Ayatollah Khomeini



Ayatollah Khomeini was born in 1902 to a family of Shi’ite religious scholars; his given name was Ruhollah Mousavi. His father was murdered before his first birthday and he was raised by his mother and aunt until their deaths in 1918. At that time his older brother took charge of the family.

Khomeini shined as a scholar and was popular in his hometown. Because of his success as a religious student, his brother sent him to learn from Yazdi Ha’iri in Arak. Khomeini followed his teacher to Qom in 1923. He continued to study and achieved the title of Ayatollah, which signifies the highest level of Islamic knowledge.

Although both of his predecessors taught the religion, they had no place in politics. Khomeini spoke out against Shah Pahlavi. He believed that the nation was losing its Islamic tradition and was living against the religion. He was exiled and sent to live in Iraq; while there he continued to speak of a purer nation that lived according to Islamic teaching. Since Khomeini would not be silent he was sent further away to Paris.

Khomeini returned to Iran in 1978 and led the people in their revolt. Upon the success of the revolution Ayatollah Khomeini was named religious and political leader of Iran for life.

After taking control of the Iranian government in 1979, Khomeini reversed Shah Pahlavi’s laws, enforced laws based on traditional Islamic teachings, and removed Western influence. For example, women had to wear the veil, both men and women had to dress modestly in traditional clothing, and men and women were segregated in social situations.