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Preface

Before commencing the main topic of this section (i.e. a short review of the Holy Prophet's (S) biography), we shall look into two vital matters in this introduction:

- 1) Human instincts and the roots of need for religion for humanity.
- 2) The Arab world during the prophetic mission and before the advent of Islam.

On elucidation of the aforementioned points, the necessary background for acquiring the finer aspects of the Holy Prophet's (S) life will be provided for, Insha'Allah.

Human Powers and Instincts

Man is a combination of material-physical powers as well as sensual-spiritual powers. He possesses animal instincts, human instincts and metaphysical instincts. Every set of these powers possess some needs related to their state and these instincts too, possess some desires connected to those very instincts. The Lord of the Universe has created on this earth all that is required by mankind.

The Holy Quran says:

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعاً

“And He has made subservient to you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth “ (Quran, 45: 13)

Thus, it becomes obvious that man is in need of guidance, in order to recognize the manner in which he should utilize all that has been created for him in the best possible manner. For example, to show him as to how he should overcome his hunger and thirst by eating and drinking, useful and healthy things, and not harmful foods and drinks.

And how he should satiate his sexual instincts through legitimate and healthy intercourse and not through illegitimate and fatal homosexuality. And how he should utilize the instinct of egoism in the correct manner and not to the extent of inflicting harm on others.

In all these affairs, man should be directed as to how he should tread the moderate path and abstain from extremities so that the evolution and progress of his existence reaches the utmost level of human perfection. For this reason, Allah the Almighty guided man to the religion of “Islam “ through the Prophets (a.s.). On sending the last of His Prophets (S) He perfected Islam for man and said:

...الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ

“This day have I perfected for you your religion “ (Quran, 5:3)

By the Power of the Almighty God, we shall discuss in the near future, the means and channels provided for His Prophets (a.s.) by Allah, to enable them to propagate Islam and allowing it to remain in the hands of the people until the end of this world. We shall also review how the Holy Prophet (S) endeavored and strove on this path on the commands of God.

In order to prepare the ground for such types of research, it is also necessary to study the Arab society before Islam. By the Power of the Almighty, let us commence our discussion.

The State of Arab Society in the Pre-Islamic Era

In order to explore the condition of Arab society in the pre-Islamic era, it is indispensable to examine the following three affairs:

- 1) Arab race and origin.
- 2) Religion, culture, economic and social conditions of the Arabs before Islam.
- 3) Situation of Mecca and Medina before the Holy Prophet’s (S) mission and migration.

1. The Arab Race and Origin

It is said that the Arabs are from the descendants of Saam, son of Prophet Noah (a.s.). Originally, all Arabs are divided into two generations of Adnan and Qahtan. The description of these two races is as follows:

- 1) The Adnan race is from the progeny of Ismaael, the son of Ibrahim. Initially, they were living in Mecca but later on, they resided in the lands of Najd and thereafter all over the Arabian Peninsula. Those who lived in Mecca before the prophetic mission belonged to the tribe of Quraish.

2) The Qahtan race is from the offspring of Yahrab–ibn–Qahtan. Originally, they resided in Yemen. Thereafter, ten of their clans migrated to Syria, Iraq and Medina. At the time of their settlement in Medina, they consisted of two tribes– Aws and Khazraj. [1](#)

2. The Religious, Cultural, Economic and Social conditions of the Arabs in the Pre–Islamic Era

A) Religious Conditions in the Arabian Peninsula

In Arabia and its environs, Allah revealed three divine laws (shariah) the Almighty for the guidance of the people, all of which were distorted by its followers before the advent of the Holy Prophet (S).

First– The Shariah of Ibrahim (a.s.), the Friend of Allah (Khaleel al–Rahman)

In the Holy Quran and the prophetic traditions, the followers of this “Shariah “ are called as “Hanif “. Its plural is “Ahnaf “ and “Hunafa “. “Hanafa “ in Arabic means “turning away from falsehood towards the truth “[2](#) and “Hanif “ means: “(the one who has) turned away from falsehood towards the truth. “ This name has appeared in the Holy Quran along with the word (Muslim) as follows:

مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَكِنْ كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُّسْلِمًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

“Ibrahim was not a Jew nor a Christian but he was a “Hanif “ (upright man), a Muslim, ” (Quran, 3:67)

After Ibrahim, his son Ismail and thereafter the son of Ismail pursued Ibrahim’s “Shariah “ and they were the “Hunafa “. The first one who effected a change in Ibrahim’s “Shariah “ was “Amr–ibn–Lahy “, a descendant of Ismail.

In his journey to Syria, he reached the city of “Ma.’ab “ in the land of “Balqah. “[3](#) There, the tribe of “Amaaleqah” worshipped the idols. Amr inquired: What are these that you worship? They replied, ‘These are idols. We ask rain from these idols and we receive it. We seek help from them against our enemies and they assist us!’

Amr requested, ‘Give me one of these idols.’ They gave him the idol “Hubal “. He took it to Mecca and setting it there, he invited the people to worship and to revere it. He also brought about other innovations in Ibrahim’s religion.[4](#)

Thereafter, idol–worship became rampant amongst the Quraish and other tribes from the offspring of Ismail. This took place while they were the sons of Ibrahim, till then the biggest idol–breaker in human history!

In this manner, Ibrahim's followers (who were from the offspring of Ismail and were living in Mecca) erected the most famous idols of the Arabs around the very Ka'ba, which the greatest idol-breaker in human history had constructed for the worship of the Unique God. Over there, they circumambulated around the idols and asked their needs from them!

