of a new leader. There had to be a head of the State of things could not work. The need was too urgent to allow delay. Delay might have meant disorder and the undoing of all that the Messenger of Allah had done. The prophet of Allah had died but the head of the state had to live on.

The two big groups among Muslims were the Muhajirin (refugees from Mecca) and the Ansar (helpers or the people of Medina). The Ansar gathered together at Thaqifa Bani Saida, their meeting place, near the house of Saad bin Abada. The talk naturally centered around the election of a Caliph. Saad, the Ansar leader, stood up and said that the Caliph must be from among them. Many voices seconded him. One man, however, stood up and said, "But how about the Muhajirin? They have perhaps a better claim." "Then let there be two caliphs," suggested someone, "one from among the Ansar and the other from among the Muhajirin."

Someone told Abu Bakr what was going on at this gathering. He saw the need to act quickly or confusion might set in again. So taking with him a part of Muhajirin he went to Thaqif Bani Saida. He addressed the gathering and said, "Both the Muhajirin and the Ansar have done great services to Islam. But the former were the first to accept Islam. They were always very close to the Messenger of Allah. So, O Ansar, let the Caliph be from among them."

To this a man from the Khazraj tribe replied, "If you don't want a Caliph from among us, let there be two Caliphs, one an Ansari and the other a Muhajif."

"That won't work," said Abu Obaida bin Jarrah. "O Ansar, you are the people who made Islam strong now, don't do anything that may undo your work."

Hearing this, another man said, "O Ansar, if we did anything for Islam, we did it to please Allah and His Apostle. We did not thereby oblige anybody. This should not be made a plea to win office. Listen, the holy Prophet belonged to the Quraish tribe. The Quraish have a greater right to fill his place. By Allah, I do not think it right to quarrel with them over this matter. Fear Allah, and do not oppose them."

This speech of a man from among them silenced the Ansar. They agreed to have a Muhajif as the Caliph. So Abu Bakr said, "Friends, I think either Omar or AbuObaida should be the Caliph. Chose one of these two gentleman."

Hearing this both Omar and Abu Obaida jumped to their feet, and exclaimed, "O Siddiq, how can that be? How can anyone else fill this office as long as you are among us? You are the top man among the Muhajirin. You were the companion of the holy Prophet in the Thaur Cave. You led prayers in his place, during his last illness. Prayer is the foremost thing in Islam. With all these qualifications, you are the fittest person to be the successor of the holy Prophet. Hold out your hand that we many pledge loyatly to you."

But Abu Bakr did not stretch out his hand. Omar saw that delay might lead to the reopening of the whole question. That could easily create difficulties. So he himself took Abu Bakr's hand and pledged loyalty to him. Others followed his example. Men from all sides rushed to pledge loyalty to the

successor of the Prophet. Abu Bakr became Caliph by the general consent of the people.

The First Address

On the following day, Abu Bakr went to the Prophet's mosque. Here people took the general oath of loyalty. When this was over, Abu Bakr mounted the pulpit as the Caliph of Islam. Then he spoke to the gathering as follows:

"O people, I have been elected your leader, although I am not better than anyone from among you. If I do any good, give me your support. If I go wrong, set me right. Listen, truth is honesty and untruth is dishonesty. The weak among you are powerful in my eyes, as long as I do not get them their due, Allah willing. The powerful among you are weak in my eyes, as long as I do not take away from them what is due to others, Allah willing."

"Listen, if people give up striving for the cause of Allah, Allah sends down disgrace on them. If a people become evil doers, Allah sends down calamities on them."

"Listen, you must obey me as long as I obey Allah and His Messenger. If I disobey Allah and His Messenger, you are free to disobey me."

Such was the Magna Carta granted by the first Caliph of Islam to his people, on the first day of his rule, without their asking. Abu Bakr showed by his example that in Islam government means government of the people, by the people and for the people.

Ali's Delay

For six months Ali and some of his relatives did not pledge loyalty to Abu Bakr. That was because of a difference of opinion with the Caliph. The holy Prophet had some land at Medina and Khaibar. His daughter, Fatima, and his uncle, Abbas, laid claim to this land. But Abu Bakr set aside the claim, in the light of what the holy Prophet himself had said. "We Prophets cannot be inherited," was his saying; "whatever we leave behind is public property."

Fatima knew nothing of this saying of her father. She thought she was perfectly right in her claim. This created a little bitterness in her mind, and the mind of her husband, Ali. The hypocrites were quick to add to the misunderstanding.

But Abu Bakr and Ali were equally unselfish. During Fatima's illness, Abu Bakr himself went to see her and cleared away the misunderstanding. After her death, Ali went to Abu Bakr and said, "O Siddiq, we admit your superiority. We do not envy the position Allah has given you. But as relatives of the holy Prophet, we thought Caliphate to be our right. You had taken away this right of ours."

