

Birth of the Seal of Prophets

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Abdullah, father of the Prophet, died a few month before (or two months after) his birth, and" his grandfather 'Abdul-Muttalib took over the care and upbringing of the child. After a few months, according to the age-long custom of the Arabs, the child was entrusted to a bedouin woman Halimah by name, of the tribe of Bani-Sa'd, for his upbringing. When he was only six years old, he lost his mother as well; so, the doubly-orphaned child was brought up by 'Abdul-Muttalib with the most tender care. It was the will of God that the Prophet to-be should undergo all the sufferings, pains and privations incidental to human life in order that he might

learn to bear them with becoming fortitude and raise his stature in human perfection.

Not two years had passed before 'Abdul-Muttalib also expired.' Abdul-Muttalib died at the age of 82, leaving the care and custody of the orphaned Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) to Abu Talib. Abu Talib and his wife, Fatimah Bint Asad, loved Muhammad more than their own children. As the Holy Prophet himself said, Fatima Bint Asad was his "mother" who kept her own children waiting while she fed the Holy Prophet, kept her own children cold while she gave him warm clothes. Abu Talib always kept the child with him day and night. Let's know more about his holy character. Abu Talib had succeeded 'Abdul-Muttalib in Siqayah and Rifadah and was an active participant in the trade caravans.

When Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) was 12 years old, Abu Talib bade farewell to his family to go to Syria. Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) clung to him and cried. Abu Talib was so moved that he took the child with him. When the caravan reached Busra in Syria they, as usual, stayed near the monastery of a monk, Buhayra. It is not possible to give here the full account of that visit.

Suffice it to say that the monk, seeing some of the signs, which he knew from the old books, was convinced that the orphan child was the last Prophet-to-be. To make sure, he started a conversation with him, and at one point said: "I give you oath of Lat and Uzza to tell me..." The child cried out: "Don't take the names of Lat and Uzza before me! I hate them!" Buhayra was now convinced. He advised Abu Talib not to proceed to Damascus "because if the Jews found out what I have seen, I am afraid they will try to harm him. For sure, this child is to have a great eminence."

Abu Talib, acting on this advice, sold all his merchandise for cheaper prices then and there, .returning at once to Mecca

Sacrilegious War (Harb-ul-Fijar) and League of Virtuous (Hilful-Fudhul)

At a place known as 'Ukaz, a great annual fair used to be held during the month of Dhul-Qa'dah during which war and bloodshed were forbidden. At the time of the fair, 'Ukaz presented a scene of pleasure and abandonment with its dancing girls, gaming tables, drunken orgies, poetic contests and shows of prowess ending frequently in brawls and bloodshed. At one of the fairs, war broke out between the Quraish and the Banu Kinanah on one side and the Qais 'Aylan on the other.

This war continued for a number of years with a considerable loss of life and varying fortunes. The lewd scenes, drunken affrays and the horrors of the war must have created a deep impression on Muhammad's sensitive mind. When the Quraish were ultimately victorious, a league was formed, on the suggestion of Zubayr, an uncle of the Prophet, to prevent disturbances of peace, to help victims of oppression, and to protect travelers. Muhammad took a very active interest in the functioning of this League which came into being as a result of a settlement known as Hilf-ul-Fudhul between Banu Hashim, Banu Taym, Banu Asad, Banu Zuhrah and Banu Muttalib. The League continued to function for half a century following the inception of Islam.

Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) marries Khadijah

Now, Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) was old enough to go with the trade caravans. But Abu Talib's financial position had become very weak because of the expenses of Rifadah and Siqayah, and it was no longer possible for him to equip Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) with the merchandise on his own. He, therefore, advised him to act as agent for a noble lady, Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, who was the wealthiest person in Quraish. It is written that in the trade caravans, her merchandise usually equaled the merchandise of the whole tribe put together. Her genealogy joins with that of the Holy Prophet at Qusay. She was Khadijah daughter of Khuwaylid ibn Asad ibn 'Abdul-'Uzza ibn Qusay. The reputation which Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) enjoyed for his honesty and integrity, led Khadijah to willingly entrust her goods to him for sale in Syria. He traded in such a way that the goods earned more profit than expected, and yet he was praised for his integrity, honesty and generosity. Khadijah was very much impressed. Only two months after his return to Mecca, he was married to Khadijah. He was twenty-five years of age and Khadijah was forty and a widow.

Reconstruction of the Ka'bah

In about 605 A.D., when the Holy Prophet was 35 years old, a flood swept Mecca and the building of the Ka'bah was badly damaged. The Quraish decided to rebuild it. When the walls reached a certain height, a dispute arose between various clans as to whom should the honor of placing the Black Stone (Hajar Aswad) in its place go. This dispute threatened to assume serious proportions but, at last, it was agreed upon that the first person to enter the precincts of the Ka'bah the next morning should arbitrate this issue. It so happened, that first person was none other than Muhammad (s.a.w.a.). The Quraish were pleased with the turn of the events because Muhammad was well recognized as the Truthful and Trust-worthy personality. Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) put his own robe on the ground and put the Black Stone on it. He told the disputing clans to send one representative each to hold the corners of the robe and to raise it.

When the robe was raised to the required level, he took hold of the Stone and put it in its place. This was a judgement, which settled the dispute to the satisfaction of all the parties. At this time, he had entered into several business partnerships and always acted with great integrity in his dealings with his partners. 'Abdullah, son of Abu Hamza, narrates that he had entered into a transaction with Muhammad (s.a.w.a.). Its details had yet to be finalized when he had suddenly to leave promising that he would return soon. When, after three days, he went again to the spot, he found Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) waiting for him. Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) did not remonstrate with him. He just said that he had been there for all those three days waiting for him. Saib and Qays, who also had business transactions with him, testify to his exemplary dealings. People were so impressed by his uprightness and integrity, by the purity of his life, his unflinching fidelity, and his strict sense of duty that they called him "al-Amin," the trusted one

Muhammad(S.A.W.), The Prophet

In the desert of Arabia was Mohammad born, according to Muslim historians, on April 20, 571. The name means "highly praised." He is to me the greatest mind among all the sons of Arabia. He means so much more than all the poets and kings that preceded him in that impenetrable desert of red sand.

When he appeared Arabia was a desert-- a nothing. Out of nothing a new world was fashioned by the mighty spirit of Mohammad -- a new life, a new culture, a new civilization, a new kingdom which extended from Morocco to Indies and influenced the thought and life of three continents -- Asia, Africa and Europe. When I thought of writing on Mohammad the prophet, I was a bit hesitant because it was to write about a religion I do not profess and it is a delicate matter to do so for there are many persons professing various religions and belonging to

diverse school of thought and denominations even in same religion. Though it is sometimes, claimed that religion is entirely personal yet it can not be gainsaid that it has a tendency to envelop the whole universe seen as well unseen. It somehow permeates something or other our hearts, our souls, our minds their conscious as well as subconscious and unconscious levels too. The problem assumes overwhelming importance when there is a deep conviction that our past, present and future all hang by the soft delicate, tender silked cord. If we further happen to be highly sensitive, the center of gravity is very likely to be always in a state of extreme tension. Looked at from this point of view, the less said about other religion the better.

Let our religions be deeply hidden and embedded in the resistance of our innermost hearts fortified by unbroken seals on our lips. But there is another aspect of this problem. Man lives in society. Our lives are bound with the lives of others willingly or unwillingly, directly or indirectly. We eat the food grown in the same soil, drink water, from the same the same spring and breathe the same air. Even while staunchly holding our own views, it would be helpful, if we try to adjust ourselves to our surroundings, if we also know to some extent, how the mind our neighbor moves and what the main springs of his actions are. From this angle of vision it is

highly desirable that one should try to know all religions of the world, in the proper spirit, to promote mutual understanding and better appreciation of our neighborhood, immediate and remote. Further, our thoughts are not scattered as appear to be on the surface. They have got themselves crystallized around a few nuclei in the form of great world religions and living faiths that guide and motivate the lives of millions that inhabit this earth of ours. It is our duty, in one sense if we have the ideal of ever becoming a citizen of the world before us, to make a little attempt to know the great religions and system of philosophy that have ruled mankind.

