

**“Unveiling the Legacy: Exploring the Enigmatic Pages of *Al-Raḥīq al-Makhtûm*,
Prophet Muhammad’s Biography”**

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Abstract

Al-Raḥīq al-Makhtûm is a comprehensive biographical work of the Prophet of Islam; it is authored by Safiur Rahman Al-Mubarakpurî in Arabic language, which is accordingly translated into English titled "The Sealed Nectar," detailing its content and significance. Divided into several chapters, the book covers various aspects of pre-Islamic Arabian society, including the geographical position of the Arabs, governance structures, prevalent religions, social norms, and the stages of the Prophet Muhammad's mission. Al-Mubarakpurî meticulously examines the roles and challenges faced during the Meccan and civil periods, detailing significant events such as the migration to Medina, battles, and the establishment of a Muslim community. He also discusses the characteristics of prophethood and the household of the Prophet, emphasizing their importance. The abstract further outlines Al-Mubarakpurî's background and methodology in writing the book, highlighting his balanced approach and meticulous verification of sources. " *Al-Raḥīq al-Makhtûm* " holds a prominent position as a reference in academic institutions and Islamic universities, earning recognition for its historical accuracy and comprehensive coverage of the Prophet's biography.

Keywords: Safiur Rahman Al-Mubarakpurî , *Al-Raḥīq al-Makhtûm*, Pre-Islamic Arabian society, Prophet Muhammad's mission, Meccan period, Civil period, Prophethood characteristics.

Introduction:

The initial chapters of the book “*Al-Raḥīq al-Makhtûm*” authored by Safiur Rahman Al-Mubarakpurî provide a comprehensive exploration of the historical, cultural, and religious landscape of pre-Islamic Arabia, setting the stage for the emergence of Islam and the life of Prophet Muhammad. In Chapter One, the focus is on elucidating the geographical positioning of the Arabs within the Arabian Peninsula, examining both their internal dynamics and their external interactions with neighbouring empires. Despite their proximity to powerful empires of the time, the Arabs emerged as a distinct and independent people, a phenomenon attributed to their unique geographical location and cultural heritage.

Al-Mubarakpurī categorizes the Arabs into three main groups: the extinct Arabs, the pure Arabs (Qahtanī Arabs), and the Arabized Arabs (Adnanite Arabs). Each group is meticulously defined, tracing their lineage and historical significance. The extinct Arabs represent ancient tribes like ‘Ad and Thâmūd, while the pure Arabs are descendants of Ya‘rub ibn Yashjub ibn Qahtan. On the other hand, the Arabized Arabs trace their lineage back to Isma‘il, peace be upon him.

Chapter Two delves into the governance and leadership structures prevalent among the Arabs during the advent of Islam. Initially divided into kingships and tribal chiefs, the Arabs enjoyed varying degrees of authority and privilege. Al-Mubarakpurī highlights the roles and territories of notable leaders, such as the kings of Yemen, the rulers of Saba, and the kings of Hira in Iraq. Additionally, he discusses the emirate in the Hijaz and the significance of Mudar tribes in pilgrimage and other religious practices.

The subsequent chapters explore the religious landscape of pre-Islamic Arabia, shedding light on the dominant religions, rituals, and cultural practices. From the worship of idols like Manat and Hubal to the presence of Jewish, Christian, and Zoroastrian communities, Al-Mubarakpurī provides a nuanced understanding of the religious milieu preceding the advent of Islam.

Moreover, the author delves into societal norms, economic conditions, and moral values prevalent in pre-Islamic Arabian society. The intricate social structure, based on tribal loyalty and kinship ties, shaped various aspects of life, including marriage, gender roles, and economic activities.

In essence, these introductory chapters lay the foundation for understanding the socio-cultural and religious context in which Prophet Muhammad’s mission unfolded, offering valuable insights into the complexities of pre-Islamic Arabian society.

Description:

The writer in the first chapter delves into the geographical location of the Arabs in the Arabian Peninsula, both internally and externally, and the significance of this in their emergence as a free people, despite being adjacent to the greatest empires of that time. Then he divides the Arabs into three categories, and the author lists the tribes attributed to each of them, defining them, their places of residence, and the divisions mentioned for the Arabs ¹ are as follows:

Firstly: the extinct Arabs, who are the ancient Arabs, like ‘Ad and Thâmûd. Secondly: the pure Arabs, also known as the Qahtanî Arabs, who are the Arabs descended from the lineage of Ya‘rub ibn Yashjub ibn Qahtan. Thirdly: the Arabized Arabs, also known as the Adnanite Arabs, who trace their lineage back to Ismâ‘îl (peace be upon him).