Under these circumstances, the Quraish reckoned themselves to be the heirs to Ibrahim's "Shariah", the custodians of the House of Ka.'ba and the host to the pilgrims to the House of God. Thus, they imagined themselves to be the chosen ones amongst the descendants of Adam!

The rest of the Arab tribes were also idol-worshippers (except for a few who were inclined towards Judaism and Christianity) and they all would perform the pilgrimage to the House of God. However, they had distorted the "Hajj" rites too as preached by Ibrahim.

They considered four of the months as forbidden, and did not fight or participate in battles during these months. These four months comprised of Zil-Qadah, Zil-Hajjah and Muharram during which they undertook the pilgrimage and Rajab during which they performed the "Umrah" (lesser pilgrimage).

In these four months, the people of the Arabian Peninsula lived in peace. Even if ever a person came across the murderer of his father, he would not cause him any harm. During these four months, they would also engage in trade, and attend markets for buying and selling goods.

The tribe of Quraish and the other Arab idol-worshippers were not at all aware that Ibrahim's "Shariah" was distorted until four of them discovered this distortion on an occasion of idol-worship.

Few Who Sought Ibrahim's "Shariah"

Before the prophetic mission, four Meccan residents viz. Waraqah-ibn-Naufal, Ubaidullah-ibn-Jahash, Uthman-ibn-Huwairath and Zaid-ibn-Amr-ibn-Nufail said to each other, "Our nation has been led astray and they are not following the path of our father Ibrahim! What are these stones, around which they circumambulate and ask their needs from, while these can neither see nor hear? Come and let us visit the cities until we find the upright (Hanif) religion of Ibrahim. "

Consequently, Waraqa and Uthman pursued Christianity; Ubaidullah accepted Islam, then became a renegade and reverted to Christianity; Zaid-ibn-Amr-bn-Nufail abandoned idol-worshipping and other heresies of the Quraish and called out to the Quraish in the House of Ka.'ba, "You are not on the path of Ibrahim's religion. "[5](#)

The work of these men acted as a catalyst in preparing the minds of the Quraish for the Holy Prophet's (S) mission.

The "Shariah" Of Moses Son Of Imran (A.S.)

Although in the beginning, the "Shariah" of Musa-ibn-Imran (a.s.) was revealed to him in Mount Sinai,

yet the addressee nation (i.e. the Bani-Israil) were in the state of journey towards Bait-ul-Muqaddas in Syria, and their “Qiblah” (direction of prayer) and religious center.

After their wars and skirmishes with other nations and prior to the proclamation of the Holy Prophet (S), a small number of Jews (who were the inheritors of this “Shariah”) lived in Yemen anonymously, while a few others lived a life of disgrace in Syrian cities. However, a majority of them lived in Medina and its flourishing outskirts like Khaiber, Wadi al-Qura and Taima (near Syria).

Like Ibrahim’s “Shariah”, the “Shariah” of Moses and his heavenly Book “Torah” too could not escape from the clutches of distortion. Moreover, the same distorted “Torah” was not within the reach of the common Jews. Rather, these were manuscripts in the hands of their religious leaders, the descendants of Harun (a.s.). Therefore, some parts were kept concealed by them. Besides, Moses’ “Shariah”, was mainly confined to such slogans like: Baitul-Muqaddas as the “Qibla”, Saturday being a holiday and the spirituality of Harun’s descendants.

These books, in the possession of the Jewish religious leaders, also contained the glad-tidings given by the Prophets of Bani-Israil about the Holy Prophet’s mission (along with his distinct characteristics) and had remained safe and intact. Of course, such prophecies were not in conflict with their daily affairs.

Hence, the Jewish scholars residing in Medina conveyed about the Holy Prophet’s mission and his stay in Medina to the people of Aws and Khazraj. Third- The “Shariah” of Jesus son of Mary (a.s.)

After Moses, Jesus son of Mary (a.s.) was sent on a mission as a Prophet in Bait-ul-Muqaddas and he too was from Bani-Israil. After his ascension to the heavens, his “Shariah” too got severely distorted like the previous two “Shariahs” so much so that his followers started believing in the Trinity: Father, son (Isa) and the Holy Spirit and changed the holiday from Saturday to Sunday.

Therefore, nothing remained much from Christianity either except for a few slogans like “Qiblah” and the carrying of the cross (where they believed that Christ was crucified on it).

Nevertheless, the glad-tidings of Christ and the Prophets before him about the Holy Prophet (S) remained safe from distortions in the religious books of the Christians, simply because these did not come in conflict with their day to day affairs. Moreover, wherever they went, the Christian scholars would inform the people about the expected arrival of the Holy Prophet (S).

In the Arabian Peninsula, the majority of the Christians lived in Syria and only a few amongst them lived in Yemen and Iraq. Some of their priests lived in monasteries on the way from Syria to Mecca where on occasions; they would come in contact with the trade caravans and talk to them about the Holy Prophet’s mission.

Relationship Between The Followers Of The Three Religions

The Jews and the Christians were at loggerheads from times ancient. While accounting their sayings

against each other, the Holy Quran says:

..وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ لَيْسَتِ النَّصَارَىٰ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ وَقَالَتِ النَّصَارَىٰ لَيْسَتِ الْيَهُودُ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ وَهُمْ يَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ

“And the Jews say: The Christians do not follow anything (good) and the Christians say: The Jews do not follow anything (good). This is while they recite the Book (perhaps implying that they do not act upon it) (Quran, 2:113)

The idol-worshippers reckoned themselves and the followers of the Book to be on the right path but respected the Jews more and called them as the first followers of the Book.