In spite of these preliminary remarks, the ground in these field of religion, where there is often a conflict between intellect and emotion is so slippery that one is constantly reminded of 'fools that rush in where angels fear to tread.' It is also not so complex from another point of view. The subject of my writing is about the tenets of a religion which is historic and its prophet who is also a historic personality. Even a hostile critic like Sir William Muir speaking about the holy Quran says that. "There is probably in the world no other book which has remained twelve centuries with so pure text." I may also add Prophet Mohammad is also a historic personality, every event of whose life has been most carefully recorded and even the minutest details preserved intact for the posterity. His life and works are not wrapped in mystery.

My work today is further lightened because those days are fast disappearing when Islam was highly misrepresented by some of its critics for reasons political and otherwise. Prof. Bevan

writes in Cambridge Medieval History, "Those account of Mohammad and Islam which were published in Europe before the beginning of 19th century are now to be regarded as literary curiosities." My problem is to write this monograph is easier because we are now generally not fed on this kind of history and much time need be spent on pointing out our misrepresentation of Islam.

The theory of Islam and Sword for instance is not heard now frequently in any quarter worth the name. The principle of Islam that there is no compulsion in religion is well known. Gibbon, a historian of world repute says, " A pernicious tenet has been imputed to Mohammadans, the duty of extirpating all the religions by sword". This charge based on ignorance and bigotry, says the eminent historian, is refuted by Quran, by history of Musalman conquerors and by their public and legal toleration of Christian worship. The great success of Mohammad's life had been effected by sheer moral force, without a stroke of sword. But in pure self-defence, after repeated efforts of conciliation had utterly failed, circumstances dragged him into the battlefield.

But the prophet of Islam changed the whole strategy of the battlefield. The total number of casualties in all the wars that took place during his lifetime when the whole Arabian Peninsula came under his banner, does not exceed a few hundreds in all. But even on the battlefield he taught the Arab barbarians to pray, to pray not individually, but in congregation to God the Almighty. During the dust and storm of warfare whenever the time for prayer came, and it comes five times a every day, the congregation prayer had not to be postponed even on the battlefield. A party had to be engaged in bowing their heads before God while other was engaged with the enemy. After finishing the prayers, the two parties had to exchange their positions. To the Arabs, who would fight for forty years on the slight provocation that a camel belonging to the guest of one tribe had strayed into the grazing land belonging to other tribe and both sides had fought till they lost 70,000 lives in all; threatening the extinction of both the tribes to such furious Arabs, the Prophet of Islam taught self-control and discipline to the extent of praying even on the battlefield. In an aged of barbarism, the Battlefield itself was humanized and strict instructions were issued not to cheat, not to break trust, not to mutilate, not to kill a child or woman or an old man, not to hew down date palm nor burn it, not to cut a fruit tree, not to molest any person engaged in worship. His own treatment with his bitterest enemies is the noblest example for his followers. At the conquest of Mecca, he stood at the zenith of his power. The city which had refused to listen to his mission, which had tortured him and his followers, which had driven him and his people into exile and which had unrelentingly persecuted and boycotted him even when he had taken refuge in a place more than 200 miles

away, that city now lay at his feet. By the laws of war he could have justly avenged all the cruelties inflicted on him and his people. But what treatment did he accord to them? Mohammad's heart flowed with affection and he declared "This day, there is no REPROOF against you and you are all free." This day he proclaimed. "I trample under my feet all distinctions between man and man, all hatred between man and man." This was one of the chief objects why he permitted war in self defense, that is to unite human beings. And when once this object was achieved, even his worst enemies were pardoned. Even those who killed his beloved uncle, Hamazah, mangled his body, ripped it open, even chewed a piece of his liver. The principles of universal brotherhood and doctrine of the equality of mankind which he proclaimed represents one very great contribution of Mohammad to the social uplift of humanity. All great religions have preached the same doctrine but the prophet of Islam had put this theory into actual practice and its value will be fully recognized, perhaps centuries hence, when international consciousness being awakened, racial prejudices may disappear and greater brotherhood of humanity come into existence. Miss. Sarojini Naidu speaking about this aspect of Islam says, "It was the first religion that preached and practiced democracy; for in the mosque, when the minaret is sounded and the worshipers are gathered together, the democracy of Islam is embodied five times a day when the peasant and the king kneel side by side and proclaim, "God alone is great." The great poetess of India continues " I have been struck over and over again by this indivisible unity of Islam that makes a man instinctively a brother. When you meet an Egyptian, an Algerian and Indian and a Turk in London, it matters not that Egypt is the motherland of one and India is the motherland of another." Mahatma Gandhi, in his inimitable style, says "Some one has said that Europeans in South Africa dread the advent Islam-Islam that civilized Spain, Islam that took the torch light to Morocco and preached to the world the Gospel of brotherhood. The Europeans of South Africa dread the Advent of Islam. They may claim equality with the white races. They may well dread it, if brotherhood is a sin. If it is equality of colored races then their dread is well founded."

Every year, during the Haj, the world witnesses the wonderful spectacle of this international Exhibition of Islam in leveling all distinctions of race, color and rank. Not only the Europeans, the African, the Arabian, the Persian, the Indians, the Chinese all meet together in Medina as members of one divine family, but they are clad in one dress every person in two simple pieces of white seamless cloth, one piece round the loin the other piece over the shoulders, bare head without pomp or ceremony, repeating "Here am I O God; at thy command; thou art one and alone; Here am I." Thus There remains nothing to differentiate the high from the low and every pilgrim carries home the impression of the international significance of Islam. In the opinion of

Prof. Hurgronje "the league of nations founded by prophet of Islam put the principle of international unity of human brotherhood on such Universal foundations as to show candle to other nations." In the words of same Professor "the fact is that no nation of the world can show a parallel to what Islam has done the realization of the idea of the League of Nations. The prophet of Islam brought the reign of democracy in its best form. The Caliph Umar, the Caliph Ali and the son inlaw of the prophet, the caliph Mansur, Abbas, the son of Caliph Mamun and many other caliphs and kings had to appear before the judge as ordinary men in Islamic courts. Even today we all know how the black Negroes were treated by the civilized white races. Consider the state of BILAL, a Negro Slave, in the days of the prophet of Islam
nearly 14 centuries ago.

The office of calling Muslims to prayer was considered to be of status in the early days of Islam and it was offered to this Negro slave. After the conquest of Mecca, the Prophet ordered him to call for prayer and the Negro slave, with his black color and his thick lips, stood over the roof of the holy mosque at Mecca called the Ka'ba the most historic and the holiest mosque in the Islamic world, when some proud Arabs painfully cried loud, "Oh, this black Negro Slave, woe be to him. He stands on the roof of holy Ka'ba to call for prayer." At that moment, the prophet announced to the world, this verse of the holy QURAN for the first time.

"O mankind, surely we have created you, families
and tribes, so you may know one another.

Surely, the most honorable of you
with God is MOST RIGHTEOUS AMONG you.

Surely, God is Knowing, Aware."

And these words of the holy Quran created such a mighty transformation that the Caliph of Islam, the purest of Arabs by birth, offered their daughter in marriage to this Negro Slave, and whenever, the second Caliph of Islam, known to history as Umar the great, the commander of faithful, saw this Negro slave, he immediately stood in reverence and welcomed him by "Here come our master; Here come our lord." What a tremendous change was brought by Quran in the Arabs, the proudest people at that time on the earth. This is the reason why Goethe, the greatest of German poets, speaking about the Holy Quran declared that, "This book will go on exercising through all ages a most potent influence." This is also the reason why George Bernard Shaw says, "If any religion has a chance of ruling over England, say, Europe, within the
next 100 years, it is Islam".

It is this same democratic spirit of Islam that emancipated women from the bondage of man. Sir Charles Edward Archibald Hamilton says "Islam teaches the inherent sinlessness of man.

It teaches that man and woman have come from the same essence, possess the same soul and have been equipped with equal capabilities for intellectual, spiritual and moral attainments."

The Arabs had a very strong tradition that one who can smite with the spear and can wield the sword would inherit. But Islam came as the defender of the weaker sex and entitled women to share the inheritance of their parents. It gave women, centuries ago right of owning property, yet it was only 12 centuries later, in 1881, that England, supposed to be the cradle of democracy adopted this institution of Islam and the act was called "the married woman act". But centuries earlier, the Prophet of Islam had proclaimed that "Women are twin halves of men."

