

CONFLICT BETWEEN THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD AND THE MUSHRIKUN  
OF QURAYSH, DURING THE MECCAN PERIOD  
IN ARABIC LITERATURE

BY

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to illustrate the religious conflict between the Prophet Muhammad and the Mushrikun of Mecca and to study some of the poetry which was said in connection with the religious idea of that period. Although the study was connected with one part of the Arabic Literature, poetry, it is stressed more on the historical part of it.

The first chapter deals with the historical Background of the Arabs' life before the advent of Islam, social, political, intellectual and religious. A more detailed study was given to the religious part of the pre-Islamic Arabs, as this is the most important point which led to the spiritual conflict between the Prophet and his fellow Qurayshites. A study of how they came to worship idols and verses of poetry which were said to glorify their idols. How did Christianity and Judaism reach Arabia and their influences in the life of the Arabs.

The second chapter deals with the life of the Prophet Muhammad, his personality, his situation in the Meccan society, his prophethood and his early message to his people. This is then followed by the reaction of the Quraysh towards the new religion, which did not recognise their faith and belief and denounced their glorified and venerated idols. Why did the Quraysh reject Islam and refused Muhammad's prophecy? What are their movements against the Prophet, his followers and

Islam? How did the Prophet face them? And finally the study of those people who took active parts and actions in stopping the Prophet from preaching Islam.

The sources of study are based mostly on al-Qur'an and kutub al-tafsir as well as historical and Arabic literary sources. Quranic verses are translated with the help of the translation of al-Qur'an by Muhammad Yusuf 'Ali, Pickthall and others.

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## CHAPTER I

### The Jahiliyah

Jahiliyah is usually known to be the period before the emergence of Islam. It is commonly used by historians and writers to designate the pre-Islamic period of the Arabs. The word jahiliyah which is derived from jahl, is defined literally as ignorance, the opposite of knowledge. The literal definition of jahiliyah (the age of ignorance) did not imply the reality of the intellectual life of the pre-Islamic Arabs, as they were not ignorant people. Among them were poets, who are recognised by historians as their leading men in war and peace. They were great merchants and experienced astronomers as well.

What does jahiliyah mean? Ibn Manzur<sup>1</sup> in his interpretation of the Prophet's tradition innaka amruun fika jālilīyah said that the jahiliyah is the situation of the Arabs before the advent of Islam, which includes their ignorance of Allah, His Prophet and His religion, as well as their attitudes in the life which are full of pride, hatred, war, revenge and all other aspects of their life. In his book Muslim Studies,<sup>2</sup> Ignaz Goldziher explains the word jahiliyah as the time of bā<sup>r</sup>barism, because

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1. Ibn Manzūr, Lisān al-'Arab, vol:11, p.130.

2. Ignaz Goldziher, Muslim Studies, vol:1, p.202.



according to him, the Prophet Muhammad wanted to contrast the Islam that he preached with babarism. Hitti<sup>1</sup> gave a rather similar interpretation of the word as the period of ignorance or babarism, in which period Arabia was neither ruled by any constitution nor by any religion.

Quotations from al-Qur'an imply the definitions of jahiliyah in different ways. Sometimes it comes in the meaning of foolishness and stupidity as said in surat al-Baqarah (the Cow), "When Moses said to his people, Allah commands you to sacrifice a cow, they replied, 'Are you making game of us?' Allah forbids that I should be so foolish."<sup>2</sup> Sometimes it has the meaning of ignorance. Allah says in surat al-Maidah (the Table), "Is it pagan laws that they wish to be judged by? Who is a better judge than Allah for men whose faith is firm?"<sup>3</sup> That is the laws of the pagan Arabs which deviated from the truth and were full of oppression and discrimination among them in their categories of life.

In some verses of poetry the word jahl gives the meaning of wildness which contrasted the word hilm,

ala la yajhalan ahadun 'alaina  
fanajhalā fauqa l-jahli l-jāhilīna

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1. Hitti, History of the Arabs, p.87.

2. Surat al-Baqarah, 67.

3. Surat al-Maidah, 50.

May no one act wildly against us, because we then would excel  
the wildness of those acting wildly.

In another verse the poet said, (Tawīl)

fa'in kunta muhtajan ila l-hilmi innanī

ila l-jahli fī ba'di l-ahayīni ahwaju

Though I need mildness, at times I need wildness ('jahī) even  
more.

Most Muslim writers tend to regard the conditions of the  
Arabs before Islam as jahiliyah, which includes the state of  
paganism and polytheism among them as well as their state of  
social, political life which were based on hatred, revenge,  
pride and war with one another.

#### The Background of the Pre-Islamic Arabs :

##### The Social Life

Generosity is one of the most distinctive character of  
an Arab. It is believed to have been born through the hard  
life of the desert. The nature of the desert with its hard  
and difficult life, produced such character, which led the rich  
to slaughter his camel to feed the poor, or led the host to  
slaughter his own camel for the guests who might appear unexpectedly

from the wondering desert. The most famous personality known for his generosity is Ḥatim at-Tāi. He was also one of the well-known pre-Islamic poets. Most of his poetry manifested his generosity. It is related that he usually slaughtered ten of his camels at every month of Rajab for guests and friends and all those around him.<sup>1</sup> He was the poet who told his slave to put on fire during the cold, freezing night, so that some desert wanderers might notice it and come to him for food and protection. Said he,<sup>2</sup>

auqid fainnal-laila lailun qirru (Rajab)

warrihu ya wāqidu rihun sirru

Put on fire, for the night is cold and the wind, oh wāqid (one who puts on fire is chill.

'alla yarā nāraka man yamurru

in jalabta daifan faanta hurru

Somebody who passes by might see your fire. If you bring in a guest you are a freeman.

Besides Ḥatim at-Tāi there were many others who were famous for their generosity, such were 'Abdullah ibn Jad'ān of Quraysh who was known as hāsi al-dhahab,<sup>3</sup> for his golden cup which he

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1. Al-Ālūsī, Bulūgh al-Arab fī Ma'rifat ahwāl al-'Arab, vol:1, p.73.

2. Ibid, p.78.

3. Ibid, pp.72-99.

used for his drinks, Harīm ibn Sinān of Ghatafān, 'Abdullah ibn Hājib al-Anbārī who was known<sup>as</sup> ākilu l-khubz,<sup>1</sup> Qays ibn Sa'd, Qatādah ibn Maslamah al-Hanafī and others.<sup>2</sup>

Another well-known character of the Arab society was their faithfulness. Whenever a promise was made by one person of the tribe, the whole tribe would stick to the promise and would not break it whatever the consequences were.

The pre-Islamic Arabs were also notorious for being heavy drinkers. Verses of pre-Islamic poetry show clearly the habit of drinking within the society. It was alleged that some of them would erect a tent somewhere in the town and put a flag on top of it as a symbol of the tent being used as a drinking place. A man would spend his money and his wealth to satisfy his drinking habit and would boast proudly for the money and time he spent in drinking places.

'Antarah ibn Shaddad said in his mu'allaqah:<sup>3</sup> (Kāmil)

faidhā sharibtu fainnanī mustahlikun

mālī wa 'irdī wāfirun lam yuklami

And when I drank I am the consumer of my wealth and my honour  
is plentiful, and are not slashed.

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1. Ākilu al-khubz, the one who eats bread. He did not eat dates and did not drink milk. Bread to the Arabs of the time was considered as respectable food. It had been the pride of his tribe to say minnā ākilu l-khubz.

2. Al-Ālūsī, op.cit. vol:1, pp.72-99.

3. Al-Anbārī, Sharh al-qasā'id al-sab' al-tiwāl, pp.337-9.

waidhā saḥautu fama uqassiru 'an nadā  
wakamā 'alimti shamāilī wa takarrumī

And when I recover I will not abstain from the act of generosity  
you knew my good qualities and my honour.

Said Abū Mihjan al-Thaqafī in his verses:<sup>1</sup>

idhā muttu fadfinnī ilā asli karmatin (Ṭawīl)  
turawwi izāmī ba'da mautī 'urūqahā

If I died, bury me near a grapevine, so its roots would water  
my bones after my death.

walā tadfinnī bil-falāti fainnanī  
akhāfu idhā ma muttu an lā adhūqahā

Do not bury me in waterless desert for I am afraid when I died  
I might not taste it (wine or beer)

'Abdulla ibn Jad'an said:<sup>2</sup>

sharibtu l-khamra hatta qāla ṣahbī (Wāfir)  
alasta 'ani l-safāhi bimustafīqi

I drank wine until my friend said, are you not awake of the  
foolishness.

wahatta an uwassada fī manāmi  
anāmu lahu siwā at-tirbi s-sahīqi

Until I put my head on a pillow and lost in a dream of a far  
away friend.

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1. Al-Qurtubī, Jāmi' ahkām al-Qur'an, vol:3, p.56.

2. Ibn Ḥabīb, al-Muḥabbar, p.340.

wahatta aghlaqa l-hānūtu rahnī  
wa ankartu l-'adūwwa min al-ṣadiqi

and till the drinking place is closed and I could not distinguish  
an enemy from a friend.

Maisir was another manifestation of the pre-Islamic society.  
It was as described by one of the Quranic interpreters, Qimar  
ahl al-jahiliyah,<sup>1</sup> the gambling of the jahiliyun. It is defined  
by Hans Wehr in his dictionary as a game of chance played with  
arrows without head and feathering for stakes of slaughtered  
and quartered camel.<sup>2</sup> This game is usually played in winter,  
as illustrated by al-'Ashā in his verse:<sup>3</sup>

al-mut'imu al-daifa idhā mā shataw (Ṣarī')  
wa l-jā'ilū l-qūta 'ala l-yāsiri

Those who feed the guest when it is winter, and provide food  
to the yāsir.<sup>4</sup> (for distribution)

The players most of whom were wealthy and rich would select  
a very cold night, where guests were expected to arrive, and  
would light a fire as a sign of their gathering. A winner of the  
game would usually divide the meat among his guests, his people,  
the poor and the needy and those who were around, in search of

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1. 'Abd al-Salam Muhammad Hārūn, al-Maisir wa l-azlām, p.11.

2. Hans Wehr, A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic, ed. J.  
Milton Gowan, p.407.

3. Ibn Qutaibah, al-Maisir wa l-qidāh, p.44.

4. Yāsir, the man who was responsible for the division of meat  
in a gambling game.

praise and appreciation. Al-Waqidi<sup>1</sup> related that a player might gamble a hundred camels in a gathering and gain a considerable amount of wealth which he then distributed to the needy and in return he would be glorified and praised by the people. On the other hand the gambling place might as well turn out to be a centre of strife, struggle, fight, quarrel and dispute, when a player was not satisfied with the game.

Women were treated well by the Arabs. They shared their husbands' responsibilities in keeping the families. They stood behind the front line in wars and encouraged their men to fight, to the last drop of their blood. They cooked the food, received the guests and also gave their ideas and opinions in whatever matters concerning their husbands and always supported them in all their missions. They were often mentioned in poetry, where they were portrayed as possessing greatness and beauty. Despite the status given to them, women were also used largely and freely by men to fulfil their sexual satisfaction. Adultery was not illegal and men would boast themselves of being lovers of women and adulterers. Among those famous of being lovers of the Arabs was Imru'ul-Qays, the poet, who was known to have sexual relationship with several women, some of whom

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1. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Tafsīr, vol:2,p.221.

were Fātimah bint al-'Abīd ibn Tha'labah ibn 'Āmir al-Udhrayah and Umm l-Hārith al-Kalbiah.<sup>1</sup>

Another well-known phenomenon of the pre-Islamic society was al-wa'd, to bury a baby girl in a grave alive.<sup>2</sup> This habit of burying their girls alive was not a widespread factor of the pre-Islamic society. It was practised by some tribes but unacceptable among others. The most famous tribe to have practised al-wa'd was banū Tamīm, followed by Mudar and Khuza'ah.<sup>3</sup> The motive of their action was merely fear of poverty as well as the belief that by having girls in the family, their sources of income would diminish. It was also related that some of them would also bury the boys during famine.<sup>4</sup> A tradition on the authority of Abū Bakr al-Hudhalī<sup>5</sup> relates that Sa'sa'ah ibn Nājiyah, Farazdaq's grandfather, was the saver of the wa'idat that when he went to meet the Prophet with Tamīm's delegation, he was believed to have rescued four hundred girls from their death. It was on this basis that Farazdaq boasted in one of his verses:<sup>6</sup>

wajaddī l-ladhī mana'a l-wā'idāti (Mutaqārib)  
wa ahyā l-wa'ida falam yuādī

And my grandfather who prevented the burying of girls, and rescued the lives of boys, so that they were not buried.

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1. Ibn Qutaibah, al-shī'r wa l-shu'arā', vol:1, p.122.

2. Ibn Manzūr, op.cit. vol:3, pp.442-3.

3. Al-Qurtubī, op.cit. vol:10, p.117.

4. Ibn Manzūr, op.cit., pp.442-3.

5. Al-Isfahānī, al-Aghānī, vol:19, pp.2-5.

6. Ibn Manzūr, op.cit. pp.442-3.



The Arabs were acquainted with different types of marriage. The first of which was the single marriage (al-zawāj al-fardī)<sup>1</sup> which was widespread among the Arabs and followed by the Quraysh and most of the tribes. This marriage contract was usually made between the suitor and the woman's guardian, and her consent was not necessary. At the same time the Arabs were allowed to marry as many wives as they wished without any limitation on their numbers.<sup>2</sup> One might have ten wives or more. Another type of marriage was zawāj al-maqt. This marriage always took place after the death of a father, who left behind him a widow or widows. The son or the heir had the right to inherit his father's property as well as his wife. He had the full power over her. He could marry her himself with the marriage settlement of his deceased father, forbid her from marrying others or marry her to anyone he wished and take the dowry himself. Those men who married their father's wives were called dayzān. Aus ibn Hajar al-Tamimi said his verse taunting a family of Banu Qays ibn Tha'labah whose three sons married the father's wife one after another:<sup>3</sup>

nīkū Fakīhata wamshū haulā qubbatihā (Basīṭ)  
fakullukum liabīhi dayzanīn salafu

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1. Al-Ālūsī, op.cit. vol:2, p.5.
  2. Ibid.
  3. Ibid, p.52.

Have intercourse with Fakihah and walk around her pavilion,  
everyone of you is his father's dayzān.

There was also a marriage called mut'ah.<sup>1</sup> This marriage contract was usually done between the man and the woman to be married. The marriage would last for a certain period of time as agreed by both husband and wife. When the period expired the marriage would end too. This is a kind of a temporary marriage which was common among the Arabs and was always performed on certain circumstances and with special intention of doing so. Other types of marriage which occurred in the pre-Islamic society were zawāj al-akhdān and zawāj al-shighār.<sup>2</sup> The first was when a woman married a couple of men at the same time. When she gave birth to a child, she would call the men and name the child after any one of them and he had to accept this, and there would be no way for him to escape from the responsibility. The latter was a marriage where a father offered his daughter to another man to be married, without a dowry, in return for the same kind of marriage.

It had been the law among the Arabs to forbid themselves from marrying their daughters, mothers, sisters and aunts, with

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1. W. Robertson Smith, Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia, pp.82-83.

2. Al-Ālūsī, op.cit. p.4.

one exception of a case, where the chief of the Banu Tamim, named Ḥājib ibn Zurārah, married his own daughter. He named her after Chosroes's daughter Ḍakhtanūs and recited these verses:<sup>1</sup>

ya laita shi'rī 'anki Ḍakhtanūs (Rajaz)

idha atāhā l-khabaru l-marmūs

If only I knew how to be away from you Ḍakhtanūs, when the secretive news came to her

ataṣḥabu al-zailaini am tamīs

lā bal tamīsu innahā 'arūs

Are you to disappear from my sight or to walk with proud, swinging gait, no, but walks with proud, swinging gait that she is a bride.

This is the only case which happens to be related and the Arabs were always aware of this type of marriage in respect of their close relationship. Another type of marriage which happened rarely among the Arabs, was to marry both sisters at the same time. The first man to do that was Abū Janḥah Sa'id ibn 'Āsim.<sup>2</sup>

The Arabs were described as being brave. This bravery, which was found in almost every one of them, must have been born within themselves through their difficult ways of survival

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1. Al-Ālūsī, op.cit. vol:2, p.52.

2. Ibid, p.52.

Most of their life was spent in battlefields. Skirmishes arose between a tribe and another without any good and acceptable reasons. A tribe was proud of its brave warriors and fighters who had died in defending the honour of the tribe. Verses of poetry were always composed to manifest this bravery. The pre-Islamic wars were usually called al-ayyām, because wars on those days were usually fought for months and years. The most famous of al-ayyām was yawm al-Basūs, between the tribes of Taghlib and Bakr, which lasted for forty years.<sup>1</sup> The war carried on by raiding and plundering until both tribes were exhausted and with the help of King Mundhir III of Hira, the war was brought to an end.

#### The Political Background

The pre-Islamic Arabia, as obviously mentioned by sources, had had no single government which governed it, and there had never been a single man who was declared or recognised to be its ruler before the establishment of the Islamic State at Madina. There were, of course, settlements which were governed by some recognised kings as those in Yemen, Kinda and other communities bordering on the Roman and the Persian Empires. The only type of political system known to the Arabs, in most of Arabia, was a tribal system.

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1. Al-Ya'qūbī, Tārikh, vol:1, p.225.

### The tribal system

Tribal solidarity was an essential factor for survival in the desert. For that reason one can see from their history that members of a tribe were related closely and tied together to the extent that all members were responsible for whatever action taken by one of them, whether it was good or bad. At the same time the victory of one member was the victory for all.

The tribe was usually based on kinship, but there were also other types of solidarity such as hulf and walā'. The first type of solidarity was considered to be the most powerful and the closest of all. The kinship was usually divided into two:

a. The male kinship ('asabiyat al-ubu<sup>w</sup>ḥah)

This is the relationship on the fathers's side. Fathers were looked upon highly in the Arab society. It was related that a man from Azd was circumambulating the Ka'bah and praying for his father only when a man asked him, "Why don't you pray for your mother too?" The man answered, "She is from Tamim."<sup>1</sup>

b. The female kinship ('asabiyat al-khu'ūlah)

Although male kinship was more highly esteemed among the Arabs, they, at the same time, respected the rights of women, and called the relationship on their mothers' side

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1. Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh, vol:1, p.198.

'asabiyat al-khu'ūlah. There were several written cases, where female kinship was more important than the male. One was the victory of the Madinese, who were related to the Prophet Muhammad from his mother's side, in persuading him to migrate to Madina. It was their enthusiastic feeling towards Islam, that encouraged the Prophet Muhammad to leave his homeland and flee to success. There were also certain cases where tribes were named after their mothers instead of their fathers.

#### The hilf

Confederacy or mutual oaths, united tribes regardless of their origin. This type of solidarity was usually formed when a tribe became weak and could not gain support from their own kinsmen. To maintain their survival, they had to find a stronger tribe and form a confederation. Members of the confederacy were treated equally and given the same responsibilities.

#### The walā'

The walā' was the relationship between the Arabs and non-Arabs who lived among them. The non-Arabs were usually known as mawālī. Similarly, the prisoners of war, who could not afford to ransom themselves, were also called mawālī. These mawālī were always named after the tribes to which they were related.

The tribal system followed by the Arabs, nomads<sup>1</sup> and settled,<sup>2</sup> was actually a democratic system of government, but not in the wider sense as it is known today. Each tribe had its own leader who was called sayyid or sheikh l-qabīlah. The sheikh was elected from among the senior members of the tribe, and had to possess certain characteristics acceptable to all. He had to have a strong personality, come from the most influential and respected family, so that he would be respected by all the members. He had to have wisdom and knowledge, so that he would lead his tribe to their objectives. At the same time he had to be a strong and courageous man, because he was their commander in war and he needed firm determination, for a word of his could lead to war between his tribe and the other surrounding tribes. He had to be the host to the guests of his tribe, and had to sacrifice his own camels for such guests. In this particular sense, the chief of the tribe had to be a generous man. When the chief lost all these features, he would be dismissed and a new chief appointed.

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1. The nomads or badū were the migrant people, who lived in tents and moved from one place to another in search of water and grass, not only for themselves, but also for their herds which were all important for their survival.
  2. The settled or hadar were the permanent residents of valleys and villages of the Hijāz, such as Mecca, Tā'if and Madina. They were traders and agriculturists, as well as other permanent occupation.

One remarkable fact about the system was that the leadership of the tribe or the post of sheikh was not a hereditary post, in which a son could succeed to his father's leadership. Rarely can it be found that the leadership stayed in the same family till more than two persons. To this point, 'Āmir ibn Tufail, who was the son of the chief said these verses:<sup>1</sup>

wa innī wain kuntu-bna sayyidi 'Āmirin (Tawīl)  
wafārisahā l-mashhūra fī kulli maukibi

Although I am the son of the chief 'Āmir, and their celebrated horseman in every procession.

famā sauwadatni 'Āmirun 'an wirāthati  
abā Allahu an asmū bi ummin walā abi

'Āmir did not make me chief by succession, Allah refused that I gain eminence through mother and father.

walākinnanī ahmī himāhā wa attaqī  
adhāhā waarmī man ramāhā bimankibi

But I always protect its territory, and slum that which harms it, and fight those who fight it with my own shoulder.

Besides the sheikh l-gabīlah, the tribe had a body of elected men, who were regarded as representatives of all

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1. Al-Ālūsī, op.cit. vol:3, p.128. See also al-Mas'ūdī, Murūj al-dhahab, vol:2, p.55, where the verses were related in slightly different words.



the members. They were called maskhāt l-qabīlah, and their presence was to control and minimise the power of the sheikh to a certain level, so that all decisions he made, would not be his own, but those of the tribe as a whole. The prosperity of the qabīlah was entirely in the hands of the sheikh and his governing body. If they were strong and courageous leaders, the tribe would prosper, but if they were weak, the tribe would collapse.

#### The Religious Background

The religious background of the pre-Islamic Arabs can be divided into certain groups: The idol-worshippers, the hunafā', the Jews, the Christians and other religious traditions and cultures.

#### The idol-worshippers

The idol-worshippers were the people who took other than God (Allah) as their symbol of worship. This habit of worshipping creatures, images and stones had spread widely among the Arabs of the Peninsula centuries before Islam. The early history of the Arabs indicated that they were true believers in God, in the era of Ibrāhīm and Ishmael. But their monotheism stood up only for a short period, when after the death of Ishmael they slowly turned to the worship of images and stones and finally idols.

Many of these activities of worship, took place in Mecca, which was regarded as a centre of religious activity and movements, because of the Ka'bah (Sacred House) which is sited there and because of its position as a centre of a trade route which linked the northern and southern parts of the Peninsula. As a religious tradition, the Arabs assembled in Mecca every year, at a certain and limited period of the year, to perform the pilgrimage and visit the Sacred House.

Ibn al-Kalbī, the author of the Book of Idols, and other authorities of the second century after the advent of Islam, put more than one theory to explain the beginning of the idol worshippers in Arabia. In his book, Ibn al-Kalbī, relates that the visit to the Ka'bah was a turning point which led the Arabs to the worship of images and stones. Before setting out on a journey, ~~the~~ Arab would take with him a stone from the vicinity of the Sacred House as a token of reverence to it, and as a sign of deep affection for Mecca. Whenever he settled at any place, he would erect the stone and circumambulate it as he had circumambulated the Ka'bah, seeking its blessing and affirming his affection and respect for it. Over a period of time, this led them to <sup>the</sup> worship of whatever took their fancy. Unconsciously they substituted a different religion for that of Ibrahim.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Ibn al-Kalbī, Kitāb al-Asnām, p.6.