These words brought tears in Abu Bakr's eyes and he said, "By Allah, the relatives of the Prophet are dearer to me than my own relatives."

The assurance satisfied Ali. He went to the mosque and publicly took the pledge of loyalty.

Usama's Expedition

Some weeks before his death, the holy Prophet has nominated Usama to lead an expedition against Syria. He was to avenge the death of his father, Zaid, the freed slave of the holy Prophet. Zaid was killed by the Syrians in the battle of Muta. The preparations of the expedition were under way when the holy Prophet fell seriously ill and passed away. That help up Usama's expedition for some weeks. As soon as Abu Bakr became Caliph, the first thing he thought of was the sending out of the expedition.

The death of the holy Prophet led some people to think that Islam was going to end with him. Many tribes had entered the fold of Islam only a short time before. They were by no means firm in the new faith. Many of them, now, showed signs of bolting out of the fold of Islam. Abu Bakr was facing a difficult situation.

But Abu Bakr had to carry out the commands of the Prophet at all costs. He was determined to send out the expedition planned by the Messenger of Allah. Some of the companions said that he had better drop the idea for the time being. Trouble was brewing all around, they said. It was unwise to send troupes out when they were urgently needed at home. But Abu Bakr would not listen to them. "How can I fold up the flag," he asked, "which the holy Prophet himself unfurled? It is simply unthinkable."

Then someone suggested that Usama was too raw - he was below twenty - to lead the expedition. It was wiser to put a more experienced man in command. The suggestion made Abu Bakr angry. "What right have I," he demanded, "to dismiss a man appointed by the Messenger of Allah?"

So the expedition left under Usama, about three weeks after the passing away of the holy Prophet. Abu Bakr accompanied Usama some distance out of Medina. The youthful commander was riding a horse, while the Caliph walked by his side. Usama said, "O successor of the holy Prophet, you also get on a horse and allow men to get down."

"By Allah," replied Abu Bakr, "I will agree to neither of the two things. What harm is there if a little dust falls on my feet, while I go some steps in the way of Allah? For every step one takes in Allah's way, one gets the reward of seven hundred good deeds."

Omar was also one of the men under Usama's command. But Abu Bakr needed him, at Medina, for purposed of advice. So he made a request to Usama, to allow Omar to remain in Medina. The request was granted.

Before the Caliph bade farewell to Usama, he gave him much useful advice. Some of it was:

"Look! Be not dishonest. Do not deceive anyone. Do not hide the booty you get. Do not mutilate anyone. Do not kill the aged, the children and the women. Do not set fire to date-palms. Do not cut down fruit trees. Do not slaughter a goat, or a cow, or a camel, except for purposes of food. You will come across people who have give up the world and are sitting in monasteries. Leave them alone."

Usama's expedition proved very successful. He raided the frontier districts of Syria and was back in Medina after forty days.

The expedition had another good result. It proved an eye-opener to those who thought Islam was dying out. They had a clear proof that Islam was still able to challenge one of the greatest powers of

the world. This overawed the wavering tribes. Some of the tribes which had left Islam actually, reentered its fold.

The Imposters

Abu Bakr soon found the country in the grip of a civil war. The outlying provinces, like Nejd, were the first to create trouble. They had accepted Islam when it seemed to be the only safest way to follow. They knew nothing of the true spirit of Islam. For centuries they had known no outside authority. They were wont to be as free as the winds that sweep across the desert. Islam put them under discipline. They had to live by the moral laws of Islam. The drinking and gambling of the "days of ignorance" were no more. The wild spirit of the desert rebelled against this moral control. It saw its opportunity in the death of the holy Prophet. Now was the time to throw off the yoke of Islam.

The one thing which was especially irk-some to the chiefs of these tribes was the poor-rate. The government at Medina took away from them, each year, two and a half per cent of their total wealth. True, this money was spent on the poor of their own tribe. But all the same, it was a burden on their pockets. If only Medina would stop collecting the poor-rate, they could continue to be Muslims. Many chiefs made this decision known to the Caliph.

A more serious trouble also raised its head at the same time. People who had spent no time with the holy Prophet, nor studied him closely, thought of him as a mere ruler. The more clever among such people began to dream of a similar career. "All we have to do," they thought to themselves, "is to claim to be prophets and get a following." Thus they hoped to rise to power and fame. Many a cunning man fell prey to this ambition. Presently, a host of imposters appeared in different parts of Arabia. They all claimed to be apostles of Allah.

Firm Action

The situation was serious. Utmost care was needed to handle it. Abu Bakr called a meeting of the Advisory Council and sought its advice. Many of the members were for slow action. "It is not wise," they said, "to start fighting on all fronts at one and the same time. Ignore those, for the time being, who refuse to pay the poor-rate. We can settle with them when imposters have been dealt with."