The rights of women are sacred. See that women maintained rights granted to them."

Islam is not directly concerned with political and economic systems, but indirectly and in so far as political and economic affairs influence man's conduct, it does lay down some very important principles to govern economic life. According to Prof. Massignon, it maintains the balance between exaggerated opposites and has always in view the building of character which is the basis of civilization. This is secured by its law of inheritance, by an organized system of charity known as Zakat, and by regarding as illegal all anti-social practices in the economic field like monopoly, usury, securing of predetermined unearned income and increments, cornering markets, creating monopolies, creating an artificial scarcity of any commodity in order to force the prices to rise. Gambling is illegal.

Contribution to schools, to places of worship, hospitals, digging of wells, opening of orphanages are highest acts of virtue. Orphanages have sprung for the first time, it is said, under the teaching of the prophet of Islam. The world owes its orphanages to this prophet who was himself born an orphan. "Good all this" says Carlyle about Mohammad. "The natural voice of humanity, of pity and equity, dwelling in the heart of this wild son of nature, speaks."

A historian once said a great man should be judged by three tests: Was he found to be of true metal by his contemporaries? Was he great enough to raise above the standards of his age? Did he leave anything as permanent legacy to the world at large? This list may be further extended but all these three tests of greatness are eminently satisfied to the highest degree in case of prophet Mohammad. Some illustrations of the last two have already been mentioned.

The first is: Was the Prophet of Islam found to be of true metal by his contemporaries? Historical records show that all the contemporaries of Mohammad both friends and foes, acknowledged the sterling qualities, the spotless honesty, the noble virtues, the absolute sincerity and every trustworthiness of the apostle of Islam in all walks of life and in every sphere of human activity. Even the Jews and those who did not believe in his message,

adopted him as the arbiter in their personal disputes by virtue of his perfect impartiality. Even those who did not believe in his message were forced to say "O Mohammad, we do not call you a liar, but we deny him who has given you a book and inspired you with a message." They thought he was one possessed. They tried violence to cure him.

But the best of them saw that a new light had dawned on him and they hastened him to seek the enlightenment. It is a notable feature in the history of prophet of Islam that his nearest relation, his beloved cousin and his bosom friends, who know him most intimately, were not thoroughly imbued with the truth of his mission and were convinced of the genuineness of his divine inspiration. If these men and women, noble, intelligent, educated and intimately acquainted with his private life had perceived the slightest signs of deception, fraud, earthliness, or lack of faith in him, Mohammad's moral hope of regeneration , spiritual awakening , and social reform would all have been foredoomed to a failure and whole edifice would have crumbled to pieces in a moment.

On the contrary, we find that devotion of his followers was such that he was voluntarily acknowledged as dictator of their lives. They braved for him persecutions and danger; they trusted, obeyed and honored him even in the most excruciating torture and severest mental agony caused by excommunication even unto death. Would this have been so, had they noticed the slightest backsliding in their master ?

Read the history of the early converts to Islam, and every heart would melt at the sight of the brutal treatment of innocent Muslim men and women.

Sumayya, an innocent women, is cruelly torn into pieces with spears, An example is made of " Yassir whose legs are tied to two camels and the beast were are driven in opposite directions", Khabbab bin Arth is made lie down on the bed of burning coal with the brutal legs of their merciless tyrant on his breast so that he may not move and this makes even the fat beneath his skin melt." "Khabban bin Adi is put to death in a cruel manner by mutilation and cutting off his flesh piece-meal."

In the midst of his tortures, being asked weather he did not wish Mohammad in his place while he was in his house with his family, the sufferer cried out that he was gladly prepared to sacrifice himself his family and children and why was it that these sons and daughters of Islam not only surrendered to their prophet their allegiance but also made a gift of their hearts and souls to their master ? Is not the intense faith and conviction on part of immediate followers of Mohammad, the noblest testimony to his sincerity and to his utter self-absorption in his appointed task ?

And these men were not of low station or inferior mental caliber. Around him in quite early

days, gathered what was best and noblest in Mecca, its flower and cream, men of position, rank, wealth and culture, and from his own kith and kin, those who knew all about his life. All the first four Caliphs, with their towering personalities, were converts of this period. The Encyclopedia Britannica says that "Mohammad is the most successful of all Prophets and religious personalities".

But the success was not the result of mere accident. It was not a hit of fortune. It was a recognition of fact that he was found to be true metal by his contemporaries. It was the result of his admirable and all compelling personality.

The personality of Mohammad! it is most difficult to get into the truth of it. Only a glimpse of it I can catch. What a dramatic succession of picturesque scenes. There is Mohammad, the prophet, There is Mohammad the General; Mohammad the King; Mohammad the Warrior; Mohammad the businessman; Mohammad the preacher; Mohammad the philosopher; Mohammad the statesman Mohammad the Orator; Mohammad the reformer; Mohammad the refuge of orphans; Mohammad the Protector of Slaves; Mohammad the emancipator of women; Mohammad the Law-giver; Mohammad the Judge; Mohammad the Saint. And in all these magnificent roles, in all these departments of human activities, he is like, a hero.

Orphanhood is extreme of helplessness and his life upon this earth began with it; Kingship is the height of the material power and it ended with it. From an orphan boy to a persecuted refugee and then to an overlord, spiritual as well as temporal, of a whole nation and Arbiter of its destinies, with all its trials and temptations, with all its vicissitudes and changes, its lights and shades, its up and downs, its terror and splendor, he has stood the fire of the world and came out unscathed to serve as a model in every face of life. his Achievements are not limited to one aspect of life, but cover the whole field of human conditions.

If for instance, greatness consist in the purification of a nation, steeped in barbarism and immersed in absolute moral darkness, that dynamic personality who has transformed, refined and uplifted an entire nation, sunk low as the Arabs were, and made them the torch-bearer of civilization and learning, has every claim to greatness. If greatness lies in unifying the discordant elements of society by ties of brotherhood and charity, the prophet of the desert has got every title to this distinction.

If greatness consists in reforming those wrapt in degrading and blind superstition and pernicious practices of every kind, the prophet of Islam has wiped out superstitions and irrational fear from the hearts of millions. If it lies in displaying high morals, Mohammmad has been admitted by friend and foe as Al Amin, or the faithful. If a conqueror is a great man, here

is a person who rose from helpless orphan and an humble creature to be the ruler of Arabia, the equal to Chosroes and Caesars, one who founded great empire that has survived all these 14 centuries. If the devotion that a leader commands is the criterion of greatness, the prophet's

name even today exerts a magic charm over millions of souls, spread all over the world. He had not studied philosophy in the school of Athens or Rome, Persia, India, or China. Yet, He could proclaim the highest truths of eternal value to mankind. Illiterate himself, he could yet speak with an eloquence and fervor which moved men to tears, to tears of ecstasy. Born an orphan blessed with no worldly goods, he was loved by all. He had studied at no military academy; yet he could organize his forces against tremendous odds and gained victories through the moral forces which he marshalled. Gifted men with genius for preaching are rare. Descartes included the perfect preacher among the rarest kind in the world. Hitler in his Mein Kampf has expressed a similar view. He says "A great theorist is seldom a great leader. An Agitator is more likely to possess these qualities. He will always be a great leader. For leadership means ability to move masses of men. The talents to produce ideas has nothing in common with capacity for leadership." "But", he says, "The Union of theorists, organizer and leader in one man, is the rarest phenomenon on this earth; Therein consists greatness."

In the person of the Prophet of Islam the world has seen this rarest phenomenon walking on the earth, walking in flesh and blood.

And more wonderful still is what the reverend Bosworth Smith remarks, "Head of the state as well as the Church, he was Caesar and Pope in one; but, he was pope without the pope's claims, and Caesar without the legions of Caesar, without an standing army, without a bodyguard, without a palace, without a fixed revenue. If ever any man had the right to say that he ruled by a right divine It was Mohammad, for he had all the power without instruments and without its support. He cared not for dressing of power. The simplicity of his private life was in keeping with his public life.