Another tradition suggests that idol worship was a practice unknown to the sons and followers of Ishmael and the man credited with the introduction of images and idols to the Arabs was 'Amr ibn Luhayy. He was Abū Khuzā'ah and he possessed the custody of the Ka'bah after killing the Jurhumites and banishing them from Mecca. In a hadīth related by Abu Hurayrah, the Apostle revealed the story of 'Amr ibn Luhayy in which he said to Aktham ibn Juan al-Khuzā'ī, "Oh! Aktham, I saw 'Amr ibn Luhayy dragging his intestines in hell, and never did I see two men so much alike as you and him!" "Will this resemblance injure me?" "No," said the Apostle, "for you are a believer and he is an infidel. He was the first to change the religion of Ishmael, to set up idols, and institute the custom of bahīrah, sāibah, waṣīlah and hāmī."<sup>1</sup> Once this 'Amr ibn Luhayy was sick, and made a journey to al-Balqā', in Syria, for the purpose of healing his sickness which could be cured only by taking a bath in a hot spring there. During his stay in al-Balqā', he noticed the inhabitants of the place worshipping idols and asked them about the matter. Answering his question they told him, "To them we pray for rain, and from them we seek victory over the enemy!"<sup>2</sup> He requested them for a few of those idols,

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1. Ibn Ishāq, The life of the Prophet, trans: A Guillaume, p.53.

2. Ibn al-Kalbī, op.cit. p.7.

and was given some, which he took with him to Mecca and erected them around the Ka'bah. From that time onwards the Arabs began worshipping idols, and this practice spread later on throughout the Hijāz and all over the Peninsula, until there was not a single house in Mecca without any sign of idols.

The changes in the ways of worshipping did not stop them from performing their devotional practices which had come down from Ibrāhīm and Ishmael. They kept on visiting the house and performing circumambulation, standing on 'Arafah and Muzdalifah, sacrificing ~~to~~ the she-camel and raising their voices in acclamation of the pilgrimage. At the same time introducing elements which had no place in the religion of Ibrāhīm. Thus when they performed the pilgrimage, they used to say in their cry:<sup>1</sup> (Rajaz)

labaika l-lāhunma labbaik

labbaika la sharīka lak

illā sharīkun huwa lak

tamlikuhu wamā malak

At your service, oh God, at your service, You have no associate, but the associate you have, you own him and what he owns.

Through their worshipping idols, the Arabs did not have the intention of replacing God with other creatures, or likening the powers of their worshipped elements with the incomparable

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1. Ibn Tshāq, op.cit. p.36.

power of God. Because of their deep reverence for him and thorough respect for His supremacy, they felt that, it was not in their position, as created beings, to worship God without any Media. So images, stones and idols were taken as Media between God and them. Thus, instead of praying to God and calling upon Him to fulfil their entreaties, they turned their faces towards the idols, revealing their sorrow and happiness, asking their protection, requiring them to perform their requests, hoping that the idols would communicate their messages to God.<sup>1</sup> Such was the situation agreed <sup>upon</sup> by the former generation, as described in the Qur'ān:<sup>2</sup>

"We worship them only that they may bring us near unto Allah."

Therefore it can be concluded that the Arabs' idolatry was different from idolatries of other nations, who, in their worshipping of idols and images, recognised the divinity of the said elements, while the Arabs, in worshipping those elements, never recognised the divinity and supremacy of the idols, but worshipped them as media only, with the belief in God's supremacy over themselves. Allah reveals in the Qur'ān:<sup>3</sup>

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1. Al-Ālūsī, op.cit.p.213.

2. Sūrat al-Zumar, 3.

3. Sūrat Yūsuf, 106.

"And most of them believe not in Allah without associating (others) as partners with Him."

The idols worshipped by the Arabs were made of various materials as well as of various shapes and forms. Some were merely shapeless stones, while others were stone, golden, silver or wooden images in the forms of human beings, animals or birds. They even had images made of dates as the one worshipped by the banū Hanīfah. It so happened that they were struck by famine, and having nothing to eat, some members of the tribe took the idol and ate it. A poet said in his verse:<sup>1</sup>

akalat Hanīfatu rabbahā

( Kāmil )

zamanu t-taqahhumi wa l-majā'ah

The men of banū Hanīfah ate their god,  
at the time of difficulties and famine.

Ibn l-Kalbi, in his book, divided the idols worshipped by the Arabs into three types: al-ansāb, al-asnām and al-authān. According to his definition,<sup>2</sup> al-ansāb were shapeless stones which were put to worship and circumambulate and sacrifice. The circumambulation around it was called al-dauwār. Al-authān were stone statues or images in the form of human beings while al-asnām were wooden, golden or silver images put to worship

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1. 'Abdullah 'Abd al-Jabbār, Qisṣat al-adab fī l-Hijāz, p.202.

2. Ibn al-Kalbī, op.cit.p.33.

and sacrifice.

The images introduced by 'Amr ibn Luhayy, in the early era of idolatry, were Wadd, Suwā', Yaghūth, Ya'ūq, and Nasr,<sup>1</sup> which were actually the images worshipped and adored by the people of Noah during his period of prophecy. They are mentioned in al-Qur'an as Allah says:<sup>2</sup>

"And they have said to each other, abandon not your gods, abandon neither Wadd, nor Suwā' neither Yaghūth nor Ya'ūq nor Nasr. They have misled many, and grant you no increase to the wrongdoers but in straying (from their mark)." It was alleged that the first man to adopt those idols among the sons of Ishmael was Hudhail ibn Mudrikah. They adopted Suwā' and had it in Ruḥat, a place near Yanbū'. The custody of Suwā' was in the hand of the Banu Lihyan who worshipped it. Later on they were followed by Mudar. A poet says describing the occasion:<sup>3</sup>

tarāhum 'ind qiblatihim 'ukūfan (wāfir)

kamā 'akafat Hudhailu 'alā suwā'i

You can see them secluding themselves, as the Hudhail secluded themselves around Suwā'.

The adoption of Suwā' brought other tribes to worship the other four images. Wadd was worshipped by the Banū Kalb and it was

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1. Ibn al-Kalbī, op.cit.p.18.

2. Surat Nuh, 23-24.

3. Al-Ālūsī, op.cit.vol:2,p.317. In Kitāb al-asnām, the word qibla in the verse is related as gail which means chief.

placed at Daumat l-Jandal. Yaghūth was taken by the tribes of Mazhij and Jurāsh. The tribe of Khaiwān took Ya'ūq and placed it in a village not far from San'ā'. While Nasr was worshipped by the Himyar at Balkha'.<sup>1</sup> Traditions related that those five idols were the statues of five righteous men, who died in the same month. One of their kinsmen suggested that they build a monument to comm<sup>em</sup>orate their righteousness and integrity. So the statues were sculptured. Relatives visited them. Finally, the ancestors worshipped them.<sup>2</sup>

Besides those five images, which received less attention in a later period, especially by the Meccans and the people of Hijāz, the Arabs worshipped other idols which were scattered widely around Mecca. It seems that the lesser attention given to those mentioned idols, was because of their remoteness

from Mecca, which did not encourage the Meccans, especially, from visiting them.

There were three famous idols which were worshipped by most of the population of the Peninsula. These three were mentioned in al-Qur'ān and the Arabs always named their sons after them. They were al-Lāt, Manāt, and al-'uzzā. Allah

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1. Ibn al-Kalbī, op.cit.pp.10-11.

2. Ibid,p.5..



says:<sup>1</sup>

"Have you thought upon al-Lāt, al-'Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other one? Are yours the males and His the females? That indeed ~~wase~~ was an unfair division."<sup>2</sup> The Arabs always considered those three idols as goddesses and said that they were the daughters of God.

The eldest of the three idols, as related by Ibn al-Kalbī, was Manāt. This Manāt was sited by the seashore, in the direction of al-Mushallal, in Qudayd, on the pilgrim route from Madina to Mecca. It was magnified by all the Arabs, especially the Aus and the Khazraj, the two tribes of Madina. Those coming from Madina and places surrounding it often made sacrifices and offered their gifts to it. The veneration of the Aus and the Khazraj was so great that it cannot be compared. It was related that they would not shave their heads after completing the circumambulation (of the Ka'bah), standing in prayer at 'Arafah and completing the rites at Minā, unless they went to Manāt crying labbaykī. A verse of poetry was composed to express their great respect for Manāt, in which a poet says:<sup>2</sup>

innī halaftu yamīna sidqin barratān (Kāmil)

bimanāta 'ind mahalli dāli l-khazraji

I swore a sincere and true oath, by Manat, at the sacred place of the Khazraj.

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1. Sūrat an-Najm, 19-22.

2. Ibn al-Kalbī, op.cit. p. 14.

Al-Lat was then adopted by the Arabs as their goddess<sup>e</sup>. It was a cubic rock standing in Tāif. Its custody was in the hand of the banū 'Attāb ibn Malīk of the Thaqīf. The Quraysh as well as the other Arabs venerated it and used to call their children Zaidullāt, and Taimullāt. The idol's name was mentioned in the verse of 'Amr ibn l-Ju'ayd, who says:<sup>1</sup>

" In forswearing wine I am like Him,

who has abjured al-Lat, although he was once its devotee."

Likewise it was by its name too that Aus ibn Hajr swore in his verse after its destruction by 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib:<sup>2</sup>

" By al-Lāt and al-'Uzzā and those who follow their religion,  
And by Allah, who is the greatest of them all. "

Al-'Uzzā which was situated in a valley in Nakhlāh, was venerated by all the tribes of the Arabs and it seems that they did not offer to any of the idols anything like their veneration of al-'Uzzā. To the Quraysh it was the greatest idol among all. They travelled for its sake, offered gifts to it, and sought its favours through sacrifices. When they circumambulated the Ka'bah they were wont to raise their voices and say:<sup>3</sup>

" By al-Lāt and al-'Uzzā,

and Manāt the third besides,

they were the most exalted females,

and their intercession is to be sought."

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1. Ibn al-Kalbī, op.cit.p.14.

2. Ibid.

3. Al-Ālūsī, op.cit.p.28.

Al-'Uzzā also had a place of sacrifice called al-Ghabghab, where they offered their oblations. Al-Hudhalī speaks of it in a satire he composed against a certain man who married a beautiful woman named Asmā', he said:<sup>1</sup>

"Asmā' was given as a dowry the head of a little red cow, which a man of the banū Ghanm had sacrificed. He saw a blemish in her eye when he led her away, to al-Ghabghab, al-'Uzzā's slaughter place, and divided her into goodly portion. "

Tradition related that there were hundreds of idols erected around the Ka'bah and inside it, at the time when <sup>the</sup> Prophet Muhammad <sup>of</sup> recaptured it from the mushrikun <sup>of</sup> Mecca. The enormous number of idols to be there, was probably due to the strong belief of the Arabs in those idols as their intercessors. Almost every tribe of them had its own idol set up around the Ka'bah, and those tribes which could not afford to build an idol, would put stones and worshipped them as well as offered them sacrifices.

The most celebrated of the idols erected around the Ka'bah was Hubal. It was believed to have been brought there by Khuzaimah ibn Mudrikah, and it was known as Hubal Khuzaimah.<sup>2</sup> It was in the shape of a human being, with a broken left hand

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1. Ibn Tshaq, op.cit.p.28.

2. Ibn al-Kalbi, op.cit.p.28.

and the Quraysh substituted for it a hand of gold. It was said to have been made of strings of agate beads. He stood over a dry fountain into which offerings were thrown. At his feet were seven divining arrows. It was Hubal that the Meccans, especially, consulted, whether they should or should not do something. It was to Hubal that the Prophet's grandfather was to sacrifice his son 'Abdullah, but he was stopped and asked to consult God about it. Finally 'Abdullah was changed for a hundred camels. It was this idol's name also that Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb mentioned during the Uhud victory, when he said: "Be lofty, O Hubal!"<sup>1</sup>

They also had Isāf and Nāilah, by the place of Zamzam, and sacrificed beside them. They were a man and a woman of Jurhum who were guilty of sexual relations in the Ka'bah and whom God transformed into two stones. The reality of this story is not known, but it was alleged that 'Amra daughter of 'Abd al-Rahman said, "I heard 'Āishah say, We always heard that Isāf and Nāilah were a man and a woman of Jurhum who copulated in the Ka'bah, so God transformed them into two stones. But God alone knows the truth."<sup>2</sup> Abu Talib swore by their names, when he

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1. Ibn al-Kalbī, op.cit. p.19.

2. Ibn Ishaq, op.cit. p.38.

said:<sup>1</sup>

"Where the pilgrims make their camels kneel,  
where the waters flow from Isāf and Nāilah."

Apart from the tribal deities, it is said that every household in Mecca had an idol of their own which they worshipped and magnified. It had been a habit for them that when a man was about to set out on a journey he would rub himself against it and when he returned from his journey, the first thing he did, was to rub himself against it again, before going in for his family. This habit was practised in the hope that the idols might protect them from any disasters in their journey, and as a sign of their respect and thanks for the idol's protection, after their safe return.

When a man was on his journey and camped somewhere on his way, he would collect four stones, choose the best of these and make it his god and use the other three to put his pot upon. The god was then worshipped, circumambulated around it, and made sacrifices at it. When he departed he left the stone, and did the same thing at every place he camped.

The Arabs also venerated houses (buyūt), as mentioned by ibn al-Kalbī in his book. They became eventually shrines or temples where some of the idols were housed. Other sources

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1. Ibn Ishāq, op.cit. p.38.

describe them as tawāghīt, and refer to some of the famous deities as so. Such was al-Īāt. It is no doubt that the Ka'bah was venerated by all the Arabs of the Peninsula. It was there that they went every year to perform their pilgrimage and it was there too that they always met in peace because killing and fighting were forbidden within the haram or vicinity of the Sacred House. Like the Ka'bah the other houses or shrines had their own haram too. Among other houses which were of less importance and venerated by certain tribes only were, Riām or Riḡām (as related in Ibn al-Kalbī). This house belonged to the Himyar and was situated in San'a'. Rudha which was possessed by banū Rabi'ah ibn Ka'b ibn Sa'd ibn Zaid Manāt. It was its name that al-Mustaughir mentioned in his verse:

" I smashed Rudha so completely that,  
I left it a black ruin in a hollow.<sup>1</sup> "

The verse was recited after Rudha was destroyed by the poet himself. Dhu'l-Khalasah, this house was mentioned by ibn al-Kalbī as one of the idols, but Ibn Kathir put it as one of the houses venerated by the Arabs. It belonged to the banī Daus, Khath'am and Bajīlah. It was also venerated by the Arabs of the area in Tabālah. There were other houses venerated by different tribes of the Arabs, such were al-Qalīs, Qasr Sindad and others.

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1. Ibn Ishāq, op.cit.p.39.

The Arabs were also said to have venerated trees. The best known example was Dhāt al-anwat.<sup>1</sup> It was described as a huge tree, which belonged to the unbelievers of Quraysh and other Arabs. They were believed to have visited it once every year, where they hung their weapons on it, sacrificed to it, and stayed there for a day. Apart from the deities mentioned, there were also star-worshippers, although they were common among the southern Arabs.

#### The Ḥunafā'

Among the polytheistic Arabs, there was a group of people, although not organised together, who neither believed in Christianity nor Judaism. These were the ḥunafā'. They were the people who possessed the real and true religion, and were particularly known to follow the religion of Ibrāhīm.<sup>2</sup> They worshipped God, they did not take idols, creatures or any created beings to be the media between God and them, as practised by the members of their societies.

It was told in Bukhārī in his Ṣaḥīḥ, that Zaid ibn 'Amr ibn Nufail asked the Christian hermit, "What is a Ḥanīf?" the hermit answered him that it was the religion of Abraham which was neither Christianity nor Judaism, and there was only one

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1. Al-Suhaili, Al-Raud al-unf, vol:2, p.289.

2. Encyclopaedia of Islam, vol:11, E-K, subject: ḥanīf, p.258.

God to worship."<sup>1</sup> There is a quotation from the Qur'ān which runs, "Ibrahim was not a Jew, nor yet a Christian, but he was an upright man who had surrendered (to Allah), and he was not of the idolators."<sup>2</sup> This quotation from al-Qur'ān and the above story of Zaid ibn 'Amr ibn Nufail, illustrated clearly the faith of the hunafā', among whom was <sup>the</sup> Prophet Muhammad himself, who spent much of his life, before the revelation, away from his polytheistic society, practising the religion of Ibrāhīm.

The hunafā' did not only recognise the existence of God, with his absolute power, but also believed in the coming of the new Prophet as well as the resurrection, and had complete faith that men would be recompensed and punished according to their deeds. Zuhair ibn Abī Sulmā, in his poetry said:<sup>3</sup>

Do not conceal from Allah what is in your hearts so that it may remain hidden, for what are hidden Allah knows. It is either held back and stored up, for the day of Judgment, or is brought forward and he punishes.

The idea of worshipping idols was opposed by the hunafā' completely. Some of them avowed openly the invalidity of worshipping idols, and called upon their fellow countrymen

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1. Al-Ālūsī, op.cit. p. 227.

2. Sūrat al-Imrān, 67.

3. Al-Ālūsī, op.cit. pp. 305-6.



to leave and withdraw from it. A number of them consisting of Zaid ibn 'Amr ibn Nufail, Waraqah ibn Naufal, 'Uthmān ibn al-Hārith, and 'Abīd ibn Jahsh insulted the Quraysh by saying, "You are worshipping the idols which bring you no good and no harm."<sup>1</sup> This contradiction of the hunafā' roused the anger of the Arabs. Consequently they were forced to flee the country for their lives.

Among the hunafā' were Qus̄s ibn Sā'idah al-Iyādī, Umayyah ibn Abī al-Salt, Zaid ibn 'Amr ibn Nufail, Waraqah ibn Naufal, Zuhair ibn Abī Sulmā, Ka'b ibn Lu'ai ibn Ghālīb, and others. Most of them died before the advent of the Prophet.

One of the most distinguished figures of the hunafā' was Waraqah. He was believed to be a Christian. He was the person who told the Prophet's wife, after the first revelation, that Muhammad was the Prophet to be. He died soon after that, before Muhammad began preaching his religion. He had promised to support the Prophet if he lived and saw the spreading of Islam. The verses of his poetry obviously showed his faith and belief in the coming Prophet:<sup>2</sup>

"(I believed) that the son of 'Abdullah, Ahmad has been sent, to every one living in this broad land.

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1. Al-Ālūsī, op.cit.p.273.

2. Ibid,p.302..

I think he will be sent speaking the truth,  
as God sent His two messengers, Hūd and Ṣālih.  
Then Moses and Abraham, until he is seen,  
In glory with a clear revelation.  
If I am spared until his mission is known to the people,  
I will be pleased and happy with him,  
Otherwise, Khadijah, know that,  
I will leave this land of yours and travel throughout the  
wide world. ”

Another well-known Hanīf was Zaid ibn 'Amr ibn Nufail.  
He was the man who fled from his country (Mecca) and travelled  
in search of the true religion. He spoke of not worshipping  
idols which were worshipped and magnified by his people. In  
his poetry he said:<sup>1</sup>

“ I renounce al-Lāt and al-'Uzzā both of them,  
as a strong-minded patient man does.  
Neither will I worship al-'Uzzā and her two daughters,  
nor will I visit the two idols of banū Ghanm.  
I will not visit Hubal, though he was our lord,  
In the days when I had little sense. ”

He travelled to Syria where he met Jewish and Christian  
hermits, who then, told him of the coming of the Prophet Muhammad.

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1. Al-Ālūsī, op.cit. p.220.

He returned home, but before he could enter Mecca, he was ambushed by a group of Meccans and killed. On his death Waraqah said these verses:<sup>1</sup>

“ You were on the right path Ibn 'Amr,  
you have escaped a cauldron of fire.  
By believing in one Lord who has no equal,  
and abandoning the idols of tyrants as they were.  
By attaining the religion that you sought,  
and not being forgetful of proclaiming the Unity of your Lord.  
And now you are in a noble place of dwelling,  
wherein you will rejoice your generous treatment. ”

One of the Hunafā' who lived and saw the spreading of Islam, was Abū Qays Sarmah ibn Abī Anas of banū al-Najjar. He converted his home into a mosque, where he worshipped the One and the Only God. He emphasized his faith in God by saying, "I pray to and worship the God of Abraham." He mentioned the word Allah in a verse of his poetry which he said during the pre-Islamic period and among the polytheists:<sup>2</sup>

“ Glorify Allah at dawn every morning,  
When the sun rises and at every cre<sup>s</sup>cant moon. ”

He adopted Islam soon after the Prophet's migration to Madina, and on his arrival he recited this verse:<sup>3</sup>

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1. Al-Ālūsī, op.cit. p.227.

2. Ibid, p.293.

3. Ibid, p.293.

He dwelt among the Quraysh in Mecca for ten years and more, hoping to find a suitable friend.

Some modern writers considered the Hunafā' to have been the followers of Christianity. This fact must have been based probably on the knowledge that most of the hunafā' were Bible readers and they, influenced by their reading had used some of the words, used in the Bible, in their poetry which were not known to the Arabs.

#### The Jews

To trace the origin of the Jewish migration to Arabia, and to Hijaz in particular, is somewhat difficult, because of scant sources. But the fact that the Jewish colonists had long been settled in Arabia is fully accepted by the historians and scholars of both western and eastern world.

Al-Isfahānī in his book of songs (al-Aghānī) dated the settlement of the Jews in Arabia as early as Moses's war against the Amalekites (al-'amaliqah)<sup>1</sup>. The story told is that Moses sent a group of his army to the Hijāz and ordered them to slay every one of the Amalekites. The army succeeded in their mission, killed the Amalekites and their king, al-Arqam, except

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1. Al-Isfahānī, Al-Aghānī, vol:19, p.94.

for a young son of their king. They returned to Jerusalem with the young prince to ask for Moses's opinion, but they found that he was dead. The Jews in Jerusalem threw them out, considering that they had committed a big sin by disobeying Moses's command. With nowhere to go, they returned to the land of the Amalekites and settled there. This group of soldiers was believed to be the first Jewish dwellers in the Hijāz.

The more reliable sources noted the Jewish migration to Arabia during the invasion of Palestine by the Romans or the Greeks, and more specifically after the destruction of the temple.<sup>1</sup> Waves of Jewish people fled to the Hijāz. It is related that after the destruction of the first temple, 80,000 priests who survived, migrated to the Hijāz and joined the former settlers.<sup>2</sup>

In the Hijāz they established their new homes and cultivated the land. They constructed strong forts to protect themselves from the raids of the beduins. In a period of time, there were numbers of Jewish colonies in Khaibar, Fadak, Wādī al-Qurā, Taimā', Maqna and in most villages to the north of Yathrib.<sup>3</sup> Those colonists were from the tribes of banū Qainuqā', banū an-Nadīr, banū Qurayshah, Banū Bahdal, banū 'Ikrimah, banū Tha'labah, banū Mahmar, banū Zaghurah, banū Zaid, banū 'Auf, and banu Pasis.<sup>4</sup> Besides them were the members of the Arab

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1. Jewish Encyclopaedia, 1905, subject: Arabia, p. 42. Al-Hufī, al-Mar'ah fī l-shi'r al-'Arabī, p. 19.

2. Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1971, vol: 3, subject: Arabia, p. 234.

3. Yaqūt, Mu'jam al-Buldān, vol: 7, p. 428. 4. Al-Isfahānī, op. cit. p. 95.

tribes who had migrated to the Hijāz from the Yemen and northern Arabia.

The authentic Jewish tribes or clans were said to be three, banū Qainuqā', banū an-Nadīr and banū Qurayshah,<sup>1</sup> while the other tribes were believed to be of Arab origins, converted to Judaism. It was alleged that both banū an-Nadīr and banū Qurayshah were descended from Kāhin ibn Hārūn ibn 'Imrān. They were thus called Kāhinān. Owing to the greatness of their ancestor, they regarded themselves as better than the other tribes and that they had the right to be leaders particularly in religious affairs.<sup>2</sup> A poet of banū Qurayshah named Ka'b ibn Sa'd said :<sup>3</sup>

“ Because of the two priests you settled where you are in the land,  
a great number of you stayed, and those who expelled you are marred. ”

When the Aus and the Khazraj came to Yathrib, after the destruction of the Ma'rib Dam, they found it dominated by the Jews. They established themselves among the Jewish communities presumably on land that had not yet been brought to cultivation. Their condition of life was bad. They lived in poverty and

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1. Watt, Muhammad at Madina, p.193.

