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A Brief Glance At The Biography of The Holy Prophet (S)

Before Appointment

The Holy Prophet's ancestors

To the best of Arab knowledge, the Holy Prophet's ancestors were leaders of the Quraish in Mecca. And considering that the pilgrims to the Ka.'bah were guests in Mecca, the Holy Prophet's (S) ancestors assumed the responsibility of serving food and water to the pilgrims in the hot hills and valleys until this authority was taken over by "Abd-Manaf ". He (Abd-Manaf) had four sons namely Hashim, Abd-Shams, Nufel and Muttalib.[1]

Hashim's Authority

After Abd-Manaf's demise, a severe power struggle in Quraish took place between "Hashim " and "Abd-Shams ", leading to hostilities and conflicts. Ultimately, Hashim emerged victorious. During his time, he earned more fame than even his forefathers did.

Hashim was the first person who established the two summers and winter trade trips for the Quraish. During the summer season, their trade caravan would set out for Syria and they named this journey as "Rehlat al-Saif". In winter, they would depart towards Ethiopia and Africa via Yemen and called this trip as "Rehlat al-Shetaa".

In those days when no individual or tribe was safe from loot and plunder, Hashim at first entered into a security pact with Caesar, the Emperor of Rome who was in Syria, for protecting the trade caravans of the Quraish. Later, while returning to Mecca, he also took an undertaking from each Arab tribe on the route that the trade caravan of Quraish would not be harmed while passing through their territories. Thus, the safety of these caravans moving on trade trips was fully guaranteed. As mentioned earlier and

as described by the Quran, the treaties of the Quraish with the Arab tribes were named as “Eelaf”.

During famine, Hashim would provide food for the Meccans. On one of his journeys to Syria, he alighted in Medina and got himself married to “Salma “, daughter of Zaid who was from the tribe of Khazraj. Salma stayed back in Medina and Hashim continued his trade journey. As a result of this wedlock, Salma gave birth to a son named “Shaibah “ (Abdul-Muttalib).

When Hashim died, the tribe of Quraish feared that other Arab tribes would prevail upon them and consequently, their trade caravans would come to a standstill. Therefore, Hashim’s two brothers, Abd-Shams and Nufail renewed their covenant and treaty with Najashi the King of Abyssinia and Casra the King of Iran.

A few years later, these two also died and the reigns of governance fell in the hands of their brother “Muttalib “, the son of Abd-Manaf. Muttalib went to Medina and brought his nephew Abdul-Muttalib to Mecca. After Muttalib’s demise, the power was transferred to Abdul-Muttalib.

Abdul-Muttalib’s Authority

Several reasons contributed to the increase in Abdul-Muttalib’s authority over the Quraish and the Arabian territory than his forefathers.

Firstly, he belonged to the progeny and race of both the great Arab sects of Adnan and Qahthan.

Secondly, there were many worthy deeds to his credit. Like the digging of the ZamZam well which was utilized by the inhabitants of Mecca and the pilgrims to the House of Allah right from the time of Hazrat Ismail (a.s.). Consequently, the few elements that were buried under the soil were discovered by Abdul-Muttalib and barring him, none was aware of its whereabouts.

After his skirmishes with the Quraish, Abdul-Muttalib excavated the well with the help of his only son Harith and quenched the thirst of the pilgrims. Abdullah-ibn Abdul-Muttalib

In digging this well, Abdul-Muttalib had no helper, save his only son Harith. At that moment, he took an oath that if God provided him with ten sons he would sacrifice one of them in His way. When the Almighty granted his prayer, his youngest son “Abdullah “ was selected to be the sacrificial offering, for the fulfillment of his covenant.

Abdul-Muttalib wanted to sacrifice his son Abdullah in front of the House of Allah. But the elite of the Quraish, who had gathered there, advised him against it, saying, “Such an action would set a bad example for the others amongst the Quraish and others too would pursue your footsteps and sacrifice their sons “

Consequent to this argument, it was resolved that Abdul-Muttalib would draw a lot between a hundred camels and Abdullah for the sacrifice. If the lot fell on the camels, he would sacrifice them but if it fell in

favor of Abdullah, his son would be sacrificed. When the lot was drawn it fell on the camels. Abdul-Muttalib did not accept this verdict until the lot was drawn thrice and on all the three occasions, it was in the favor of the camels. Abdul-Muttalib sacrificed the one hundred camels and prepared food out of their meat. Thus, Abdullah was delivered from sacrifice.