After the fall of Mecca, more than one million square miles of land lay at his feet, Lord of Arabia, he mended his own shoes and coarse woolen garments, milked the goats, swept the hearth, kindled the fire and attended the other menial offices of the family. The entire town of Medina where he lived grew wealthy in the later days of his life. Everywhere there was gold and silver in plenty and yet in those days of prosperity many weeks would elapse without a fire being kindled in the hearth of the king of Arabia, His food being dates and water.

His family would go hungry many nights successively because they could not get anything to eat in the evening. He slept on no soften bed but on a palm mat, after a long busy day to spend most of his night in prayer, often bursting with tears before his creator to grant him strength to

discharge his duties. As the reports go, his voice would get choked with weeping and it would appear as if a cooking pot was on fire and boiling had commenced. On the very day of his death his only assets were few coins a part of which went to satisfy a debt and rest was given to a needy person who came to his house for charity. The clothes in which he breathed his last had many patches. The house from where light had spread to the world was in darkness because there was no oil in the lamp.

Circumstances changed, but the prophet of God did not. In victory or in defeat, in power or in adversity, in affluence or in indigence, he is the same man, disclosed the same character. Like all the ways and laws of God, Prophets of God are unchangeable.

An honest man, as the saying goes, is the noblest work of God, Mohammad was more than honest. He was human to the marrow of his bones. Human sympathy, human love was the music of his soul. To serve man, to elevate man, to purify man, to educate man, in a word to humanize man-this was the object of his mission, the be-all and end all of his life. In thought, in word, in action he had the good of humanity as his sole inspiration, his sole guiding principle. He was most unostentatious and selfless to the core. What were the titles he assumed? Only true servant of God and His Messenger. Servant first, and then a messenger. A Messenger and prophet like many other prophets in every part of the world, some known to you, many not known you. If one does not believe in any of these truths one ceases to be a Muslim. It is an article of faith.

"Looking at the circumstances of the time and unbounded reverence of his followers" says a western writer "the most miraculous thing about Mohammad is, that he never claimed the power of working miracles".

Miracles were performed but not to propagate his faith and were attributed entirely to God and his inscrutable ways. He would plainly say that he was a man like others. He had no treasures of earth or heaven. Nor did he claim to know the secrets of that lie in womb of future. All this was in an age when miracles were supposed to be ordinary occurrences, at the back and call of the commonest saint, when the whole atmosphere was surcharged with supernaturalism in Arabia and outside Arabia.

He turned the attention of his followers towards the study of nature and its laws, to understand them and appreciate the Glory of God. The Quran says "God did not create the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in play. He did not create them all but with the truth. But most men do not know". The world is not illusion, nor without purpose. It has been created with the truth. The number of verses inviting close observation of nature are several times more than those that relate to prayer, fasting, pilgrimage etc. all put together. The Muslim under its

influence began to observe nature closely and this give birth to the scientific spirit of the observation and experiment which was unknown to the Greeks.

While the Muslim Botanist IBn Baitar wrote on Botany after collecting plants from all parts of the world, described by Myer in his *Gesch. der Botanikaa-s*, a monument of industry, while Al Byruni traveled for forty years to collect mineralogical specimens, and Muslim Astronomers made some observations extending even over twelve years. Aristotle wrote on Physics without performing a single experiment, wrote on natural history, carelessly stating without taking the trouble to ascertain the most verifiable fact that men have more teeth than animal. Galen, the greatest authority on classical anatomy informed that the lower jaw consists of two bones, a statement which is accepted unchallenged for centuries till Abdul Lateef takes the trouble to examine a human skeleton.

After enumerating several such instance's, Robert Priffault concludes in his well known book "The making of humanity", "The debt of our science to the Arabs does not consist in starting discovers or revolutionary theories. Science owes a great more to Arabs culture; it owes is existence". The same writer says " The Greeks systematized, generalized and theorized but patient ways of investigation, the accumulation of positive knowledge, the minute methods of science, detailed and prolonged observation, experimental inquiry, were altogether alien to Greek temperament. What we call science arose in Europe as result of new methods of investigation, of the method of experiment, observation, measurement, of the development of Mathematica in form unknown to the Greeks. That spirit and these methods, concludes the same author, were introduced into the European world by Arabs.

It is the same practical character of the teaching of Prophet Mohammad that gave birth to the scientific spirit, that has also sanctified the daily labors and the so called mundane affairs. The Quran says that God has created man to worship him but the word worship has a connotation of its own. Gods worship is not confined to prayer alone, but every act that is done with the purpose of winning approval of God and is for the benefit of the humanity comes under its purview. Islam sanctifies life and all its pursuits provided they are performed with honesty, justice and pure intents.

It obliterates the age-long distinction between the sacred and profane. The Quran says if you eat clean things and thank God for it, it is an act of worship. It is saying of the prophet of Islam that Morsel of food that one places in the mouth of his wife is an act of virtue to be rewarded by God. Another tradition of the Prophet says "He who is satisfying the desire of his heart will be rewarded by God provided the methods adopted are permissible. A person was listening to him exclaimed 'O Prophet of God, he is answering the calls of passions, is only satisfying the

craving of his heart.

Forthwith came the reply, "Had he adopted an awful method for the satisfaction of his urge, he would have been punished; then why should he not be rewarded for following the right course". This new conception of religion that it should also devote itself to the betterment of this life rather than concern itself exclusively with super mundane affairs, has led to a new orientation of moral values. Its abiding influence on the common relations of mankind in the affairs of every day life, its deep power over the masses, its regulation of their conception of rights and duty, its suitability and adaptability to the ignorant savage and the wise philosopher are characteristic features of the teaching of the Prophet of Islam.

But it should be most carefully born in mind this stress on good actions is not the sacrifice correctness of faith. While there are various school of thought, one praising faith at the expense of deeds, another exhausting various acts to the detriment of correct belief, Islam is based on correct faith and righteous actions. Means are important as the end and ends are as important as the means. It is an organic Unity. Together they live and thrive.

Separate them and both decay and die. In Islam faith can not be divorced from the action. Right knowledge should be transferred into right action to produce the right results. How often the words came in Quran-- Those who believe and do good thing, they alone shall enter paradise. Again and again, not less than fifty times these words are repeated as if too much stress can not be laid on them. Contemplation is encouraged but mere contemplation is not the goal. Those who believe and do nothing can not exist in Islam.

These who believe and do wrong are inconceivable. Divine law is the law of effort and not of ideals. It chalks out for the men the path of eternal progress from knowledge to action and from action to satisfaction.

But what is the correct faith from which right action spontaneously proceeds resulting in complete satisfaction. Here the central doctrine of Islam is the Unity of God. There is no God but God is the pivot from which hangs the whole teaching and practice of Islam. He is unique not only as regards his divine being but also as regards his divine attributes.

As regards the attributes of God, Islam adopts here as in other things too, the law of golden mean. It avoids on the one hand, the view of God which divests the divine being of every attribute and rejects, on the other, the view which likens him to things material. The Quran says, On the one hand, there is nothing which is like him, on the other , it affirms that he is Seeing, Hearing, Knowing. He is the King who is without a stain of fault or deficiency, the mighty ship of His power floats upon the ocean of justice and equity. He is the Beneficent, the Merciful. He is the Guardian over all.

Islam does not stop with this positive statement. It adds further which is its most special characteristic, the negative aspects of problem. There is also no one else who is guardian over everything. He is the meander of every breakage, and no one else is the meander of any breakage. He is the restorer of every loss and no one else is the restorer of any loss what-so-ever. There is no God but one God, above any need, the maker of bodies, creator of souls, the Lord of the day of judgment, and in short, in the words of Quran, to him belong all excellent qualities.

Regarding the position of man in relation to the Universe, the Quran says "God has made subservient to you whatever is on the earth or in universe. You are destined to rule over the Universe." But in relation to God, the Quran says 'O man God has bestowed on you excellent faculties and has created life and death to put you to test in order to see whose actions are good and who has deviated from the right path.'

In spite of free will which he enjoys, to some extent, every man is born under certain circumstances and continues to live under certain circumstances beyond his control. With regard to this God says, according to Islam, it is my will to create any man under condition that seem best to me. cosmic plans finite mortals can not fully comprehend. But I will certainly test you in prosperity as well in adversity, in health as well as in sickness, in heights as well as in depths. My ways of testing differ from man to man, from hour to hour. In adversity do not despair and do resort to unlawful means. It is but a passing phase. In prosperity do not forget God.