Abu Bakr would not listen to such counsel. "By Allah," he declared, "even if a single kid is due from a man, he must give it. If he refuses. I will wage war against him. If others do not support me, I will fight alone. No one has the power to change a commandment of Allah."

However, the situation was extremely difficult. Among the non-payers of the poor-rate were the neighbouring tribes of Abs and Zabyan, Asad and Toy. They thought of squeezing a concession from the Caliph before Usma's army was back in Medina. They sent a deputation to the Caliph, offering to stay withing the fold of Islam if they were exempted from paying the poor-rate.

True to his mettle, Abu Bakr firmly turned down the proposal. At the same time, he set about strengthening the defences of Medina, for he expected a treacherous attack from the rebel tribes.

On the third night the treacherous blow came. But Abu Bakr was ready for it. He hit back so hard that the enemy fled back headlong.

In a few days Usama was back in Medina. The Caliph decided to march in person against the treacherous tribes. People begged him not to risk his life but Abu Bakr would not listen. Leaving Usama in Medina as his deputy, the Caliph led an army against Abs and Zabyan and utterly defeated these tribes. Their pastures were taken over for army use.

This firm action on the part of the Caliph convinced many a waverer that it was impossible to accept part of Islam and reject part of it. That saved the integrity of Islam as a way of life. Abu Bakr's invincible faith helped Islam keep its foundation in tact.

War on Imposters

It was now time to strike at the imposters. Usama's army had rested and was ready to go into action again. Abu Bakr marched the army about twelve miles along the road to Nejd. Here he divided it into eleven battalions. Each battalion was put under the command of an experienced commander. The commanders were then told to march against different imposters.

Before these armies left, a general warning was given to the imposters and their followers. They were assured of pardon if they came back to Islam. The Caliph gave the following instructions to his commanders:

"I request the soldiers of Islam to fear Allah, under all conditions. They should do their best to obey the commandments of Allah. They should fight against those who have left Islam and have fallen in the trap of the devil. But before taking out swords, they must declare the message of Islam. If the apostates accept it, they must at once hold back their hands. But if the message is rejected, they must attack and fight till these people give up disbelief. When the apostates re-enter the fold of Islam, the commander of the Muslim army must explain to them their rights and duties under Islam. They should be given their rights and should be made to do their duties. The commander should keep his men from hasty action and mischief. He should avoid a headlong plunge into enemy settlements. He should rather enter them after making sure of all precautions, lest Muslims suffer a loss. Whether he is on the march or in the camp, the commander should be kind and considerate towards his men. He should look to their comfort and should be gentle in speech."

The Caliph explained these instructions to the commanders. Then they led their battalions against the several imposters.

Abu Bakr then came back to Medina. He had already forced the waverers among Muslims to pay Zakat (the poor-rate). Now he launched an all-out attack on imposters and their followers.

Talaha

Talaha was one of the imposters. He belonged to the tribe of Banu Asad. On return from the last pilgrimage, he laid claim to prophethood. All his tribesmen became his followers. The tribes of Tay

and Ghatfan were the allies of Banu Asad. They also joined the imposter. With his huge following, Talaiha was encamping at the Bazakha spring in Nejd. Khalid bin Walid defeated the imposter who fled to Syria. Afterwards, he again became a Muslim. He served in the Muslim army during the Iraqi campaign and tried to make amends for his past sins.

Malik bin Nawirah

Khalid next marched against Malik bin Nawirah. He was the chief of the trib of Banu Tamim. He had stopped the payment of the poor-rate and had made war on the Muslims of his tribe. Hearing of Khalid's approach, he disbanded his men. Khalid put him and his men under arrest. The night happened to be unusually cold and the prisoners started shivering. The matter was reported to Khalid who ordered that they be warmed up. But the Arabic phrase for "warming up" also means "salying". Misunderstanding the order, the guards put Malik and his men to the sword.

In the morning when Khalid came to know of Malik's fate, he felt very sorry. But there was nothing he could do about it. "When Allah has ordained a thing," he said, "it does come to pass." Complaints reached the Caliph that Khalid had not acted on his instructions in this particular case. There was a demand that Khalid be punished for the hasty act. Abu Bakr himself paid bloodmoney for Malik bin Nawirah. "Khalid is the sword of Allah," he said. "This sword has flashed against the disbelievers. Who am I to make it disappear?"

Musailma the Liar

Musailma was the most cunning of all imposters. He belonged to Yamama. When he learnt of the serious illness of the holy Prophet, he wrote him a letter, saying, "Allah has made me your partner in prophethood. Let us divide the earth between ourselves." To this the holy Prophet replied, "To Musailma the Liar! Surely the earth belongs to Allah. He grants possession of it to those of His servants whom He likes."