Belief In The Resurrection And Day Of Judgement

Before the Holy Prophet’s mission, none of the religious groups, whether they were Sabians (star-worshippers), Magians (dualists), Jews or Christians, had any clear belief about resurrection and the Day of Judgment. The Arab idol worshippers too, denied resurrection and the Day of Judgment. As per the Holy Quran, they would say:

إِن هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِينَ

“There is naught but our life in this world; we die and we live and we shall not be raised again“ (Qur’an, 23:137)

Moreover, their belief vis-a-vis god and the idols (which they reckoned to be God’s partners) was such that they sought all their worldly needs from them. For example, they would ask them to degrade and despise their foes, send rain for them, cure their sick, make their camels and sheep give milk, etc.

Thus, they did not fear from indulging in any wicked and unjust acts like killing, plundering, persecuting, cursing and imprecating others save whatever was unpleasant for them in this worldly life. For instance, as they were aware that if they killed someone, a person from the victim’s tribe would seek revenge by killing someone from the assassin’s tribe, they would refrain from committing such an act. Or they would desist from deeds that was considered improper by the society and would be because of disgrace for them.

Such was the religious state and belief of the Arabs in the pre-Islamic era.

B) The culture of the Arabs

The Arab culture in those days consisted of two vital branches:

Science Of Genealogy

In the era of paganism, the Arabs would lay tremendous amount of emphasis on the memorization of genealogy of their race (lineage of ancestors). Until the second century of hijri, every Arab knew by heart his ancestors lineage down to Ismail and Ibrahim (if he was from the descendant of Adnan), and to Ya.'rabibn- Qahtan (if he was from the descendant of Qahtan).

They lent such significance to this science that they had memorized the genealogy of Arabian horses as well. The book, "Ansab al-Khail " of Hisham-ibn-Muhammad-ibn-al- Kalbi⁶ can be cited as an evidence of our point. Yet, notwithstanding the aforementioned information, whatever is within our reach and has come down in the books of genealogy about the descent of the Arab tribes is doubtful and refutable due to a number of reasons.

Firstly, sometimes a group amongst a tribe would detach from their original clan and join another tribe. In this regard, Ibn al-Kalbi has a book titled "An- Nawaaqil "⁷, which in itself means those groups amongst the Arab tribes who transferred their genealogy from one tribe to another. Consequently, in the books of genealogy, these sects have been related to those tribes to which they had moved.

Secondly, many of the Arabs would adopt children, with the result, that while citing his genealogy, a person would not be linked to his real father but to the man who adopted him.

Lastly, during the period of paganism, there are other instances, which tamper the authenticity of the aforesaid descents in such documents. We shall relate one such example. Ibn Abil Hadid narrates from Rabii al-Abrar Zamakhshari as follows:

The mother of Amr Aas was a wicked bondmaid living in Mecca and her name was "Naabegha", the freed one of Abdullah-ibn-Jad.'an. Five men slept with her in one "Tohr " (Tohr means the period of a woman's purity between two menstruation cycles). These five men were Abu Lahab, son of Abdul-Muttalib, Amiyya-ibn-Khalaf, Hisham-ibn-Mughaira, Abu-Sufyan-ibn-Harb and Aas-ibn- Waael. The result: Naabegha gave birth to Amr and though he resembled Abu Sufyan, all of them claimed to have fathered the child. Finally, they asked Naabegha to judge this matter herself. She said: "Amr is the son of Aas-ibn- Waael. " After this, Amr was called as Ibn (son of) Aas-ibn-Waael and was linked to his tribe and descent. The reason why Naabegha selected Aas-ibn- Waael was because he had endowed her with numerous gifts and presents.⁸

Thereafter, Amr is introduced as the son of Aas-ibn-Waael in the books of Arab genealogy till date. Numerous incidents similar to the above exist in the Quraish genealogy.⁹

Besides the Quraish, the tribe of Thaqif, who lived in Taif some 72 Km away from Mecca, had also experienced similar incidents. However, experts on genealogy have not said anything about the tribes of Aws and Khazraj in Medina, the tribes of Hamadan in Yemen and the other tribes of Qahtan in the Arabian Peninsula.

Experts On Genealogy In The First And Second Centuries

In the first and second Hijri, there existed experts on genealogy amongst the Arabs such as Abu-Bakr, the first Caliph, and Aqeel-ibn-Abi Talib who were well aware of these events and people would acquire knowledge from them in this regard.

Eloquent Poems

Ya'qubi says: ¹⁰ "The Arabs reckoned poems rather than knowledge and other sciences to be the true wisdom. Whenever an accomplished poet would emerge in a tribe, they would bring him to the market places (that were set up on special occasions during the year) and to the House of God during the Haj season so that the Arabs would gather and listen to his poems. This act, according to them, was the source of their honor and dignity.

Except for poetry, they did not possess any other culture or attraction in their activities. Sometimes, the poems would lead them towards hostility and enmity and on other occasions, it would result in friendship and unity. They would use these poems to enrich their speeches, seek precedence over each other and distinguish good and evil amongst themselves. By the help of poems, a tribe would fight with another tribe, engage in flattery and rebuke the other tribe.

The Arabs would compose poems having four different implications:

1. In describing the valour of a person in battles and their tools of war such as sword, spear, bow and arrow and horse riding. In this regard, their poems are similar to the poems of Firdousi about Rostam and his horse and tools of war (in Persian literature). The only thing addition in Arabic poems is the description about camels.
2. In describing their own generosity and their tribe's munificence, especially the food prepared for guests. Such type of poems is not in vogue in Persian.
3. In describing the beloved and the beloved's house and whatever is related to the beloved. This kind of poem is found in all languages. In this regard, sometimes very ordinary poems can be found in their lyrics like the poems of Ubaid Zaakani.
4. In describing the glories of a tribe, which the like of it cannot be found in any other nation.