In fact, the second chapter of this biographical book related to Governance and Leadership among the Arabs. In this chapter, the author discusses governance and leadership among the Arabs, as they were initially divided into kingships at the advent of Islam, albeit without absolute authority, or into tribal and clan chiefs who enjoyed privileges similar to kings and rulers. He mentions the most famous among them, such as the kings of Yemen and the people of Sabâ. Then, he details their roles, defining each role including their territories, the duration of their rule, the capitals they established, and other aspects of their civilization. Furthermore, he mentions the kings of Hira in Iraq, delving into their history and the monarchs who governed them. He also addresses the kings of the Levant, describing them and their rulers.

Following this, the author discusses the emirate in the Hijaz and provides an overview of it. Then he addresses the Mudar tribes and their role in the pilgrimage and serving the pilgrims, as well as the role of some Banu Kinanah in delaying or postponing the sacred months. He recounts the narratives behind the war between the tribes of Khuzaymah and Quraysh. He also discusses the leadership in Qusayy and its prestigious aspects, such as carrying the standard in battle, providing water for the pilgrims, and feeding them. He mentions the positions of Quraysh and their distribution among their tribes. Additionally, he describes governance in the rest of the Arab tribes.²

In the third chapter, the author discusses the religions prevalent among the Arabs, noting that the majority followed the religion of Isma‘îl (peace be upon him) until ‘Amr ibn Luhay, the leader of the Khuzaymah tribe from Syria, introduced idol worship among them. Consequently, some Arabs began worshiping idols such as Manat and Hubal, among others. The author then describes the rituals associated with their idol worship, such as circumambulation and sacrifice.

Furthermore, the author examines the role of Jews in the Arabian Peninsula, mentioning prominent tribes like Khaybar and Nadir. He also explains how Christianity spread among the Arabs through the occupation of Abyssinia and the Romans. He notes that some Arab tribes, such as the Ghassanids, embraced Christianity, while those adjacent to the

Persians adopted Zoroastrianism. Additionally, many people in the Levant embraced the Sabian religion. The author concludes by discussing the status of these religions at the advent of Islam.³

In the fourth chapter, the author discusses the prevailing norms in pre-Islamic society, including social status and the roles of women and men within it. He also mentions the various types of marriage prevalent during that period, as well as the relationship between a man, his brother, and the members of his extended family and tribe. The author highlights that the social system was based on tribal loyalty and discusses the relationships between different tribes. Furthermore, he addresses their economic conditions and ways of living, as well as some of their moral values such as generosity, self-esteem, and loyalty to agreements.⁴

The author continued in the chapters of his book to talk about the lineage of the Prophet and forty years of his life before the mission, and the descent of revelation upon him, as follows:

Chapter Five: In the fifth chapter, the author discussed the lineage of the Prophet (peace be upon him), dividing it into three sections: what the historians and genealogists unanimously agreed upon, tracing it back to his ancestor Adnan; what they differed upon; and what they remained uncertain about. He elaborated on each category. Then, he spoke about the origins of the Prophet's noble family, namely Hashim, Abdul-Muttalib, and Abdullah, detailing aspects of their lives and biographies. He recounted the story of Abdul-Muttalib and Abraha Al-Habashi's attempt to demolish the Kaaba, the story of the Zamzam well, and mentioned the sons of Abdul-Muttalib. He also narrated the story of his son, the sacrifice Abdullah, who was the father of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and the story of his marriage to Aminah bint Wahb.⁵

Chapter Six: In this chapter, the author discusses the birth of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the forty years preceding his prophethood. He describes the events and signs leading up to his birth, his wet nurses, the glad tidings given to his mother, the announcement of his birth to his grandfather, and the naming ceremony. The author also delves into his early life in the household of Bani Saad, including the incident with his wet nurse Halimah before she returned him to his family and the blessings that accompanied his presence in their home.

Furthermore, he recounts the incident of his chest being opened at the age of four or five, his return to his mother until her passing, and then his transition to the care of his grandfather. The author elaborates on his relationship with his grandfather and his subsequent move to live with his uncle following his grandfather's death.