2. Al-Isfahānī, op.cit.p.95.

3. Ibid.

with utmost difficulty on the poorer lands while the richer lands were in the hands of the Jews. It was the Jews who monopolised the economic life in Yathrib. They were industrial and agricultural people. They were traders and at the same time they practised usury.<sup>1</sup> They traded in dates, grains and beer which they imported from Syria. Their Arab neighbours, who were weaker in all aspects of life, had to deal with them and formed alliances with their tribes.

The situation of the Aus and the Khazraj did not change. They suffered a hard and difficult life for a long time, when, after waves of difficulties, the King of Ghassan, namely Abū Jabīlah,<sup>2</sup> came on the scene. Through a careful plot, he succeeded in killing hundreds of Jewish men. The success of Abū Jabīlah was expressed beautifully in verses of 'Abid ibn Salīm, a man from Khazraj:<sup>3</sup>

“ Abū Jabīlah was the best man who walks and the most loyal of them to his promise.

He is the most dutiful of them and the most learned man in the knowledge of good will.

May the days preserved for us when war full of cares comes upon us.

A great leader whose sword defeats the enemy. ”

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1. Jawad Alī, Tārīkh l-'Arab qabl l-Islām, p.96.

2. Al-Isfahānī, op.cit. p.96.

3. Ibid, p.96.

The killing of the Jews was lamented by a poetess of banū Quraidzah named Sarah, in her verses of elegy:<sup>1</sup>

" I would have laid down my own life for a band of men,  
who were of no avail at Hurūd which the winds are effacing.  
Marred men of Banū Quraidzah destroyed by the sword and  
spears of the Khazraj.

A great misfortune befell us, in which pure water becomes  
bitter for those who suffer it.

If they had been skilled in their affair, a great army  
would have fought there to protect them."

Numbers of Jews were slain, but the situation in Yathrib did not change as was expected. So another plot was conducted by Mālik ibn 'Ajalān.<sup>2</sup> He succeeded in killing more than eighty men of the Jews. After this second victory, no Jews were brave enough to go against the Aus and the Khazraj. To protect themselves every tribe of them formed alliances with either the Aus or the Khazraj. The Arabs were then, leaders of Yathrib, but their position was not firm, because of unbroken hostility among their tribes, which sometimes led them to fight one another. After the famous war of the Aus and the Khazraj namely, Fijar Yathrib,<sup>3</sup> they came to an agreement and elected one of their men

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1. Al-Isfahani, op.cit. p.96.

2. Ibid, p.97.

3.. Al-Kharbutlī, al-'Arab wa l-Yahūd fī l-'asr l-Islāmī, p.23.



'Abdullah ibn Abī Salūl<sup>1</sup> as their leader. This settlement also did not succeed in aiming its objections. The condition continued until the migration of the Prophet Muhammad to Yathrib, who took full responsibility as a leader and reformed the whole community on the basis of Islam.

Were the Jews influenced by the Arabs?

After centuries of settling among the Arabs, it is no doubt that the Jews, although not totally predominated by the Arabs, were influenced on nearly every aspect of their life except religion. The author of "History of the Jews" writes in his book, "In pre-Islamic northern Arabia, the Jewish tribes were arabianized, both according to language and their mode of life, differing from the Arabs only in the matter of religion."<sup>2</sup> What is really concerned here is to put forward the influence of Arabic language on the Jews.

The majority of the Jews in the Hijāz and in Yathrib and its environs particularly, used Arabic language to communicate, not only with the Arabs, but among themselves too. They spoke the dialect of their Arab communities, and at the same time used Hebrew words along with their Arabic. But this fact did not deny that, there were Jews who could speak and write in

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1. Al-Kharbutlī, op.cit. p.23.

2. Dubnov, History of the Jews, trans. from Russian, Moshe Spiegel, vol:2, p.308.

Hèbrew. Their own language was usually used to understand their religious books and to perform magic.<sup>1</sup>

The influence of Arabic was so great that the Jews did not only speak the language, but mastered the literature as well. The poetic literature of the Jews was believed to be as old as the Arabic Literature itself and possessed the same form, metre as well as the same meaning and imagination.<sup>2</sup> The oldest verses were produced by the poetess Sārah<sup>3</sup> who bewailed the slaughter of many of her people by the Arabs, as previously mentioned. Most of the works of the Jewish poets before Islam are preserved in the classical Arabic poetry.

Among the poets were, Samaw'al ibn 'Ādiya, Aus ibn Danī, Rabī' ibn Abī l-Huqaiq, Sa'yā ibn Gharid (Samaw'al's brother) and Ka'b ibn l-Ashraf. The most famous of them was Samaw'al, whose loyalty was praised by the Arabs and became a proverbial saying, "More loyal than Samaw'al".<sup>4</sup> He lived in a castle called al-Ablaq at Taimā', which was built by his grandfather. In one of his verses he says:<sup>5</sup>

" For me, 'Ādiya built a strong walled fort, with a well  
Where I drew water as I pleased. "

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1. Jawad 'Alī, op.cit.p.34.

2. The Jewish Encyclopaedia.op.cit.p.53.

3. Ibid,p.53.

4. Nicholson, Literary History of the Arabs,p.84.

5. Al-Isfahānī, op.cit.p.98.

Another example of Jewish poetry was the verses recited by Aus ibn Danī al-Qurazī, in answering a Jewish woman who had been converted to Islam and asked to become Muslim as well. He said:<sup>1</sup>

“ She called me to Islam on the day I met her, and I said,  
‘No, but come and be a Jew.  
We follow the Torah of Moses and his religion,  
both of us think that his religion is the true message,  
And those who lead on the right way, are rightly guided.’ ”

At the time of the Prophet's migration to Yathrib, the only difference, that could be noticed, between the Arabs and the Jews was their religion. The Jews were believers in God, they were the ahl al-Kitāb. They observed the holy days especially the ‘Āshūrā’ and took the Sabbath as their day of rest. While the Arabs were idol-worshippers. They did not have a holy book, They did not know the Sabbath. They were completely different in many of their beliefs.

The attitudes of the Arabs towards the Jewish religion (Judaism)

The success of the Jews in controlling the economy of Yathrib, and their ability in deceiving the Arabs, did not mean that they had the same ability to spread their faith and creed in

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1. Al-Isfahānī, op.cit. p.97.

Yathrib partly and in Hijāz wholly. Their failure to do so was due to many reasons:

1. The Jews themselves were not intrested in spreading and converting other nations to their religion, with the idea that they were the 'Chosen Nation of God' and all the other people did not have the same quality as they had. This reason put off the Arabs from <sup>being</sup> converted to Judaism.
2. The teachings of their religion were too heavy for the pagan Arabs and against their nature. For example, the Arabs were born to fight, they fought for life and raided for food, while the Jews regarded that as the dirtiest job that leads to evil. The prohibition of eating the camel's flesh by the Jews was totally against the Arab's taste, who regarded camels as their main source of livelihood.
3. The Arabs were annoyed at the way the Jews treated them. They were tired of being deceived by the Jews, whom they regarded as foreigners who grabbed the prosperity of their lands. At the same time the Jews did not show good manners and character that attracts the Arabs. They kept on breaking promises and betrayed the Arabs continously, beside their bad treatment in the economics of Yathrib.

All these reasons did not remove the fact that the Arabs were also influenced by the Jews, although the influence was not great. To the Arabs, Jews were learned people, they were

people of knowledge, for they were the ahl al-Kitāb. So, as a group of people who could neither read nor write, and possessed little knowledge, the Aus and the Khazraj always followed the Jews in many of their works. The Jews also taught them to write Arabic. It is no wonder that when Islam came to Yathrib there were already<sup>a</sup> number of Arabs who could read and write. There were also members of some Arab tribes around Mecca and Yathrib who had converted to Judaism such as the tribes of banū Hārith ibn Ka'b and banū Kindah.<sup>1</sup> At the same time there were also intermarriages among the Arabs and the Jews. The Jews also spread the idea of Muhammad's prophecy. And it is believed that this is one of the reasons that helped the spread of Islam among the Medinese. 'Āsim ibn 'Umar ibn Naqāwā related<sup>2</sup>

"What made us accepted Islam, with God's mercy and Guidance, is that, we heard from the Jews that, we were polytheists and idol worshippers, they were the ahl l-Kitāb, they possessed knowledge that we did not, and there was still hatred and enmity between us and them. When we achieved something that they did not like, they said to us, 'the time of the new Prophet is near, we will kill you and him together.' We heard a lot of it from them, and when Allah sent Muḥammad, we responded

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1. Al-Hūfī, op.cit. p.29.

2. Al-Kharbutlī, al-'Alāqāt al-siyāsiyah baina al-'Arab wa l-Yahūd fī l-'usūr al-qadīmah, p.65.

to his call, and we knew that they had promised us, we hastened towards him, we believed in his teachings and they became infidels."

### Christianity

The spread of Christianity on the Arab Peninsula was rather different from that of the Jews. If Judaism entered Arabia through migration of its people to some parts of Arabia, Christianity entered through missionary work, trading and slaves. That was due to the status of Christianity itself. It was the state religion of the Roman Empire and there was no doubt that the Empire would support every means of activities to spread the religion, especially among the Arab tribes, who were dwelling within the boundries of Arabia, Syria and Iraq.

The exact date of an early Christian penetration into Arabia is not known, although there are claims by Christian authors, that the penetration of Christianity into Arabia dated from the early days of Christianity itself.<sup>1</sup> These claims cannot be accepted, as Dr Jawad 'Alī explains in his book,<sup>2</sup> "Because their proofs are not well established and therefore we cannot put the exact date of its penetration now. The only way for us is to search for the oldest written work that we can stick to, without any doubt and any interpretation."

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1.. Sheikho, *Tārīkh al-Nasrāniyyah fī Jazīrat al-'Arab*, vol:1, p.28.

2.. Jawad 'Alī, *al-Mufasssal fī Tārīkh al-'Arab qab al-Islām*, vol:6, pp.586-7

It is obvious that Christianity first entered Arabia in Busrā, as was shown in the old Greek and Syriac traditions, as well as those of the Muslims later on.<sup>1</sup> The first tribe of Bādiyat ash-Shām to accept Christianity was Qudā'ah, a tribe from Yemen, whose chief was appointed king of the area by the Romans.<sup>2</sup> They were succeeded later on by the Salih and Ghassān in succession. The latter became the kings of that part of Syria until the emergence of Islam.<sup>3</sup>

The acceptance of Christianity by the Ghassanid kings was manifest among the Muslim writers. Al-Ya'qūbī, in his Tārīkh, writes:<sup>4</sup>

"Those who embraced Christianity among the Arabs were: from Quraysh, banū Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzā, from Tamīm, banū Imri el-Qays, from Rabī'ah banū Taghlib and from Yamen, banū Tayy, Madhhij, Bahrā', Salīh, Tanūkh, Ghassān and Lakham." The Ghassanid belief and religion were also praised by the poet Imru l-Qays in his verses:<sup>5</sup>

" Their place is with God, their religion is ancient,  
and they hope for nothing but the results.  
They wear fine sandals and excellent sashes,  
and on palm Sunday they are greeted with myrtle branches."

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1. Sheikho, op.cit.p.29.

2. Al-Ya'qūbī, Tārīkh, p.29.

3. Sheikho, op.cit.p.29.

4. Al-Ya'qūbī, op.cit, p.257.

5. Sheikho, op.cit.p.31.

The Christianization of the Ghassān was followed by other neighbouring tribes, especially those, who were under the influence of the Roman Empire, (as shown from the text of al-Ya'qūbī). At the same time the activities of the missionaries went on with great success. Through their strong personalities, with their knowledge of medicine, logic and their way of attracting people, the missionaries were successful in persuading the tribal leaders to accept Christianity, or to give them help in their objectives. It was not only their knowledge that attracted the Arabs, but also their power and ability to cure the sick, as well as their summons to God in fulfilling the Arabs' wishes, that made Christianity acceptable. At the same time, the missionaries were courageous people. Some of them went out to live in the desert with the nomads in their tents adopting their ways of life until they were known as priests of the tents.<sup>1</sup>

It was believed that most of the churches within the borders of Syria were built during the fifth century A.D. Some of them were named, (as found in Yāqūt, Mu'jam al-Buldān) dayr Ayyūb, dayr Bawannā, dayr Sa'd and dayr Busrā. These churches survived until sometime after Islam.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Sheikho, op.cit. p.37.

2. Ibid, p.36.



The Arab traders who travelled throughout the length and breadth of the Peninsula, found churches as relaxing places to rest in. They were supplied with water as well as alcoholic drinks and entertainment. The Arabs learnt some of the teachings of Christianity through their occasional visits to these churches, where they observed and watched the priests performing their religious obligations and following their religious teachings. It was alleged that, some of the priests, would go out in the middle of the night with their light to show the way to the Arab traders.<sup>1</sup> All these activities performed by the churches and the priests, made a great impact on the lives of the Arabs.

The sources also showed that, Christianity was accepted by <sup>a</sup> number of Arabs through their relations with Christian traders, and that Christianity entered Arabia, also through its imported goods some of which were slaves of both kinds, white and black. The white slaves most of them were from Persia and Byzantium, were more preferable to the Arabs, because of their beauty and skill, which were not found among those imported from Africa. These slaves, both white and black, were mostly Christians. With their knowledge of reading and writing, they succeeded in turning away some of their masters, from worshipping idols to the acceptance of their religion, or if not accepting

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1. Jawad 'Ali, op.cit. p.589.

it, stopping some of them from practising their daily worship of idols and leaving them wondering which was the right religion to follow.

The Arabs on the borders of Irāq, accepted Christianity as did their brothers on the borders of Syria. It was due to their relations with the Byzantines as well as the activities of the missionaries from the Syriac churches. Although the government of Irāq or Persia was not Christian, the spreading of Christianity in the area was not opposed, since the Persians were not keen on spreading their own religion, and Christianity which spread there was not of the same sect as that followed by the Byzantines..

Some sources give information of the acceptance of Christianity by the kings of Hīra and attributed to them the erection of some of the churches of Hīra, as claimed by the church writers.<sup>1</sup> But this claim is again rejected by Dr Jawad 'Alī,<sup>2</sup> in his statement that most of the kings of Hira were obviously idol worshippers, because Christianity was not imposed upon them as had happened to the kings of Ghassān, and the spreading of Christianity within their territory was among ordinary people only, and not among the king's tribe and family. At the same time Christianity

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1. Sheikho, op.cit.p.87-92.

2. Jawad 'Alī, op.cit.p.596.

was only a strange religion to them and its penetration did not concern them immediately. It was believed that the kings of Hirā remained idolators until the end of the sixth century, when king Nu'mān became a Christian. He was the first king of Hirā to accept Christianity and supported the cause morally and materially. One of the churches, which he built, was named after his wife, Hind who was a Christian.

It seems that Christianity entered Arabia both by land and by sea. By land, through Syria and Irāq to the Hijāz and Yemen, by means of trade caravans, which connected the Hijāz and other parts of Arabia; and by sea, through ships from Greece and Abyssinia to Yemen, which was regarded as one of the important centres of Christian mission. Ethiopia or Abyssinia was the centre from which Christianity penetrated to Yemen and later to Hijāz. Nejran, the famous trading centre of Yemen was related closely to the spreading of Christianity in the Peninsula. After the second Ethiopian invasion of Yemen in 525 A.D. Christianity spread widely among the Arabs of the south. The Ethiopian governor, Abrahah, took Nejran as the centre of the Christian community by building churches and practising the teachings of the Bible. One of the famous churches built by him was al-Qalīs, which resembled the Ka'bah in Mecca. His aim of constructing al-Qalīs in such a way, was to turn the Arabs away from going to Mecca and persuade them to come to Nejran as the destination of the Arabs' pilgrimage, as a

result, he formed an army and sent it against Mecca. The expedition failed. Most of the army was killed by disease, and the rest returned to Nejran. Nejran remained a Christian city into Muslim times, until its inhabitants were expelled by 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second Caliph.

It is undoubtedly that Christianity had its own influence in the Arab society, especially in its language and literature. The poetry of the pre-Islamic period show impressions of Christianity in many ways and aspects of its life. Arab poets dealt with ideas of monotheism, the history of prophets, and added religious expressions to their poetry, which they heard and learnt from the Christian priests and monks. Those ideas were outside their knowledge before the coming of Christianity to them. The use of foreign languages by the churches in their prayers gave the Arabs courage to translate the Bible and other religious texts from their origins into Arabic. One of the Bible translators whose work was known to society was Waraqah ibn Naufal.

#### The Sabians

There was another group of Arabs known as Sabians (al-sābiyah). The word Sābiyah is mentioned three times in the Qur'an:

1. Those who believed (in the Qur'an) and those who follow

the Jewish (scriptures) and the Christians and the Sabians, and who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness shall have their reward with their Lord, there shall be no fear on them, nor shall they grieve.<sup>1</sup>

2. Those who believe (in the Qur'ān), those who follow the Jewish (scripture) and the Sabians and the Christians, and who believe in Allah and the Last Day and work righteousness, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they be grieved.<sup>2</sup>

3. Those who believe (in the Qur'ān) those who follow the Jewish (scripture) and the Sabians, Christians, Magians and the polytheists, Allah will judge between them on the Day of Judgement, for Allah is witness of all things.<sup>3</sup>

From the three quotations of the Qur'ān, it is identified that the Sabians mentioned are a group of a religious movement, who believed in Allah and the Last Day. They differed from the Jews and the Christians and they had no connections with the Sabians of Harrān, who were moon-worshippers, and claimed themselves to be the Sabians mentioned in the Qur'ān, during the Abbasid time, in order to be granted the same religious privileges as the Jews and the Christians.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Sūrat al-Baqarah, 62.

2. Sūrat al-Māidah, 72.

3. Sūrat al-Hajj, 17.

4. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1972, vol: 19, p. 855. Sālih Ahmad al-'Alī, Muḥādarat fī Tarīkh al-'Arab, p. 260.

J. Robson, claims that the Sabians mentioned in the Qur'ān were most probably the Mandeans, wrongly called the Christians of St John. They can still be found near the Euphrates and Tigris. Baptism is a frequent and important rite, so running water is necessary.<sup>1</sup>

The word sabaa as illustrated by the Arabic dictionaries,<sup>2</sup> means those who put away their own religion and take another religion as their belief. The pre-Islamic Arabs interpreted the word, as those who put away their ancestors' belief and accepted the new religion. They called the Prophet Muhammad and the Muslims in early Islam - Sābi'ah. One tradition related that, when 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb accepted Islam, one of the Quraysh, namely Jamīl ibn Ma'mar called to his friends, "O, Quraysh, 'Umar is a sābi'". But 'Umar who was behind him said, "He is a liar, I have become a Muslim and I declare that there is no god except Allah and Muhammad is His Prophet."<sup>3</sup> In another tradition Ibn Sa'd related that whenever Muhammad was preaching Islam, Abu Lahab followed him and said, "Do not follow him, he is a sābi' and a liar."<sup>4</sup>

From these traditions, a conclusion can be made that the Arabs considered the Sābiyah as believers in one God (Allah)

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1. J. Robson, Encyclopaedia of Religion, 1970, p. 544.
  2. Tāj al-'Arūs, al-Qāmus al-Muhīt, al-Sihāh and others.
  3. Ibn Hishām, al-Sīrah al-nabawīyyah, vol:1, p. 37.
  4. Ibn Sa'd, Tabaqāt, vol:1, part:1, p. 145.

They described the Muslims as such because they could not differentiate between the Muslims, Jews, Christians and Hunafā'.

There is another tradition which relates that the Ṣābiyah, were the Sabians of Harrān. They were the ancestors of Abraham and were divided into two groups:

- a. The Ṣābiyah Hunafā'.
- b. The Ṣābiyah Mushrikūn.<sup>1</sup>

The Mushrikun of them were those who worshipped the seven stars. Every star had its own temples, where the sabians prayed and offered their sacrifices and offerings. The Ṣābiyah Hunafā' were those who had the same belief, but prayed like the Muslims and faced the Ka'bah. A group of them fasted in Ramaḍān. They prohibited eating port, dead animals and blood, and marrying close relatives just as the Muslims do.<sup>2</sup>

It is difficult to draw a conclusion as to what exactly the sabians believed, because all sources give different accounts and different ideas of their beliefs. But as far as the Qur'an is concerned the sabians were believers in one God and the Last Day, they were neither Jews nor Christians. Whether they had the same belief as the Hunafā' or not, is also obscure, for there are no tradition that says, the sabians were the Hunafā'.

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1. Al-Ālūsī, op.cit. p.334.

2. Al-Mas'ūdī, al-Tanbīh wa l-Ishrāf, pp.79-137.

### Religious Customs

Hajj, the pilgrimage to the Sacred House, is one of the religious obligations performed by the Arabs long before Islam. This obligation descended from Abrahām, when Allah revealed to him and ordered him as well as his people and his descendants to carry out the pilgrimage, after his completion of the building of the Ka'bah. Allah says in al-Qur'ān, "And proclaim, O Abrahām, unto mankind the pilgrimage. They will come unto you on foot, on every lean camel. They will come from every deep ravine. That they may witness things that are of benefit to them, and mention the name of Allah on appointed days, over the beast of cattle that He has bestowed upon them. Then eat thereof and feed therewith the poor and unfortunate."<sup>1</sup>

The pilgrimage was performed during some particular months of the year as mentioned by al-Qur'ān, "For the Hajj are the months well-known, and those who undertake the duty therein, let there be no obscenity, nor wickedness and nor wrangling in the Hajj."<sup>2</sup> A tradition related by at-Tabarī on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās interprets the ashhurun ma'lūmāt as the month of Shawwāl, Dhū l-Qa'dah and Dhū l-Hijjah,<sup>3</sup> which were included in the holy months of four. Another month was

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1. Sūrat al-Hajj, 27-8.

2. Sūrat al-Baqarah, 197.

3. At-Tabarī, Tafsīr, vol:11, pp.150-3. Ibn Hishām, vol:1, p.45. Ibn Manzūr, Lisān al-'Arab, vol:6, p.272, vol:15, p.10.



Muharram. It is believed that the exact days for the performance of the pilgrimage was the first ten days of Dhū l-Hijjah.

The pilgrimage to the Sacred House brought together the Arabs from places all over the Peninsula, leaving behind their enmity and animosity towards each other. They venerated the Sacred House and performed all the institutions of the pilgrimage, such as the circumambulation of the Ka'bah, the running between Safā and Marwah, and the standing in prayer at 'Arafah and Minā. At the same time they abandoned things prohibited during the pilgrimage. All these obligations of the pilgrimage continued to be performed as they were, until the Quraysh, who possessed the custody of the Ka'bah, invented the idea of the Hums and put it into practice. It is believed that this idea was invented before the year of the Elephant,<sup>1</sup> probably during the custody of Qusayy ibn Kilāb.

#### The Hums and the Hullah

Hums means the people of the sanctuary or the sacred place, more obviously the Quraysh and those people residing in Mecca. Traditions ~~varied~~ in considering who were the ahl al-hums. A tradition on the authority of Ibn Sa'd from al-Wāqidi and al-Azraqi relates the hums to be the Quraysh, Kinānah,

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1. Ahmad Ibrāhīm Sharīf, Makkah wa l-Madīnah fī l-Jāhiliyah wa 'ahd al-Rasūl, p.188.

Khuza'ah, Judham, Dhakhrawan, Tahqif, 'Umar, al-Lat, Ghatafan, 'Adawan and Quda'ah. Another tradition says that the tribe of the Hums were all the clans of Quraysh, Khuza'ah because of its neighbourhood to the Quraysh and all those who lived in Mecca.

The Hums are reported to have said, "We are the sons of Ibrahim, the people of the holy territory, the guardians of the temple and the citizens of Mecca. No other Arabs have rights like ours or a position like ours. The Arabs recognize none as they recognize us. So do not attach the same importance to the outside country as you do to the sanctuary, for if you do so, the Arabs will despise your taboo and will say, 'They have given the same importance to the outside land as to the sacred territory.'"<sup>1</sup> Thus they gave up the standing in prayer at 'Arafah and the swift departure from it, while they recognized that these were obligations of the pilgrimage and the religion of Ibrahim. They considered that other Arabs should stand in prayer there and depart swiftly from that place. They said, "We are the people of the sanctuary, it is not fit for us to leave the Sacred Territory and honour other places as we . . . honour the sacred place."<sup>2</sup> Later they took other tribes and clans of the Arabs living in Mecca and other places of the Peninsula, to join them and become members of the Hums.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ibn Ishāq, op.cit.p.87.