Occasionally, of course, they rhymed verses on practical knowledge. Therefore, odes on good ethics by Arab poets can also be seen. Eloquent sermons calling for praiseworthy morals were delivered in the Arab market places. Insha'Allah, we shall mention these in the near future.

Before the advent of Islam, the greatest poet in Mecca was "Abu Talib " and the most famous poet in Medina was "Hassaan-ibn-Thabit ".

C) The economic condition of the Arabs in the pre-Islamic era

Arab tribes residing in Yemen, Medina, Iraq and Syria were involved in farming, gardening and cattle breeding, while the Meccans who belonged to the Quraish tribe were engaged in trade and business. During winter, their trade caravan would move from Syria, Iran and Iraq towards Mecca and in summer, they would move from Mecca to Yemen and Ethiopia in Africa. In this regard, the Almighty God informs through the Holy Quran:

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ. لِإِبِلَافِ قُرَيْشٍ إِبِلَافِهِمْ رِحْلَةَ الشِّتَاءِ وَالصَّیْفِ فَلْيَعْبُدُوا رَبَّ هَٰذَا الْبَيْتِ الَّذِي أَطْعَمَهُمْ مِنْ جُوعٍ وَأَمَّنَّهُمْ مِنْ خَوْفٍ

“For the protection of the Quraish, Their protection during their trading caravans in the winter and the summer, So let them serve the Lord of this House, Who feeds them against hunger and gives them security against fear”. (Qur'an, 106: 1-4)

Verily, the Quraish had gathered enormous wealth as a result of these trade trips, which was unparalleled amongst other Arabs.

Such was the economic condition of these few Arab tribes. Except for them, all other tribes that formed the majority of the Arabian Peninsula were nomads living in distressing conditions. They lived in dry and arid places with scanty water and grass.

The real and vital wealth of these tribes was the camels, which possess greater power of withstanding thirst than other four-legged creatures. A few tribal warriors also possessed horses for the purpose of battles, hunting wild animals and fleeing (from the enemy).

Like the Europeans of today who eat all kinds of animals and insects, the desert dwellers too, used to hunt and eat all types of animals!

Sometimes, a particular tribe would attack another tribe and after a battle with one another, the victor would plunder the wealth, women and children of the vanquished to the maximum possible extent. On occasions, they would even sell their captives to other tribes.

In all these situations (i.e. at the time of hunting wild animals or grazing camels or wars), the women and children were considered a heavy burden for the men and had no share in this entirely onerous life. Therefore, some of the fathers would bury their daughters alive. In this regard, the Holy Quran says:

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ خَشْيَةَ إِمْلَاقٍ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ

"And do not slay your children for (fear of) poverty. We provide sustenance for you and (and so

will We do) for them “ (Qu’an, 6: 151)

Another source of income for the Arabs was slavery, where they derived benefit from the work of their slave or bondmaid. At times, they would set their bondmaids to fornicate for the purpose of earning income and if in this the bondmaid became pregnant, their child would become a slave of their owner and this itself was another profit for the owner of the bondmaid! [11](#)

If a bondmaid was set free and she continued in the act of fornication and consequently gave birth to a child, it was she who would determine the father of this child. Consequently, the newborn would be linked to his tribe. [12](#)

Sometimes, these harlots would fix a flag on top of the doors of their houses, a sign of their willingness to indulge in prostitution. [13](#)

Whatever we have mentioned was only a hint of the economic condition of the Arab society in those days. In those periods, all Arab tribes would organize markets on special occasions.

The Arab Markets

The Arabs arranged markets on special occasions during the year where people from all over the Arabian Peninsula would congregate. At such times, their life and property was secured. Amongst all these markets, the market of “Akkaz “, situated beyond Najd (a distance of one day from Taif and three days from Mecca) was the most important one.

During the month of Zil-Qadah, the Quraish and other Arab tribes would gather in this market. Apart from being a place for trading, it was also a ground for extolling tribal glories and virtues, a place for reciting poems and delivering sermons. Moreover, contracts were signed between the tribes at this very place.

From here, they would depart for the market of “Majaanah “ (a day’s distance from Mecca) where they would stay until the end of Zil-Qadah. Thereafter, they would leave for the market of “Mujaz “ (a distance of 6 km from Arafat) and there, they would halt until the 8th of Zil-Haj. On the 9th of Zil-Haj they would leave for Arafat for performing the Haj rites. [14](#)

D) The sociopolitical condition of Arabs in the pre-Islamic era:

Human societies run either on system formulated by man himself, or a divine one. In case of the latter, people learn gnosis, world-view and ordinances pertaining to life from their Lord through Prophets. In such type of societies, they perform every act for the satisfaction of God and are called as monotheists. As for a society based on man-made regulations, its people perform every act as per their desire, personal gains and losses being their primary concern. Of course, if man thinks that the benefits and losses of a society is his own gain and loss, he will sometimes perform acts to the benefit of the society

even though it may result in personal loss.

In a society based on man-made system, or established on racial principles, like the German Nazi society of yore and the present Zionist state in occupied Palestine, or founded on the basis of nationalism, a person acts for the interest of his society, even if he has to inflict loss on other societies and transgress their rights. But, in a society whose people are monotheists and fulfill the affairs for divine satisfaction, they perform acts for their personal benefits as well as for the benefit of the society but never to the extent of transgressing the rights of others.

During the era of paganism, the Arabs were egoists possessing strong patriotic feelings towards their own tribes. In other words, they performed acts for their own personal benefit as well as for their tribe's benefits even if this resulted in loss for other people and societies. This is because the tribal societies are either racial or nationalists.