Abdul-Muttalib's action brought back memories of Ibrahim's attempt to sacrifice his son, Ismail. Hence, Abdul-Muttalib was also called as "the second Ibrahim ".

Abdul-Muttalib got his son Abdullah married to Aamena, the daughter of Wahab. A son was born to them and they named him, "Muhammad-ibn- Abdullah-ibn-Abdul-Muttalib " (the last prophet-S)2.

Aam-ul-Feel (Year of the Elephant)

The Holy Prophet (S) was not yet born when his father Abdullah died. In the year of the Prophet's birth, Abraha the commander of Ethiopia advanced from Yemen to Mecca along with huge army and war elephants, the aim being the destruction of the House of God.

Abdul-Muttalib climbed the mountains of Mecca and raised his hands in prayers and cried. God answered his prayers and sent the birds (Abaabeel) against Abraha's army and destroyed them in entirety.

Such incidents related to Abdul-Muttalib found fame amongst the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula and earned special laurels for him. The Arabs named this year as the year of the elephant (Aam-ul-Feel).

Initially, the Prophet (S) was put under the guardianship of his grandfather Abdul-Muttalib. He was only a child when his mother Aamena died. Thereafter, when he turned eight, his grandfather Abdul-Muttalib too became fatally ill. Before dying, he entrusted the guardianship of his grandson to his noble son, Abu Talib.

Abu Talib's Authority

After Abdul-Muttalib's departure, the onerous task of governing the Quraish fell upon his son Abu Talib. In the same year, Abu Talib, like all other Quraishites, departed for Syria for trade, but in this journey, his nephew, Muhammad (S), accompanied him.

During this excursion, the Christian monks discovered the qualities of the last Prophet present in Muhammad (S) and disclosed the same to Abu Talib. They also warned him of the lurking danger from the Jews and insisted that Abu Talib should return to Mecca along with Muhammad (S) and strive to safeguard him. Acting on their admonishments, Abu Talib returned to Mecca and took real care of Muhammad (S).

When he was twenty-five years old, the Holy Prophet (S) married the wealthiest woman of Quraish, Khadijah (s.a.), and the daughter of Khuwaylid. In the year when severe famine struck Mecca, the

Prophet (S) requested his uncle Abu Talib to entrust his son Ali to him so that he could take him home and keep him under his special guardianship. Abu Talib accepted his nephew's request[3] and Ali who was only a child was brought-up in the house and under the guardianship of the Prophet (S).

Construction of the Ka'ba

The Holy Ka.'ba possessed a low wall, slightly taller than the height of one standing figure but sans any ceiling. Inside the Ka.'ba was a well wherein laid its treasures. In the thirty-fifth year of the Holy Prophet's life, some thieves stole these treasures, on which the Quraish decided to re-build the Ka.'ba. They divided the work of re-building the Ka.'ba amongst their own tribes. When the work reached the stage for fixing Hajar-ul-Aswad (the black stone), a dispute arose amongst the tribes of Quraish, as each was determined to place the black stone themselves to earn a distinction.

Things reached to a stage where the various tribes prepared themselves for a battle so that the one emerging victorious would place the black stone.

At this moment, the eldest man amongst the Quraish, Mughaira-ibn-Abdullah Makhzumi, (to prevent unnecessary bloodshed) addressed the Quraish who had gathered in Masjid-ul-Haraam, 'O the tribes of Quraish! Anyone who enters the mosque at this very moment will judge this dispute and you should accept his verdict.'

Everybody accepted his suggestion and fixed their eyes on the entrance of the mosque when suddenly they saw Abdul-Muttalib's grandson, Muhammad-ibn- Abdullah (S) setting foot in the mosque. Joyously, they all cried in one voice,

هذا الأمين , رضينا ! هذا محمد

"It is Muhammad, the trustworthy. We are satisfied with his judgement".

When the Prophet (S) came nearer, they narrated to him the incident. He (S) ordered them to fetch a piece of cloth and they duly obliged. The Holy Prophet (S) placed the Hajar-ul-Aswad on this cloth by his own hands.