God-gifts are given only as trusts. You are always on trial, every moment on test. In this sphere of life there is not to reason why, there is but to do and die. If you live live in accordance with God; and if you die, die in the path of God. You may call it fatalism. but this type of fatalism is a condition of vigorous increasing effort, keeping you ever on the alert. Do not consider this temporal life on earth as the end of human existence. There is a life after death and it is eternal. Life after death is only a connection link, a door that opens up hidden reality of life. Every action in life however insignificant, produces a lasting effect. It is correctly recorded somehow.

Some of the ways of God are known to you, but many of his ways are hidden from you. What is hidden in you and from you in this world will be unrolled and laid open before you in the next. the virtuous will enjoy the blessing of God which the eye has not seen, nor has the ear heard, nor has it entered into the hearts of men to conceive of they will march onward reaching higher and higher stages of evolution. Those who have wasted opportunity in this life shall under the inevitable law, which makes every man taste of what he has done, be subjugated to a course of

treatment of the spiritual disease's which they have brought about with their own hands. Beware, it is terrible ordeal. Bodily pain is torture, you can bear somehow. Spiritual pain is hell, you will find it almost unbearable. Fight in this life itself the tendencies of the spirit prone to evil, tempting to lead you into iniquities ways. Reach the next stage when the self-accusing spirit in your conscience is awakened and the soul is anxious to attain moral excellence and revolt against disobedience. This will lead you to the final stage of the soul at rest, contented with God, finding its happiness and delight in him alone. The soul no more stumbles. The stage

of struggle passes away. Truth is victorious and falsehood lays down its arms. All complexes will then be resolved. Your house will not be divided against itself. Your personality will get integrated round the central core of submission to the will of God and complete surrender to his divine purpose. All hidden energies will then be released. The soul then will have peace. God will then address you 'O Thou soul that art at rest, and retest fully contented with thy Lord return to thy Lord. He pleased with thee and thou pleased with him; So

enter among my servants and enter into my paradise.

This is the final goal for man; to become, on the, one hand, the master of the universe and on the other, to see that his soul finds rest in his Lord, that not only his Lord will be pleased with him but that he is also pleased with his Lord. Contentment, complete contentment, satisfaction, complete satisfaction, peace, complete peace. The love of God is his food at this stage and he drinks deep at the fountain of life. Sorrow and defeat do not overwhelm him and

success does not find him in vain and exulting.

The western nations are only trying to become the master of the Universe. But their souls have not found peace and rest.

Thomas Carlyle, struck by this philosophy of life writes "and then also Islam-that we must submit to God; that our whole strength lies in resigned submission to Him, whatsoever he does to us, the thing he sends to us, even if death and worse than death, shall be good, shall be best; we resign ourselves to God." The same author continues "If this be Islam, says Goethe, do we not all live in Islam? Carlyle himself answers this question of Goethe and says "Yes, all of us that have any moral life, we all live so. This is yet the highest wisdom that heaven has revealed

".to our earth

The Life of The Holy Prophet of Islam(S.A.W.)

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Chapter 1: Creation

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

The "Noor" (Light) is created When Allah intended to create the creatures, He first created the "Noor" (Light) of Muhammad. Al-Qastalani (in *Al Mawahibu'l-Ladunniyah*, vol. 1, pp. 5, 9, 10) has quoted the Prophet's traditions to this effect as transmitted through Jabir ibn 'Abdullah al-Ansari and 'Ali (a.s.). The well-known historian al-Mas'udi (in his *Maruju 'dh-dhahab*) quotes a lengthy tradition from 'Ali (a.s.) to the effect that when Allah created, first of all, the Light of Muhammad, He said to it: "You are My chosen one and the Trustee of My Light and Guidance. It is because of you that I am going to create the earth and the skies, lay down reward and punishment, and bring into being the Garden and the Fire." Then the tradition goes on to speak about the Family of the Prophet, about creation of the angels, of the souls, of the world, of the covenant taken from the souls which combined the belief in the One God with acceptance of Muhammad's Prophethood.

This is why Ibn 'Abbas narrates saying that the Prophet said: "I was Prophet when Adam was between soul and body (i.e. when Adam's creation was in its preliminary stages)" (at-Tabarani, *Al-Mu'jjam al-Kabir*; *Al Khasa'is al-Kubra*, vol.1, p.4).

Muhammad's Light adorned the 'Arsh (Throne) of God. When eons later, Adam was created, that Light was put in his forehead. It continued its journey, generation after generation, through numerous prophets and their successors till it came to Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.). From Ibrahim (a.s.), it came to his eldest son, Prophet Isma'il (a.s.).

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) said: "Verily Allah chose Isma'il from the progeny of Ibrahim, and chose Banu Kinanah from the progeny of Isma'il, and chose Quraish from the Banu Kinanah, and chose Banu Hashim from Quraish, and chose me from Banu Hashim." At-Tirmidhi has narrated this tradition from Wathilah ibn al-Asqa' and has said that this tradition is sahih (correct).

Abul-Fida quotes in his *Tarikh* (History) a tradition wherein the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) says: "Gabriel said to me: 'I looked at the earth from the east to the west, but I did not find anyone superior to Muhammad, and I looked at the Earth from the east to the west but did not find any progeny superior to the progeny of Hashim.'"

The Children of Isma'il (a.s.)

Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) had brought his eldest son Isma'il (a.s.) with his mother Hajirah (Hagar, in Hebrew) from Kan'an to a barren valley which was later known as Mecca. He used to visit them once a year. When Isma'il was old enough to help him, Prophet Ibrahim built the House of

Allah known as the Ka'bah.

There was no water in the land when Isma'il and Hajirah were left there. The well of Zamzam miraculously appeared for Isma'il. The tribe of Jurhum, finding the well, sought the permission of Hajirah to settle there. During the annual visit of Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.), permission was given to them, and ultimately Isma'il married in the same tribe. He begot twelve sons; the eldest was called Qidar (Cedar, in Hebrew).

The Isma'ilites increased in number, thus fulfilling the promise of Allah to Ibrahim to multiply Isma'il exceedingly. (See Genesis 21:13)

The Isma'ilites, by and by, spread all over Hijaz. They were not organized and consequently had no power. About 200 years before Christ, 'Adnan from the children of Qidar arose to some fame. The genealogy of 'Adnan up to Qidar is not agreed upon. The Arabs have narrated various genealogies. The Prophet (s.a.w.w.), in order to emphasize the Islamic ideology that personal qualities, rather than genealogy, was the criterion of excellence, and with a view not to entangle himself in such unnecessary and useless arguments, ordered the Muslims thus:

"When my genealogy reaches 'Adnan, stop."

In the third century of the Christian Era (CE), there arose a leader named Fahr in that family. He was son of Malik, son of Nadhar, son of Kinanah, son of Khuzaymah, son of Mudrikah, son of Ilyas, son of Madhar, son of Nazar, son of Ma'ad, son of 'Adnan.

Some people think that this Fahr was called Quraish, and that is why his children came to be known as the Quraish.

In the 5th generation after Fahr, in the fifth century of the Christian era, a very powerful personality appeared on the scene. He was Qusayi, son of Kilab, son of Murrah, son of Lu'i, son of Ghalib, son of Fahr.

Many people say that it was not Fahr but Qusayi who was called Quraish. The famous Muslim scholar, Shibli al-Nu'mani, writes: "Qusayi became so famous and achieved such a high prestige that some people say that he was the first man to be called Quraish, as Ibn Abdi Rabbih has written in his book Al-'Iqdu'1-Farid, clearly saying that as Qusayi gathered all the children of Isma'il from far and wide and made them leave the nomadic way of life, settling them around the Ka'bah, he was called Quraish (The Gatherer). Al-Tabari quotes caliph 'Abdul-Malik ibn Marwan as saying that "Qusayi was Quraish, and that nobody was given this name before him."