The death of the holy Prophet gave Musailma the opportunity. He collected a large army. This army had first to deal with an impostress - Sajah by name. She was a Christian. After the death of the holy Prophet, she laid claim to prophethood, "why should all prophets be men?" she said. "In me Allah has now sent a woman prophet." She raised a big army and was marching towards Medina. On the way she came across Musailma's forces. The shrewd imposter at once saw that Sajah was a serious rival. He also felt that he could not defeat her on the battlefield. So he started a love affair, Sajah easily fell into the trap. The two were married. Now Musailma had a huge army, 4,000 strong, under his command.

The battalion under Ikrama bin Abu Jahl was to attack Musailma. The battalion under Shurjil was to reinforce it. Ikrama had orders to wait for the reinforcement. But, hoping to get the whole credit for himself, Ikrama did not wait for Shurjil. He attacked Musailma and was badly beaten. The news made Abu Bakr sad. He at once wrote to Khalid bin Walid to deal with Musailma. The combined battalions of Khalid and Shurjil now fell upon the imposter. Musailma fought desperately. Once his men reached the very tent of Khalid. But Khalid kept his nerve. He rallied his men and himself led a final attack.

Confounded by the suddenness of the attack, Musailma's men took to flight. The imposter and a few of his companions hid themselves in a fortified garden but the Muslim warriors threw open the gates. The infamous imposter and his friends were all put to the sword. Among those who killed Musailma was Wahshi, the negro slave who had killed Hamza, the uncle of the holy Prophet at Ohud. He had done this to win his freedom. Hind, the wife of Abu Sufyan, had promised to buy him his freedom if he slew Hamza. After the fall of Mecca, Wahshi became a Muslim. The Holy Prophet forgave him but said, "Please Wahshi, keep out of my sight. You remind me of my dear uncle."

Wahshi had always felt sorry for his sin. He wanted to wash it out. The battle against Musailma gave him his chance. His javelin was in search of the imposter. With great skill he sank the poisoned end of his javelin into the imposter. The wretch gave a yell and fell to the ground. The next moment his head was cut off. "Thank Allah!" exclaimed Wahshi, "I have been able to make some amends for my sin."

Musailma belonged to the tribe of Banu Hanifa. Orders were received from the Caliph that all men of the tribe who had taken up arms against Islam should be put to death. But Khalid had already promised to spare their lives. So his word was honored and the whole tribe re-embraced Islam.

Bahrain

The people of Bahrain embraced Islam in the lifetime of the holy Prophet. After his death a powerful tribe, Banu Bakr, threw off the yoke of Islam and started fighting against Muslims. Abu Bakr sent a battalion under Ala bin Hadrami, to deal with the rebel tribe. The Banu Bakr were defeated. Their leader, Hatim, was killed. Bahrain was once again secure under Muslim rule.

Some tribes of Oman also gave up Islam. The generals of Abu Bakr brought them all back into the fold of Islam.

Thus in a few months Abu Bakr was able to put down the country-wide rising caused by imposters. Khalid bin Walid did more than any other man to make this possible.

The Era of Conquest Begins

The kings of Iran had done all they could to crush Islam. In fact, the infamous Khusro Parvez had ordered the arrest of the holy Prophet. But a few days after, he was killed by his own son, Sharuya. Since that day, Iran had known no peace. Abu Bakr had to take account of the ever-present danger on the eastern frontiers.

In the first month of the year 12 A.H., Khalid bin Walid was sent with an army to challenge the might of Iran. Another army under Qaqa bin Amr was to reinforce him. Khalid was to attack Kamla, the southern outpost of the Iranian empire.

A second army, under Ayaz bin Ghanam, was to strike at the northern boundary of Iraq.

According to the Islamic practice, Khalid addressed the following letter to Hurmuz, the Iranian Commander: "Accept Islam and you will be safe. If not, agree to pay the jizya or you will have to

repent. I am bringing against you a people who love death as you love life."

The proud Iranian Commander paid no heed to the warning. He was slain in the battle that followed. The Iranian army was utterly routed. After this a number of well-known Iranian generals came to fight Khalid. Bahman and Jahan were two of them. But they all met defeat. The Iranian losses were heavy.

Hira, on the Iranian border, was the stronghold of the Christian Arabs. They had so far fought on the Iranian side. Khalid conquered Hira. Soon after, the other frontier chiefs also submitted to Khalid.

After Hira, Khalid conquered Anbar and Ain-ut-Tamr, two important outposts of the Iranian empire. He now received a letter from Ayaz, calling him to his help in North Iraq. Ayaz was hard pressed at Dumat-ul-Jundal. Khalid rushed to his help and sent the following message to Ayaz:

"Wait for a while. Camels carrying fierce lions are shortly reaching. Wave after wave of troops are on their way."

One of the enemy generals, Akidar, knew from his own experience how impossible it was to halt Khalid's attack. He advised the other generals to stop fighting against the Muslims. When the advice went unheeded, he quietly left. His friends saw the truth of his remarks when they met humiliating engagement took place at Faraz. A huge force made of Iranians and Arabs crossed the Euphrates. On the 15th of Dhul-Qaad, 12 A.H., Khalid routed this host at Faraz. From here he went back to Hira.

