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Prophet Muhammad (S) before being conferred the office of prophethood

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (S) was born on 17th Rabiul Awwal in the year 570 A.D. in Mecca.^{[1](#)}

His father was Abdullah and mother, Amina. His father passed away before his birth and was buried in Medina. The Prophet came under the care of his grandfather, Abdul Muttalib. Abdul Muttalib was a Quraish elder and was very fond of Muhammad. Regarding him, he said: My son, Muhammad is having a bright future.^{[2](#)}

At the age of five years The Holy Prophet Muhammad (S) also lost his mother, Amina and when he was hardly nine his grandfather, Abdul Muttalib also departed for his heavenly abode. After the passing away of Abdul Muttalib, his son, Abu Talib took over the responsibility of his upbringing and care. This kind uncle cared for Muhammad like a real father.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, at the age of twenty-five years married Khadija bint Khuwaylid, a noble and chaste lady of Quraish. She gave birth to two sons, but they passed away a short time after birth. She also had four daughters named: Zaynab, Ruqayyah, Ummu Kulthum and Fatima.

It is learnt from history that The Holy Prophet Muhammad (S) during his childhood and youth was better than others of his age and it was realized that he had an extraordinary personality.

Abu Talib says the following with regard to him:

When a part of the night had passed, I heard amazing statements from Muhammad (S). He mentioned the name of God when he drank water or ate his dinner. When he began eating, I heard from Muhammad: In the name of Allah, the One. After eating, he remarked: Praise be to Allah in excess. I was amazed at these acts. Sometimes, I came upon him suddenly and saw effulgence over his head which continued up to the heavens. I never heard any falsehood from Muhammad and he never

committed any act of the age of Ignorance. I never saw him laughing for no reason or playing with children; he was never attracted to them. He liked solitude and humility.[3](#)

Ibn Abbas says: In the morning, when the sons of Abu Talib awoke from sleep their eyes used to be dirty and sticky, but the eyes of Muhammad used to be absolutely clean. In the morning, Abu Talib provided breakfast to the children; they attacked the food competing with each other but Muhammad did not take part in this. When Abu Talib noticed this, he gave him food separately.[4](#)

Abul Fida writes:

The Messenger of Allah (S) grew up under the care of Abu Talib. Almighty Allah guarded him from committing the acts of the period of Ignorance and other evil deeds, because He wanted to exalt his status so that he may come out as the most excellent among his relatives with regard to greatness, good nature, observance of manners of society, kindness to neighbors, forbearance, trustworthiness and truthfulness. He never committed any vile deed and did not cause harm to anyone. He never entered into arguments and fights. All the praiseworthy qualities had gathered in him in such a way that he was given the title of 'Muhammad Amin'.[5](#)

Abul Fida writes:

In the beginning of revelation, the Holy Prophet (S) returned home terrified and told his wife, Khadija: I am fearful about my own self. Khadija comforted him saying: Glad tidings be to you that Almighty Allah will not degrade you in any way. Because you are good to relatives; you are truthful and share the difficulties of people; you help the poor and are hospitable and you assist others in worldly matters.[6](#)

Anas ibn Malik says:

Before prophethood, The Holy Prophet Muhammad (S) earned the title of Trustworthy (Amin) among the people as people had recognized his honesty and justice.

Rabi ibn Khaitham says: During the period of Ignorance, people used to refer to The Holy Prophet Muhammad (S) in their disputes. Nadhr ibn Harith told Quraish: When Muhammad (S) was a child you considered him better than you with regard to truthfulness and honesty, but when he has matured and is sent to you as the prophet of God, you allege that he is a sorcerer. No, by Allah, he is not a magician.[7](#)

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (S) was twenty years of age when he took part in Hilful Fuzool – that is the oath of the valiant. Some well intending Arab gentlemen had devised this committee to protect the rights of oppressed and this was finalized at the house of Abdullah ibn Judan. They took oath that as long as they were alive, they would protect those who were oppressed and recover their rights from the usurpers. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (S) said with regard to this:

I was present at the oath, which was taken in the house of Abdullah ibn Judan; and I would not like to be given red-haired camels in exchange for it; and even though Islam is established, if I am still called to it,

I would respond.[8](#)

From such historical evidences, it can be concluded that The Holy Prophet Muhammad (S), before declaration of prophethood was well known for his nice behavior, honesty, truthfulness, forbearance, justice, harmlessness and chastity.

As a result of this same fine behavior, people accepted his claim of prophethood and brought faith upon him.