2. Al-Ālūsī, op.cit.vol:2, p.319.

3. Ibn Hishām, op.cit.vol:1, p.200.

After a period of time, they added other ideas to the Hums. They were not to eat the salted cheese made from the milk of the sheep, they could not enter tents of hair, and they were not to sit in the shade of tents made from the skins of animals during their pilgrimage. Then they said, "It is not fit for those from outside the sanctuary to eat their own food, if they come to do the Hajj or 'Umrah. They are not to circumambulate the Ka'bah except in the clothes of the Hums, or they have to do it naked. If men and women among them honour themselves (by performing the tawāf) and they do not have the clothes of the Hums, they are to circumambulate it wearing their own clothes, but must throw them away after finishing the circumambulation. Neither they nor others can touch the clothes or use them any more."<sup>1</sup> The Arabs called such clothes laqā. A man composed a verse of poetry in memory of his clothes which he had thrown away after the circumambulation:<sup>2</sup>

kafā hazanan karri 'alaihi kaannahu (Tawāf)

laqan baina aidī at-tāifina harīmu

Sufficient enough is the sorrow that passed him, as though he was a laqā<sup>3</sup> in front of the circumambulators.

The rules of the hums were followed by most of the Arabs. They halted in prayer at 'Arafah and departed swiftly from it, and undressed themselves when doing the circumambulation. Their

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1. Ibn Hishām, op.cit. vol:1, p.202.

2. Al-Shartūnī, Aqrab al-mawārid, vol:1, p.185. In ibn Hishām the verse was related :kafā hazanan karri 'alaihā kaannahā.

3. Laqā: an untouchable clothes.

women did so, wearing only an open shift that showed most of the body. A woman said a verse on this occasion:<sup>1</sup>

al-yauma yabdu ba'duhu au kulluhu (Rajaz)

wamā badā minhu falā uhilluhu

Today part of it or all of it\* could be seen. But what is seen of it I do not deem lawful.

The hullah were undoubtedly all the other tribes of the Arabs who were not included in the hums. They forbade themselves hunting during the pilgrimage. The rich of them spent his wealth for the sake of the pilgrimage and the poor collected what they could from their animals, butter, wool, skin and fur that would last them for the pilgrimage. They did not enter any door nor any house. They did not shelter themselves as long as they were in the clothes of ihram. They ate meat and when they entered Mecca after giving away all their shors and clothes, and shared the clothes of the hums as sign of veneration to the Ka'bah and if they could not get any, they would circumambulate it naked.<sup>2</sup>

The most manifested difference between the hums and the hullah were the standing in prayer at 'Arafah at the beginning of the Hajj, where the hullah performed it and the hums did not, because 'Arafah was outside the haram, and the clothes of ihram.

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1. Al-Ālūsī, op.cit. vol:2, p.321.

2. Ibn Ḥabīb, al-Muḥabbar, p.180.

\* The reference here is to her sexual organs.

Annasa'ah

Annasa'ah was usually referred to those Arabs who proclaimed the holy months of Rajab, Dhū l-Qa'dah, Dhū l-Hijjah and Muharram, were to be delayed and declared other months as the holy months for the year, instead of the original four months.<sup>1</sup> The declaration of the delayed holy months was usually voiced after the pilgrimage. A man would stand and say to the people before they departed from Mecca, "Allahumma innī ahlaltu ahada assafaraini wa nasa'tu l-akhara lil 'am-l-muqbil."<sup>2</sup> The first man to announce annasa'ah was al-Qalammas Hudhaifah ibn 'Abd ibn Fuqaim ibn 'Adīy ibn 'Amir ibn Tah'labah ibn l-Harith ibn Mālik ibn Kinānah ibn Khuzaimah.<sup>3</sup> The announcer of annasa'ah went down from al-Qalammas to his descendants and the last of them was Abū Thumamah, Junadah ibn 'Auf. A poet from Banī Firās ibn Ghanm ibn Mālik ibn Kinānah, namely 'Umair ibn Qays said proudly:<sup>4</sup>

alasna 'n-nāsi'ina 'alā ma'addin (wāfir)

shuhūrū l-hilli naj'aluḥā harāma

Are we not the people who dictated to Ma'ad to delay the appointed months. We make ordinary months holy.

According to Ibn Ishāq the nasa'ah was practised for two reasons:<sup>5</sup>

1. To delay the month of Muharram to Safar for the purpose of raiding, fighting and taking revenge.

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1. Ibn Hishām, op.cit. vol:1, p.45.

2. Ibn Khaldūn, Tārīkh ibn Khaldūn, vol:2, p.685.

3. Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah, vol:2, pp.206-7.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibn Hishām, op.cit. vol:1, p.46.

2. To delay the time of pilgrimage.

Al-Hadaya (sacrifices made to god)

The mushrikun were understood to have sacrificed their belongings to the gods and idols that they worshipped. Allah says in al-Qur'an:<sup>1</sup>

"And they made for Allah a share of what Allah has produced in abundance in tilth and in cattle, and they said according to their fancies, this is for Allah and this is for our partners." The sacrifices and the hadāyā were of different types and kinds, all according to the economic situation of the tribe. In Mecca for example, where most people were traders and merchants, the hadāyā were usually in the form of either money, jewelleries or clothes. <sup>1</sup>It was related that there was some kind of a well in the Ka'bah where hadāyā was thrown in it.

This did not stop other tribes from offering other things to their idols. Thus wheat and other agricultural products were offered to Dhū l-Khalasah, because the people of that area were mostly agriculturists.<sup>2</sup> Another type of hadāyā was animals where sheep, camels, poultry and other domestic animals were offered. Allah reveals in al-Qur'an types of hadaya in His verses:

"Mā ja'ala Allahu min bahīratin walā sāibatīn walā wasīlatin

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1. Surat al-An'am, 136.

2. Ibn l-Kalbī, op.cit. p.35.

walā hāmin, walākinna<sup>1</sup>lladhīna kāfarū yaftarūna 'alā Allahi l-kadhibā wa aktharuhum lā ya'qilūn."<sup>1</sup> Quranic interpreters differed among <sup>selves</sup> them in defining the words bahīrah, sāibah, wasīlah, and hāmī. What is understood from most traditions are:

1. Bahīrah was a she-camel that had given birth to five cubs, if the fifth was male, it would be slaughtered, and if it was a female, one of its ears would be cut off and its milk would not be drunk, except for guests and it would not be used for riding.
2. Sāibah was a camel which was left by its owner and nobody would take any benefit out of it.
3. Wasīlah was the twin cubs which were a male and a female. The female would be sacrificed to the idols while the male would be left untouched.
4. Hāmī was the she-camel that had delivered ten females consecutively. It would be left about and would not be used for anything.

#### Al-Kuhhān (soothsayers)

Kāhin is the name of the soothsayer among the polytheistic Arabs. They were believed to have been under the influence of gods. Their knowledge was based on inspiration. They had also visions by night which reveal to them <sup>the</sup> future and other events

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1. Sūrat al-Mā'idah, 103.

and things hidden from ordinary beings. It is related that every kāhin had a tābi' or companion who was usually shaitān or jinn.<sup>1</sup> They played a very important part in their society. They were always consulted by chiefs of tribes before making any important decisions, especially before going to war. They also acted as judges where people came to them to be judged and justified.<sup>2</sup> The Kāhin's utterances were usually said in the form of a sadj', short sentences in rhythmic prose, with single, or more rarely alternating rhyme.<sup>3</sup> Among famous soothsayers of both sexes were Shiq ibn Anmar ibn Nizar, Satīh ibn Māzin, Fātimah bint Murr al-Khath'amīyah, who was said to have offered herself to the Prophet Muhammad's father,<sup>4</sup> Zarqā' bint Zuhair and others.

#### The intellectual life

The pre-Islamic Arabs were mostly illiterate. Only a small number of them were able to read or write. Those who had the opportunity of reading or writing were usually traders who came from the towns, such as Mecca, Madina and Tāif and who themselves had covered the width and length of the Peninsula and had contacted the people of the neighbouring states, Yemen and Ethiopia in the south and Syria and Persia in the North. In Mecca, as well

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1. Ibn Habīb, op.cit.p.390.

2. Al-Mas'ūdī, Murūj al-Dhahab, vol:1, pp.168-75.

3. Encyclopaedia of Islam, vol:1, p.625.

4. Ibn Sa'd, vol:1, pp.96-7.



as other parts of Arabia, there were groups of intellectual people who were called hukkām. They were the judges. People came to them to justify their cases of heritage, conflicts, lands and water and others.<sup>1</sup> The hukkām's judgement was based on their experience, their trustworthiness, their personality and their intelligence. Among the hukkām were al-Af'ā ibn al-Af'ā al-Jurhumī, Hanzalah ibn Nahd al-Qudā'i, Aktham ibn Saifī ibn Rabāh ibn l-Hārith ibn l-Mukhashin, 'Amr ibn Humamah al-Dausī and among the Quraysh were 'Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim, Harb ibn Umayyah, 'Abdullah ibn Jad'an and al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah al-Makhzūmī.

Other types of intellectual characteristic and experiences of the Arabs were:

1. Al-Shi'r (poetry)

The most notable feature of an intellectual life of the pre-Islamic Arabs was their poetry. It was regarded as their treasure where all their ancestors' history, their wars, their pride, their bravery, their generosity, their law, their hatred of their enemies and their love of their women and children were recorded.<sup>2</sup> The birth of a poet in a tribe was usually celebrated by the tribe and congratulations poured in

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1. Al-Ya'qūbī, op.cit. vol:1, p.258.

2. Ibid, p.262.

from neighbouring tribes. If a poet emerged in a tribe, he would be taken to the sūq or aswāq<sup>1</sup> where he would recite his poetry in front of other tribes. His talent and fluency in reciting his verses would be judged by established poets. Such judges were appointed to give judgement on who was the most talented poet, on that particular meeting. One of them was Imrū 'ul-Qays, who judged the shu'arā' in sūq 'ukāz. It is related that a stage was built for him for that purpose.

## 2. Al-Ansāb (genealogy)

The Arabs were very keen on preserving their genealogy. It was the important point of their pride. They needed it in their war where a genealogist of a tribe would mention the names of their ancestors. It was believed that every tribe had its own genealogist who could remember all the names of the tribes, their clans, their families, their pride and their disgrace, their wars and skirmishes. One of the famous genealogists of the Arabs was Abū Bakr ibn Abī Quhāfah, the Prophet's companion who was well known for his knowledge in genealogy before and after Islam.

## 3. At-Tib (medicine)

The medical experience of the Arabs was mostly inherited by them from their ancestors or imported from the neighbouring

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1. Aswāq is the plural of sūq, which means market. The aswāq al-'Arab were usually held once a year where they met and traded their goods as well as said their poetry. One of the most famous of them was sūq 'ukāz.

Sasanian or Byzantine Empires. The medicine used by them was herbs and other agricultural products.<sup>1</sup> One of their famous atibbā' was al-Hārith ibn Kaldah al-Thaqāfī,<sup>2</sup> according to some he was the Prophet's private doctor.

4. An-Nujūm (astronomy)

Being traders who had to guide their caravans through endless desert, and being nomads who had to move from one place to another for pasture and water, the Arabs had acquired a wide knowledge of an-nujūm. They knew the names of stars, their rising and setting times. That was all acquired through their own observation of the stars, which were used to guide them to their destination.<sup>3</sup>

There were of course other fields of knowledge and intellectual experiences which the Arabs possessed, such were their knowledge of weather, shipping and navigation, al-akhbār, al-firāsah and al-qiyaḥah.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Al-Ālūsī, op.cit. vol:3, p.327.

2. Ibid, p.329.

3. Ibid, p.344.

4. Ibid, pp.210-364. The texts: al-akhbār, firāsah and qiyaḥah are history, physiognomy and the knowledge of circumstantial evidence.

## CHAPTER 2

To trace the conflict between the Prophet Muhammad and the Quraysh, one has to look back at the situation of Mecca before Islam, the ~~biography~~ of the Prophet himself. How did he spend his boyhood, his youth and his married life, before his mission, within the polytheistic society of Mecca. How was his relationship with the Quraysh, and why did they oppose him and his message from Allah to the extent that he had to flee from Mecca.

### Mecca

As most communities of pre-Islamic Arabia, Mecca never surrendered to be governed by a single man or liqāh.<sup>1</sup> The system of one man rule was rejected by the Meccans and it was against their nature. Mecca was governed by a body of men who were called malā'. They were the representatives of the tribes and clans who were dwelling around and inside Mecca itself. They met, discussed, planned their society and solved their problems in a house called dār al-Nadwah. This house was believed to have been built by Qusay ibn Kilāb of Quraysh, who was appointed as the first leader of the malā', after Khuḏā'ah. The senate or malā' ruled Mecca and governed the people according

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1. liqāh is a system, where a man was declared to be a ruler or king of a society or a country.

to customs and hereditary law. The tribes were not bound to accept or follow every decision taken by the senate. The Quraysh always paid a certain amount of their wealth to Qusay which was later used to provide food and drink for the pilgrims who visited Mecca every year to perform their pilgrimage.

After Qusay's death, the leadership of Mecca fell to his eldest son 'Abd al-Dār, until he was challenged by 'Abd Manāf. Mecca was then divided into two camps or parties. Each camp was supported by some tribes of Mecca. The quarrel nearly led to fighting, but a compromise was achieved, by which each was given certain functions in governing Mecca.

'Abd Manāf was to supervise the siqāyah (water-supply, especially during the pilgrimage) and rifādah (provisioning of pilgrims), while 'Abd al-Dār was given the functions of hijābah (veiling the Ka'bah) and liwā' (carrying the standard in war or arranging them) and nadwah.

'Abd Manaf was more celebrated than 'Abd al-Dār, and it was his sons and grandsons who later controlled the politics of Mecca up to the emergence of Islam. But among the sons of 'Abd Manāf, the party was divided again into the house of Hāshim, and that of 'Abd Shams, which was known as the house of Umayyah. This division into Hashim and Umayyah created the greatest problem in the history of the Arabs when 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah fought each

other for the rank of the Caliph.

One of the leaders of Mecca, who established his personality before the advent of Islam was 'Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hāshim. He was the Prophet's grandfather who was one of the malā' and held the post of siqāyah. The most important work he did which brought out his personality, was the re-excavation of the well of Zamzam, which had become blocked up during the last days of the Jurhums.<sup>1</sup> The excavation of Zamzam helped him greatly and made the duty of supplying water for the pilgrims easier for him. It was in his days that Mecca was attacked by the Ethiopian troops, commanded by a man called Abrahah. The attack on Mecca had a purpose. With the strength of his troops, Abrahah hoped to demolish the Ka'bah and turn the Arabs' veneration of the Ka'bah away towards the new ka'bah which he built in Yemen. 'Abd al-Muttalib tried to drive the Ethiopian troops away by negotiation, but he failed,<sup>2</sup> as he failed to strengthen his men to fight against the Ethiopians,<sup>3</sup> for the enemy were fully equipped with arms and weapons, as well as elephants, against which the Arabs had neither the experience nor the ability to fight.

'Abd al-Muttalib directed his men and the population of Mecca to take cover within the surrounding valleys and hills

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1. Ibn Hishām, vol:1, pp.209-10.

2. Ibid, vol:1, p.51.

3. Al-Ya'qūbī, op.cit.vol:1, pp.209-210.

of Mecca while he himself, as is alleged, did not leave the Ka'bah but remained beside it, praying to Allah to protect the sanctuary and preparing to fight and stop the invaders with some of the men who were loyal and faithful to him.

By the will of Allah the Ethiopians were stopped from achieving their purpose. A flock of birds was sent down on them carrying pestilence and death to their troops. This incident raised 'Abd al-Muttalib's popularity morally and religiously to the extent that he was called by his people the second Ibrāhīm.<sup>1</sup> This particular incident is mentioned in al-Qur'ān, as Allah says in sūrat al-Fīl (the Elephant):

"Do you not see how your Lord dealt with the companions of the elephant? Did he not make their treacherous plan go astray? And send against them flights of bird, striking them with stones of baked clay. Then he made them like an empty field of stalk and straw (of which the corn) has been eaten up."

Among the mala' of Mecca, whose personality emerged after 'Abd al-Muttalib and continued to flourish after Islam, was Abū Sufyān ibn Harb ibn Umayyah. He was known to be a successful merchant. He was able to conduct trade caravans to the north and south and to Eastern Arabia.<sup>2</sup> It was he, with his cleverness

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1. Al-Ya'qūbī, op.cit. vol:1, p.7.

2. Al-Ālūsī, op.cit. vol:1, p.320.

and expertness, that saved the Quraysh trade caravan from the Muslims, thus leading to the battle of Badr.

The fact that the Umayyads held the post of the liwā', although the post was not given until sometime before the emergence of Islam, gave Abū Sufyān the chance and responsibility of strengthening the military power of the Quraysh. It was his courage and devotion to the old beliefs which inspired the polytheist Meccans' struggle against the emerging power of Islam in Madina.

The political situation in Mecca was not altered, until the Prophet conquered the town and abolished most of the Meccan traditional systems except the post of siqāyah and hijābah.

### Meccan Trade

As a centre of trade route between north and south, Mecca had automatically relations with the surrounding communities and those of southern and northern Arabia. The trade link between Mecca and the southern part of Arabia or Yemen in particular dated as far back as the Himyarite dynasty, who in their profession as traders, had established small settlements along the trade route<sup>1</sup> to the north. At that time Mecca was only a

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1. Jawad 'Alī, *op.cit.* vol:1, pp.381-384.



stopping station for the trade caravans with its Ka'bah which received its veneration of the traders, especially the King Tubbā' who was said to be the first man to veil the Ka'bah and ask the people to venerate it.<sup>1</sup>

During the Qurayshite rule, Mecca sent one of its men, who was said to be al-Muttalib ibn 'Abd Manāf and ratified an agreement with the Yamanites, according to which the Quraysh were allowed to trade in Yemen and its territory. This trade agreement brought the two communities to work together and appreciate each others' success. Sources mention that 'Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim established a friendly relationship and exchanged delegations between Mecca and Yemen, as the one sent by 'Abd al-Muttalib to congratulate Saif ibn Dhī Yazan on his success over the Ethiopians,<sup>2</sup> who had invaded Mecca before that.

The Meccan trade was of different types and kinds. Some of them traded in rice and wheat and some were traders of beers, oil, weapons, swords, bows and arrows.<sup>3</sup> Not only men were traders and merchants, but also women. The most known personality was Khadījah bint Khuwailid, the Prophet's wife.

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1. Ibn Hishām, op.cit.vol:1, pp.19-20.

2. Ibn al-Kathīr, op.cit.vol:2, pp.171-2.

3. Ibn Qutaibah, al-Ma'arif, p.249.

## MUHAMMAD BEFORE ISLAM

### His boyhood

He was born in one of the noble families of <sup>the</sup> Quraysh, whose ancestors had the greatest influence in the political, economic and social life of Mecca. Qusay ibn Kilāb, one of his great, great grandfathers, seized power from the Khuza'ah<sup>1</sup> and it was he who instituted the nadwah, hijābah, siqāyah, rifādah and liwā', as mentioned earlier. His grandfather 'Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim gained his prosperity through his effort in excavating the well of Zamzam as well as his courage in facing the expedition of the elephant from Ethiopia.

'Abdullah, who was Muhammad's father, was the youngest son of 'Abd al-Muttalib. The significance of his life, was that, he was 'Abd al-Muttalib's son who was to be sacrificed to God in order to fulfill his father's promise that he would sacrifice one of his sons, if he was given ten, but 'Abdullah's life was exchanged for one hundred camels after the matter was put to one of the kāhinat\* of the Arabs.<sup>2</sup>

It was after this incident that he married Muhammad's mother, Aminah bint Wahb ibn 'Abd Manāf ibn Zuhrah, whose father was

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1. Ibn Hishām, op.cit.vol:1, p.59.

2. At-Tabarī, op.cit.vol:2, p.174.

\*. Soothsayers.

the chief of Banū Zuhrah.<sup>1</sup> She was herself, one of the <sup>most</sup>respec-  
table ladies of the Quraysh at the time.

There was an argument among the Arabs scholars relating to the time of 'Abdullah's death. Some stated that his death was before Muhammad's birth. This tradition was opposed by most of the scholars,<sup>2</sup> for there <sup>were</sup> others who gave <sup>a</sup>different version on the subject. Abū Ja'far at-Tabarī in his Tārīkh relates that Hisham ibn Muhammad said that, 'Abdullah died eighteen months after Muhammad's birth.<sup>3</sup> Hisham's tradition was supported by another tradition, which says that 'Abdullah died twenty two months after Muhammad was born.<sup>4</sup>

After his father's death, Muhammad was left with his mother and later, sent to the tribe of Banī Sa'd, a be<sup>o</sup>duin tribe of the desert, to be brought up among them, with the purpose that when he grew up he would speak the perfect language of the Arabs. This is confirmed by the Prophet himself when he said as related by Ibn Sa'd, "I am from <sup>the</sup>Quraysh, and my tongue is the tongue of Banū Sa'd ibn Bakr."<sup>5</sup>

His mother passed away when he was about six years old.<sup>6</sup> He was left with his grandfather, 'Abd al-Muttalib, who

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1. At-Tabarī, op.cit.p.174.

2. Al-Mas'ūdī, op.cit.vol:2,p.58.

3. At-Tabarī, op.cit.p.130.

4. Ibn Sa'd, op.cit.vol:1,p.62.

5. Ibid,p.71.

6. At-Tabari, op.cit.,p.131.

died two years after his mother's death, as related by some sources. But there is another tradition which relates that 'Abd al-Muttalib died when Muhammad was ten years of age.<sup>1</sup> He was then left in the guardianship of his uncle, Abū Tālīb, who himself was not a rich man and had to support a big family. At the age of twelve he accompanied his uncle on a trade caravan to Syria.<sup>2</sup> It was on this journey that Bahīra, a Christian hermit at the church of Busrā, saw him and recognised that he would be the future Prophet, after inspecting and questioning him. Bahīra told Abū Tālīb that his nephew's life was in danger, if the Jews found out about him and asked Abū Tālīb to take him back to Mecca as soon as possible.<sup>3</sup>

#### His marriage

At the age of twenty five, Muhammad married Khadijah bint Khuwailid, who was forty years of age.<sup>4</sup> She was as related by Ibn Ishāq,<sup>5</sup> a rich, wealthy and respected lady of Mecca. It was said by al-Zuhrī that most men of the Quraysh were eager to marry her.<sup>6</sup> It was in Khadijah's merchandise that Muhammad traded to Syria and it was his honesty and integrity in his

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1. At-Tabarī, op.cit.p.131.

2. Al-Ya'qūbī, op.cit.vol:2,p.10.

3. At-Tabarī, op.cit.p.195.

4. Ibid,p.196.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid,p.197. Ibn Sa'd, op.cit.p.131.

job that attracted Khadijah to marry him. Ibn Ishāq tells that,<sup>1</sup> when Maisarah told Khadijah of Muhammad's honesty, during his trading trip to Syria, Khadijah sent for Muhammad and said to him, "O, son of my uncle, I like you for your relationship, your good position among your people, your honesty, your good manners and your truthful talk." She then offered herself to Muhammad. Nafisah bint Munaih relates the story of Muhammad's marriage to Khadijah as follows,<sup>2</sup> "Khadijah sent me to Muhammad after his return from Syria. I said to him, 'O, Muhammad, what prevents you from marrying?' He said, 'If you are offered beauty, wealth, nobility and fitness, would you accept?' He said, 'Who is she?' I said, 'Khadijah.' He said, 'How am I going to do that?' I said, 'It is up to me.' He said, 'I will do so.' I went back to Khadijah and told her the story. I sent for Muhammad to come at a certain time and sent for Khadijah's uncle, 'Amr ibn Asad, to marry her. Muhammad came and entered to his uncles and one of them married him to Khadijah." Khadijah was the mother of all of Muhammad's children except Ibrahim, whose mother was Mariyah al-Qibtiyah.