The basis of the Arab tribal system in the pre-Islamic era:

The hierarchy of the Arab tribes during the period of paganism was established on four pillars:

1. The chief of the tribe.
2. The poet of the tribe.
3. The heroes and warriors of the tribe.
4. The income of the tribe.

The details of this resume are as follows:

First: The Power Of The Tribe's Leader

In Arab society of those days, the leader of a tribe possessed the rank of a ruler and commander and the entire tribe was submissive before him. His rule over the people was established on the basis of love, respect and fear. One fourth of the war-booty belonged to the leader of the tribe¹⁵ and in exchange to this; he entertained his tribe, defended their rights and protected them. In Mecca, the Holy Prophet's (S) forefathers were the leaders of the Meccan tribes, till this rule was taken over by Hisham and then by his son Abdul-Muttalib. After him, Abu Talib became the Meccan chief.

In Medina too, the various sects from the two tribes of Aws and Khazraj possessed various leaders in every era.

Second: The Power Of Poems

In the Arabian society, poetry was the only beautiful art and admired culture. A tribe's poet was the official speaker, who waxed eloquent tribal glories. He was the protector of his tribe's interest and the

defender of its dignity. Sometimes, through a single verse or a few lines of a poem, the antagonists were humbled and degraded. At times, battles and bloodshed would take place between two tribes because of a couplet or a few lines of poem. In contrast, an ode would bring friendship and love between two tribes.

Elegant poems would be recited in tribal gatherings during Haj and the market seasons and then, these very poems would be transferred from one person to another amongst the entire Arab tribes. In this way, poems were the only means for disseminating good and evil thoughts and ideas in the Arab societies. It shows that the power of poem was more than the might of wealth and sword in that society.

Third: The Heroes And Warriors Of The Tribe

In the early society of desert-dwellers, championship and physical power exerted considerable influence. Amongst the Arabs, the value of gallantry was much higher than other desert-dwellers. In the pre-Islamic era, Hamza-ibn- Abdul Muttalib and Amr-ibn-Abdawud were the most famous champions of the Quraish in Mecca.

Fourth: The Power Of Wealth

Wealth and property have always had a significant effect in human societies. But wealth exerted a greater influence in the Arab society of those days than in many other human societies. They also reckoned spiritual values to be untrue and worthless.

They would say,

وَقَالُوا مَا هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا يُهْلِكُنَا إِلَّا الدَّهْرُ

“There is nothing but our life in this world; we live and die and nothing destroys us but time “
(Qur'an, 45:24)

The Positive Aspect

In their greedy, ignorant and malicious life, they possessed one righteous facet rarely seen in other human societies, especially the present day civilization. And that was their fulfillment of all promises and agreements.

The Importance Of Promises And Agreements In Arab Societies

Before Islam: The flow of social affairs in the human societies is based on fulfillment of promises and pacts between individuals in a society. Buying and selling of goods, property and necessities of life, partnership amongst individuals in various affairs, marriage contracts, and stipulation for their annulment are all based on reliance of promises and contracts.

Today, pledges and contracts are written down and are usually registered and notarized by government organizations, which ensure their implementation. But, in the pre-Islamic tribal Arab societies, pledges and contracts were based on an individual's respect for promises and contracts and he would strive hard to implement them in order to exhibit his worthiness. Implementation of promises and pacts was also the proof of one's dignity and superiority. Every member of that society strove to respect and fulfill his promise to others.

By uttering a few words like, "You are my son ", to an alien belonging to another tribe (no matter how distant he was from the announcer in race, genealogy, place of residence and customs), this stranger would become the announcer's son, a brother to his sons and in genealogy; he would be counted amongst his tribe. The adopted son also had the right of inheritance. Moreover, the experts on Arab genealogy have registered such a stranger as the announcer's son in the books of genealogy and have reckoned him to be amongst the announcer's tribe.

* * *

If two tribes concluded a peace contract and vowed to support each other, then each individual from these two tribes would become prepared to sacrifice even their lives for the sake of their respective tribe's honor and dignity.

Moreover, if a person belonging to a tribe would announce, "So and so person from so and so tribe is under my protection ", then all the announcer's sons, relatives and near ones would sacrifice their lives for the sake of protecting that man's life. Besides, each of his tribesmen too would protect this man in turns.

Similarly, if a person paid allegiance to another to cooperate with him in an affair, he would assist him to the extent of sacrificing his life. If two fighters clad in their war outfits faced each other in the battle-field with their swords and horses (where everything is fair) and if one would address the other, "You are safe ", then both could dismount peacefully, throw off their waroutfits and rest side by side without fear.

An individual's firmness in fulfilling promises depended on the extent he held in esteem his own dignity, prestige and human values. This ethic and behavior prevalent in those days of ignorance was a plus point of that society, the like of which cannot be found in any modern civilization. [16](#)

The above mentioned quality by no means implies that disputes and conflicts did not exist amongst the Arabs. Rather, like all other humans, the Arabs too were involved in disputes and feuds and would drag their opponents to court. These courts were presided by judges accomplished to solve such disputes.

[The Arab Judges](#)

In every human society, there exist arbitrators and judges for settlement of disputes. The Arab society before Islam, was no exception to this rule and in every era, there was one or more persons (known for

their intelligence, sagacity, steadfastness and rectitude), who settled litigation and cases among the various Arab tribes. These men were called as “Hukkaam “ ((ĪḂÇã. People from far and near would approach these judges for solving any matter that required court proceedings.

In Mecca, Abdul-Muttalib, followed by his son Abu Talib, were amongst the Arab judges during their respective times. [17](#)

Such was the condition of the Arabs in the entire Arabian Peninsula and its environs. Now, by the Power of the Almighty, we shall further examine, in an impartial manner, the condition of the people of Mecca and Medina.