Khalid's Exploits

Abu Bakr had no more than ten thousand troops when he took over as Caliph. With this small force, he had to put down a country-wide revolt. To all appearance the task was hopeless. But Abu Bakr met with amazing success. Much of this success was due to his unshakable faith in Allah. "Islam is the path of truth revealed by Allah," he said, "so Allah must defend it against enemies." It was not so much on troops as on Allah's help that Abu Bakr depended. Results proved that he was right in his faith.

There was, however, another important factor which helped Abu Bakr. This was Khalid bin Walid, the greatest general of Islam. His tact and courage made the small forces of Islam look ten times stronger. The results were simply astonishing. With a handful of troops Khalid was able not only to overcome all internal enemies but also to make Arabia safe for Islam. He was then able to jump on Iraq and win it for Islam. From Iraq he marched against the Byzantine forces and put them to rout. All this took place in the space of two years. Throughout the campaign not even once did Khalid meet with a reverse. By forced marches, he often gave a surprise to the enemy and did not rest till he overpowered them. This made Khalid the dread of the enemy. The truth is that Khalid's exploits put to shame the victories of an Alexander or a Napoleon.

Allah's Sword

Khalid bin Walid was born a general. At Ohud, he fought on the side of the Quraish. It was he who turned the tide of that battle. Muslim victory was clearly in sight. Quraish leaders were on the run.

Suddenly Khalid saw the pass at the back of the Muslim army undefended. At the head of a strong party, he dashed through the pass and took the army of Islam by surprise.

After the peace of Hudaibiya Khalid embraced Islam. His military talent soon began to outshine others. The Holy Prophet at once saw his worth and gave him the title of "Saif Allah" or "Allah's Sword." But it was not till Islam overleaped the boundaries of Arabia that the world saw Khalid's unequalled military talent.

Abu Bakr was quick to see Khalid's ability. So he put him in charge of the Iraqi campaign. Khalid's exploits in this campaign have few equals in history. In about eleven months, he over-ran the whole of Iraq and brought it under the banner of Islam. He had no more than ten thousand men. With this small force he defeated hosts twenty times as big. These hosts had superior arms and equipment. But Khalid knew how to win with smaller numbers and inferior arms.

In Iraq Khalid fought fifteen battles in all. He won complete victory in all of them. He never allowed the standard of Islam to leave the battlefield until the enemy was completely beaten. Towards the later part of the campaign, Khalid became the dread of the enemy. The mere fact that Khalid commanded an army made the enemy tremble.

A Good Administrator

Khalid was not only a great conqueror but also a first-rate administrator. He saw to it that things were managed well in the cities and territories he conquered. He never marched on until this had been done. He left behind a deputy to look after things. He also appointed a judge to settle people's disputes.

Khalid was extremely kind hearted and just to the people. His army had strict orders not to do any harm to farmers and other civilians. "They are the real strength of society," he said. "They should always be treated with kindness and respect." This was something new for the conquered people. The Iranian and Byzantine officers had been very hard on them. Khalid's treatment won their hearts. So much so that they came to hate their old masters.

Hard on the Enemy

Khalid was very hard on people who took up arms against Islam. He believed that such people should have only two choices. They should either give in or fight to death. If they fled from the battlefield, he would not let them go. He followed them wherever they went, until they either begged for mercy or were killed.

This policy of Khalid proved very sound. He dealt with the beaten enemy once and for all. He did not allow them to take up arms a second time. Muslim forces were too small to deal with repeated risings.

There is hardly another general in history who combines as many qualities as Khalid. Khalid is unquestionable the greatest general produced by Islam.

War with Byzantian

The need for military operations against Byzantium began to be felt in the life-time of the Holy Prophet. So Abu Bakr was bound to do something about this danger. In the year 13 A.H., he prepared a big army and divided it into four battalions. Each battalion was put under a separate commander. Each of them was to strike at a different point on the Syrian border. Abu Obaida bin Jarrah was to march on Hims, Amr bin al-Aas on Palestine, Yazid bin Abi Sufyan on Damascus and Shurjil bin Hasna on Jordan.

These battalions were to strike at the enemy at once and the same time. The aim was to keep the enemy from hitting with full force on anyone of the battalions.

Before these armies left, Abu Bakr gave the following instructions to their commanders:

1. Always fear Allah. He knows what is in men's hearts.
2. Be kind to the men under you and treat them well.
3. Directions given should be brief. If too long, they are likely to be forgotten.
4. Improve your conduct first; others will improve when they see your example.
5. Honor the representatives of the enemy.
6. Keep your own arrangement a secret.
7. Be always truthful so you can get good advice.
8. At night when you are free, sit among your men. This will keep you in touch with them.
9. Make good arrangements for the watch and ward of the army.
10. Keep away from untruthful men. Be intimate with truthful and faithful companions.
11. Be sincere to all whom you have dealings.
12. Beware of cowardice and dishonesty.
13. You will come across people who have given up the world and are spending their days in place of worship. Leave such people alone.