Religion of Muhammad (S) before being vested with the office of prophethood

The question which arises at this juncture is that whether The Holy Prophet Muhammad (S) believed in religion and Shariah before being vested with the office of prophethood? And if he had faith; which religion did he follow?

Before that it is necessary to mention that regretfully we don't have anything in history and Islamic sources which can clearly oppose this matter, but it is possible to mention some points as historical evidences. For example, Abul Fida writes:

It was the practice of the Messenger of Allah (S) that one month every year he used to go the Cave of Hira and engage in worship there. Quraish also performed this act during the period of Ignorance. They gave food to every mendicant who came to their town. After the worship rituals, before entering his house, he used to circumambulate the Kaaba.[9](#)

Ghyath ibn Ibrahim has narrated from Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.) that he said:

The Holy Prophet, after coming to Medina performed the Hajj only once. But he performed the Hajj rituals in Mecca along with his relatives a number of times.[10](#)

It is also mentioned that Muhammad (S) prayed the ritual prayer at the age of four years.[11](#)

His uncle, Abu Talib also described the childhood of Muhammad in the same way: He recited 'In the name of Allah', before dinner and uttered 'praise be to Allah' after it.[12](#)

From such descriptions that are mentioned about His Eminence, it can be concluded that before being vested with the office of prophethood, he used to perform worship rituals, perform the ritual prayer and spend a month every year at the cave of Hira; he performed the rituals of Hajj, circumambulated the Kaaba and recited 'In the name of Allah' before eating; thus it can be seen that he was a religious person, who observed worship rituals diligently.

Moreover, in the discussion of infallibility, it was proved that prophets are immune from infidelity,

polytheism and sins, throughout their lives. Hence it should be said that the Prophet of Islam also before his being vested with the office of prophethood was religious, because infidelity and polytheism are not compatible with his infallibility.

Quran has also absolutely negated deviation and infidelity for the Holy Prophet (S) even before he was vested with the office of prophethood. It even says:

وَالنَّجْمِ إِذَا هَوَىٰ / مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمْ وَمَا غَوَىٰ

“I swear by the star when it goes down. Your companion does not err, nor does he go astray...”
(53: 1-2)

Therefore there cannot be doubt about the religiosity of Muhammad before his being vested with the office of prophethood.

After accepting his original religiosity now the question arises that which religion was he following? Here a number of possibilities exist:

First possibility: He either followed the Shariah of Prophet Musa or Prophet Isa (a.s.), since only these two heavenly religions existed in the world and it was necessary for all to follow them. Thus Prophet Muhammad (S) also before being vested with prophethood must have followed one of these faiths.

But this possibility is invalid; because if he had been a Jew or a Christian he would also have taken part in the rituals of their faith and would have socialized with them; and this would have been recorded in history; whereas such a thing is neither recorded in history nor the Jews and Christians have claimed this.

Thus as you know from before, The Holy Prophet Muhammad believed in rituals and worships which are from other than these two religions; like Hajj, circumambulating the Kaaba, ritual prayer and Etekaf (seclusion) in the Cave of Hira. On the basis of this, it can be concluded that he was neither a Jew nor a Christian before his being vested with prophethood.

Second possibility: That he was a follower of the Shariah of Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.). In explanation of this point, it can be said that Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) laid the foundation of monotheism and God worship in Hijaz. His Shariah became famous in that area as Hanifiyya and it spread among the people there. His son, Ismail also propagated that Shariah. Arabs of that area, who were most probably descendants of Prophet Ismail (a.s.) accepted the Shariah of their ancestor, Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) and they preserved it.

For a long time, the religion of Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) was the predominant religion of the people of Arabian Peninsula, but due to the passage of time, laws, rules and worship rituals of that Hanif faith were gradually forgotten and neglected and except for some special rituals like Hajj, stay at Arafat, Mashar

and Mina, animal sacrifice, stoning of satans, circling the Kaaba, trotting between Safa and Marwa and some other rituals.

On the contrary, by the passage of time polytheism dominated the beliefs of the people and through wrong justification they considered some things and persons as associates of God, and worshipped them. In spite of these deviations, they considered themselves as the followers of the religion of Ibrahim (a.s.).