And he spoke about his trading journey to Syria and his encounter with Bahira the monk, as well as what transpired between him and his uncle Abu Tālīb. He also discussed the War of Fijar that occurred between Quraysh and their allies from Kinanah against Qays Aylan. Then, he talked about the Pact of Fuḍl and its establishment, as well as the reason behind its formation. Additionally, he mentioned the Prophet's trade with Khadijah (may Allah be pleased with her) and her proposal to marry him, recognizing his trustworthiness and blessings. He discussed their marriage and what she bore from him. Then, he spoke about the construction of the Ka'aba and the dispute among Quraysh tribes regarding the placement of the Black Stone. ⁶

Chapter Seven: Shades of Prophethood and Message

In this chapter, the author discusses the shadows of prophethood and message, beginning with the story of the Cave of Hira and the Prophet's worship therein. He then narrates the beginning of Gabriel's descent upon him, citing the hadith of the initiation of revelation from Sahih al-Bukharī. He also mentions the Prophet's wife Khadijah's journey with him to her cousin Waraqah ibn Nawfal, and what he informed them of. The author then speaks about the cessation of revelation and the Prophet's reaction to this hiatus, including his sadness. He subsequently discusses the resumption of revelation to the Prophet, mentioning the types of revelation and the Prophet being informed of his prophethood for this nation and his duty to convey the message. ⁷

Hereafter the author highlighted on the roles of the Prophet how he played in preaching Islam at the different stages. In this connection, the author divides the call into two stages or roles: the Meccan period, which lasted for thirteen years, and the civil role, which lasted for ten years. The author divided the Meccan role into three stages: ⁸

Firstly: The Secret Stage, which lasted for three years. During this period, he discusses the beginnings of the Prophet's call, how people chose Islam and embraced it, their secret meetings with him, and the first obligation of prayer, which were two units of prayer in the

morning and two units in the evening. The news of the call spread among the Quraysh, but they did not pay much attention to it until the call continued in this manner for three years.

Secondly: The Public Stage of the Call in Mecca, which lasted from the beginning of the fourth year of prophethood until the end of the tenth year. During this period, Allah commanded the Prophet to publicly proclaim his message and warn his people and tribe. The author narrates the Prophet's ascent to Mount Safa and what transpired between him and his uncle Abu Lahab. The Quraysh began holding meetings and gatherings to devise ways to stop the call. Sometimes they sent his uncle Abu Talib to him, and at other times they denied him in front of the people or accused him of sorcery. They also used torture against those who followed him and believed in him. The author mentions some types of torture and persecution suffered by the Muslims. He then discusses the first migration of the companions to Abyssinia, which was carried out secretly at night, and the plots to bring them back to Mecca for torture. However, all their attempts and methods failed, so they returned to Abu Talib and threatened him with war between them and the Muslims. They told him to return and speak to his nephew, and despite all the harm and temptations, the Prophet persisted in his positions and his call. The author also recounts in this chapter the story of the Islam of Hamza and Umar Ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with them, and how their embrace of Islam added strength and dignity to it. Then he talks about the general boycott of the Quraysh against the Muslims, refusing to deal with them in any way, whether in marriage, trade, or other dealings, and discusses what happened during that period. He also talks about the Year of Sorrow and the accumulation of worries on the Prophet, peace be upon him, due to the deaths of his supporters, namely his uncle Abu Talib and his wife Khadijah, may Allah be pleased with her. He also discusses the Prophet's marriage to Sawdah bint Zam'ah and mentions the reasons behind his steadfastness and patience.

Thirdly: The Stage of the Call outside Mecca, which lasted from the end of the tenth year of prophethood until the Hijrah. In this stage, the author talks about the Prophet's departure to Taif and what happened there, the presentation of Islam to tribes and individuals coming from outside Mecca, the dialogue that took place between them and the Messenger, what happened to him at Al-Aqabah, the pledge of allegiance of some companions to him, and their carrying the banner of the call and transferring it to Medina. He then speaks about the miracle of the Isra and Mi'raj, its timing according to scholars, the miracles and events that occurred during it. He also discusses the first pledge of Al-Aqabah, mentioning the terms agreed upon, the people who pledged allegiance, their number, and the sending of Mus'ab ibn

'Umair, May Allah be pleased with him, as the first envoy of Islam to Medina. Then he talks about the second pledge of Al-Aqabah, detailing it and the pursuit by the Quraysh, and then discusses the beginnings of the migration of the companions from Mecca to Medina, and the gathering of the Quraysh to prevent them and stop them. Finally, he talks about the migration of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and what happened to him before and during his departure, as well as his experience in the cave and after leaving it, his direction towards Medina and his arrival at Quba, and the reception of the companions. Then he discusses his journey from Quba to Medina after staying there for several days.