When Qusayi came of age, a man from the tribe of Khuza'ah named Hulail was the trustee of the Ka'bah. Qusayi married his daughter and, according to Hulail's will, got the trusteeship of the Ka'bah after Hulail. Qusayi established many new institutions:

- He established Dar-un-Nadwah (Assembly House). It was there that discussions were held to settle important matters like war and peace, caravans assembled before going out, and marriages and other ceremonies were conducted.
- He established the system of Siqayah (making arrangements to supply water to the pilgrims during the hajj days) and Rifadah (to feed them during those days).
- It appears from al-Tabari that this system was followed in Islam up to his time, i.e. 500 years after Qusayi.
- He made arrangements for the pilgrims to stay at Mash'arul-Haram at night and illuminated the valley with lamps, thus making their stay comfortable.
- He rebuilt the Ka'bah and dug the first well at Mecca. Zamzam was filled up long ago and nobody knew of its actual location.

Arab historians unanimously say that he was generous, brave, and sympathetic; his ideas were pure, his thinking clean, and his manners very refined. His word was followed like a religion during his lifetime and even after his death. People used to visit his grave at Hajun (present day Jannatul Ma'alla). No wonder that he was the undisputed chief of the tribe, which owed its strength and power to his leadership. To him had converged all the responsibilities and privileges of the tribe:

- The trustee of the Ka'bah (Hijabah), • Chairman of Dar-un-Nadwah which he himself had established; • He fed the pilgrims (Rifadah);
- He arranged to provide them with drinking water (Siqayah); The standard-bearer of Quraish in wartime (Liwa), and The commander of the army (Qiyadah).

These were the six privileges, which were looked upon with great respect and before which all of Arabia bowed down. The most wonderful aspect of his life is his selflessness. In all the accounts of his life, there never appears any hint that by being the undisputed leader of the tribe, he had gained anything for his own self.

Qusayi had five sons and a daughter: 'Abduddar was the eldest, then Mughirah (known as 'Abd Munaf). Qusayi loved his eldest son very much, and at the time of his death, he entrusted 'Abduddar with all the six responsibilities mentioned above.

But 'Abduddar was not a very able man, whereas 'Abd Munaf was acknowledged as a wise leader even during the life of his father, and his words were dutifully obeyed by the whole tribe. Because of his nobility and benevolence, he was commonly known as "generous." Thus, it came to pass that 'Abduddar shared all his responsibilities with 'Abd Munaf. And 'Abd Munaf virtually became the paramount chief of the Quraish.

'Abd Munaf had six sons: Hashim, Muttalib, 'Abdush-Shams, and Nawfil were the most famous

among them.

There was no trouble while 'Abduddar and 'Abd Munaf were alive. After their death, a dispute started between their children concerning the distribution of the six responsibilities. A war had almost started before it was agreed upon that Siqayah, Rifadah, and Qiyadah should go to the children of 'Abdu Munaf, and Liwa' and Hijabah should remain with the children of 'Abduddar, while the chairmanship of Dar-un-Nadwah should be shared by both families.

Hashim

Hashim's name will always shine in the history of Arabia and Islam, not only because he was the great grandfather of the Holy Prophet, but in his own right because of his tremendous achievements.

He may well be compared with any great leader of his time. He was the most generous, the most prestigious, and the most respected leader of the Quraish. He used to feed the pilgrims during hajj with royal open-handedness. But the best testimonial to his benevolence is his title "Hashim" whereby he came to be known. Once, there was a great famine in Mecca. Hashim could not look silently at the sorry plight of the Meccans. He took all his wealth, went to Syria, purchased flour and dried bread, brought it to Mecca and daily slaughtered his camels for gravy; the bread and the biscuits were broken into the gravy and the whole tribe was invited to partake of it. This continued till the famine was averted and all the lives were saved. It was this extraordinary feat that earned him the name "Hashim," the one who breaks (the bread).

Hashim's real name was 'Amr.

Hashim was the founder of the trade caravans of the Quraish. He obtained an edict from the Byzantine emperor, which exempted Quraish from all kinds of duties or taxes when entering or leaving the countries under his domain. He obtained the same concession from the emperor of Ethiopia. Thus, the Quraishites started taking their trade caravans in winter to Yemen (which was under the Ethiopian rule) and in the summer to Syria and beyond up to Ankara (under Byzantine rule). But the trade routes were not safe; therefore, Hashim visited all the dominant tribes between Yemen and Ankara and entered into agreements with all of them. They agreed that they would not attack the trade caravans of Quraish, and Hashim undertook on behalf of Quraish that their trade caravans would bring all their necessities to their places of abode and would buy and sell at reasonable prices. Thus, in spite of all the looting and plundering that prevailed in Arabia then, the trade caravans of Quraish were always safe.

It is to this achievement of Hashim that Allah refers in the Qur'an, counting it as a great bounty of God upon Quraish:

For the security and safeguard enjoyed by the Quraish, their safety during (their) journeys by

winter and by summer, let them worship the Lord of this House no provides them with food
against hunger, and with security against fear. (Qur'an, Ch. 106)

There was a pathetically pessimistic tradition in Quraish known as Ihtifad. When a poor family could not feed itself, it would go out to the desert and, entering a tent, remain there till death claimed all of its members one by one. They thought that nobody would know of their plight
and, by thus starving to death, they would protect their honor.

It was Hashim who persuaded Quraish to actively combat the poverty instead of succumbing to it. His scheme: He joined one rich person with a poor one, provided that their dependents were equal in number. That poor person was to help the rich one during the trade journey. Whatever increase of capital accrued by way of profit would be shared equally by both. Thus,
there would be no need for Ihtifad.

This scheme was wholeheartedly accepted and put in effect by the tribe. This wise suggestion not only removed poverty from the Quraish but also created a feeling of brotherhood and unity
among them.

These achievements were enough to justify a very long life. But our wonder knows no bounds when we learn that Hashim. was only 25 years old when death overtook him at Gaza, Palestine, in approximately 488 A.D. His grave is preserved, and Gaza is also called "Ghazzah Hashim,"
i.e. Hashim's Gaza.

Hashim was very handsome, and because of his looks and prestige, many chiefs and even rulers wanted him to marry their daughters. But he married Salma daughter of 'Amr (from the tribe of 'Adi Bani Najjar) of Yathrib. She was the mother of Shaibatul-Hamd (commonly known
as 'Abdul-Muttalib) who was in his infancy when Hashim died.

'Abdul-Muttalib

Hashim had five sons: 'Abdul-Muttalib, Asad, Nadhlah, Saifi and Abu Saifi. But the last three had no children; Asad had only a daughter, Fatima bint Asad, mother of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. Thus,
it was only through 'Abdul-Muttalib that the progeny of Hashim survived.

'Abdul-Muttalib was born at Yathrib (later named Medina) in his maternal grandfather's house, and he was only a few months old when Hashim died. After Hashim, his brother Muttalib succeeded him in all the privileges mentioned earlier. After some time, Muttalib went to Yathrib and brought his nephew to Mecca. When Muttalib entered Mecca with his nephew behind him on his camel, some people said: "This is the slave of Muttalib!" Muttalib said: "No! He is my nephew and son of my deceased brother Hashim." But the name stuck, though today few
people know that the real name of 'Abdul-Muttalib was Shaibatul-Hamd.

Muttalib loved 'Abdul-Muttalib and looked after him very well. But 'Abdush-Shams and Nawfil

were hostile towards him. At the death of Muttalib, 'Abdul-Muttalib succeeded him in the two privileges held by him, i.e. Siqayah and Rifadah.

In spite of the enmity of his own uncles, his personal virtues and qualities of leadership earned him in later days the title of "Sayyidul Batha" (the Chief of Mecca). He lived to the ripe age of 82. A carpet was spread for him before the Ka'bah and nobody dared to put his foot on it. In later days, this rule was broken only by the orphaned son of 'Abdullah (i.e. the Holy Prophet) who used to sit there and 'Abdul-Muttalib forbade Quraish from interfering with the child because, he told them, "This child of mine is to have a special dignity."

It was 'Abdul-Muttalib who had forbidden his children from using intoxicants. It was he who used to enter the cave of Hira during the month of Ramadan to spend the month in remembrance of Allah and in feeding the poor. Like his father and uncle, he used to feed and provide water for the pilgrims during the hajj season. During whole year, even the beasts and birds were fed from his house and, accordingly, he was called "Mut'imut-tayr" (feeder of the birds).