#### His place among the Quraysh

Although Muhammad had neither wealth, nor any power whatsoever in his Meccan society, yet his character as an honest,

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1. At-Tabari, op.cit. p.197.

2. Ibn Sa'd, op.cit. p.131.

integrated, just, trustworthy young man, ranked him highly among his people. He was known to them as al-Amin<sup>1</sup> (the trustworthy).

The rebuilding of the Ka'bah by the Quraysh which aroused anger among the tribes that took part in the activity, could have led to a disastrous war, had it not been for Muhammad, who was asked to settle the problem. The story related by Ibn Tshāq<sup>2</sup> tells that when the Quraysh came to the final stage of putting back the Black Stone in its place, the argument arose by, to which tribe would have the honour of doing so. Anger flared up so that every tribe swore that they would go to war against any of them who dared to take the honour of putting the Black Stone back. The situation of anxiety continued for four or five nights. Then the tribes met in the mosque consulting each other and trying to solve the burning problem, when finally, Abū Umayyah ibn al-Mughīrah, as alleged by some narrators, the eldest man of the Quraysh at the time, said, "Take the first man to enter the mosque to be the judge of your argument." It so happened that the first man to enter was Muhammad, and when the Quraysh saw him, they said, "This is Muhammad, the trustworthy, and we are satisfied with him."<sup>3</sup> When the problem was explained to him, he went to the corner of the Ka'bah where

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1. At-Tabari, op.cit. p.201.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

the Black Stone was to be put, and asked the Quraysh to bring him a piece of cloth. The cloth was brought. He lifted the Black Stone and put it in the cloth. Then he asked all the chiefs of the tribes concerned to hold a corner of the cloth and lifted it to the place where it was to be put. He took the Black Stone and placed it himself.

Muhammad's capacity for solving the problem, with his quick and clear judgement saved the Quraysh from further bloodshed which would cause death and destruction of their own people. This incident gives a clear picture of the Quraysh's attitude towards Muhammad as a respected responsible young man.

#### The revelation

Scholars are agreed that, before his revelation from Allah, Muhammad used to spend his time in prayer in the cave of Hira'. The motive of his isolation has been described differently by scholars. A tradition related by al-Zuhri from 'Urwah ibn al-Zubair and from 'Aishah who says: "The first revelation from Allah to Muhammad was just a true dream (al-ru'ya al-sadiqah) and it came like first rays of the dawn (falaqi al-subh). After that he was always liked isolation. He isolated himself in prayer in the cave of Hira' for several nights, before returning to his family. Then he returned to his family for the same supply of food, till Gabriel came to him."<sup>1</sup>

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1. At-Tabari, op.cit.p.205.

Another tradition, which was related by Ibn Ishāq from Wahb ibn Kīṣān from 'Abdullah ibn al-Zubair from 'Abīd ibn 'Umar says, "It was the custom for the Messenger of God to spend one month in prayer at Hīra every year and that was the custom of the Quraysh during the Jahiliyah. Tahannuth is tabarrur. The messenger of God spent the particular month of the year, eating what was given to him by the poor. When he completed his month's stay there, the first thing he did after leaving Hīra' and before entering his house, was to circumambulate the Ka'bah seven times or more (only God knows how often) and then returned to his home. He did like that until the month of the year when Allah the Almighty wished to honour him with the Prophethood."<sup>1</sup>

What is understood from the two traditions is that: Muhammad had no liking for isolation until he had a revelation which came like the dawn. While the second tradition mentions that isolation in prayer was the custom of the Quraysh in the Jahiliyah and therefore Muhammad was not the only person to have done that, but there were others too who might have done the same.

Muhammad's first revelation was in Ramadān as Allah says, "Ramadān is the month in which the Qur'ān was sent down as a

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1. At-Tabarī, op.cit.p.206. , Ibn Hishām, op.cit.vol:1, p.251.



guide to mankind and also a clear evidence of guidance and proof."<sup>1</sup>

Traditions differ from one another in mentioning the age of the Prophet at his first revelation. Most traditions in At-Tabarī say that Muhammad was forty when he received the revelation.<sup>2</sup> Ibn Hishām agrees with that when he related from Ibn Ishāq saying, "When Muhammad reached the age of forty, Allah sent him with mercy to all people"<sup>3</sup> Other traditions which are also related in At-Tabari give an account that the Prophet received his first revelation when he was forty three years of age as the one related by Ibn Humaid from Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib who said, "The revelation was sent down to the Messenger of God when he was forty three years of age."<sup>4</sup>

The Qur'ān does not mention the exact age of the Prophet at the time of his first revelation, although it does mention that he had a life-time before the revelation. Allah says in verse 16 of Sūrat Yūnus, "Say, if Allah had wished so, I should not have recited it to you, nor would I have made it known to you. I have stayed among you the life-time before this, will you not then understand." The conclusion which can be drawn from all the evidence is that, the first revelation was sent down to the Prophet during his early forties. It is worth mentioning that the Arabs regard the age of forty as the age of maturity.

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1. Sūrat al-Baqarah, 185.

2. At-Tabari, op.cit. p. 202.

3. Ibn Hishām, op.cit. p. 249.

4. At-Tabarī, op.cit. p. 202.

The first verses of al-Qur'ān revealed to the Messenger of God, as agreed by all scholars were,

"Iqrā' bismi rabbika alladhī khalaq, khalaqa l-insāna min 'alaq, iqra' wa rabbuka l-akramu l-ladhī 'allama bi l-qalam, 'allama l-insāna mā lam ya'lam."

There are slight differences in the traditions relating the event of the first revelation. Ibn Ishāq relates that the first verses of the Qur'ān were revealed to the Prophet while he was sleeping.<sup>1</sup> The Prophet said, "Gabriel came to me with a receptacle of pure silk in which was a Kitāb and said, 'Read,' I said, 'I do not read.' He pressed me hard until I thought it was death, then he released me and said, 'Read,' I said, 'I do not read.' He pressed me hard again, until I thought it was death, then he released me and said, 'Read,' I said, 'What shall I read?' I did not say that except to prevent him from returning to me and doing the same thing as he had done before. Then he said, 'Read in the name of your Lord who created, who created man out of a mere clot of congealed blood. Read, and your Lord is most bountiful. He, who taught the use of the pen. He who taught man what he does not know.' And then I read. He finished the reading and went away. I woke up and felt as if the kitāb were written in my heart."

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1. At-Tabarī, op.cit.vol:2,p.206.,  
Ibn Hishām,vol:1,p.253.

'Urwah who related the tradition from 'Āishah bint Abū Bakr, mentions that the Prophet was fully awake at the first revelation of the Qur'ān. According to him the revelation of the Qur'ān came after the first rays of the dawn, as been mentioned earlier.<sup>1</sup>

After the revelation the Prophet went home to Khadījah, frightened and terrified, and told her what he had just seen and heard. Khadījah said to him, "Be happy and be brave, I swear by Him who holds Khadījah's soul in His hand that you will be the future Prophet of this Ummah." She went with the Prophet to Waraqah ibn Naufal, a cousin of hers, who was one of the Munafā' and read the Bible and translated it into Arabic. When Muḥammad related the story to Waraqah, he told him that the same Gabriel who had come to him was the one who came to Mūsa ibn 'Imrān, and that he would be the future Prophet of his people, who would persecute and drive him out of Mecca. Waraqah said that, were he to live to that day, he would give full support to Muḥammad.<sup>2</sup> Waraqah died soon after that.

The revelation stopped for a period of time which worried the Prophet severely, so that he tried to throw himself several

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1. At-Ṭabarī, op.cit.p.205. Al-Nuwairī, Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Ādab, vol:16, p.173.

2. Abū Nu'aim al-Isfahānī, Dalā'il al-Nubuwa<sup>w</sup>h, p.170.

times from the top of ~~mount~~ Hirā', but each time he was stopped by Gabriel, who appeared in front of him and said, "O, Muhammad, you are the Messenger of God."

Jābir ibn 'Abdullah al-Anṣārī<sup>1</sup> relates from the Prophet, at the time when revelation stopped, saying, "When I was walking one day, I saw the angel, who came to me at Hirā', sitting on a chair between the sky and the earth. I was terrified at seeing him and went home and said, 'Cover me, cover me.' I was covered and then Allah revealed, 'O, you, who are wrapped in a mantle. Arise and deliver your warning and your Lord, magnify, . . . And your garments, keep clean. And all abomination keep away from.'"<sup>2</sup>

It was after the revelation of these verses that the Prophet started to preach his message. Allah asked him to talk about what He gave him, to his people and about his prophethood and to preach what he was taught to those, whom, he believed, could help him in his mission, as Allah says, "Waammā bini'mati rabbika fa haddith." And the bounty of your Lord proclaim."<sup>3</sup>

The first obligation imposed on the Prophet and his followers, after proclaiming the oneness of God and renouncing

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1. At-Tabarī, op.cit. p.210.
  2. Sūrat al-Mudaththir, 1-5.
  3. Sūrat al-Duhā, 11.

the idols, was prayer. Ibn Ishāq relates that when the Prophet was in a valley outside Mecca, Gabriel came to him and taught him to perform wuḍū' and pray. He went home and taught Khadījah the same.<sup>1</sup>

### The Earliest Converts

The first person to accept Muhammad's message, as claimed by all traditions, was his wife Khadījah bint Khuwailid,<sup>2</sup> who bravely supported him and stood courageously behind him with all her influence and personality as well as her wealth until her death three years before his migration to Madīnah.<sup>3</sup>

There is an argument among scholars on the subject of who accepted Islam after Khadījah. Some traditions mention, 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib to be the first convert as related by Zaid ibn al-Arqam who said, "The first man to accept Muhammad's teaching was 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib."<sup>4</sup> At the same time 'Ali himself was heard to say, "I am the servant of God and the brother of His Prophet, and his staunch friend, anyone who ever says this after me is a liar. I prayed with the Messenger of God for seven years before the others."<sup>5</sup> 'Ali was also believed to have said the

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1. At-Tabarī, op.cit.p.210.

2. Ibid,p.307.

3. Ibid,p.343.

4. Ibid,p.310.

5. Ibid,p.310.

following verse,

sabaqtukumūilā l-Islāmi turrān (wāfir)

ghulāman mā balaghtu awana hulmī

I came to Islam before all of you, as a boy who had not reached the age of puberty.<sup>1</sup>

He was between nine and ten years old when he became a Muslim.

Other traditions claim Abū Bakr ibn Abī Quhāfah to be the first Muslim after Khadījah.<sup>2</sup> A tradition on the authority of al-Sha'bi said, "I said to Ibn 'Abbas, 'Who is the first Muslim?' He said, 'Did you not hear the verses of Ḥassān ibn Thabit,<sup>3</sup>

Idhā tadhakkarta shajwan min akhī thiqatin (Basī)

fādhkur akhāka Abā Bakrin bimā fa'ala

When you think of the sorrow for a trustworthy man, think of your brother Abū Bakr for what he did.

Khairu l-bariyati atqāhā wa 'a'dalahā

ba'da an-nabī<sup>yi</sup> wa'au<sup>ya</sup>fāhā bimā hamala

The noblest of mankind, the most God-fearing and the most equitable, after the Prophet, and the most faithful with what he carried.

ath-thānī al-tālī<sup>ya</sup> al-mahmūdā mashhaduhu

wa awwalā n-nāsi minhum saddaqa al-rasūla

The second, the follower who deserves praise within society, and the first, among all the people to believe in the Messengers of God.

1. Abū l-Fidā', al-Mukhtasar fī Akhbār al-Bashar, p.116.

2. At-Tabarī, op.cit. p.316.

3. Al-Nuwairī, op.cit. p.180.

Besides the traditions which claim 'Alī and Abū Bakr to be the first Muslims, there are also traditions that mention Zaid ibn Hārithah<sup>1</sup> to be the first convert after Khadijah. He was a slave whom the Prophet freed and adopted. He named Zaid after himself. It was one of the Quraysh' traditions to give their adopted sons their own names and tribal names. So, Zaid was known to the Quraysh as Zaid ibn Muhammad.

It is rather difficult to give a definite word on who accepted Islam first among the three. The possibility of anyone of them being the first convert, as mentioned by the traditions, is obvious. Both 'Alī and Zaid were members of the Prophet's household, while Abu Bakr a prominent member of his tribe, was said, to be the Prophet's friend before Islam and to know his personality well, and he was always known to be an honest and trustworthy man.

#### The early converts

According to Ibn Ishāq, Abu Bakr, after his conversion to Islam succeeded in bringing some of his friends to the new religion. These were, 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān ('Abd Shams), Zubair ibn al-'Awwām (Asad), 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Auf (Zuhrah), Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās ('Abd Manāf) and Talhah ibn 'Ubaidillah (Taym).<sup>2</sup> They were later followed by other people who were listed by

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1. At-Tabarī, op.cit.p.314.

2. Ibn Hishām, op.cit.vol:1,p.267.

Ibn Ishāq as follows:<sup>1</sup>

Abū 'Ubaidah ibn al-Jarrāh (al-Ḥārith ibn Fihri), Abū Salmah (Makhzūm), al-Arqam ibn Abī al-Arqam (Makhzūm), 'Uthmān ibn Maḍh'un (Jumāh), his brothers Qudāmah and 'Abdullah and his son Sāib ibn 'Uthmān, 'Ubaidah ibn al-Ḥārith (al-Muttalib), Sa'd ibn Zaid ibn 'Amr ibn Nufail ('Adī) and his wife Fātimah bint al-Khattāb (the sister of 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb), Asmā' bint Abī Bakr and 'Āishah bint Abī Bakr (Abū Bakr's daughters), Khabbāb ibn al-Arrat and 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd, the confederates of Banū Zuhrah, 'Umair ibn Abī Waqqās (the brother of Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās), Mas'ūd ibn al-Qari (al-Qarah), Salīt and Ḥatīb ibn 'Amr ('Āmir), 'Ayyāsh ibn Hudhaifah (Sahm), 'Āmir ibn Rabī'ah (the confederates of al-Khattāb) 'Abdullah and Ahmad ibn Jahsh (the confederates of Banī Umayyah), Ja'far ibn Abī Tālib and his wife Asmā' bint 'Umair (Khath'am), Ḥatīb ibn al-Ḥārith (Jumāh), and his wife Fātimah bint al-Mujallah, Ḥattāb ibn al-Ḥārith (Jumāh), and his wife Fākihah bint Yassar, Ma'mar ibn al-Ḥārith (Jumāh), al-Muttalib ibn Azhar (Zuhrah), and his wife Ramlah bint Abī 'Auf (Sahm), Nu'aim ibn 'Abdullah (the brother of Banī 'Adīy), 'Āmir ibn Fuhairah (the mawla of Abū Bakr), Khālīd ibn Sa'īd ('Abd Shams) and his wife Amīnah bint Khalaf (Khuzā'ah), Ḥatīb ibn 'Amr, Mahsham ibn 'Utbah ('Abd Shams), Wāqid ibn 'Abdullah (the confederate of Banī 'Adīy), Khālīd, 'Aqil, 'Āmir and Iyah from Banī al-Bukair (the confederates of

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1. Ibn Hishām, op.cit.vol:1, pp.268-280.



banī 'Adīy) 'Ammār ibn Yāsir (the confederate of banī Makhzūm) and Suhaib ibn Sinān (the confederate of Banī Taym).

From those names given by Ibn Ishāq, it seems that most of the early converts were among the Quraysh of different tribes, who seemed to come to the Prophet in groups, as those of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān and his friends, and individually as well as in couples, like Sa'id ibn Zaid and his wife. The list also shows that most of the women who embraced Islam did so when their husbands had done so. There were only a few cases where the whole family accepted Islam at the same time and this did not happen until at the end of the Meccan period as related by Muḥammad ibn 'Umar, namely that those who migrated to Madina, taking their wives, their children and leaving their houses locked were the family of Ghanm ibn Banī Daudān, the family of Abū Bukair and the family of Maz'un.<sup>1</sup>

A statement on the authority of al-Zuhrī says, "The Messenger of God (God bless and preserve him) summoned to Islam secretly and openly, and there responded to God whom He wished of the youngmen (ahdāth al-rijāl) and weak people (du'afā' al-nās) so that those who believed in him were numerous and the unbelieving Quraysh did not criticize what he said."<sup>2</sup> The phrase

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1. Ibn Sa'd, op.cit. pp. 63, 288. Ibn Hishām, op.cit. vol:2, pp. 116-117.

2. Ibn Sa'd, op.cit. vol:1, p. 199.

ahdath al-rijāl does not give the implication that those who answered Muhammad's summons to the Oneness of God, were only young men of Quraysh, who had neither status nor good position in the social, economic and political life of the Meccan community.

Though the sources do not state clearly the status of the early Muslims in their tribes, yet it seems that a number of them came from the middle class families of <sup>the</sup> Quraysh, as Abū Bakr, Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās and Talhah, who were either traders or artisans. Khālīd ibn Sa'īd ibn al-'Ās was from a family whose father was considered one of the richest men in Mecca and one of the most prominent of <sup>the</sup> Quraysh with considerable power in society.<sup>1</sup> Al-Arqām must probably have been in the same position as Khālīd, though young, and must have had certain power in the family, so that he could offer his house as the headquarters for the Muslims.

The list of the early Muslims shows also that some of the early converts were confederates of the Meccan tribes as well as slaves and mawālī. These are the people, possibly, considered by al-Zuhri as du'afā'al-nās. Al-Wāqidī gives a different view on this subject when he identifies the mustafūn as those people who did not belong to any of the Meccan tribes, and who did not have any defence or strength to face the Meccans, who later on, tortured

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1. Al-Muhabbar, op.cit. p.165.

them to bring them back to their former religion.<sup>1</sup> Among the mustad'afūn were Suhaib ibn Sinān, 'Āmir ibn Fuhairah and Bilāl ibn Ribāh,<sup>2</sup> who was believed to be the earliest convert from the Ethiopian mawālī, as mentioned in the tradition of Ismā'il ibn Tbrāhīm ibn Yūnus and from Ḥassān who said, "The Prophet said, Bilal is the earliest Ethiopian to accept Islam."

Besides Ibn Ishāq's list of the early converts there are also some sources that mention names of the early Muslims who were not from <sup>the</sup> Quraysh and were believed to have accepted Islam as early as 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān and his friends. These were Abū Dharr, Jundub ibn Janādah al-Ghifārī, 'Amr ibn 'Abāsah ibn 'Āmir ibn Khālīd ibn Ghadīrah ibn 'Itāb ibn Imri'el-Qays ibn Bahthah ibn Sulaimān who was also known as Abū Nujaih or Abū Shu'aib,<sup>3</sup> and 'Atabah ibn Ghazwān.<sup>4</sup> 'Amr ibn 'Abasah claimed to be the third or fourth person to accept Islam as stated in the tradition on the authority of Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Wāqidī.<sup>5</sup> Another tradition related by Shaddād ibn 'Abdullah gives a full conversation of Abū Umamah and 'Amr, when Abu Umamah asked him, "How do you claim that you are the fourth convert to Islam?" 'Amr said, 'I was during the Jahiliyah, seeing the people in error, and I did not see the

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1. Ibn Sa'd, vol:3, p.230.

2. Ibid, pp.227, 230.

3. Al-Nuwairī, op.cit.vol:16.p.192.

4. Ibid, p.195.

5. Ibn Sa'd, op.cit.vol:1, p.215.

idols of any value. Then I heard from a man telling the news of Mecca and speaking of many things that happened there. I rode my horse until I reached Mecca. And there I found the Messenger of God preaching secretly and his people were divided into two, I showed my friendship so that I entered to him and asked, 'What is the Prophet of God? He said, 'The Messenger of God.' I said, 'Does Allah send you?' He said, 'Yes.' I said, 'With what?' He said, 'To believe in the unity of God, not to associate anything with him, to break the idols and to keep the ties of relationship.' And I said, 'Who are with you in this?' He said, 'Freemen and slaves' Thus Abū Bakr and Bilāl were with him. I said to him, 'I am your follower.' He said, 'You are not able to do this on this day, but return to your people and when you hear that I have become known, join me.' I returned to my people and the Prophet migrated to Madīna, and I was a Muslim."<sup>1</sup>

The preaching of Islam went on secretly among the Quraysh and some other tribes of the Arabs who came to visit Mecca and made personal contact with the Prophet. This secrecy went on for three years.<sup>2</sup> Though the mission was still a secret to the public, the response to Islam was encouraging. Men and Women accepted Islam

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1. Ibn Sa'd, op.cit. vol:4, p.216.

2. Ibn al-Athīr, op.cit. vol:2, p.42. , Ibn Sa'd, op.cit. vol:1, p.199.

individually and in groups. Islam spread in Mecca and many people talked about it in secret.<sup>1</sup>

Then came the command from Allah, "Fa asda' bimā tu'mar wa 'a'rid 'ani l-mushrikīn."<sup>2</sup> The verse is commented on differently by Quranic commentators. The word sada'a or more specifically sada'a bi l-haqq is defined by lexicographers<sup>3</sup> as to speak openly (takallama bihi jahran). At-Tabarī in his Tafsīr explains the verse as follows:

"Inform your people that I have sent to you and refrain from going to battle with Mushrikin and killing them"<sup>4</sup> This was before the revelation of the verse (fa aqtulū l-mushrikīna haithu wajadtumū-hum),<sup>5</sup> which abrogated the first verse that forbids the Muslims from killing the mushrikīn.<sup>3</sup> Ibn Kathir explains that Allah ordered his Prophet to proclaim his prophethood, carry out his mission and face the mushrikin.<sup>6</sup>

Al-Qurtubī gives a rather similar commentary to that of at-Tabarī: Inform all your people of the message of Allah, for Allah has ordered you to do so.<sup>7</sup>

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1. Ibn Hishām, vol:1, p.280.

2. Sūrat al-Hijr, 94.

3. Lisān al-'Arab, vol:8, p.196. , Tāj al-'Arūs, vol:5, p.410. , Aqrab al-Mawārid, vol:1, p.638.

4. At-Tabarī, Tafsīr, vol:14, p.69.

5. Sūrat al-Taubah, 5.

6. Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol:2, p.559.

7. Al-Qurtubī, Tafsīr, vol:10, p.61.

In Tafsir al-Hadith, the commentator defines the word isda' as obey and carry out (ati' wa naffidh). The verse ordered the Prophet to proceed with his summons to Islam, proclaim it and carry out the mission which was entrusted to him without paying any attention to the mushrikin.<sup>1</sup> Other commentaries related by several narrators, on the authority of Mujāhid, give a few differences on the subject:

- a. Ijhar bi l-Qur'ān, proclaim the Qur'ān.
- b. Al-jahru bi l-Qur'ān fī al-salah, reading the Qur'ān aloud in prayer.<sup>2</sup>

All commentaries although slightly different in view, came to a final word that the Prophet was ordered by Allah to publish his mission among his relatives in the first place, then to all the people. Allah said, "Wa andhir 'ashīrataka al-aqrabīn."<sup>3</sup> And admonish your nearest kinsmen. Al-Qurtubī says that the 'ashirataka al-aqrabīn were the Quraysh, while other commentaries say that they were banū 'Abd Manāf.<sup>4</sup>

It was after the revelation of the verse 94 (sūrat al-Hijr), as agreed by scholars, that the Prophet started to preach his message from Allah openly. He was not opposed by his fellow Qurayshites and his word was not commented on by them.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Muḥammad 'Izzat Darwazah, Tafsīr l-Hadīth, vol:4, p.142.
  2. At-Tabarī, Tafsīr, vol:14, pp.67-80.
  3. Sūrat al-Shu'arā', 214.
  4. Al-Qurtubī, op.cit.vol:13, p.143.
  5. Ibn Sa'd, op.cit.vol:1, p.199. , At-Tabarī, op.cit.vol:2, p.324. , Ibn al-Athīr, op.cit.vol:2, p.42.