Although there were some among them who were displeased with the present situation and they realized the loss of the essence of the religion of Ibrahim (a.s.) and of having fallen into deviation and sometimes they even went so far as to adopt the laws and customs of religious worship of the upright faith and purify them from nonsense. The following historical examples prove this point:

Ibn Hisham writes:

On one of the festivals, when Quraish used to gather around an idol and with absolute sincerity offer sacrifice to it four persons separated from them, receded into a corner and spoke among themselves: We take oath that we would keep our faith concealed from others. Those four were as follows: Waraqa ibn Naufal, Abdullah ibn Jahash, Uthman ibn Huwairath and Zaid ibn Umar. They said: By Allah, you know that your people do not follow the right faith. They have adopted the wrong version of the faith of your ancestor, Ibrahim (a.s.). What is the stone that they go around? This idol neither hears nor sees, nor causes any harm or benefit. My people! Select the right faith for yourself. After that they dispersed in the land to revive the religion of Ibrahim (a.s.). [13](#)

He also writes:

Zaid ibn Umar waited; came out of the religion of his relatives but he did not join the religion of Jews and Christians. He kept away from idol worship, abstained from carrion, blood and animals sacrificed to the idols. He prohibited the killing of the child and said: I worship only the God of Ibrahim (a.s.). Thus he condemned the religion of his people. [14](#)

It can be concluded from such reports that the ancestors of the Prophet also followed the religion of Ibrahim (a.s.).

Asbagh ibn Nubatah says that he heard Amirul Momineen (a.s.) say:

By Allah, the father and grandfather of Abu Talib, and Hashim and Abd Manaf never worshipped idols. He was asked: Then how did they worship? He replied: They acted on the religion of Ibrahim (a.s.) and prayed facing the Holy Kaaba. [15](#)

On the basis of this, it can be realized that The Holy Prophet Muhammad (S) followed the religion and Shariah of Ibrahim (a.s.) before his prophethood. He was a monotheist and he opposed polytheism and idol worship. He prayed the ritual prayer and performed the rituals of Hajj, which are in fact the rituals of

the religion of Ibrahim (a.s.). He was fond of seclusion and remembrance of God and observed good manners and morals.

It can be concluded from some traditional reports that The Holy Prophet Muhammad (S), even before his ministry, was always having divine help in recognizing the best morals and its demands.

Amirul Momineen (a.s.) says with regard to this:

From the time of his weaning, Allah had put a mighty angel with him to take him along the path of high character and good behavior through day and night. [16](#)

Allamah Majlisi has written with regard to this:

It is narrated that some companions of Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) asked him about the interpretation of the verse:

إِلَّا مَنْ ارْتَضَىٰ مِنْ رَسُولٍ فَإِنَّهُ يَسْلُكُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ رَصَدًا

“Except to him whom He chooses as an apostle; for surely He makes a guard to march before him and after him.” (72:27)

The Imam said:

Almighty Allah appoints angels on his prophets to guard them and help them in propagating their message. He appointed a mighty angel since the time of Muhammad’s infancy, to guard him and to guide him to good deeds and praiseworthy morals and to restrain him from evil. It was this angel who said: Peace be on you, O Muhammad, Messenger of Allah (S) when he was not even given the ministry, the Prophet thought that this salutation was from stones and the earth; but no matter how much he searched, he could not find anything. [17](#)

[1.](#) Will Durant, History of Civilization, Part I, Vol. 4, Pg. 197.

[2.](#) Manaqib Ibne Shahr Ashob, Vol. 1, Pg. 61.

[3.](#) Manaqib Ibne Shahr Ashob, Vol. 1, Pg. 63.

[4.](#) Abul Fida, Seerat Nabuwwa, Vol. 1, Pg. 242.

[5.](#) Abul Fida, Seerat Nabuwwa, Vol. 1, Pg. 249.

[6.](#) Abul Fida, Seerat Nabuwwa, Vol. 1, Pg. 394.

[7.](#) Uyunul Athar, Vol. 2, Pg. 334.

[8.](#) Abul Fida, Seerat Nabuwwa, Vol. 1, Pg. 257–262.

[9.](#) Abul Fida, Seerat Nabuwwa, Vol. 1, Pg. 390.

[10.](#) Wasailush Shia, Vol. 8, Pg. 88.

[11.](#) Biharul Anwar, Vol. 15, Pg. 361.

[12.](#) Manaqib Ibne Shahr Ashob, Vol. 1, Pg. 63.

[13.](#) Ibne Hisham, Seerat Nabawiyya, Vol. 1, Pg. 237.

[14.](#) Ibne Hisham, Seerat Nabawiyya, Vol. 1, Pg. 239.

[15.](#) Biharul Anwar, Vol. 15, Pg. 144.

[16.](#) Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 194.

[17.](#) Biharul Anwar, Vol. 15, Pg. 361.

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