Some of the systems originated by 'Abdul-Muttalib were later adopted in Islam. He was the first person to make Nadhr and fulfill it, to give one fifth (khums) of the treasure in the way of Allah, to forbid prohibited degrees, to cut a thief's hand, to make intoxicants unlawful, to forbid fornication and adultery, to discourage the system of killing the daughters, to discourage the tawaf around the Ka'bah without clothes, and to fix the compensation of manslaughter (killing someone by mistake or unintentionally) at 100 camels. Islam adopted all these systems. It is not possible to give the whole history of 'Abdul-Muttalib in this short chapter, but two important events must be mentioned: the recovery of Zamzam and the attempted attack on the Ka'bah by Abraha, the governor of Ethiopia over Yemen.

Hundreds of years ago, Zamzam was filled up and nobody knew where it was. (It is not the place here to give the details as to how and by whom it was filled up). One day, 'Abdul-Muttalib was sleeping in Hatim of the Ka'bah. Someone told him in a dream to dig the Taybah and get water. He asked where Taybah was, but the vision vanished without any reply. The same vision was repeated the second and the third day, but the names were changed every time. On the fourth day, he was told to dig Zamzam. 'Abdul-Muttalib asked where Zamzam was. He was told the signs. 'Abdul-Muttalib, with his eldest (and at that time the only) son, Harith, dug the place where Zamzam is today. On the fourth day, the wall of the well appeared, and after some more digging, the water-level was reached.

At this success, 'Abdul-Muttalib cried "Allahu Akbar!" and said: "This is the well of Isma'il!" Quraishites gathered around him and started arguing that since the original well was the

property of Isma'il, the recovered well, too, belonged to the whole tribe. 'Abdul-Muttalib rejected their claim, saying that it was given especially to him by Allah. The Quraishites wanted to fight and fill up the well then dig it up again.

At last, they agreed to put their case before the wise woman of the tribe of Sa'd in Syria. Every clan sent one man as its representative. 'Abdul-Muttalib, with his son and a few companions, were in the same caravan. But he had his separate arrangements. In the middle of a desert, the water which 'Abdul-Muttalib had was finished. The whole group was suffering from acute thirst. The leaders of the other party refused to give them any water. They were near their death. 'Abdul-Muttalib advised his group to dig some graves, so that when anybody died, others would bury him. Thus only one person, the last one to die, would remain unburied. They dug up their own graves. The opposite party was enjoying the scene.

On the second day, 'Abdul-Muttalib exhorted his companions that it was cowardice to succumb to death like that without making a last effort. Thus, he rode his camel, and the camel arose. In doing so, its foot hit the earth and Lo! A stream of cool sweet water appeared! 'Abdul-Muttalib cried "Allahu Akbar!" His companions, too, cried "Allahu Akbar!" They quenched their thirst, filled their water-skins, and then, 'Abdul Muttalib invited the opposite group to fill their water-skins from that fountain. His own companions objected, but he said, "If we do the same as they had done, there would be no difference between us and them."

The whole caravan gathered around that fountain. They drank and filled their water-skins. Then they said: "O 'Abdul-Muttalib! By Allah! Allah has decided between you and us. He has given you victory. By Allah, we will never dispute with you about Zamzam. The same Allah who has created this fountain here in this desert for you has given Zamzam to you."

Zamzam became the personal property of 'Abdul-Muttalib. He dug the well deeper. Two deer made of gold, some swords and coats of mail were found buried therein. Again, the Quraish demanded a share in the treasure. Again, 'Abdul-Muttalib refused. At last, the dispute was decided by lot which gave the golden deer to the Ka'bah and the swords and the coats of mail to 'Abdul Muttalib; the Quraish got nothing.

.It was then that 'Abdul-Muttalili dedicated one-fifth of his own share to the Ka'bah

Chapter 2: The Year of the Elephant (The Year of the Elephant)

The above-mentioned episode happened in his youth. Now we come to the most important event of his life which took place just eight years before his death. By then, he was the patriarch of the tribe.

The Ethiopian governor of Yemen, Abraha al-Ashram, envied the reverence in which the Ka'bah

was held by the Arabs. Being a staunch Christian, he built a big cathedral in Sanaa (the capital of Yemen) and ordered the Arabs to go there for pilgrimage instead. The order was ignored. Not only that; someone entered the cathedral and made it unclean. The wrath of Abraha knew no bounds. In his fury, he decided to avenge it by demolishing and desecrating the Ka'bah itself. He advanced with a large army towards Mecca.

There were many elephants in his army; he himself rode a huge elephant. It was an animal which the Arabs had not seen before, thus the year came to be known as 'Amul-Fil (the year of the elephant), and it started an era for reckoning the years in Arabia. This remained in use until the days of 'Umar ibn al -Khattab when, on the advice of Hazrat 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, he replaced it with the era of Hijra.

When news of the advance of Abraha's army came, the Arabian tribes of Quraish, Kinanah, Khuza'ah and Hudhayl joined together to defend the Ka'bah. Abraha sent a small contingent towards Mecca to capture the camels and young people. The contingent captured many animals, including two hundred of 'Abdul-Muttalib's.

Meanwhile, a man from the tribe of Himyar was sent by Abraha to Quraish to advise them that Abraha had not come to fight them: his only aim was to demolish the Ka'bah. But if the Quraish resisted, they would be crushed. Then followed a frightening description of his huge army, which, admittedly, was much larger and better equipped than all the tribes put together.

'Abdul-Muttalib replied to this ultimatum in these words: "By Allah, we do not want to fight him. So far as this House (the Ka'bah) is concerned, it is the House of Allah; if Allah wants to save His House, He will save it, and if He leaves it unprotected, no one can save it."

Then 'Abdul-Muttalib, with 'Amr ibn Lu'aba and some other prominent leaders, went to see Abraha. Abraha was informed before hand of the prestige and position of 'Abdul-Muttalib. Also the personality of 'Abdul-Muttalib was very impressive and awe-inspiring. When he entered Abraha's tent, the latter rose from his throne, warmly welcomed him, and seated him beside him on the carpet. During the conversation, 'Abdul-Muttalib requested him to release his camels. Abraha was astonished. He said: "When my eyes fell upon you, I was so impressed by you that had you requested me to withdraw my army and go back to Yemen, I would have granted that request. But now, I have no respect for you. Why? Here I have come to demolish the House which is the religious center of yours and of your forefathers and the foundation of your prestige and respect in Arabia, and you say nothing to save it; instead, you ask me to return your few camels back to you?!"

'Abdul-Muttalib said: "I am the owner of the camels, (therefore, I tried to save them), and this House has its own Owner Who will surely protect it." Abraha was stunned by this reply. He

ordered the camels to be released, and the deputation of Quraish returned. On the second day, Abraha issued orders to his army to enter Mecca. 'Abdul-Muttalib told the Meccans to leave the city and to seek refuge in the surrounding hills. But he, together with some leading members of Quraish, remained within the precincts of the Ka'bah. Abraha sent someone to warn them to vacate the building. When the messenger came, he asked the people who their leader was. All fingers pointed towards 'Abdul-Muttalib. He was again invited to go to Abraha where he had a talk with him. When he came out, he was heard saying: "The Owner of this House is its Defender, and I am sure He will save it from the attack of the adversaries and will not dishonor the servants of His House."

'Abdul-Muttalib then took hold of the door of the Ka'bah and, crying to Allah, prayed in the following words (of poetry):

(O Allah! Surely a man defends his own home, therefore, Thou shouldst protect Thy Own House. Their cross and their wrath can never overcome Thy wrath. O Allah, help Thy Own people against the fellows of the cross and its worshippers).

Then he, too, went to the summit of the hill, Abu Qubays. Abraha advanced with his army. Seeing the walls of the Ka'bah, he ordered its demolition. No sooner had the army reached near the Ka'bah than an army of Allah appeared from the western side. A dark cloud of small birds (known in Arabic as Ababil) overshadowed the entire army of Abraha. Each bird had three pebbles: two in its claws and one in its beak. A rain of the pebbles poured down from the birds, and in a few minutes, the whole army was destroyed. Abraha himself was seriously wounded; he fled towards Yemen but died on the way.