What they did was to point at Muhammad whenever he passed them and say mockingly, "'Abd al-Muttalib's boy is speaking from the sky."<sup>1</sup> This situation of non-confrontation between Muhammad and the Quraysh continued for sometime, until the revelation of the verses insulting their idols and mentioning the perdition of their ancestors who had died in polytheism.<sup>2</sup> All sources are agreed that the revelation of the insulting verses was the turning point of the Quraysh's opposition to Muhammad and Islam.

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1. Ibn Sa'd, op.cit. p.199.

2. Ibid, p.199., At-Tabari, op.cit. vol:2, p.324., Al-Nuwairi, vol: 16, p.196.

### CHAPTER 3

#### Comparative Study of Shirk and Islam

The Quraysh as well as other people who associate Allah with other elements or beings are described in ~~the~~ Qur'ān as mushrik. To know the exact meaning of the word, one has to study the word literally and understand its meaning through texts of ~~the~~ Qur'ān and its interpretation by mufasssirrūn.<sup>1</sup>

The literal meaning of the word shirk which is derived from the word sharika and as it is defined by the Arabic dictionaries, is to share or to participate. When one shares something with somebody, he is thus, his associate, or in Arabic sharīk. These words shirk, sharīk and other derivations from the same root, frequently repeated in ~~the~~ Qur'ān, and nearly two-thirds of them are in verses revealed during the Meccan period. Most verses containing the word sharika (the verbal forms of it) and so on, reflect the meaning of the word as those who associate Allah with other elements of worship, be they human-beings, angels, jinns, trees, planets or other living and non-living things.

The Qur'ān in defining the word shirk, puts forward several types of it which were largely adopted by the Arabs before the advent of Islam. The types of shirk illustrated by ~~the~~ Qur'ān

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1. Commentators.



were not only adopted by the Arabs, but are still practised largely by some nations of our times.

In sūrat al-An'ām Allah exemplifies one of the forms of shirk where jinns were taken as Allah's associates. Allah says, "And they make the jinns equal with Allah, though Allah did create the jinns and they falsely, having no knowledge, attribute to Him sons and daughters. Praise and glory be to Him above what they attribute to Him."<sup>1</sup>

It is in the same verse that the Arabs invented the descendants of Allah. Thus they called their three celebrated idols daughters of God as mention in sūrat al-Najm, "Have you seen al-Lāt and al-'Uzzā and Manāt the third goddess? What, for you the male and for Him the female?"<sup>2</sup> In another corresponding verse Allah says, "And they assign daughters to Allah. Glory be to Him, and for themselves what they desire."<sup>3</sup>

A group of them worshipped numbers of gods. Allah asked through His Prophet, "Or have they taken for worship (other) gods besides Him? Say, bring your convincing proof. This is the message of those with me and the message of those before me. But most of them know not the truth and so turn away."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Sūrat al-An'ām, 100.

2. Sūrat al-Najm, 19-21.

3. Sūrat al-Nahl, 57.

4. Sūrat al-Anbiyā', 24.

Some of them took two gods. On this occasion Allah says, "Allah said, do not take (for worship) two gods, for He is only one God and fear Me and Me alone."<sup>1</sup>

There were also some, who accepted the oneness of God, but did not believe in the resurrection, and in disbelieving that they denied the might and majesty of Allah. This group is referred to in the Qur'ān as Allah says, "They swear their strongest oaths, by Allah, that Allah will not raise up those who die, but it is a promise (binding) on Him in truth, but most among mankind realise it not."<sup>2</sup>

To those who worshipped angels, Allah says these words, "One day He will gather them all together and say to the angels, was it you that these men used to worship?"<sup>3</sup>

Most of the Arabs associated with Allah idols which they made with their own hands. On this occasion Allah says, "Do they indeed ascribe to Him as partners things that can create nothing but are themselves created? Nor can they give them aid, nor can they aid themselves."<sup>4</sup>

The author of Tafsīr al-Manār,<sup>5</sup> divides shirk into three

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1. Sūrat al-Nahl, 51.

2. Ibid, 38.

3. Sūrat Sabā', 40.

4. Sūrat al-'A'rāf, 191-2.

5. Al-Sheikh Rashīd Ridā, Tafsīr al-Manār, vol:7, pp.409-10.

categories. The first and the lowest of them all is the ignorant people who worships creatures and believes them to be gods with the supreme power that could bring good and disaster upon them. The second is the people who believes that God dissolves Himself into some of His creatures.

They then take those creatures as their gods, worship them and ask for their help in their sorrow and need. The third category is the people who believes in God and His supremacy, but worship other elements as media between God and them. This is the notorious type of shirk which was practised mostly by the Arabs of the peninsula besides other types of shirk described above.

The Qur'an puts shirk as the number one sin, and that is why in one of the Quranic verses Allah says, "Say, come, I will rehearse what Allah has prohibited you from, join not anything as equal with Him, be good to your parents, kill not your children on a plea of want. We provide sustenance for you and for them, come not nigh to shameful deeds, whether open or secret, take not life which Allah has made sacred except by way of justice and law, thus he commands you that you may learn wisdom."<sup>1</sup> In this verse Allah commands his Prophet to tell his followers the prohibitions that should be kept away from and puts shirk in the first place. This reflects the danger of it and the

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1. Sūrat al-An'ām, 151.

damage that it can do to the people. In the Prophet's tradition, which was related by 'Amr ibn Shurahbil from 'Abdullah, "A man said to the Prophet, which is the greatest sin with Allah? He said, 'To call a partner along with Allah. He created you.' and then what? 'To kill your child fearing that he will eat with you.' And then what? 'To commit adultery with your neighbour's wife.'" God reveals to His Prophet confirming what he has said, "And those who do not call other gods along with Allah, do not kill the souls that Allah forbids them, unless with the right claim, and they do not commit adultery, and those who do that will meet with sins."<sup>1</sup>

The Qur'ān's attitude in dealing with shirk and the mushrikun is expressed firmly in many of its verses, Allah says in sūrat al-Nisā', verse 48, "Allah forgives anything else to whom he pleases. To set up partners with Allah, is to devise a sin most heinous indeed." In another verse the Qur'ān indicates, "Being true in faith to God and never assigning partners with him, if anyone assigns partners to God, he is as if he had fallen from heaven and been snatched by birds or the wind had swooped and thrown him into a far distant place."<sup>2</sup>

As for the mushrikūn, the Qur'ān reminds them that they will

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1. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (Mashkūl), vol:1, p.63.

2. Sūrat al-Ḥajj, 31.

be prohibited from entering paradise (al-jannah), the verse says, "Whoever joins other gods with Allah, Allah will forbid him the garden, and the fire will be his abode. For the wrong-doers, there will be no one to help."<sup>1</sup> In another verse, Allah says, "Soon shall we cast terror into the hearts of the unbelievers, for that they joined companions with Allah, for which he had sent no authority, their abode will be the fire and evil is the home of the wrong-doers."<sup>2</sup>

The study of shirk provides us with a clear proof that it is a grievous sin in Islam. What is Islam then? The simplest answer that one can provide is, it is the religion preached by <sup>the</sup> Prophet Muhammad fourteen centuries ago and it is still a flourishing religion of our era. The followers of Islam are called Muslims or Muhammadans<sup>3</sup> (the followers of Muhammad) as they used to be called by the western scholars who tried to deny the originality of Islam as one of the religions of God, besides Judaism and Christianity. The word <sup>1</sup>Islam (an infinitive form of aslama) means submission, resignation or surrender. The meaning of the word, as illustrated by Ibn Manzūr in his *Lisān al-'Arab* and explained from the point of view of Islamic Jurisprudence, is to manifest obedience to God and perform all the

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1. Sūrat al-Mā'idah, 72.

2. Sūrat al-'Imrān, 151.

3. From the Muslim point of view, this designation is inaccurate and even blasphemous.

obligations brought down through the Prophet Muhammad. At-Tabarī interpreted the word Islam as submission with humiliation and solemnity,<sup>1</sup> and his interpretation of the verse, inna al-dīna 'ind al-Allāhi l-Islām, is to surrender oneself to God with full obedience and without arrogance and deviation, at the same time not to associate any creatures or elements with Him.

Al-Shahrastānī defined the word Islam as to show obedience and resignation to God which can be shared by both monotheists and polytheists. "The desert Arabs say, 'We believe.' Say, you have no faith but you only say we have submitted our will to Allah."<sup>2</sup> Thus a true muslim must have faith in Allah besides his submission to his supremacy. Here is where the imān and ihsān come in. The Prophets explained the differences between these three words in his tradition where the angel, Gabriel, in the form of a desert Arab, came and asked the Prophet, "O, Messenger of God, what is Islam? The Prophet said, 'To proclaim that here is no God but Allah and that I am the messenger of Allah, to pray, to give alms, to fast in Ramadān and to go on the pilgrimage to Mecca, whoever is able to do so.' The man said, 'You have said the truth,' and then he said, 'What is imān? The Prophet said, 'To believe in Allah, His angels, His

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1. At-Tabarī, Tafsīr, op.cit. vol:6, pp.275-6.

2. Surāt al-Hujurat, 14.

books, His Messengers and the Day of Judgment, and to believe in predestination." The man said, 'You have said the truth.' And then he said, 'What is ihsān?' The Prophet said, 'To worship Allah as if you see Him, if you do not see Him, He sees you.' The man said, 'You have said the truth,' and then he said, 'When is the Resurrection?' The Prophet said, 'The one who is responsible for it knows more about it than the one who asked.' The man stood up and went away. The Prophet said, 'That was Gabriel, who has come to teach you your religion.'<sup>1</sup>

From the above tradition we can understand clearly the fundamental belief of Islam, that is to believe in one God (Allah) the creator, the almighty. "In this uncompromising monotheism," says Hitti, "with its simple, enthusiastic faith in the supreme rule of the transcendent being, lies the chief strength of Islam."<sup>2</sup>

In a statement made by Ja'far ibn Abī Tālib in front of the Ethiopian King, during the first migration to Ethiopia, when he and his Muslim brothers were summoned to the Negus's court to defend themselves from the Quraysh, who had come to Ethiopia with the intention of persecuting them, one can understand clearly the fundamental beliefs of Islam and its teachings. When the Negus asked the Muslims what was the religion for which they had forsaken their people, Ja'far answered him,<sup>3</sup> "O, king,

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1. Al-Shahrīstānī, al-Milal wa an-Nihal, vol:1, p.40.

2. Hitti, History of the Arabs, p.129.

3. Ibn Ishāq, op.cit. p.152.

we were an uncivilised people, worshipping idols, eating corpses, committing abominations, breaking natural ties, treating guests badly and our strong devoured our weak. Thus we were, until God sent us an apostle whose lineage, truth, trustworthiness, and clemency we know. He summoned us to acknowledge God's unity and to worship him and to renounce the stones and images which we and our fathers formerly worshipped. He commanded us to speak the truth, be faithful to our engagements, mindful of the ties of kinship and kindly hospitality, and to refrain from crime and bloodshed. He forbade us to commit abomination and to speak lies and to devour the property of orphans, to vilify chaste women. He commanded us to worship God alone and not to associate anything with Him, and he gave us orders about prayer, almsgiving and fasting. We confessed his truth and believed in him, and we followed him in what he had brought from God and we worshipped God alone without associating aught with Him."

Jafar's remarks manifest a picture of the two different ways of life led by the Arabs before and after Islam. One was full of hatred, enmity, evil and immorality, while the other was full of truth, love, purity and belief in the supremacy of Allah, the Almighty. The above text also revealed the strategy and the objective of Islam which can be classified as follows:-



1. To correct the beliefs of the people which had been distorted by evil elements and to bring them back to the right path, that is, to believe in one God, resurrection and predestination, as the essential step to righteousness.

2. To explain the reality and the authenticity of the prophets, their messages and their responsibilities.

To show that Islam is the religion of freedom, thought, knowledge, philosophy and wisdom.

4. To reform the social, economic and political situation of society, by providing the key points to solve and settle the problems in the light of the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

5. To bring the people together as brothers and sisters under the banner of Allah and to wipe out all signs of discrimination among them.

6. To give women their human, religious, social and legal rights and to respect them as full members of society.

The Qur'ān summarised all these objectives of Islam in only one word, Allah says, wamā arsalnāka illā rahmatan lil 'ālamīn. We sent you not but as a mercy to all the people. The word rahmah includes all the objectives of Islam and the message of the Prophet Muhammad.

In verses of his poetry, an Arab poet recited the goals

of Islam saying,<sup>1</sup>

( Rajaz )

dhāka nabīyūn sayyīdu l-anāmi  
qad jāa ba'd al-kufri bi l-islāmi

akramahu r-Rahmānu min imāmi  
wamin rasūlin sādiqi l-kalāmi

ya'muru bi ṣ-salāti wa ṣ-siyāmi  
wa l-birri wa ṣ-silāti wa l-arhāmi

wa yazjuru n-nāsa 'ani l-aṭhāmi  
wa r-rijsi wa l-awṭhāni wa l-harāmi

That is the Prophet who is the head of all creatures, who brought Islam after the kufr.

Who was honoured by al-Rahman as Imam, and a Prophet who spoke the truth.

He orders us to pray and fast, to be dutiful to God and to keep ties of relationship.

He orders the people to keep away from sins, and from uncleanness, idols and what he has prohibited.

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1. Al-Nuwairī, op.cit.vol:16,p.163.

al-Hāmid, Shi'r al-da'wah al-Islāmiyah,p.30.

### The Conflict

It is indeed very important to study the motives of the Quraysh's movement against Muhammad, which produced a conflict that lasted for nearly ten years. The revelation of the insulting verses<sup>1</sup> was regarded as one of the main reasons for their opposition. But, of course, there were other important aspects of life which motivated them to be antagonistic to Muhammad, his followers and Islam.

The elements of motivation can be classified as follows:

- a. The religious motive, or more specifically the spiritual motive. Islam brought a new belief which contrasted with the belief of the Quraysh in particular and the Arabs in general.
- b. The social motive. To the Quraysh, the emergence of Islam would destroy their social codes of life, which they had inherited from their fore-fathers.
- c. The political motive. Islam would change the political system of the Arabs.
- d. The economic motive. Islam, if not opposed, would usurp the economic position of the Quraysh.

### The Prophet's early message

The fundamental message that Muhammad brought to his people was to believe in One God, Allah the Almighty and that, he,

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1. The verses concerning the subject will be mentioned later in the chapter.

Muhammad was the messenger of Allah. He was also asked to tell his people of the kind of life that would exist after their death, the resurrection and the hereafter.

Therefore, it could be concluded that the Quraysh's opposition to Muhammad at his early message was based on these points:

1. The belief in One God, Allah.
2. Muhammad as the Prophet of Allah.
3. The resurrection and the hereafter.

1. The belief in One God, Allah.

Muhammad's message to his people asking them to believe in one God is described in the Qur'an, as Allah says:

"Say, I am only a human being like you, it is revealed to me that God is only one."<sup>1</sup>

"They have been commanded to worship the One God alone."<sup>2</sup>

"I am Allah, <sup>there is</sup> no God except me, and worship me."<sup>3</sup>

"And Allah is my Lord and your Lord, worship Him, this is the right path."<sup>4</sup>

"That is Allah, my Lord, worship Him, this is the right path."<sup>5</sup>

"Say that Allah is the Only One."<sup>6</sup>

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1. Sūrat Fussilat, 6.
  2. " al-Taubah, 21.
  3. " Tāhā, 14.
  4. " Maryam, 36.
  5. " al-Imrān, 51.
  6. " al-Ikhlās, 1.

In his message Muhammad said, "Allah has ordered me to tell my nearest kinsmen, and I cannot give you either good in this world or a share in the hereafter except when you say there is no God but Allah."<sup>1</sup> The Prophet also said, "I am the messenger of Allah, sent to all the people and I call you to Allah, to worship Allah and not to associate anything with Him."<sup>2</sup> In his call to Abū Bakr the Prophet said, "I call you Abū Bakr to Allah, The only One without any associate. Do not worship other than Him and I remind you to obey Him."<sup>3</sup>

This essential belief of Islam contrasted with the belief and faith of the Quraysh, who, as explained in the earlier chapter, believed in God, but took other elements and idols as media between God and themselves and thus associated the might of Allah with others.

## 2. Muhammad the Prophet of Allah

Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah, a messenger from Allah sent to all the people as Allah says in the Qur'ān, "wamā arsalnāka illā rahmatan li l-'ālamīn." The fact that Muhammad was the Prophet and the Messenger of God was not accepted by most of the Quraysh, especially those prominent personalities and figures of Mecca, such as Abū Jahl, Umayyah ibn Khalaf,

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1. Al-Nuwairī, op.cit. vol:16, p.197.

2. At-Tabarī, op.cit. p.233.

3. Al-Kind Hilawī, Hayat as-sahābah, vol:1, p.46.

al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah and others.<sup>1</sup> Though there were some of them who had the knowledge that there would be a prophet among themselves, such as Umayyah ibn Abī al-Salt al-Thaqafī, who was hoping that he himself would be the prophet. The Quraysh's rejection of Muhammad's prophethood was based mainly on the fact that:

a. Muhammad was not a wealthy man. He was not one of the malā'. He did not own a trade caravan. His involvement and success in trade was not with his own merchandise, he was employed to trade to Syria. As far as the sources are concerned it was only twice that he went to Basra on a trading trip, first, with his uncle, Abū Talib, when he was only a boy. Secondly when he was employed by Khadijah before their marriage.

The Quraysh would not recognise any kind of leadership, be it religious or secular, from a man who was not wealthy, for being wealthy and rich was one of the main factors in becoming a leader in the pre-Islamic society. Al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah said, "Is it revealed to Muhammad while I am left out. I am the greatest of the Quraysh and their lord! and Abū Mas'ūd Aus ibn 'Umar al-Thaqafī is left out, he is the chief of the Thaqif. We are the great men of the two towns."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Their names and status in the Meccan society will be dealt with later in the chapter.

2. Ibn Hishām, op.cit.vol:1, p.337.

b. Muhammad was born after his father's death. His mother died when he was about six years of age. Orphans, in the pre-Islamic society were positioned very low. They were oppressed, subjugated, despised and treated unjustly. Muqātil related that Umayyah ibn Khalaf treated Qudāmah ibn Maz'ūn, who was an orphan under his guardianship, unjustly and deprived him of his own rights.<sup>1</sup> Allah gives a version of the orphans' position in the pre-Islamic society and says, "No, but they do not respect the orphans."<sup>2</sup> The verse indicates that those Quraysh who were given position and wealth refused to give a helping hand to the orphans and to treat them kindly. Allah says in the Qur'ān describing Muhammad al-yatīm, "alam yajidka yatīman fa 'āwā."

c. Muhammad was a shepherd. Being a shepherd was not considered respectable occupation by the Quraysh, whose lives were mostly involved in trade.<sup>3</sup> It is related on the authority of Abu Hurairah that the Prophet said, "No prophet was sent by Allah except that he was a shepherd. His followers said to him, 'And you?' He said, 'And I, I looked after the sheep of the Quraysh for a few qarārīt."<sup>4</sup> The Quraysh had never expected

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1. Al-Fakhrul-Rāzī, at-Tafsīr al-Kabīr, vol:3, p.171., Muhammad 'Izzat Darwazah, op.cit. vol:1, p.153.

2. Sūrat al-Fajr, 17.

3. Ibn Hishām, op.cit. p.190. Al-Qalī al-Baghdādī, Kitāb al-Amālī wa an-Nawādir, p.199.

4. Al-Diyār Bakrī, Tārīkh al-Khums, vol:1, p.259. Ibn Mājah, Sunan, vol:2, p.727. Taj al-'Arūs, vol:5, p.304.

that the Prophet of the Arabs would be a man who had worked at a job despised by society. So Muhammad's occupation as a shepherd, was one of the reasons for the Quraysh's rejection of his prophethood.

### 3. The Resurrection and the Hereafter

Islam emphasizes the idea of resurrection. It declares that Allah with His unlimited power and might will resurrect men from their graves and repay them for what they have done during their life time on the Day of Judgement. Those who have done good will be rewarded, and those who have done bad will receive the same. Allah gives several names in the Qur'an to the Day of Judgement, yaum al-Ākhirah, yaum al-ākhir, yaum al-qiyāmah, yaum al-Ba'th, yaum al-Faṣl, yaum al-Hisāb, yaum al-Jāmi', yaum al-Talāqī, yaum al-Ḥasrah, yaum al-Āzifah, yaum al-Sāk<sup>Kh</sup>hah, yaum al-Ḥashr, yaum al-Qāri'ah, yaum at-Taghābun.

The Quraysh did not believe in the Resurrection and the Hereafter. Allah says in the Qur'an, "They said, what! when we die and become dust and bones, can we really be raised up again."<sup>1</sup>

"There is nothing but our life in this world, we die and we live and we shall never be raised up again."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Sūrat al-Mu'minūn, 52.

2. Ibid, 37.



"The unbelievers think that they will not be raised up. Say, no, my Lord will surely raise you up and then will tell you of what you did, and that is easy for Allah."<sup>1</sup>

"And they said, what, if we are bones and dust, shall we be raised up in a new creation."<sup>2</sup>

"And if you say, you will be raised up after your death, the unbelievers will say, this is only manifest magic."<sup>3</sup>

The Quraysh believed that the souls of the dead would turn into al-hāmah and al-sadā, and to them it would be impossible for the dead to be raised up again after being formed into these two birds. Shaddād ibn al-Aswad ibn 'Abd Shams ibn Mālik says this verse,<sup>4</sup>

yuhaddithunā l-rasūlu bi'an sanahyā (wāfir)

wa kaifa hayātu asdā'in wa hāmī <sup>again</sup>

The Prophet tells us that we will live <sup>again</sup> and how can there be life after being sadā and hāmā.

Another poet says,<sup>5</sup> (Abu 'Alā' al-Ma'arī)

hayātun thumma mautun thumma nashrun (wāfir)

hadīthu khurāfatin ya Umma 'Amrin

Life and then death and then resurrection, talk of nonsense,

O Umma 'Amrin.

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1. Sūrat at-Taghābun, 7.

2. " al-Isrā', 49.

3. " Hūd, 7.

4. Al-Ālūsī, op.cit. vol:2, p.213.

5. Ibid, p.213.; Ma'arī: Luḡumiyyat.

There were of course some Arabs who believed in Resurrection and the Day of Judgement. This belief could be spotted clearly in some of their poetry. Such is the verse of Umayyah ibn Abī al-Salt when he says,

wa yaumu mau'idihim an yuhsharū zumaran (Basit)

yaumu t-taghabuni idh lā yanfa'u l-hadharu

And the day of their appointed time where they are gathered in groups on the day of Taghabun, where precaution is of no avail.

#### The Insulting Verses

The Prophet's call to monotheism was a new idea to the majority of the Quraysh as well as of the Arabs. There were only a few of them who had the idea of believing in one God. They were the Hunafā'.<sup>1</sup> One of them, Zaid ibn 'Amr ibn Nufail, was killed by his own people when trying to tell them that what they worshipped was wrong.<sup>2</sup> To the Quraysh, their own religion did not give them a clear idea of what they believed, and where they would stand if it were criticised, as they only followed what their ancestors had done, and none of them were really keen on discussing and defending it. Allah says in the Qur'an,<sup>3</sup> "But they said, we found our fathers following a certain religion, and we guide ourselves by their footsteps."

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1. Refer to previous chapter.

2. Ibn Hishām, op.cit.p.235.

3. Sūrat al-Zukhruf, 22.

The emergence of Islam and its critic of their religion opened their eyes and brought them together in defending it. Their status and influence in religion, as dwellers of the Haram, would diminish if Islam were accepted by the Arabs. So Muhammad had to be stopped from spreading his message and converting other tribes to Islam.

Allah revealed the verses criticising the Quraysh and what they worshipped. Allah says,

"Is it not to Allah that sincere devotion is due, but those who take for protectors other than Allah, we only serve them that they may bring us nearer to Allah. Truly, Allah will judge between them in what they differ."<sup>1</sup>

"And they worship besides Allah things for which no authority has been sent down to them and of which they have no knowledge, for those that do wrong there is no helper."<sup>2</sup>

"And they have taken (other) gods beside Allah, in order that they may be helped. It is not in their power to help them, but they (the worshippers) are unto them a host in arms."<sup>3</sup>

"And they worship other than Allah that cannot harm and profit them and they say, those are our intercessors with God."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Sūrat az-Zumar, 3.