Thereafter, he (S) ordered every tribe to hold a portion of this cloth containing the black stone and carry it to the desired spot. When they did so, the Holy Prophet (S) elevated the stone by his own hands to its place, thereby bringing a threatening dispute to a friendly end.[4]

People of the Book awaiting the arrival of the last Prophet (S)

Allah, Exalted be He, had informed His prophets (a.s.) about all the qualities of the last prophet (S). He informed them about his birthplace, his house, the signs of the period of his mission and migration, the

signs present in his stature, his characteristics, his behavior, the distinctions present in his sacred laws, etc.

He had commanded His prophets (a.s.) to reveal all these qualities to their nations and to take an undertaking from them that whenever such a prophet arrived with these characteristics and qualities, they should believe in him.

The prophets (a.s.), in turn, had propagated all these qualities and particulars to their people and divulged these to their own legatees. Moreover, this matter was recorded in detail in heavenly scriptures and their commentaries, written by the legatees.

As long as these were not detrimental to the worldly lives of the people of the book, such news and information remained untouched in these heavenly canons and were not distorted and were available with the Jew and Christian scholars and priests.

The Jew and Christian scholars would relate and explain these prophecies to all and sundry, including Abdul-Muttalib and Abu Talib, the Prophet's grandfather and uncle respectively.

Moreover, the Jew scholars disseminated this report in Medina and informed that this Prophet would migrate to this city. It was for this reason that after the Prophet's appointment, Abu Talib would repeatedly stress this point in his poems. Also, for this very reason, when the people of Medina came in contact with the Prophet (S) in Mecca, they realized that he was the same Prophet about whom the Jews had talked and they brought faith in him. Insha'Allah, we shall explain this matter in its proper place.

The Prophet's Appointment

Before turning forty, the Holy Prophet (S) would seclude himself every year in the cave of "Hera " for a few hours and preoccupy himself in the worship of God. In this seclusion, the Holy Prophet (S) would allow Ali (a.s.) to accompany him.

At forty, a revelation descended upon the Holy Prophet (S) for the first time in this very cave. Ali, who had accompanied him on that occasion as well, became the first witness of the divine revelation.

After revelation, Ali (a.s.) and Khadijah (s.a.) were the first to bring faith in the Prophet (S). They performed the congregational prayers with the Prophet and except for these three, none believed in Islam. In this connection, Tabari and other historians have narrated from Afif Kandi as such:

"During the era of paganism, I went to Mecca and was the guest of Abbas-ibn Abdil Muttalib. One day when the sun was above the horizon, I cast my glance over the Ka.'ba. I saw a youth approaching and he looked towards the sky. Then, he stood in the direction of the Ka.'ba. A few moments later, I saw a child approaching and he stood on his right side. Moments later, a woman too approached and stood

behind them. Then, the young man bowed in obeisance.

The child and woman too followed him and bowed down. The young man stood on his feet. The child and woman too repeated the same action. The young man went in the state of prostration. The two followed suit.

I said,'O Abbas! It is indeed amazing..' Abbas queried, 'A great affair indeed! Do you know the identity of this young man?.' I replied in the negative. He said, 'He is my nephew Muhammad-ibn-Abdullah-ibn-Abdul Muttalib.'. Again, he inquired, 'Are you aware of the youth accompanying him?.'

I replied, 'No..'

He said, 'He is my nephew Ali ibn Abi Talib ibn Abdul Muttalib! My nephew (once) told me: "My Lord! The Lord of the heaven and earth has ordered them (i.e. the heaven and the earth) to follow the path for which they have been created. "

I swear by Allah that I am unaware of anyone on earth who is steadfast on this religion save these three.[5]

Commencement Of The General Call

Till the Prophet's (S) message and practice was confined to the four walls of his house, nobody bothered him. But in the third year of his mission, the verse,

وَأَنذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ

was revealed and the Prophet (S) invited his relatives over for dinner. When he finished serving, he invited them to Islam and said, 'who amongst you is ready to assist me in this affair so that he will be my successor, vizier and legatee?!

All refused except Ali who was then only in his teens. He responded, 'O Messenger of Allah! I am ready to assist you in this affair.'. The Prophet (S) repeated this call three times and on each occasion, the people refused to acknowledge positively save Ali. Thereafter, the Prophet (S) embraced

Ali and said, 'You are my successor, vizier and legatee.'.