It is to this important event that Allah refers in Chapter 105: Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the companions of the Elephant? Did He not make their treacherous plan go astray? And He sent against them birds in flocks, striking them with stones of baked clay, so He rendered them like straw eaten up. (Qu'ran, 105)

Some historians have tried to minimize the impact of the Divine intervention by suggesting that the army perished because of an epidemic of smallpox. But such an explanation creates more puzzles than it solves. How was it that the whole army was seized by that epidemic just when it was advancing on the Ka'bah? How was it that not a single soldier survived that epidemic? Why was it that no Meccan caught that contagious epidemic? Moreover, if there was no epidemic in Mecca before or after that sudden burst of the plague, where did the epidemic come from?

This epoch-making episode happened in 570 A.D. It was in the same year that the Holy .Prophet of Islam was born to `Abdullah and Amina

Chapter 3: Faith of Ancestors

Faith of the Ancestors of the Holy Prophet

It is the accepted belief of the Shi'a Ithna-Asheris, the Hanafis, and the Shafi'is that the ancestors of the Holy Prophet from 'Abdullah to Qidar ibn Isma'il, and from there right up to Adam, were true believers. They believed in the One and Only God and faithfully followed the Divine religion of their times. From Qidar to 'Abdullah, all of them followed the Shari'ah of Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.), which was the religion prescribed for them by God.

The famous Sunni scholar Imam Jalaluddin as-Suyuti has written nine books on this subject and has proved beyond doubt that all the ancestors of the Holy Prophet were true believers. Shaykh 'Abdul-Haqq Muhaddith Dehlawi has written: "All the ancestors of the Holy Prophet from Adam up to 'Abdullah were pure and clean from the uncleanness of disbelief and paganism. It was not possible for Allah to put that Holy Light (of the Holy Prophet) into dark and dirty places, i.e. the loin of a pagan man or the womb of a pagan woman. Also, how could it be possible for Allah to punish the ancestors of the Holy Prophet on the Day of judgement and thus humiliate him in the eyes of the world?"

The Holy Prophet himself has said: "I was always being transferred from the loins of the clean ones to the wombs of the clean ones."

'Allamah al-Majlisi has written that it is the unanimous belief of Shi'a scholars that the father, mother and all ancestors of the Holy Prophet followed the true religion, and his Light never entered into the loin of any pagan man or the womb of any pagan woman. Also, the accepted traditions say that all his ancestors were "Siddiqun" (Truthful Ones): They were either prophets or successors of prophets.

After Isma'il, all his ancestors were successors of Isma'il (a.s.). Other traditions specify that 'Abdul-Muttalib was a "Hujjat (Proof) of Allah and that Abu Talib was his successor."

Amirul-Mu'minin 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) said: "By Allah, neither my father ever worshipped the idols, nor my grandfather 'Abdul-Muttalib, nor his father Hashim, nor his father 'Abd Munaf.

They prayed facing towards the Ka'bah and followed the religion of Ibrahim."

If you look again at the preceding life-sketches of some of the ancestors of the Holy Prophet, you will find that many traditions established by them are now included into the tenets of Islam. Qusayi started the night-stay at Mash'arul-Haram during the hajj, and Allah kept that system in Islam. Can anybody think that Allah would confirm a religious rite established by a pagan?

Likewise, as we have seen the customs established by 'Abdul-Muttalib were adopted in Islam.

Could Allah glorify 'Abdul-Muttalib if he were a pagan?

Also, read again the events of the discovery of Zamzam and the appearance of the well in the desert. Read again the events of 'Amul-Fil, and see the firm conviction that Allah would surely save His House. That statement, repeated several times, shows that 'Abdul-Muttalib knew what was going to happen. Why was he so sure? There can only be one explanation: He was informed by Allah. And this, in turn, proves the earlier statement that he was a "Hujjat" of Allah. In all these events and narrations, he is always seen praying to Allah, and there is no hint from any quarter that he ever prayed to the idols of Quraish (to Hubal, Lat or 'Uzza). When he finds Zamzam, he exclaims "Allahu Akbar!" When he emphasizes anything, he swears by the name of Allah. When he stakes his claim, he says that Allah gave it to him. What further proof is needed to show that it was a family of True Believers?

The Holy Prophet said: "Jibril (Gabriel) said to me: 'I searched the east and the west of the earth, but I did not find anyone superior to Muhammad; and I searched the east and the west of the earth, but I did not find the children of any father better than the children of Hashim.'"

Also, the Holy Prophet said: "Verily, Allah chose Kinanah from the children of Isma'il, and He selected Quraish from Kinanah and chose the children of Hashim from the Quraish, and selected me from the children of Hashim."

'Abdullah

When, at the discovery of Zamzam, 'Abdul-Muttalib encountered the enmity of Quraish, he was quite worried because he had only one son to help him. He, therefore, prayed to Allah, making a nadhr (vow) that if Allah gave him ten sons to help him against his enemies, he would sacrifice one of them to please Allah. His prayer was granted, and Allah gave him twelve sons, out of whom five are famous in the Islamic history: 'Abdullah, Abu Talib, Hamza, 'Abbas and Abu Lahab. The other seven were: Harith (already mentioned), Zubayr, Ghaydaq, Muqawwim, Dharar, Qutham., and Hijl (or Mughira). He had six daughters: 'Atikah, Umaymah, Baydha', Barrah, Safiyyah, and Arwi.

When ten sons were born, 'Abdul-Muttalib decided to sacrifice one of them according to his nadhr. Lot was cast and 'Abdullah's name came out.

'Abdullah was the dearest to him, but he did not flinch from the decision of the fate. He took 'Abdullah's hands and started towards the place where sacrifices were offered. His daughters started crying and begged him to sacrifice ten camels in place of 'Abdullah. At first 'Abdul-Muttalib refused. But when the pressure of the whole family (and in fact, the whole tribe) mounted, he agreed to cast lot between 'Abdullah and ten camels. Again the name of 'Abdullah came out. On the suggestion of the people, the number of the camels was increased to twenty, again, the same result. Repeatedly, the number was increased to thirty, forty, fifty, sixty,

seventy, eighty and ninety.

But the result was always the same. At last the lot was cast between 100 camels and 'Abdullah. Now the lot came out for the camels. The family was jubilant, but 'Abdul Muttalib was not satisfied. He said: "Ten times the name of 'Abdullah has come out. It is not fair to ignore those lots just for one lot." Three times more, he repeated the lot between Abdullah and 100 camels, and every time the lot came out for the camels. Then he sacrificed the camels and the life of 'Abdullah was saved.

It was to this incident that the Holy Prophet referred when he said: "I am the son of the two sacrifices." He meant the sacrifices of Isma'il and 'Abdullah. The name of the mother of 'Abdullah was Fatimah, daughter of 'Amr ibn `Aidh ibn 'Amr ibn Makhzum. She was also the mother of Abu Talib, Zubayr, Baydha', Umaymah, Barra and 'Atikah.

A year before "the year of the elephant," 'Abdullah was married to Aminah daughter of Wahb ibn 'Abd Munaf ibn Zuhrah ibn Kilab. In that very gathering, 'Abdul-Muttalib married Hala, daughter of Wuhaib, i.e. cousin of Aminah. Hala gave birth to Hamza, and Thawbiyah, the slave-girl of Abu-Lahab, breast-fed him. She also gave her milk to the Holy Prophet for some time. Thus, Hamza was the uncle of the Holy Prophet and also his cousin as well as foster brother. Various traditions put the age of 'Abdullah at the time of his marriage at 17, 24 or 27 years.

'Abdullah went with a trade caravan to Syria. While returning, he fell ill and stayed at Yathrib (Medina). When 'Abdul-Muttalib sent Harith to look after him and bring him back, he had already passed away. 'Abdullah was buried in Yathrib. The Wahhabis walled up his grave and nobody was allowed to visit it. Then, in the 1970s the Wahhabis dug up his body together with those of 7 companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and buried them somewhere else under the pretext of extending the Mosque.

'Abdullah had left some camels, goats, and a slave-girl, Ummu Ayman. The Holy Prophet got it .all as his inheritance