2. " al-Hajj, 71.

3. " Yā sin, 73, 74.

4. " Yūnus, 18.

"And those who call other than Allah, they do not create anything and they themselves are created. They are dead and not alive, and they do not know when they will be raised up."<sup>1</sup>

"And they took other than Allah, gods that create nothing and they themselves are created. They do not possess the power either of harming or benefiting themselves and they have no power over death, life and resurrection."<sup>2</sup>

"Do they indeed associate with Allah things that can create nothing but which are themselves created. They are unable to give them any help, nor can they help themselves. And when you call them to guidance, they will not obey you. It is all the same to you whether you call them or you keep quiet. Those whom you call besides Allah are servants like you. Call upon them and they will answer if you are truthful. Do they have feet to walk with, or hands to lay hold with or eyes to see with, or ears to hear with, say, call your partners and plot against Me. You will be given no respite. My protector is Allah who revealed the Book and He will choose the righteous. And those whom you call besides Allah are unable to help you nor can they help themselves."<sup>3</sup>

"Say, shall we indeed call other than Allah things that can do us no good and no harm and turn on our heels after being

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1. Sūrat al-Nahl, 20, 21.

2. " al-Furqān, 3.

3. " al-'A'rāf, 191-7.

guided by Allah, like the one who was deluded in the world by shayāṭin, bewildered, he has friends who call him to guidance, come to us, say, Allah's guidance is the only guidance, and we have been directed to submit ourselves to the Lord of the world."<sup>1</sup>

"And they worship other than Allah things that do not bring them good nor harm and the unbeliever is the supporter of evil against his Lord."<sup>2</sup>

"The parable of those who took other than Allah as their protectors is that of the spider that built a house, the weakest of houses is the spider's house, if they <sup>only</sup> knew."<sup>3</sup>

The verses not only criticise and insult the Quraysh and what they worshipped, but also give a very unpleasant picture of the Quraysh. Allah says,

"You and what you worship other than Allah are stones of the hell, to it you will come."<sup>4</sup>

"Or do you think that most of them listen or understand, they are only like cattle, indeed they are more astray."<sup>5</sup>

"And those whom Allah guides, and He is the true guidance. And those who go astray, they will find no protector besides Him, and We will gather them on the day of judgement, on their

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1. Sūrat al-An'ām, 71.
  2. " al-Furqān, 55.
  3. " al-'Ankabūt, 41.
  4. " al-Anbiyā', 98.
  5. " al-Furqān, 44.

faces, blind, dumb and deaf. Their abode is hell, We will increase for them the fierceness of the fire."<sup>1</sup>

The Quraysh regarded all the verses mentioned above as an insult to them, their ancestors and their idols. They were angered by the Qur'an's criticism of themselves. Among them, the wealthy and the powerful, they took a firm decision that they would use whatever means of persuasion and force to stop Muhammad from spreading the religion of Allah.

#### Quraysh's Movement against the Prophet

The Meccans were worried when they witnessed Muhammad's achievement in converting his people to Islam, especially after the acceptance of it by Hamzah ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib<sup>2</sup> and 'Umar ibn al-Khattab of banū 'Adīy.<sup>3</sup> Both Hamzah and 'Umar were young, strong and brave. The sources relate that none of the Quraysh were brave enough to come out and face 'Umar when he openly announced his acceptance of Islam in front of the Quraysh who

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1. Sūrat al-Isrā', 97.
  2. Hamzah ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib was the Prophet's uncle. He accepted Islam six years after the revelation. How he accepted it is clearly explained in Sīrat Ibn Hishām, vol:1, p.291.
  3. 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb came from banī 'Adīy. This clan was not classed as an important one in Meccan society. The story of his conversion to Islam is related in Sīrat Ibn Hishām, vol:1, p.355.

were sitting around the Ka'bah.<sup>1</sup>

From the time he started preaching Islam, the Prophet was protected by his uncle Abū Tālīb, although the latter was not himself a Muslim. He was also protected by his wife's position in society. With Hamzah and 'Umar on his side, the Prophet's and his followers' position became stronger. It is related on the authority of Ibn Mas'ud that it was after Umar's acceptance of Islam that the Muslims were brave enough to go out and pray beside the Ka'bah.<sup>2</sup>

The Quraysh made certain plans to stop the Prophet from continuing his mission. They put forward suggestions which they thought would attract the Prophet and silence him from mentioning their idols and ancestors. They not only used their tongues in accusing the Prophet and his followers but used their hands as well to torture the Muslims, in the hope that after being hurt they would return to their former religion.

#### Quraysh's first movement - meeting with Abū Tālīb

As Abu Talib was the only person from Muhammad's relatives who had given his full support to the Prophet and had stood firmly beside him, the Quraysh's first step was to approach Abū Tālīb and persuade him to stop his nephew saying what he had

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1. Ibn Hishām, vol:1, p.363.

2. Ibid, p.355.

said and doing what he had done. A group of prominent Quraysh consisting of 'Utbah and Shaibah, sons of Rabi'ah ibn 'Abd Shams, Abū Sufyān ibn Harb ibn Umayyah, Abū l-Bakhtarī al-'Āṣ ibn Hishām, al-'Aswad ibn al-Muttalib ibn Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzā, Abū Jahl 'Amr ibn Hishām ibn al-Mughīrah, al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah, Nubaih and Munabbih sons of al-Hajjāj ibn 'Āmir and al-'Ās ibn Wā'il ibn Hishām,<sup>1</sup> went to Abū Tālib and said, "Oh, Abū Tālib, your nephew has abused our gods, condemned our religion, disgraced our culture and deceived our fathers. Either you prevent him from doing so, or leave the matter between him and us. You are as we are, against him and we have had enough of him."<sup>2</sup> Abū Tālib answered them politely and they went away.

Seeing that their first move did not affect Muhammad's mission in the least, the Quraysh went to Abū Tālib again and said what they had said before, adding that they would put down both Muhammad and Abū Tālib if he did not stop his nephew from doing what he was doing. They would do anything until either group was destroyed.<sup>3</sup> The Prophet adhered to what he had been ordered by God to do. Islam flourished among the Quraysh and some other tribes. Abū Tālib sensed the enmity of his people

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1. Ibn Hishām, op.cit.vol:1,p.265.

2. Ibid,p.263.

3. Ibid,p.263. Abū l-Fidā', al-Mukhtasar fī akhbār al-bashar, vol:1,p.263..



towards the Prophet and himself, and tried to persuade the Prophet to stop calling his people to Islam, but the Prophet insisted that he would not leave the duty imposed upon him until the religion he preached was established or he himself destroyed. The Prophet's firm stand encouraged Abū Tālib to go on supporting, for he said, "Go my nephew, and say what you like, by Allah I will never surrender you to anyone."<sup>1</sup>

Knowing that Abū Tālib would not use force against Muhammad, they went to Abū Tālib again for the third time. This time they took with them 'Umārah ibn l-Walīd ibn l-Mughīrah, who was said to be the most handsome young man of the Quraysh.<sup>2</sup> They wanted to exchange Muhammad for 'Umārah. They would take Muhammad and kill him, while Abū Tālib would take 'Umārah and adopt him. They said, "This is a man for a man."<sup>3</sup>

It is obvious that the Quraysh's suggestion of the exchange of Muhammad for 'Umārah was not a wise one. It shows their stupidity and foolishness, for nobody, however stupid, would accept the offer. So Abū Tālib rejected the Quraysh's offer and said, "Will you give me your son, so that I may feed him for you and I give you mine to be killed. This will never be."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Ibn Hishām, op.cit.vol:1,p.264.

2. Ibid,p.265. , Al-Nuwaīrī, op.cit.vol:16,p.200.

3. Ibn Hishām, op.cit.p.265.

4. Ibid.

The second movement - the violence

Sources related that it was after the third unsuccessful meeting with Abū Tālib that the Quraysh began to take more aggressive action against the Muslims.<sup>1</sup> This hostile action was regarded as the second step of the Quraysh movements against the Messenger of Allah and his followers. The Quraysh used every means of persecution towards the Muslims, especially those who had no protection from their own tribes. Every family and tribe tortured their own members who had become Muslims. Those who suffered most were slaves or mawālī. Such were Bilāl ibn Ribāh, 'Ammār ibn Yāsir, his parents, Khabbāb ibn al-Aratt and many others.

Bilāl ibn Ribāh was tortured by his master Umayyah ibn Khalaf of banī Jumah, at the middle of the day when the ground was burning hot. He was laid on his back with a giant stone on his chest and it was said to him, "You will stay like this until you die or be unfaithful to Muhammad and worship al-Lāt and al-'Uzza."<sup>2</sup> It is related on the authority of 'Abbas ibn Hishām<sup>3</sup> that 'Ammār ibn Yāsir, his brother 'Abdullah, his father Yāsir and his mother Sumayyah were all tortured by the Quraysh. Yāsir died of torture. 'Abdullah was speared to death, while

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1. Ibn Hishām, op.cit. vol:1, p.324.

2. Ibid, p.325.

2. Al-Balādhurī, Ansāb al-Ashraf, vol:1, p.160.

Sumayyah was killed by Abū Jahl. She was the first woman martyr in Islam. 'Ammar survived the torture. While he was being tormented by the Quraysh they said to him, "We will not leave you alone, until you abuse Muhammad and say that al-Lat and al-'Uzza are better than Muhammad's religion." He said so, and they left him, but his heart was filled with faith in Allah and Muhammad.<sup>1</sup>

Through all this misery the Prophet was protected by his uncle, Abū Tālib, and the clans of Hāshim and 'Abd al-Muttalib, who answered Abū Tālib's call for Muhammad's protection. The only person who refused to join his clan in supporting Muhammad was Abū Lahab.<sup>2</sup>

The Quraysh's oppression of the Muslims did not give them a satisfactory result. They could not crush their faith and bring them back to polytheism, though there were a few Muslims who forsook their religion<sup>3</sup> because of the severity of the violence. None of the sources mentions the names of those who had done so.

It is understood from the sources that there were only two alternatives for the Muslims in order to release themselves

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1. Al-Balādhurī, op.cit. pp. 156-60.

2. Ibid, 230. , Ibn Hishām, op.cit. p. 287,

3. Ibid, p. 364.

from Quraysh's violence. For the mawālī, to be bought and freed from their polytheist masters as Abū Bakr did for Bilāl and some others. For others, to join the migration to Ethiopia. This emigration was sanctioned by the Prophet<sup>1</sup> when he feared that violence might endanger the Muslims' faith if it was allowed to continue.<sup>2</sup>

Seeing that the emigrant Muslims were being treated kindly by the Ethiopians, the Quraysh took a decision to send a delegation to Ethiopia and demand the return of the Muslims to Mecca. 'Amr ibn al-'Ās and 'Abdullah ibn Rabī'ah ibn l-Mughīrah<sup>3</sup> were sent to Ethiopia, with presents to the Negus and his priests. The Quraysh's arrival in Ethiopia and their request for the return of the Muslims to Mecca angered the Negus. He summoned the Muslims to his court and discussed the subject with them.<sup>4</sup> The Negus was impressed by the Muslims' faith and their opinion towards him and his peaceful policy towards them. The Quraysh's present were rejected and the mission failed. 'Amr ibn al-'Ās and 'Abdullah ibn Rabī'ah returned to Mecca empty handed.

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1. At-Tabarī, Tārīkh, vol:2, p.221.

2. Ibid, p.238.

3. Ibid, p.335. Ibn Hishām, op.cit.vol:1, pp.356-7.

4. The detailed story of the discussion between the Muslims and the Negus on the subject of their religion is related fully in Ibn Hishām, op.cit.vol:1, pp.358-362. See also pp. 110-1, for Ja'far's description of Islam to the Negus during the discussion.

Third movement - Accusation against the Prophet

The Quraysh plotted several times to kill the Prophet, but he was well protected. He did not suffer any bodily injury, but what he suffered most was the Quraysh's accusation against himself.

They accused him of calling for something which was only a legend. What Muhammad said was not from Allah but what he had learnt from a foreigner ('ajami). It was related that there was a blacksmith in Mecca whose name was Bal'am. He was not an Arab. The Quraysh saw Muhammad going onto and coming out of his place and accused him of learning what he said from Bal'am.<sup>1</sup> Allah says in the Qur'an describing Quraysh's accusation against Muhammad,

"And we know well that they say: only a man taught him. The speech of him at whom they falsely hint is outlandish, and this is clear Arabic speech."<sup>2</sup> Allah says in other verses, "Those who disbelieve say: This is only a lie that he has invented and other folk have helped him with it, so that they have produced slander and a lie. And they say: Fables of the men of old which he has had written down so that they are dictated to him morning and evening."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Al-Isābah fi Ma'rifat al-ṣahābah, vol:1, p.165.

2. Sūrat al-Nahl, 103.

3. Sūrat al-Furqān, 4, 5.

Muhammad was accused of being a sorcerer, a magician. The accusation resulted from a meeting of a number of prominent Quraysh to discuss what they would say to the Arab tribes about Muhammad when they came for the pilgrimage. Al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah, an elderly Quraysh from Banī Makhzūm, proposed that they call Muhammad a magician, and say that what he brought was only magic that had divided society and separated families and tribes from one another.<sup>1</sup> Thus when the time for the pilgrimage came, the polytheist Quraysh spread the word that Muhammad was a magician and his words were magic. They asked the Arabs to keep away from him, as his words would endanger their whole system of life. Allah says in the Qur'ān, "Those who disbelieve say of the truth when it reaches them, This is only manifest magic."<sup>2</sup> In another verse Allah says, "And when the truth came to them they say, this is magic and we do not believe in it."<sup>3</sup>

The Quraysh also accused Muhammad of being a madman, a liar, a poet and a soothsayer.<sup>4</sup> Many verses of the Qur'ān obviously relate all the Quraysh's accusations against Muhammad. Allah says,

"And warn by the grace of Allah, you are neither a soothsayer,

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1. Ibn Hishām, op.cit.vol:1, p.289.
  2. Sūrat Sabā', 43.
  3. Sūrat Zukhruf, 30.
  4. Ibn Hishām, op.cit.vol:1, p.308.

nor a madman."<sup>1</sup>

"Have they not thought there is no madness in their friend,  
he is only a plain warner."<sup>2</sup>

"And your friend is not mad."<sup>3</sup>

"You are not, with your Lord's grace upon you, a madman."<sup>4</sup>

Allah says, "And they say, shall we forsake our gods for  
a mad poet."<sup>5</sup>

"And they marvel at a warner who has come to them from  
among themselves. The unbelievers said, this is a sorcerer,  
a liar. Did he make gods into one God. This is an astounding  
thing."<sup>6</sup>

"That indeed is the speech of an illustrious messenger.  
It is not a poet's speech. Little do you remember."<sup>7</sup>

"Has the reminder been given to him alone among us, nay  
he is <sup>an</sup> insolent liar."<sup>8</sup>

"And if they deny you, those before them also denied.  
Their messengers came to them with clear proofs and with the  
Psalms and the Scripture giving light."<sup>9</sup>

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1. Sūrat at-Tūr, 29.

2. " al-'A'rāf, 184.

3. " al-Takwīr, 22.

4. " al-Qalam, 2.

5. " as-Saffāt, 36.

6. " Sād, 4.

7. " al-Haqqāh, 39-41.

8. " al-Qamar, 25, 26.

9. " Fātir, 25.

"But they say, these are only muddled dreams. He has but invented it.\* He is but a poet. Bring us sign as was sent to those messengers before."<sup>1</sup>

Besides ~~the~~ Qur'an there were many events which were related in the sources in connection with the Quraysh's accusations against Muhammad. It is related that the Prophet was preaching Islam in the market of Dhū l-Majāz. In his sermon the Prophet said,<sup>2</sup> "O, people, say there is no god but Allah and you will succeed." The people gathered around him and when he had finished, Abū Lahab said from behind, "He is a sabian liar."<sup>3</sup> On another occasion it is related that the Prophet went out one day and whoever met him on that day accused him of being a liar.<sup>4</sup> This particular incident hurt the Prophet considerably so that he had to go home and wrap himself in his blanket.

On top of all accusations<sup>levelled</sup> said against him, the Prophet was also required by the Quraysh to bring miracles to them. All the prominent Qurayshis who were against the Prophet, met one day beside the Ka'bah and decided that they would call the Prophet and talk to him about what was going on between him

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1. Sūrat al-Anbiyā', 5.

2. Ibn Kathīr, al-bidāyah wa an-nihāyah, vol:3, p.139.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibn Hishām, op.cit. vol:1, p.310.

\* The reference is to the Qur'an



and themselves. So they called him and he eagerly answered their invitation, thinking that they would accept Islam and leave their polytheistic belief. When he came they offered him wealth, status and said, "If it is wealth that you want, we will collect it from all of us until you are the richest man among us. If it is position that you ask for, we will make you our leader, and if you want to be king, we will make you so."<sup>1</sup> The Prophet rejected all their offers. They then asked the Prophet to remove the hills and make their country wider, to make rivers flow in their country like the rivers of Syria and Irāq, to resurrect their ancestors and among those resurrected should be Qusay ibn Kilāb, who would tell them whether what Muhammad preached was right or wrong, if he said it was true, then only would they believe in Allah and recognise Muhammad as the Messenger of Allah.<sup>2</sup>

When the Prophet told them that he was not sent to do what they had asked him to do for them, they asked him to request Allah to build for him palaces, gardens and to give him treasures of gold and silver. The Prophet answered them, "I will not do that and I am not the person who will ask his Lord for that."

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1. Ibn Hishām, op.cit.vol:1, p.316.

2. Ibid, p.316.

al-Nuwairī, op.cit.vol:16, p.215.

A tradition relates that Abū Jahl<sup>1</sup> said to the Prophet, "Bring back to life two or three men from our ancestors who have died. You are most honoured before Allah, you are not less loved by Allah than 'Isā, as you say, and 'Isā did that. Will you make subservient to us the wind that will take us to Syria in a day and bring us back in another day. The long journey tires us. You are not less loved by Allah than Sulaimān and he commanded the wind and in the morning it covered him a month's journey and in the evening the same." To both requests the Prophet answered that he was not able to do that. Abū Jahl said, "If you refuse to do anything that I have asked you, do not say bad things of our gods."<sup>2</sup>

In the Qur'an Allah confirms that the Quraysh requested miracles and says,

"And they said, we will not believe in you until you cause a spring to gush forth from the earth for us, or you have a garden of date-palms and grapes, and cause rivers to gush forth therein abundantly, or cause the sky to fall on us in a piece, as you asserted or bring Allah and the angels as guarantors, or have for yourself a house of gold, or ascend into the sky,

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1. His name is 'Amr ibn al-Mughīrah from banī Makhzūm. He was called Abū l-Hakam before Islam, but was called Abū Jahl by the Prophet after Islam. The Prophet said, "Whoever calls Abu Jahl, Abu l-Hakam, has made a mistake and must ask Allah for forgiveness."

2. Al-Balādhurī, op.cit. vol:1, p.126.

and we shall not believe in your ascension till you bring down for us a book we can read. Say glory to my Lord, I am only a mortal messenger."<sup>1</sup>

In another verse Allah says, "And they said, what is this messenger who eats food and walks in the market. Why is an angel not sent to him to be a warner with him. Or why is a treasure not sent down to him or a paradise made for him so that he can eat therefrom. And the wrongdoers said, you are but following a man bewitched."<sup>2</sup>

The Quraysh also mocked at the Prophet, sneered at him and scoffed at what he said from the Qur'an. A tradition records that Umayyah ibn Khalaf of the banī Jumah always mocked the Prophet whenever he saw him.<sup>3</sup> Allah revealed, "Wailun li kulli humazin lumazah." <sup>\*</sup>Wail to every slandering traducer.

It is related that an-Nadar ibn al-Hārith al-'Abdarī, one of the scoffers, who was said to have read the books of the Persians and mixed it with Christians and Jews,<sup>4</sup> said to the Prophet, after finishing his story, "Which of us is a better narrator? Me or Muhammad?" and continued saying, "Muhammad has come to you with tales of the ancients."<sup>5</sup> Allah says,

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1. Sūrat al-Isrā', 90-94.

2. " al-Furqān, 7-8.

3. Ibn Hishām, op.cit.vol:1, p.382.

4. Al-Balādhurī, op.cit.vol:1, p.139.

5. Ibid, 140.

\*. Text: Wail: a valley in hell.

"And when our revelations are recited to them, they say, we have heard. If we wish we can say the same thing, his is only fables of the ancients."<sup>1</sup>

The Prophet recited to al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah,<sup>2</sup> who was sitting with him and some other Quraysh<sup>it</sup> in the mosque, a verse of the Qur'an which says,

"You and what you worship besides Allah are fuel of hell, to which you will come."<sup>3</sup>

Al-Walīd then told 'Abdullah ibn Az̤ziba'ra that Muhammad had said that they and what they worshipped would be the fuel of hell. 'Abdullah ibn Az̤ziba'ra said, "Ask Muhammad, is everything that is worshipped going to hell with those who worship it. We worship angels, the Jews worshipped 'Uzair and the Christians worship 'Isā ibn Maryam."<sup>4</sup> Allah revealed on the subject, "Those to whom kindness has gone forth before from us, they will be far removed from there (hell)."<sup>5</sup>

Ubayy ibn Khalaf came to the Prophet with pieces of broken bones and said to him, "You say that Allah will bring back life to these bones?"<sup>6</sup> The Prophet said, "Yes I say that, Allah will

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1. Sūrat al-Anfāl, 31.

2. Al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah ibn 'Umair ibn Makhzūm, one of the richest men of the Quraysh. The Quraysh covered the Ka'bah one year and he alone would cover it for another year.

3. Sūrat al-Anbiyā', 98.

4. Ibn Hishām, op.cit. vol:1, p.385.

5. Sūrat al-Anbiyā', 101.

6. Al-Balādhurī, op.cit. vol:1, p.137.

resurrect them and you after being broken like this and then He will put you into hell."<sup>1</sup> Allah says, "And he has coined for us a similitude, and has forgotten the fact of his creation, saying, who will revive these bones when they have rotted away. Say, He will revive them who produced them in the first place, for He is the Knower of every creation."<sup>2</sup>

There are many more verses in the Qur'an telling how the Quraysh mocked at Muhammad, the Qur'an and the Muslims. In Sūrat al-Tauba Allah says,

"And if you ask them, they will say, we only talk and jest. Say, was it at Allah and his revelation and his Messenger that you did scoff."<sup>3</sup>

"Messengers have been derided before you, but the scoffers were hemmed in by the thing that they mocked."<sup>4</sup>

"But the evil-result of their deeds overtook them, and that at which they had scoffed hemmed them in."<sup>5</sup>

"Ah, the anguish for my servant. Never does a messenger come to them but they mock him."<sup>6</sup>

The Quraysh had offered the Prophet wealth, dignity and honour. They had offered him leadership and kingship, but

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1. Ibn Hishām, op.cit. p.387.

2. Surat Yāsīn, 78-9.

3. " al-Tauba, 65.

4. " al-An'ām, 10.

5. " al-Nahl, 34.

6. " Yāsīn, 30.

they were rejected totally by the Prophet. They had accused him, abused him, hurted him mentally and physically, and asked him to bring miracles from Allah, but all their efforts resulted in failure. The Prophet continued with his message, more and more people from Quraysh and other tribes accepted Islam. Finally, the Quraysh, led by al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah, al-'Ās ibn Wā'il, al-Aswad ibn al-Muttalib and Umayyah ibn Khalaf,<sup>1</sup> met the Prophet and suggested to him that he worship their gods, al-Lāt and al-'Uzzā for a year and they would worship Allah for a year. Allah revealed to the Prophet,

"Say, you unbelievers, I shall not worship what you worship, nor will you worship what I worship, and nor that I the worshipper of what you have worshipped, and nor that you will worship what I worship. For you your religion and for me my religion."<sup>2</sup> At-Tabari commented on the last verse,<sup>3</sup> lakum dīnukum (you have your religion), you will never leave your religion because it has been stamped on you and you will die in that religion. Waliya dīn (and I my religion), I will never leave it, for it has been in Allah's knowledge that I will never exchange it for another.