The news of the Muslim invasion upset Emperor Heraclius. He was in Jerusalem at that time. He sought the advice of his nobles. He himself was in favor of coming to terms with the Muslims. "It is better to give up half of Syria," he said, "than lose the whole of it." To this the nobles did not agree.

So four huge armies were sent by the emperor to fight the Muslims. His own brother was leading one of the armies. Each army was several times more numerous than the Muslim army it had to fight. This made the Muslim commanders give thought to the matter. They met together for mutual counsel. One of them pinpointed the folly of fighting separately. "We will be crushed under the sheer weight of numbers," he said, "if we fight separately." The other generals saw the point. They agreed upon a plan to merge the four battalions into a single army. Thus, they thought, the Muslim army would stop looking too small in its own eyes. They informed the Caliph of their decision. He approved of it and sent the following written message:

"Muslims can never be defeated because of small numbers. But if their own sins overwhelm them, they will meet defeat. So let you all keep away from sins of all kinds."

The Battle of Yarmuk

Heraclius learnt that the four Muslim armies had merged into one. He also ordered a similar move. The four Byzantine armies combined to form a gigantic mass of men. They dug up trenches in the valley of Yarmuk. By the Caliph's orders the Muslim forces, too, took up position on the opposite side. For weeks the two armies lay facing each other. Neither of the two sides dared to touch on the fighting.

The Byzantine forces had every advantage on their side. In addition to numbers, they had the river in front and the mountains at their back. So the Muslim commanders requested the Caliph for reinforcements. HE at once wrote to Khalid to rush to Syria.

Khalid handed over the charge of affairs in Iraq to Muthanna bin Haritha. He then hastened to Syria at the head of ten thousand men. Despite all his haste, Khalid conquered many forts and cities on the way. At last he reached Yarmuk. Almost at the same time, the Byzantine army received a reinforcement. This brought their total strength to two hundred and forty thousand. The Muslim army numbered just thirty-six thousand.

Khalid Reorganizes the Army

Khalid at once saw that he must properly organize the army, in order to win. It meant a single command, in place of the four commands. So he called the other commanders and said, "We are fighting for the sake of the faith. We must all forget ourselves. We cannot afford to be split under many commanders. That would be a help to the enemy. Let there be just one commander, by turns if you please. If you agree to that let me be the commander for the first day of the battle."

All liked the plan. Khalid took the chief command. He divided the army into several sections. Each section was put under a commander. It was further subdivided into many troops, each with a leader. Abu Sufyan was appointed the fiery herald. He went about the army, speaking words of courage to men.

As the two armies stood facing each other, a Muslim soldier remarked. "How numerous the enemy is!" Khalid overheard the remark. "It is not the numbers that matter," he exclaimed, "it is rather the final outcome of the battle."

At long last the battle began. Khalid took some troops with him. He made a wild charge and was soon in the heart of enemy forces. He succeeded in driving a wedge between the enemy cavalry and infantry. The two were cut off from each other.

Fighting unto Death

Ikrama bin Abu Jahl was fighting at Yarmuk. Soon after the battle began, the Muslim troops began to reel under the weight of numbers. Ikrama saw this. "Heretofore I fought all battles against the Apostle of Allah," he shouted out. "This is the first time I am fighting for the cause of Allah. In no case will I turn my back on the battlefield. Now who are going to fight unto death with me?"

Saying this, Ikrama held out his hand to receive the pledge of others. His son, Amr, was the first to

give the pledge. He was followed by four hundred more. Like wild cats, these men pounced upon the enemy hordes. They dealt such telling blows that the sea of man cleared before them. Their desperate attack caused confusion among enemy ranks.

Rout of the Enemy

Soon the enemy cavalry found itself walled between Khalid's troops and the main Muslim army. Confusion spread and they fled. The Muslim army made was for them to flee.

Now Khalid fell on the enemy infantry. The shield of the cavalry being no more, the infantry was taken by surprise. In utter confusion it fell back. But the mountain blocked the way. In despair men ran back to the river. Here a watery death awaited them. Most of the men had tied themselves with iron chains to rule out the possibility of flight. The chains proved traps of death. When a few of the men fell into the river, they also dragged their companions into the watery grave. According to one estimate, one hundred and twenty thousand of them were drowned in the river. The Byzantine rout was complete. The Muslims' loss was three thousand killed.

Women's Courage

Muslim women played a notable role in this battle. They formed a battalion which stood at the back of the army. They supplied water to the men. They also dressed their wounds. They shouted words of courage when the army showed signs of weakness. These words put a new heart into retreating men. They dashed forth like lightning and sowed death among enemy lines.