Then the stage at Medina started, in which the author discusses the division of the civil covenant into three stages:

Firstly: The Stage of Tribulations and Internal Obstacles, and the enemies' incursion into the city. This stage existed at the beginning of the migration to Medina, where the community consisted of Muslims, Jews, and polytheists. The Prophet, peace be upon him, worked on consolidating the foundations of the Muslim community, such as building the Prophet's Mosque, and what happened to him and the companions during that time and how it was built. He also talks about the brotherhood between the emigrants and the helpers, the Constitution of Medina, and the relationship between the factions residing in the city. Quraysh began threatening the emigrants and seizing what remained for them in Mecca. Then came the verses allowing them to fight and engage in jihad. He then mentions the expeditions during that period and discusses the Battle of Badr, its causes, events, and details, as well as the caravan belonging to Quraysh. He then talks about the military activities between the Battle of Badr and the Battle of Uhud, such as the Prophet's expeditions, and the attempts of hostility, such as the attempt to assassinate the Prophet, peace be upon him. He also discusses the violation of the agreement by the Banu Qaynuqa, their siege, and evacuation afterwards. He then talks about the Battle of Uhud, its causes, scenes, and details, and then mentions the expeditions that followed the Battle of Uhud. He talks about the Battle of the Trench, the Banu Qurayzah, and the expeditions after them, discussing the battles and expeditions with their events, details, and scenes. He also talks about the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, then about the conquest of Mecca, its reasons, and the movement of the Islamic army. He discusses what happened to them on their way to Mecca and upon entering it. He then mentions the Battle of Hunayn, the siege of Taif, and the Battle of Tabuk.

Secondly: The Stage of Truce with the Pagan Leadership.

Thirdly: The Stage of Mass Entry into the Religion of Allah after the Conquest of Mecca, where tribes began to rush to enter the religion of Allah. The author mentions the Muslim delegations and what happened between them and the Prophet, such as the delegation of ‘Abd al-Qays, the delegation of Daws, and the delegation of Furu’ah ibn ‘Amr al-Judhâmî. Then he talks about the Farewell Pilgrimage and the preparation of the army of Usama ibn Zaid, may Allah be pleased with him, to fight the Romans.

Then the author Al-Mubarakpurî brought out the information regarding the Death of the Prophet and Characteristics of the Prophetic Household. In fact, in this section, the author discusses the signs and premonitions indicating the nearing death of the Prophet, peace be upon him, such as his seclusion for twenty days in the month of Ramadan, which was unusual as he used to seclude himself for ten days before that. Then he talks about the onset of his illness and the agony of death he experienced. He speaks about the last week of his life, then moves on to the final day of his life, commanding Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq, may Allah be pleased with him, to lead the people in prayer. He then discusses his final moments, his passing, and the grief of the noble companions over his death. The author also discusses Abu Bakr's stance on his death, then talks about his preparation, farewell, and burial, as well as the consultations that took place in the Saqifah of Bani Sâ‘idah and the selection of the caliph. Finally, he concludes his book by defining the Prophetic household throughout its stages, whether in Mecca or Medina, and talks about his wives, peace and blessings be upon him, their marriages, and the reasons behind marrying each one of them. He also speaks about the qualities and ethics of the Prophet, peace be upon him.¹⁰

The Status and Importance of the Book "*Al-Rahîq al-Makhtûm*":

The book "*Al-Rahîq al-Makhtûm*" holds a high position among the biographies, and the following points illustrate its significance:

1. It is adopted by many academic institutions and Islamic universities as a reference for the Prophet's biography.
2. The book won the first place in the International Competition of the Prophet's Biography organized by the Muslim World League,¹¹ despite the strict and precise conditions set for it, such as the integration of events according to their dates and being accurate in its subject matter, along with mentioning all manuscripts and scientific sources relied upon in writing it, and its examination by a committee of senior scholars.¹²

3. It is recommended and endorsed by some scholars, urging people to read it due to its sequential historical presentation of the Prophet's biography,¹³ in addition to its simplicity in presenting the biography from birth to death.¹⁴
4. It is considered one of the important books of Islamic knowledge.¹⁵

The author of the book "Al-Raheeq Al-Makhtum" (The Sealed Nectar) and his approach in the book, as well as his life-sketch:

In fact, we are aware of the fact that Safiur Rahman bin Abdullah bin Muhammad Akbar bin Muhammad Ali bin 'Abd al-Mu'min bin Faqirullah Al-Azamî is an Indian author, who was championed in writing the biography of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). He was born in a village on the outskirts of Mubarakpur, currently known as Hussainabad, in the year 1943 CE. His family is attributed to the Ansar. He initially learned the Qur'ân at a young age and then joined Darul Uloom School in Mubarakpur in 1948, where he spent six academic years completing his primary education. He then moved to Ihya Ulum Al-Islam School in Mubarakpur in June 1954, where he spent five years learning the Arabic language and its grammar, as well as Islamic sciences such as Tafsir, Hadith, Fiqh, and Usul. He graduated from there in 1961. Additionally, he obtained a "Alim" certificate in February 1960 from the Eastern Science Examination Board in Allahabad, India, and later received a certificate in Arabic literature in February 1976. He worked as a teacher, preacher, and lecturer in various schools and universities.¹⁶