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1. At-Tabarī, Tafsīr, vol:30, p.331.

2. Sūrat al-Kāfirūn.

3. At-Tabarī, Tafsīr, vol:30, p.331.

### The Boycott

The emigration to Ethiopia was not an end to the continuous conflict between the Prophet and his polytheist rivals. The persecution of the Prophet and his followers in Mecca went on. The Muslims stood firm and courageous behind their Prophet against every possible means of persecution and violence. Islam spread, and the Muslims' position became stronger and stronger with the conversion of more people to its fold.

A further step was taken by the Quraysh to paralyze the Muslims. The Quraysh managed to bring together all the clans against banū Hāshim and banū al-Muttalib. They wrote an agreement that no marriage would occur between them and banū Hāshim and banū al-Muttalib, and no trade would commence between them and the two clans.<sup>1</sup> The agreement was written by Mansūr ibn 'Ikrimah, stamped and kept in the Ka'bah.<sup>2</sup>

The motive of the boycott was apparently religious, against Muhammad and Islam, but political issues were also involved. The boycott was not against Muhammad and Muslims as a whole, for the boycott was purposely focused against banū Hāshim, and banū al-Muttalib only, while the Muslims consisted of various clans of the Quraysh. It is clear that the Quraysh's

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1. At-Tabarī, op.cit.vol:2, pp.335-6.

2. Ibn Hishām, op.cit.vol:2, p.16.

chiefs who masterminded the boycott were aware that the spreading of Islam among the Quraysh and other tribes of the Arabs, with the Prophet of Islam, who was from banu Hashim, might possibly strengthen banū Hāshim's power and position among the Arabs.

The boycott was maintained for over two years,<sup>1</sup> but the effect on banū Hāshim and banū al-Muttalib was not as what had been expected, since various members of the boycotting clans were related to banū Hāshim by marriage. They would undoubtedly give banū Hāshim every possible help that was needed. On the same account, Muslims of other clans and tribes who were not included in the boycott and whose trade activities were not restricted, would of course offer any kind of assistance to their Muslim brothers of banū Hāshim and banū al-Muttalib. On the other hand, banu Hashim's trade was not stopped completely. They still managed to maintain their trading activities with other tribes during the season, although on a very small scale.<sup>2</sup>

The boycott was put to an end through the initiative taken by five prominent Qurayshites. Hishām ibn 'Amr ibn Rabī'ah of

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1. At-Tabarī, op.cit.p.336.

2. Ibn Sa'd, op.cit.vol:1,p.209.



banu 'Āmir ibn Lu'ay, Zuhair ibn Abī Umayyah of banū Makhzūm, Mut'am ibn 'Adīf of banū Naufal ibn 'Abd Manāf, Abu l-Bakhtarī ibn Hishām and Zam'ah ibn al-Aswad of banū 'Abd al-'Uzzā.<sup>1</sup>

The Quraysh's boycott on Banu Hashim did not effect the Prophet as much as the death of his wife, Khadījah bint Khuwailid, and his uncle, Abū Tālib ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib, which occurred immediately after the end of the boycott,<sup>2</sup> one after another. The impact of their death caused great difficulty for the Prophet's mission. Banu Hashim's support towards the Prophet was not as great as it was during Abū Tālib's lifetime. Their protection was lessened to the extent that the Prophet had to ask protection from other tribes of the Quraysh when he came back from Tāif.<sup>3</sup> This was due to the realization by banū Hāshim that their support and protection would jeopardize their own material gains as well as their social status, especially after the Quraysh's boycott on them.

#### The End of the Persecution

##### The mission to Tāif

The situation in Mecca did not encourage the Prophet to spread his mission in it only, but pushed him to widen his

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1. Ibn Hishām, op.cit.vol:1, pp.397-9., At-Tabarī, op.cit.vol:2, pp.228-9.

2. Ibn Hishām, op.cit.vol:2, p.25.

3. Ibid, p.20., At-Tabarī, op.cit.vol:2, p.231.

scope to neighbouring places. The first move was to Tāif, a village of about 60 miles away from Mecca, with the hope that the Thaqif would answer his call and accept Islam. The motivation of his choice to go to Tāif was not clearly mentioned in the sources. His call for Islam was rejected by the Thaqif's chiefs,<sup>1</sup> and he had to return to Mecca.

After his attempt the Prophet preached Islam among the Arab tribes of the Peninsula who had come to Mecca for the pilgrimage. He approached banū Kindah, banū Kalb, banū Hanīfah, banū 'Amīr ibn Sa'sa'ah<sup>2</sup> and other tribes, but almost all of them rejected his call for Islam, with the exception of the Aus and the Khazraj who had willingly accepted Islam and later invited the Prophet and his followers to immigrate to Madina.

### The Hijrah

Realizing that Muhammad was being supported by other Muslims outside Mecca, and knowing that the Muslims had left Mecca secretly to a destination unknown to them, and suspecting that Muhammad would try to leave Mecca as all the others, the Quraysh held a meeting at Dar an-Nadwah<sup>3</sup> and put the Prophet under close

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1. Ibn Hishām, vol:2, p.60-1.

2. Ibid, pp.64-7. , At-Tabarī, op.cit.vol:2, pp.49-50.

3. Ibn Hishām, vol:2, p.124-6.

observation a few days before his suspected departure. The meeting came to a decision that there was no alternative in stopping Muhammad from preaching his message except to eliminate him. The decision was taken because of the fact that if the Prophet was allowed to leave Mecca freely and go to any other place, his message would continue, as he would never give up his obligation of preaching Islam, unless he was ordered to do so by the Almighty. Islam would flourish and the Quraysh's religion and other beliefs would be doomed. The plan was to use a number of young men from various clans of the Quraysh to kill Muhammad at the same time. Thus, none of Muhammad's relatives from banū 'Abd Manāf would have the ability to avenge his death, as the killers were not from one particular clan, but from several of them.<sup>1</sup>

On the very night of Muhammad's emigration, The Quraysh surrounded his house, but he slipped out of the house unnoticed and left 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib in his bed. The Prophet was then joined by Abū Bakr ibn Abī Quhāfah, who accompanied him to Madina.

It is understood from the sources that when the Muslims emigrated to Madina, all their belongings were left behind in

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1. Ibn Hishām, op.cit. vol:2, p.126.

Mecca. That was due to the problem of transporting the belongings to Madina as well as the circumstances of the emigration, which took place mostly in secret, to avoid the Quraysh preventing them doing so. Not only material belongings were left, but also wives and children.<sup>1</sup>

Muhammad's and his followers' migration to Madina stopped the Quraysh's persecution against himself, his followers and Islam, but the conflict continued and extended to a larger scope of confrontation, which included not only spiritual and physical factors, but also economic and political situations of both sides of the parties. The decision to emigrate to Madina was taken after the Prophet's second meeting with a group of Madinans (bai'at al-'Aqabah al-Thāniah),<sup>2</sup> who had come over to Mecca to proclaim their acceptance of Islam. The reasons for choosing Madina as the place for the Muslims to be immigrated to was probably two folds:

1. The acceptance of Islam by the Aus and the Khazraj, gave the assurance that they would give all assistance to their Muslim brothers when they immigrated to Madina. On the other hand the Prophet was related to one of the tribes of Madina, bani 'Adīy ibn an-Najjār, from his mother's side, and he was related

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1. Ibn Hishām, op.cit. vol:2, pp.144-5.

2. The detail story of this Bai'ah is related in Ibn Hishām, vol:2, pp.81-110.

to have visited Madina with his mother when he was still a child. His mother died on their return journey to Mecca.<sup>1</sup>

2. Madina's geographical situation was good for the Muslims, as it is situated within the trade route between Mecca and Syria. In this way the Muslims would be able to establish Madina as a new trading centre instead of Mecca. Madina is also far from Mecca which gave a lot of advantages to the Muslims if any armed clashes might happen.

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1. Ibn Hishām, op.cit. vol:1, p.177,

Al-Mustahzi'un (the scoffers)

Only two of the scoffers are mentioned in ~~the~~ Qur'an, namely, Abū Lahab and his wife. The couple are mentioned in Sūrat Tabbat. Allah says,

'Perish the hand of Abu Lahab and may he perish. His wealth and gain will not avail him. He will be plunged into flaming fire. And his wife as she carries the firewood shall have around her neck a halter of palm fibre."

There are two different traditions which relate the revelation of the sūrah. A tradition on the authority of Qatādah relates that Abu Lahab went to the Prophet and asked him what would be his reward if he accepted Islam. The Prophet answered, "Like that given to all Muslims." Abū Lahab said, "Is not there anything better for me?" The Prophet said, "What do you want?" Abu Lahab said at last, "Perish this religion that puts me and them on the same level."<sup>1</sup>

Another tradition says that the surah was revealed when the Prophet was commanded to preach his message to his nearest kinsmen, wa andhir 'ashirataka'l-aqrabīn. When he preached to them Abu Lahab said, "May you perish for the days to come. Is this what you call us to?"<sup>2</sup> The first tradition is more

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1. At-Tabarī, Tafsīr, op.cit.vol:30,p.336.

2. At-Tabarī, Tarikh, op.cit.vol:2,p.319.

acceptable logically as the reason for the revelation of the sūrah. The Message of Allah, in the second tradition, when the Prophet summoned his nearest kinsmen to Islam, was still vague to the Quraysh and Islam at that moment was in its early stages. There was still no opposition from the Quraysh of any kind. The event related in the first tradition might have taken place at any time after the Prophet had proclaimed his mission, as the sources do not mention the exact date of the event. The objectives of Islam were known to the Quraysh, and they knew who Muhammad's followers were. They were as mentioned by the sources freedmen and slaves as well as confederates of Quraysh, who were all treated equally in Islam. This equality which does not give any advantages to the rich, the strong and the powerful, made Abu Lahab said his nasty words to the Prophet, for he enjoyed considerable power in Meccan society.

Abū Lahab's name was 'Abd l-'Uzzā ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim.<sup>1</sup> He was the Prophet's uncle and one of the bravest and most brilliant of <sup>the</sup> Quraysh during the Jahiliyah and was said to be a rich man. His pride and arrogance prevented him from following the religion preached by his nephew. He was one of the strongest opponents of Islam and used every possible means

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1. Al-'Alām, vol:4, pp.134-5.

means of activity to destroy the Prophet, his followers and Islam itself. He was the only person who did not join his clan in protecting the Prophet, when the situation of Muslims was on the brink of destruction. He died a polytheist, shortly after the Battle of Badr.<sup>1</sup>

His wife who is described in ~~the~~ Qur'ān as wood-carrier (ḥammālat al-ḥatab), was Umm Jamīl bint Harb ibn Umayyah, Abū Sufyān's sister. Her description as wood-carrier was due to her performance in carrying thorns and putting them on the path taken by the Prophet.<sup>2</sup> When she heard of the revelation, she went to the Prophet, who was with Abu Bakr in the mosque and said to the latter, as she could not see the Prophet, "Where is your friend, I have heard that he had slandered me. By Allah I am a poet, and she said the following:<sup>3</sup>

We disobeyed mudhammim<sup>4</sup> (Muhammad) We refused his authority

We hated his religion

Other scoffers whose names are not referred to in ~~the~~ Qur'ān were obviously mentioned in history and Quranic commentary books. The mentioning of the scoffers' names by historians

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1. Dā'irat al-ma'ārif al-Islāmiyah, subject, alif, vol:1, p.395.

2. Ibn Hishām, op.cit. vol:1, p.380.

3. Ibid, p.381.

4. Mudhammim, the name given to the Prophet Muhammad by the Quraysh which means dispraised, the opposite word of Muhammad.



and Quranic commentators is based on Quranic verses which were revealed to the Prophet due to particular events and specific incidents caused by the Quraysh against the Prophet and Islam. Some verses were revealed specially for some particular individuals, while others were directed at the groups of the Prophet's opponents and opposers.

Allah says,

"Woe to each sinful liar, He hears the revelations of Allah recited to him, and then continues in pride as though he does not hear them, give him tidings of a painful punishment."<sup>1</sup> The verse was directed at an-Nadar ibn l-Hārith,<sup>2</sup> who was one of the Prophet's opponents. Ibn 'Abbas related that Allah revealed eight verses in connection with him and his activities against the Prophet. In another verse Allah says,

"Do not obey each insulting oath-monger, a slanderer going about with calumnies, hindering all good, trespassing beyond bounds, deep in sin. Violent with all that, intrusive, even if he possesses wealth and sons."<sup>3</sup> The revelation of this verse was related to al-Akhnas ibn Sharīq ibn 'Amr al-Thaqafī.<sup>4</sup> Another verse revealed to the Prophet was attributed to al-'Ās ibn Wā'il,<sup>5</sup> Allah says,

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1. Sūrat al-Jāthiyah, 7, 8.

2. Ibn Hishām, op.cit. vol:1, p.384.

3. Sūrat al-Qalam, 10-16.

4. Ibn Hishām, op.cit. vol:1, p.386., At-Tabarī, Tafsīr, vol:29, pp.14-15.

5. Ibn Hishām, op.cit. vol:1, p.383.

"Have you not seen him who disbelieves in our revelations and say, assuredly I shall be given wealth and children. Has he penetrated to the Unseen or has he made a pact with the Beneficient? Nay, We shall record what he says and prolong for him a span of torment. And we shall inherit all that he talks of and he will come to Us alone."<sup>1</sup>

In verses directed to groups of scoffers, Allah describes them in two words; Al-Mustahzi'un and al-Muqtasimun. Allah says,

"For sufficient we are to you against those who scoff, who set some other god along with Allah, and they will come to know"<sup>2</sup> It is related on the authority of 'Urwah ibn az-Zubair that the Mustahzi'un indicated in the verse, were a number of prominent personalities from several clans of the Quraysh. They were al-Aswad ibn 'Abd Yaghūth ibn Wahb ibn 'Abd Manāf of banī Zuhrah, al-Aswad ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib, of banī Asad ibn 'Abd l-'Uzzā, al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah ibn 'Abdullah of banī Makhzūm, al-'Ās ibn Wā'il ibn Hishām of banī Sahm ibn 'Amr and al-Hārith ibn t-Tilātilah ibn 'Amr of banī Khuzā'ah.<sup>3</sup> Allah says,

"As we sent down for those who make division. Those who

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1. Sūrat Maryam, 77-80.
  2. Sūrat al-Hijr, 95-6.
  3. At-Tabarī, Tafsir, vol:14, pp.48-51.

break the Qur'ān into parts. By your Lord. We shall question every one of them, on what they used to do."<sup>1</sup> The word al-muq-tasimūn in the verse refers to a group of <sup>the</sup> Quraysh who divided among themselves the duty of preventing <sup>the</sup> Prophet Muhammad from preaching Islam during the pilgrimage. During the period, almost all the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula came to Mecca to perform their obligation. Muhammad was stopped from reaching them and preaching to them. According to Ibn 'Abbas<sup>2</sup> the muq-tasimūn were 17 people representing several clans of the Quraysh. They were three from banī 'Abd Shams, Ḥanzalah ibn Abī Sufyān, 'Utbah and Shaibah sons of Rabī'ah ibn 'Abd Shams, seven from banī Makhzūm, Abū Jahl, al-'Ās ibn Wā'il, Abū Qays ibn l-Walīd, Qays ibn Fākih, Zuhair ibn Abī Umayyah, Aswad ibn 'Abd l-Asad, and as-Sā'ib ibn as-Saif, one from banī 'Abd al-Dār, an-Nadar ibn l-Ḥārith, two from banī Sahm, Munabbih and Nubaih sons of al-Ḥajjāj, and two from banī Jumāh, Umayyah ibn Khalaf and Aus ibn Mūsir.

Another list of the Prophet's opponents related by Ibn Sa'd contains the same names mentioned in the list related by 'Urwah and Ibn 'Abbas, with some additional names such as 'Uqbah ibn Abī Mu'it, Umayyah and Ubay sons of Khalaf, al-Hakam ibn Abī l-'Ās, 'Adī ibn al-Ḥamrā' and some others. Almost all

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1. Sūrat al-Hijr, 90-3.

2. Ibn Ḥabīb, op.cit. pp. 160-1.

the names mentioned in the traditions, based on the Quranic verses, were of the same persons, but there were probably others who opposed the Prophet and Islam and whose names or deeds are not mentioned in ~~the~~ Qur'an.

Studying the scoffers names, gives an impression that most of them were prominent members of society, who possessed wealth and dignity among their clans. Some of them were members of Dar an-Nadwah, the body responsible for running the Meccans' affairs. Some of them were close relatives of the Prophet, such as Abū Lahab, his uncle, al-Aswad ibn 'Abd Yaghūth, his cousin, Zuhair and 'Abdullah sons of Abi Umayyah, also his cousins, sons of his aunt 'Ātikah bint 'Abd al-Muttalib. As far as the sources are concerned none of the Prophet's opponents were religious men, even though they were very enthusiastic in defending their religion and almost all of them were merchants and traders.

The sources relate that nearly all the Prophet's opponents died in polytheism, except for a few of them who accepted Islam, when the Prophet conquered Mecca nine years after his migration to Madina. Among those who accepted Islam were Abū Sufyān ibn Harb, and al-Hakam ibn Abī al-'Āṣī.

In addition to the scoffers there were also poets who used their skill and talent to satirize the Prophet and Islam.

A tradition relates that there were three Qurayshite poets who did so, 'Abdullah ibn az-Ziba'rā, Abū Sufyān al-Hārith ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib and 'Amr ibn l-'Ās. Nothing of their poetry which was said against the Prophet and Islam, during the Prophet's mission in Mecca, is to be found in the sources. That, this is missing shows clearly that the Muslims did not have the least interest in relating and compiling the satire against the Prophet and Islam. What was recorded of their poetry was mostly said after the Battle of Badr and the period after that, but their satire was answered back by the Muslim poets such as Ḥassān ibn Thābit, 'Abdullah ibn Rawāḥah and Ka'b ibn Mālīk.

### Conclusion

1. The emergence of Islam and its new teaching brought <sup>about a</sup> great confusion, not only among the Quraysh, but among the Arabs as well. Some of them who were annoyed with their ancestors' faith and belief accepted Islam, while the majority of them adhered to their ancestral creed and created great problems to the spreading of Islam.
2. The revelation of ~~the~~ Qur'an, as words of Allah, with its perfection both in content and language, challenged the quality of the Arabic poetry as well as other branches of its literature. The teaching of ~~the~~ Qur'an changed the social structure of the pre-Islamic society and abolished its faith and belief.
3. The situation of hardship and torture experienced by the Prophet Muhammad and his followers during the period of his mission in Mecca, helped to create <sup>a</sup> conflict of ideas in the poetic life of the Arabs, Meccan in particular, and changed the features and style of the pre-Islamic poetry from its traditional character and ~~heralded the~~ beginning of a new era of the Arabic poetry as well as its literature.
4. The acceptance of Islam by some of the Arabs, slowed down the production of Arabic poetry, especially in Mecca, as

the Muslims were busy defending themselves from the Quraysh's accusation and learning the new religion as well as remembering the words of Allah. At all events, the production of poetry among other Arabs of the Peninsula was not affected by the situation in Mecca. The meeting in al-aswāq and the recitation of poetry went on as usual.

5. Poetry said in Mecca, especially during the preaching of Islam could be classified as follows:

- a. Poetry against the Prophet and Islam.
  - b. Poetry said in support of the Prophet and his cause.
- a. Poetry said against the Prophet Muhammad, his followers and Islam was composed by the Qurayshite poets and used by them as one of their weapons to attack and assault Islam. But as explained earlier (p. 156) nothing of their poetry was recorded, this could be explained in two ways:
- i. No interest from poetic narrators in relating and compiling the satire against the Prophet and Islam
  - ii. The possibility that the Quraysh did not have the opportunity of composing any of the poetry due to their great involvement in persecuting and torturing the Muslims, or the probability that when they accepted Islam, they did not want to bring back the memory of their enmity towards the Prophet and Islam.

b. Most of the poetry related in the sources, which supported the Prophet and his Islamic course was said - by Muslim poets, with the exception of verses said by Abū Tālīb, the Prophet's uncle, who, as believed by the sources, did not accept Islam till the end of his life. The poetry was composed largely to defend Islam, to show the hatred of idols and cultures of the pre-Islamic Arabs and to praise the Prophet. Such were verses of 'Amr ibn Jumah, when he condemned the idols and praised Islam:<sup>1</sup>

wallahi lau kunta ilāhan lam takun (Rajaz)  
 anta wa kalbun wasta bi'rin fī qaran  
 uffin limulqāka ilāhan mustadan  
 al-āna fattashnāka 'an sū'i'lghiban  
 alhamdulillahi 'l-'alīyi dhi l-minān  
 al-wāhibu r-razzāqi dayyānu d-dīn  
 huwa 'l-ladhī anqadhanī min qabli an  
 akūna fī zulmati qabrin murtahan

By Allah if you are the God, it will not be  
 that you and a dog tied together in the middle of a well  
 Shame to the one who formed you and took you as god  
 now we inspected your stupidity  
 Praise <sup>be</sup> to Allah, the Supreme, the Benefactor,  
 The Giver, the Provider <sup>of</sup> the Godly religion  
 He, who saves me  
 from being in the gloomy grave

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1. Al-Hamid, op.cit. p.41



There are few verses <sup>been</sup> reported to have ~~been~~ said by 'Uthmān ibn Maz'ūn expressing his emotion to his cousin Umayyah ibn Khalaf who had persecuted him and made him flee to Ethiopia with other Muslims:<sup>1</sup>

a-Taimaibn 'Amrin lilladhī jā'a bighdātan (Tawīl)  
 wa min dūnihi al-sharmāni wa l-birki akta'u  
 a-akhrajānī min batni makkata āminan  
 wa askantanī fī sarhi baidā'a tuqḍha'u  
 tarīshu nibālan lāyūwātika rīshuhā  
 wa tabrī nibālan rīshuha laka ajma'u  
 wa hārabta aqwāman kirāman a'izzatan  
 wa ahlakta aqwāman bihim kunta tafza'u  
 sata'lamu in nābatka yauman mulimmatun  
 wa aslamaka l-aubāshu ma kunta taṣna'u  
 O Taym ibn 'Amr, I wonder at him who came with enmity  
 when the <sup>gulfs</sup> two and the broad high land lay between us  
 Did you drive me out of Mecca where I was safe  
 and make me live in a loathsome white castle.  
 You feather arrows whose feathering will not help you  
 you sharpen arrows whose feathers are all for you.  
 You fight noble strong people  
 and destroy those from whom you sought help.  
 You will know one day when misfortune attacks you  
 and strangers betray you, what you have done.

1. Ibn Hishām, op.cit.vol:1, pp.355-6.

There are verses recited by Abū Tālib praising the Prophet with the intention of maintaining the unity of his clan in defending the Prophet.<sup>1</sup>

idha 'ajutama'at yauman Qurayshun limafkharin (Tawīl)  
fa 'Abdumanāfin sirruhā wa samimuhā  
wa 'in hussilat ashrafu 'abdimanāfihā  
fa fī hashimin ashrafuhā wa qadimuhā  
wain fakharat<sup>kh</sup> yauman fainna Muhammadan  
huwa l-mustafa min sirrihā wa karimiha  
ta dā'at qurayshun ghat<sup>th</sup>thuhā wa saminuhā  
'alainā falam tazfar wa hashat hulumuha

If one day Quraysh gathered together to boast,

'Abd Manāf would be their heart and soul.

And if the nobles of 'Abd Manāf were reckoned,  
amongst Hashim would be their noblest and chief.

If they boast one day, then Muhammad  
would be the chosen noble and honourable one.

Quraysh summoned every one against us

They were not successful and they were besides themselves.

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1. Ibn Hishām, op.cit. vol:1, p.283.

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