At this, Abu Lahab scoffed insultingly at Abu Talib and left in a huff.[6]

Later, Zaid, the Prophet's (S) freed slave, and Jafar ibn Abi Talib, the Prophet's (S) cousin, accepted Islam followed by Abu-Zar and a few others. The tenth to accept Islam was Fatimah, the wife of Abu Talib and mother of Ali-ibn-Abi Talib (a.s.).[7]

Reaction of the Quraish and their leader's support for the Prophet (S)

Islam spread in Mecca and a few from the various tribes of Quraish converted to Islam. However, till the time the Holy Prophet (S) and his followers were busy in the worship of the One God and did not condemn their idols, the Quraish did not show any reaction except astonishment.

But when the Prophet (S) was commanded by Allah to warn the idol-worshippers and explain to them the folly of idol-worship, the situation exploded. The polytheists approached their leader Abu Talib, saying, "You are our leader and master. Your nephew insults our gods and calls them names. Restrain him from defaming our idols and abusing them. We too will allow him to be free with his own God. "

Abu Talib called the Prophet (S) in a gathering and addressed him thus, 'They are eminent personalities and leaders of your nation and have requested to be allowed to worship their idols.'.

Prophet (S): 'O Uncle! Shouldn.'t I invite them to something better?

Abu Talib: 'What's that.'?

Prophet (S): 'I invite them to utter a creed (of faith) by which the Arabs would become humble before them and the non-Arabs would come under their domination.'.

Abu Jahl: 'What is the single creed? Tell us for we are ready to utter this creed ten times.'.

Prophet (S): 'The creed to be uttered is:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

[meaning: there is no god but Allah]..'

On hearing this, they all got up angrily and left, saying, 'By god! We shall defame you and your God who has given you such commands.'.[8]

Other Recommendations of the Quraish

The Quraishite polytheists offered another proposal to the Prophet (S). They suggested that for one year they would worship the Prophet's (S) God and for one year, the latter would worship their gods. As a riposte to this demand, the following verses were revealed,

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ وَلَا أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَا عَبَدْتُمْ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ

"Say: O unbelievers! I worship not that which ye worship, Nor will ye worship that which I worship. And I will not worship that which ye have been wont to worship, Nor will ye worship that which I worship. You shall have your religion and I shall have my religion " (***Quran, 109:1-6***)

And the Prophet (S) continued his task.....

For the third time, the Quraishite polytheists approached Abu Talib. This time, they took with themselves "Ammaarah" the most handsome and astute youth amongst all Quraish. They addressed Abu Talib thus, 'We offer you this youth who is the best amongst all the Quraish and you hand over to us Muhammad so that we can kill him and hence bring to an end this atmosphere of anxiety.'.

To their absurd suggestion, Abu Talib replied, 'Should I hand over to you my son for you to kill him and keep your son to take care of him.'?

At this juncture, the Quraish saw no alternative but to torment the Prophet's (S) followers. Consequently, each tribe began to trouble and torture the Muslims of their tribe.

When the torture and harassment increased, the Holy Prophet (S) commanded the Muslims to migrate from Mecca to Ethiopia, with "Jafar ibn Abi Talib " as their leader.

The polytheists dispatched Amr al-Aas and Ammaarah to Ethiopia with gifts and presents to meet "Najashi ", the King of Ethiopia and request him to extradite the Muslims to Mecca. However, Najashi declined their request and instead, continued to honor Jafar and his companions.

When Abu Talib received this news, he recited the following poem in honor of Najashi and amidst his poem; he invited the King to Islam:

تعلم خـيار الـناس أن محـمد *** وزير لموسى والمسيح ابن مريم

أتى بالهـدى مثل الذي أتـيا به *** فكـل بـأمر الله يهدي ويعصم

وإنكم تتلـونه في كتابكم بصـدق *** حديـث لا حـديث المترجم

فلا تجعـلوا الله نـداً وأسلـمو *** فإن طريق الحـق لـيس بمظلم 35

In this poem, the leader of Mecca addressed the King of Ethiopia as follows:

Behold! O best of men! Know that Muhammad (S) is the helper of Musa and Isa Messiah, son of

Maryam,

Like them (Musa and Isa), he (S) too has brought the guidance. Each of these three Prophets guides according to the divine command and protect the people from the evil deeds,

You (Christians) read about him in your own Book (Injeel) unambiguously, and not out of words based on conjecture and surmise,

Indeed when any group amongst us (Muslims) take refuge in you out of your grace and magnanimity, they will surely respond with honor and respect.