3. The Conditions of Mecca and Medina in the Pre-Islamic Era

A) Culture of Mecca and Medina

1. Culture Of The Meccans

Due to their trade journeys to Syria, Iran, Iraq and Ethiopia, the Meccans were better acquainted with the culture of the civilized nations of their time than all other Arabs were. As a result of their social links with the people of the Book (i.e. the Jews and the Christians) they were aware of their habits and customs.

Similarly, owing to the constant inflow of the Arabs in Mecca for Haj and Umra and the markets in its outskirts (especially the market of Akkaz, which was an arena for the Arab poets and orators), the language and accent of the Quraishites, were the most eloquent amongst the Arabs.

In the pre-Islamic era, seventeen people from Mecca had learnt how to read and write. [18](#)

2. Culture Of The People Of Medina

The people of Medina had close relations with the Jews and Jewish scholars. Consequently, they acquired most of their cultural information from them. Before Islam, there were eleven people in Medina belonging to the tribes of Aws and Khazraj who had learnt reading and writing.

Amongst them, seven were called as “Kaamil” because besides reading and writing, they also knew swimming and archery. Anyone who would learn these three arts would earn for himself the epithet “Kaamil” (meaning perfect).

B) The Socio-Political Conditions of the People of Mecca and Medina

Like the entire Arabian Peninsula, politics in Mecca and Medina was ruled by the tribal system. However, the social system of these two, just as we shall see, differed vastly with each other.

1. Sociopolitical Condition In Mecca

In Mecca, the Quraish reckoned them to be the descendants of Ismail and Ibrahim and this itself made them feel haughty against all the other Arab tribes. Similarly, nearness to the House of God wherein all the Arab tribes (except the Jews and Christians) would gather for Haj and Umra had also become a source of additional honor and glory for the Meccans.

Moreover, the Quraish linked the incident of “Abraha “ (who had come with the intention of destroying the House of God) to them and in this way, unduly held themselves to be dear before the Arab tribes.

On the other hand, various indecencies and unlawful acts like usury, gambling, fornication, arrogance and insolence was rampant amongst them. This was due to their regular trade with Iran, Syria, and Iraq, Yemen and Ethiopia and consequently, their amassment of enormous wealth. For this reason, they were unparalleled during those days in the Arabian Peninsula. The following verse applied to them:

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنَّاظِرٌ
إِن رَّآهُ اسْتَغْنَىٰ

“Man most surely becomes inordinate, when he sees himself free from want”. (Qu’an, 96:6&7)

In that era, immorality and corruption was not as prevalent in any part of the Arabian Peninsula as they were in Mecca. This was due to a number of reasons, a few of which are as follows:

(1) As they disbelieved in the resurrection and the Day of Judgment, they would, during their leisure time, engage in trade and during their stay in Mecca, involve themselves in debauchery and all sorts of voluptuousness.

(2) As a group of Quraishites would move to tropical and cold regions during their trade journeys, it would be months that their families would remain without any male member. Consequently, with the absence of any interactive barriers between the members of the two sexes in the Arab society, there remained no obstacle for sin between the voluptuous men who stayed behind and the womenfolk present.

(3) The presence of slaves and virgin bondmaids in the houses of the aristocrats amongst the Quraish, facilitated illicit sexual intercourse for both men and women.

The aforementioned factors were influential in the spread of sins and indecencies in Mecca, more than in all other Arab societies. For better acquaintance with the morality of the Meccans, suffice it is to mention the following event taken from the book “Aghaani”:

Abu-Lahab, son of Abdul-Muttalib, laid a bet with Aas, son of Hisham, over a hundred camels. Their gambling was such that they would design a hole in the ground to the size of a pebble or walnut. Then, they would stand at a distance and cast this pebble or walnut in the hole. If the object would find its

target then that person would be declared the winner.

In this gambling, Abu-Lahab won a hundred camels from Aas. Once again they laid a wager, with the same result. Again, for the third time, they played and Abu-Lahab emerging as winner. After losing whatever he owned, Aas addressed Abu-Lahab, 'O son of Abdul-Muttalib! I feel that the dice has befriended you. Let us take a final gamble and see which one of us will become the slave of the other..'

Abu-Lahab said: 'so be it..' Once again they cast the dice. Abu-Lahab emerged as winner and took Aas as his slave.

After this incident, Aas would pay tax to Abu-Lahab. During the battle of Badr, the Quraish had stipulated that all should either themselves participate in this war or send someone as a proxy. Abu-Lahab sent Aas in his place and promised to set him free after his return. But he got killed in the battle of Badr. [19](#)

[The state of Taif, a rural district of Mecca](#)

The wide spread fornication and indecencies in Mecca had their effect in Taif, a rural district located some twelve leagues from Mecca. A majority of the people of Taif belonged to the tribe of Thaqif. Also, a few affluent Quraishite also lived in this place. Perhaps, due to this very reason, the people of Taif were only second to the people of Mecca in fornication and usury. [20](#) Now, in order to throw light on the influence of the Meccans on the people of Taif and the tribe of Thaqif, we relate a story narrated by historians:

In Taif, Harith-ibn-Kaldah Thaqafi owned a bondmaid named "Somayyah ". He got her married to his Roman slave and was collecting tax from her prostitution business. Meanwhile, Abu-Sufyan returned from a journey and straightaway went to Taif. After getting on a high from his drinks, he approached Abu Maryam Saluli, a wine-seller and asked, 'Indeed, my journey was a long one.