He served as a supervisor for Darussalam Library in Riyadh, where he supervised the research and scientific investigation department. He passed away after Friday prayers in Mubarakpur on 10/11/1427 AH, corresponding to 1/12/2006 CE. He was keen on paying attention to the *Sîrah* (biography) as it is one of the noblest sciences and the most authentic. Some Muslims requested him to write a moderate book that combines aspects of the *Sîrah* (biography) while considering all its scholars without bias or deviation. He authored several books on the *Sîrah* (biography),¹⁷ including his explanation of Sahih Muslim in his book¹⁸ "Minhat al-Mun'im fî Sharh Sahîh Muslim,"¹⁹ supervision of the book "Al-Misbah al-Munir fî Tahdhib Sirat Ibn Kathir,"²⁰ writing the book "Wa innaka la'alâ khuluqin 'azîm,"²¹ and composing the book "At-Ta'dilât wal-Ziyadât 'Alâ Kitâb al-Rahîq al-Makhtûm."²²

The Author's Methodology:

Safiur Rahman Al-Mubarakpurî adopted a balanced approach in his writing, avoiding both tedious elaboration and excessive brevity. He meticulously traced and verified various narrations without explicitly mentioning all the sources, to avoid unnecessary length while indicating some of them at appropriate places.²³

Discussion:

The extensive coverage of various aspects of pre-Islamic Arabian society and the early stages of Islam provided in the summarized text offers readers a comprehensive understanding of the historical, cultural, religious, and political context in which the Prophet Muhammad's message emerged and spread. By dividing the content into chapters focusing on different themes such as the position of the Arabs, governance, religions, prevailing norms, and the stages of the Prophet's call, the author presents a structured narrative that facilitates learning and comprehension.

One notable aspect of the text is the author's meticulous attention to detail, evident in the thorough exploration of each topic discussed. For example, in the chapter on the position of the Arabs, the author not only describes the geographical location of the Arabian Peninsula but also categorizes the Arabs into distinct groups based on lineage, providing insights into their historical background and social dynamics. Similarly, in the chapter on governance and leadership, the author delves into the roles of different rulers and leaders across various regions, shedding light on the complexities of governance in pre-Islamic Arabia.

Furthermore, the author's discussion of religions among the Arabs offers valuable insights into the religious landscape of the time, highlighting the diversity of beliefs and practices that existed prior to the advent of Islam. By examining the influence of Judaism, Christianity, idol worship, and other faiths on Arabian society, the author enriches readers' understanding of the cultural and religious milieu in which Islam emerged.

The detailed exploration of prevailing norms and societal structures in pre-Islamic Arabia provides readers with valuable context for understanding the social dynamics that shaped Arabian society. By discussing topics such as social status, gender roles, marriage practices, and economic conditions, the author offers a nuanced portrayal of pre-Islamic Arabian society, challenging simplistic narratives and stereotypes.

Overall, the summarized text provides readers with a rich and informative overview of key aspects of pre-Islamic Arabian society and the early stages of Islam. By presenting a well-structured narrative that covers a wide range of topics in depth, the author offers readers a valuable resource for gaining insight into the historical, cultural, and religious context of the Prophet Muhammad's message.

Conclusion:

Safiur Rahman Al-Mubarakpurî's "The Sealed Nectar" is a comprehensive exploration of pre-Islamic Arab society, the emergence of Islam, and the life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Through meticulous examination, the author delves into the geographical, social, religious, and political landscape of the Arabian Peninsula, offering insight into the challenges and opportunities encountered by the early Muslim community.

Al-Mubarakpurî categorizes the Arabs into distinct groups and discusses their governance structures, religious beliefs, and societal norms, providing a nuanced understanding of the cultural milieu within which Islam arose. The delineation of Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) mission, from its secretive beginnings in Mecca to the establishment of an Islamic state in Medina, offers readers a chronological account of the Prophet's teachings and the evolution of early Islamic history.

Through vivid narratives and meticulous documentation, the author brings to life the trials and triumphs of the early Muslim community, highlighting the profound impact of the Prophet's message on the socio-political landscape of the time. Al-Mubarakpurî's balanced and scholarly approach ensures the reliability and accuracy of the information presented, making "The Sealed Nectar" a valuable resource for scholars and students alike, inspiring further exploration of Islamic history and civilization.

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