The Byzantine army at first forced the Muslims to fall back. Muslim women stood on a bridge. Khalid came to them and said, "O daughters of Islam, if anyone turns his back on the battlefield, kill him at once."

The women did what Khalid bade them to do. They stood at their post of duty. They had stones at their post of duty. They had stones in their hands and their eyes were fixed on the battlefield. If anyone fled for life, he was met by a shower of stones. Back he ran into the thick of battle and fought to the last.

Many Muslim soldiers had brought their families with them. The women stayed in tents at the back of the troops. Their words of courage for the brave and their taunts for the weak of heart, made a real difference in the tempo of fighting and in the outcome of the battle. Victory of Yarmuk was in no small measure due to the courage of Muslim women.

Two Great Martyrs

On the following morning Khalid took stock of his losses. Ikrama and his son, Amr, were brought to him. They were seriously wounded. Their condition was grave. Khalid put their heads on his lap. In a few minutes, the souls of both of them winged their way to heaven.

Ikrama was the son of Abu Jahl, the archenemy of Islam. When Mecca fell, Ikrama fled away for fear of life. But hearing that the Prophet had forgiven all enemies, he came back to Mecca. To his surprise, the Prophet ran out to greet him. From that day on, Ikrama was a true son of Islam. He laid down his life fighting for the glory of Islam.

Unparalleled Selflessness of Khalid

The battle of Yarmuk was on when a letter arrived from Medina. It was delivered to Khalid. It said that Abu Bakr had passed away and Omar has succeeded him as Caliph. IT also said that the new Caliph had dismissed Khalid from his command and replaced him by Abu Obaida bin Jarrah. Khalid read the letter. He then informed Obaida that the command had passed to him. But the news was not made public, lest the army should lose heart. The letter had no effect whatever on Khalid. He went on fighting as desperatley as ever.

After the battle was over, Khalid's dismissale became known. Someone said to him, "How is it that the news did not damp your spirit at all?" "I was not fighting for Omar," replied Khalid, "I was fighting for the cause of Allah."

Abu Bakr's Last Illness

On the 7th of Jamadi-ul-Akhir, 13 A.H., Abu Bakr was taken ill. He had sever fever. Everything was done to bring down the fever, but all in vain. It became clear to the aged Caliph that his end was come.

Even in these last days, the thought that troubled Abu Bakr was the future of Islam. He wanted to make sure that nothing would go wrong with the affairs of Muslims, after he was no more. He had to spend every ounce of his energy to put down the violent storms of unrest that broke loose after the Prophet's death. He did not want this to happen after his own death.

Omar's Nomination

Welfare of Muslims had always been the first care of Abu Bakr. He would allow nothing that made Islam weak. The thing he feared most was division among Muslims. He remembered what had happened after the death of the Holy Prophet. He wanted to make sure that no differences should divide Muslims after he was no more. Unity was the secret strength. Unity must be had at any price.

As his sickness grew, Abu Bakr gave more and more thought to the matter. Who should be the Caliph after him? Should he himself name the best man? Or should he leave the matter to the people? In the latter case, quarrels might arise. These would certainly shake the very foundations of Islam. IT was too great a risk. Abu Bakr was not willing to take that risk.

After careful thought, he chose to nominate Omar. He put his proposal before the leading Companions. Most of them liked the proposal. But someone said, "Omar is no doubt the best man, but he is rather too strict."

To this Abu Bakr replied, "As soon as the burden of Caliphate falls on his shoulders, he will become more mild."

When all Companions agreed, Abu Bakr called Othman. He dictated to him Omar's nomination. It was read out to the people. It said:

"This is the will of Abu Bakr, the Caliph of the Holy Prophet. He is making the will when he is about to leave for the next world. This is the time when even a non-believer begins to believe and even a sinner begins to trust in Allah. I appoint Omar bin Khattab as your ruler. In appointing him, I have kept your welfare fully in mind. I hope he will be truthful and just. But if he leaves his path and becomes unjust, I know nothing about the unseen, I have only the well-being of Muslims at heart. Everybody is responsible for what he does."

The will was read out to the people. After this Abu Bakr went to the top of his house, supported by two men. Addressing the people he said:

"My brethren in-faith, I have not appointed any of my own brothers and relatives as your Caliph. I have appointed a man who is the fittest person among you. Do you approve of him?"

"Of course we do," went up a shout from hundreds of men.