Do you have any prostitute at your disposal?' Abu Maryam took him to Somayyah. After this event, Somayyah gave birth to "Ziyad " in the year 1 A.H.

Initially, Ziyad was reckoned to be Ubaid's son (the Roman slave who was Somayyah's husband). It was in the year 41 A.H. or 42 A.H., when Muawiya declared Ziyad to be Abu-Sufyan's son and his own brother because of his father's adultery with Somayyah. Right till the end of Bani-Ummayah's rule,

Ziyad was reckoned to be Abu-Sufyan's son. Thereafter, during the Abbasside reign, he was called as "Ziyad-ibn-Abih " [21](#).

From the above incident, we draw two conclusions:

1. As mentioned previously, the affluent Quraish had polluted the city of Taif and the tribe of Thaqif with their (evil) deeds.

2. The Quraish spread their wings of vices and evil not only in their own city and at their leisure time; rather they did not desist from their reproachable ways and habits, even during their travels and jaunts to other cities.

Perhaps, the following incident is yet another evidence for such state of affairs:

After the battle of Badr, the Muslims held as captives about seventy people from Quraish. Amongst them, was a group of the affluent and the elite?

Abdullah–ibn–Ubayy, a hypocrite, tried to persuade one of his two bondmaids to have intercourse with one of the wealthy Quraishite captives, hoping that she would become pregnant and would give birth to a child. After the return of the captives to Mecca, he (Abdullah) would receive enormous amount of money from the wealthy Quraishite in return for his illegitimate son (who, as per the Arab custom, belonged to Abdullah–ibn–Ubai).

However, none of these two bondmaids resorted to this wicked act and they complained to the Prophet (S). Thereupon, Allah the Almighty revealed the following verse:

وَلَا تُكْرِهُوا فَتِيَاتِكُمْ عَلَى الْبِغَاءِ إِنِ ارْتَدْنَ تَحَصُّنًا لِّتَبْتَغُوا عَرَضَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا

“Do not force your slave girls for prostitution to seek the life (wealth) of this world, if they want to protect their chastity...” [Qur’an 24:33]

This incident shows that this rich Quraishite had made a request to Abdullah–ibn–Ubai to have sexual intercourse with his bondmaids and hence the persuasion. [22](#)

To conclude, we shall remind you of a story, which depicts noteworthy diligence of the tribe of Thaqif in prostitution and perversion.

In the year 9 A.H., a group belonging to the tribe of Thaqif left for Medina in order to accept Islam conditionally. At that moment, they consulted amongst themselves and laid the following condition to accept Islam, “(We, the) Thaqif cannot refrain from fornication and wine. “ But when the Holy Prophet (S) rejected their condition, they were forced to agree to abstain from these two evil deeds. [23](#)

Such was the state of Mecca and its rural outskirts (i.e. Taif) during the era of paganism.

2. Sociopolitical Conditions In Medina

As far as Medina is concerned, its state of affairs was as follows:

Before the Holy Prophet’s migration to Medina, the Jews were residing in it and its outskirts, and possessed firm strongholds. They were equipped with the best war equipment of their time,

complemented well with experienced men for warfare. In a few flourishing areas, they lived with the most advanced methods of gardening, farming and animal husbandry. All of them (especially those residing in Medina) engaged in trade and usury as well.

As per the revelation in their religious books, the Jews believe that God has created them a privileged nation to rule over all other nations and reciprocally He has created all other people to serve the Jews.

Hence, the Jews have always strove to dominate and behaved arrogantly with others, regardless of the society they lived. Similarly, taking into consideration their inclination for accumulating wealth and their greed, they have an astonishing exploration for appropriation of other nations.' wealth by all possible means.

For achieving these two aims (i.e. gaining supremacy over all nations and appropriating their wealth), they have resorted to all conceivable means within their disposal. Such a situation prevailed in every era and in every society that they lived. Moreover, as the Jews fail to achieve their objectives in a society established on ethics, they become the source of propagation of every type of sin and slipshod and indulge in all sorts of conspiracies.

Keeping in view these Jewish qualities, the Jews living in the ancient Arab society were rich and arrogant. Reading and writing were widespread amongst them and they reckoned themselves to be from the progeny of Bani-Israil, the chosen ones of mankind, the people of the "Shariah " (religious laws) and the first heavenly book. They spread such ideas amongst the entire people of the Arabian Peninsula.

In order to manifest their virtues, they would narrate to the people of Medina all that the Torah had foretold about the advent of the last Prophet. They would explain the signs of his emergence, prophesying that his coming is near and Medina will be his place of residence.

These prophecies, prompted Abu-Aamer (whose name was Abd-Amr and who belonged to the tribe of Aws) to resort to the worship of God with this hope that he would become this promised Prophet.²⁴ He would wear coarse, woolen clothes such that he was addressed as Abu-Aamer, the monk. However, on the occasion of the Prophet's migration to Medina when he realized that he had not become the Prophet, he engaged in sabotage!²⁵

As per their customary habit, the Jews in Medina would arouse antagonism between the two tribes of Aws and Khazraj and set them to fight against each other. Resultantly, on occasions, bloody wars would take place between them. The tribes of Aws and Khazraj each had a treaty of friendship and cooperation with one of the Jewish tribes. During wars, both the tribes would hire arms from their Jewish ally. Thus, the Jews would derive massive gains, while the two tribes of Aws and Khazraj would receive nothing but desperation and distress.

This is quite similar to the dealings of America and Russia today with their allies in the third world.....

By comparing the state of the two tribes of Aws and Khazraj with the state of the tribes residing in Mecca and Yemen, which coexisted peacefully in the same era, it becomes obvious that the wars that took place were the result of Jewish conspiracies!