Next he called Omar to his bedside and spoke to him thus:

"Omar! I have nominated you my successor. My parting advice is that you fear Allah and work for the well-being of the Muslims. Remember, Omar, the duties you own to Allah are to be discharged at the proper time. Some of these are to be discharged at night and some during the day time. First things must come first. On the Day of Judgment only those will come out successful whose good deeds are weighty. Those whose evil deeds out-weigh the good deeds, will have a terrible time. For success and salvation, you have to make the Qur'an and the truth your guides. You know, Omar, that the verses of the Qur'an speak of good reward and punishment side by side. This is to put the fear of Allah in the believer's heart and to make him pray for forgiveness. Omar, when you read in the Qur'an about the inmate of fire, pray to Allah not to make you one of them. But when you read about the dwellers of Paradise, pray for being one of them Omar, if you follow the path I have chalked out for you, you will find me by your side."

When Omar had left the dying Caliph raised his hands in prayer and said:

"Lord! I have taken this step in the best interest of the Muslims. I feared disunion among them, so I took this step, the consequences of which are best known to You. After careful thought I have appointed a man who is the sincerest and the most energetic worker for the well-being of the people. I am at death's door now, so help the Muslims, Lord after I am no more. They are Your servants. Their future is in Your hands. Lord, keep their rules on the right path. Make Omar one of the noblest Caliphs and help the Muslims help him."

Abu Bakr Passes Away

After an illness of two weeks, Abu Bakr passed away. He was sixty-three at the time. He was buried by the side of the Holy Prophet.

Before his death he said, "Do not use new cloth to cover my dead body. The sheet of cloth I have on will do for me. Wash it clean."

"But this is too old and worn, father," said his daughter Aisha.

"This old and worn sheet will do for me," he replied.

This parting wish was acted upon. The second wish of the dying Caliph was, "Sell my land and pay back in the public treasury all the money I got as my salary." This was also done. Before he became the Caliph, Abu Bakr was a well-to-day merchant. The affairs of the Caliphate left him no time to look after his own business. The matter was put before the Companions. They allowed the Caliph a salary of six thousand dirhams a year. All this money was paid back to the Bait-ul-Mal (the Public Treasury) after the Caliph's death.

Thus Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, left behind a noble example of selfless service. He lived and worked for Islam to the last breath. And for his tireless labors, he sought no worldly reward.

Two Years of Abu Bakr's Caliphate

Abu Bakr was Caliph for only two years, three months and ten days. This was a relatively short period of time in the life of people. But during this short period, Abu Bakr was able to do great things for Islam. These achievements have made his name immortal. They have placed him among the greatest men of all time.

When Abu Bakr took over, Islam was confined to Arabia alone. And here, too its hold was rather shaky. In many parts of the country, Islam was but a name. It was not a way of life with most people. Scores of tribes had thought of the Holy Prophet as a mere king. They tried to throw off his yoke as soon as he was no more. Abu Bakr taught these people a lasting lesson. He taught them that Islam was a way of life.

Abu Bakr was able to do this because of his unshakable faith. No difficulties could take him off the path of the Prophet. Usama might be youthful and inexperienced, but Abu Bakr would not hear a word against him. He was appointed by the Prophet. There might be rising in the country, but Abu Bakr would not put off the expedition to Tabuk. The Prophet had ordered it. Abu Bakr stood unequalled in his love for Allah and His Apostle. This was the secret of his unbending strength. It was this inner strength that carried him through the darkest hours of his Caliphate.

Abu Bakr was as sincere as he was firm in faith. He lived up to every word of what he said at the beginning of his Caliphate. He was never anything but the faithful agent of Allah and His Apostle, and the humblest servant of his people. It was this fact which won him the deepest love and respect for all classes of his people. The result was that Islam took an unshakable hold on the country of its birth. Soon it gathered enough strength to overlap its boundaries. It struck at the two most feared powers of the time. And lo! it was successful. Abu Bakr had put Islam on the road to worldwide expansion.

Islam means total submission to the will of Allah. It means that utter absence of all selfishness. The Holy Prophet showed by his example how that goal could be reached. He showed how the power of the State should not be used for private ends but for the public good. Abu Bakr was the first among his followers to live up to the Prophet's example. He got no personal gain out of the Caliphate. He spent every minute of the last two years of life in the service of his people, but got not a penny as wages.

Abu Bakr had several sons and many near relatives. For public offices, he did not choose anyone of them. He rather chose other people who were more fit for public service. He had to nominate his own successor to prevent quarrels. But his choice fell on none of his own relatives. His choice was rather the man whom he honestly believed to be the best among the Companions. All the same, he did not force his choice on people. He put his proposal before the Companions. When they had agreed to it, he put it before the people.

In short, Abu Bakr showed the world what government of the people, for the people, and by the people really meant. Neither the East nor the West had ever known such a form of government before. The mighty empires of Iran and Byzantium were based upon naked force.

In short Abu Bakr kept going the great work of the Prophet. For that he had to fight hard. He fought with a will and with a faith that amazed everyone. Islam is forever grateful to him for the great services he rendered to it.



For more information or suggestions e-mail [The Muslim Students' Association](#) of the University of Delaware.