The people of Medina lived under such conditions till the Holy Prophet's migration to Medina, when the two tribes of Aws and Khazraj planned to find a remedy for their helplessness. They arrived at a solution that all should agree to elect a king, whereupon they would take commands from him to prevent future wars.

Thus, they selected an eminent person of Medina named Abdullah-ibn-Ubaiy. They were in the process of setting up the royal crown for him and buying the necessary jewels from the Jews that they came into contact with the Holy Prophet in Mecca and realized that he is the same Prophet about whom the Jews had foretold. Hence, they accepted Islam and invited the Holy Prophet (S) along with his companions to Medina.

After his entry into Medina, a treaty was signed between all the Medinites viz. the Jews, Aws and Khazraj, in accordance with the Prophet's (S) guidance and instructions. This truce stipulated that nobody would commit injustice against the other and if ever anyone did commit any wrong, the Prophet (S) would be the judge. Moreover, the entire Medinites were also backed up in the face of any possible external aggression or invasion.[26](#)

Also, taking into consideration the Arab habits and customs of that time, the consequence of the treaty of fraternity and brotherhood between the Muslims and the pact with the Jewish tribe residing in Medina becomes obvious and evident.

By paying attention to what was said about the state of the Arabs in the pre- Islamic era, we can now cast a glance over the Holy Prophet's (S) biography.

[1.](#) Refer to "Mukhtasar Jumharah Ansab al-Arab " of Ibn Kalbi and "Ansab " of Ibn Hazm. For acquaintance with the Arab places, refer to "Qab.'el al-Arab " of Omar Ridha Kahhale.

[2.](#) Refer to "al-Mufradaat by Raagheb Isfahani ".

[3.](#) Balqah is situated between Syria and Wadi al-Qura (which is near Medina). For a detailed description on Balqah and Ma.'ab, refer to "Mu.'jam al-Buldaan. "

[4.](#) Refer to Seerah Ibn Hisham 1/81-82:- The story of Amr-ibn-Lahy and the worship of idols.

[5.](#) The life-history of Zaid has come down in length in Seerah Ibn Hisham 1/242-247

[6.](#) A manuscript of this book can be found in the library of Majma.' Ilmi al-Islami.

[7.](#) Refer to the life history of Hisham-ibn-Abi Nasr in "Hadiyat al-Aarefeen "; 2/509

[8.](#) The genealogy of Amr Aas has come down in detail in the commentary of Ibn Abil Hadid 6/283--Sermon No 83 of Nahjul-Balagha.

[9.](#) Refer to the genealogy of Muawiaya and Ziyad in the commentary of Ibn Abil Hadid 1/336 and 16/187; and also the incident of Zekwaan, the slave and adopted one of Amiyya whose agnomen changed to Abu-Omar and Walid-ibn-Uqbah-ibn-Abi Ma.'eet-ibn-Abi Omar was his grandson and Uthman's brother. (Refer to Aghaani 1/24); and also the incident of Walid in "The role of Ayesha in the Islamic history. " 1/152 10 Tarikh-Ya.'qubi 1/262: Arab poets

[10.](#) Tarikh- Ya'qubi 1/262: Arab poets

- [11.](#) Refer to the story of Abdullah-ibn-Ubayy in the forthcoming discussion on the state of Taif.
- [12.](#) Refer to the story of genealogy of Amr Aas mentioned above.
- [13.](#) Refer to "Al-Muhbar", p. 340. Such houses existed in Mecca and Taif.
- [14.](#) Regarding this discussion, refer to the Arab history in the pre-Islamic era in Tarikh-Tabari, Yaqubi, Muruj az-Zahab and Seerah Ibn Hisham.
- [15.](#) One-fourth of war-booty that belonged to the leader was called as "Mirbaa ". Refer to the description of "Robh " (one-fourth) in Sihah Jauhari, Qamoos al-Muhit, Lisan al-Arab, Taj al-Arous and the story of Adi-ibn-Hatims.' meeting with the Prophet (S) in Seerah Ibn Hisham.
- [16.](#) With regards to this discussion, refer to the Arab history in the pre-Islamic era in Tarikh-Yaqubi, Tarikh-Tabari, Muruj az-Zahab and Seerah Ibn Hisham.
- [17.](#) Tarikh-Yaqubi 1/258: The Arab Judges.
- [18.](#) "Futuh al-Buldaan ": Balaazari, p.580 and 583.
- [19.](#) Aghani: 4/179--In explanation of the battle of Badr from the words of Hassaan-ibn-Thabit. Aas was the son of Hisham-ibn-Mughaira-ibn-Asad and his agnomen was Abul-Bakhtari. Refer to Seerah Ibn Hisham 2/281-283.
- [20.](#) Refer to the description of Taif in Mu.'jam al-Buldaan; 6/10-16.
- [21.](#) Refer to the narration of the event of the year 44 A.H. in Tarikhe Ibn Athir 3/223-225; Estia.'b 1/548-555 and Al-Isaabah 1/563.
- [22.](#) Tafsir al-Durr al-Manthur of Suyuti 5/47. On the same page, in connection with "occasions of revelation " Of this verse, he has narrated other traditions as well. However the traditions that describe the above event are considered to be correct by us and we have explained it in brief.
- [23.](#) Refer to "Amtah al-Asmah " by Muqrezi; Page 492 about the visit of the group of Thaqif to Medina.
- [24.](#) Ansaab al-Ashraaf: Balaazari 1/340.
- [25.](#) Seerah Ibn Hisham 2/234 and Mughazi of Waqedi in the narration of the battle of Uhud.
- [26.](#) Seerah Ibn Hisham 2/234 and 147 and Uyoon al-Athar 1/197.

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