Najashi called a joint meeting of Amr-Aas and the Muslims under the leadership of Jafar ibn Abi Talib. Jafar gave (positive) replies to Amr, while Najashi rejected Amr disdainfully.

Najashi accepted Islam and introduced it as the official religion of the state, just like the "Shariah" of Moses (a.s.) and Jesus (a.s.). The number of emigrants to Ethiopia exceeded eighty. The news spread like wildfire amongst the various tribes in the Arabian Peninsula. Islam had crossed the frontiers of Mecca and people from other Arab tribes, such as "Abuzar Ghaffari ", began accepting Islam.

In his poems, while expressing support for the Prophet (S), Abu Talib also invited the people to Islam,

مَنَعنا الرَسولَ رَسولَ المَليكِ بِبيضٍ تَلَألأُ لمع البُروقِ

بِضَربٍ يُذَبِّبُ دونَ النِهابِ حذارَ الوَثائِرِ وَالخَنفَقيقِ36

We supported and defended the Prophet, the master, with a sword that flashes like lightning.

I will support and defend the Prophet, the master; a support from a supporter who is tender and sympathetic to him.

In another poem, he challenges,

I swear by Allah that I shall die but not allow them (i.e. the polytheists) to lay hands on him.

You presented us a religion, which according to me, is the best religion for mankind.[9]

In yet another couplet, he questions,

Don't you realize that we have found Muhammad to be a Prophet, similar to Moses, whose name has come down in the first Book (Torah)?[10]

* * *

Once again they suggested that if the Prophet (S) desired worldly wealth, they could offer him so much that he would become the richest man in Mecca or if he craved for power, they were willing to select him as their ruler.

The Prophet (S) responded, “By Allah! If they place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left, I shall not refrain from inviting the people (to Islam). “

In these exchanges of offers and refusals between the Quraish, Abu Talib and the Holy Prophet (S), Abu Talib expressed his helplessness before the Prophet (S), saying, “O my nephew, your nation has spoken as you see. Ponder over my affair and your affair and do not ask me something which I am unable to fulfill! “

At this moment, the Holy Prophet (S) cried. Turning back, he began to walk away, but Abu Talib called out to him. When the Prophet (S) halted, he said, ‘O my nephew, you may continue to preach as you wish (and) I shall not forsake you, come what may..’

Conflict between the Prophet’s uncle (Hamza) and Abu Jahl

One day Abu Jahl, finding the Prophet (S) all alone near Mount Safa, insulted and abused him, and called Islam by ugly names. A bondmaid witnessed this scene.

At that moment, Hamza Ibn Abdil Muttalib, an eminent Quraishite known for his bravery and valor, had left Mecca for hunting. It was his practice that after returning from hunting, he would hasten towards Masjid-ul-Haram and circumambulate the Ka.’ba and then depart for his house.

Inside the mosque, he would visit every group from the Quraish who would assemble in some corner of the mosque and offer his greetings to them. This time, on the way back, the aforesaid bondmaid narrated to him the incident of Abu Jahl’s misbehavior with the Prophet (S). Hamza was furious and hastened to the mosque angrily. But this time, without approaching anybody, he simply dashed towards the group amongst who was Abu Jahl.

When he approached them, he stood before Abu Jahl and raising his bow struck Abu Jahl’s head as a result of which his head split open and challenged, ‘How dare you insult my nephew while I follow his religion and pay heed to his words? If you can, try to get rid of me!.’

People belonging to the tribe of Bani-Makhzum (Abu Jahl’s relatives) wanted to assist Abu Jahl. But the latter, sensing the consequence, refrained them saying, ‘Leave alone Abu Ammarah (Hamza) for I have insulted his nephew very badly.’.

* * *

For the sake of supporting the Prophet (S), the chief of the Quraish (Abu Talib) stepped up his campaign

against the Quraishite infidels. His blazing attacks on them in form of odes were like thunderbolts from the sky. In this battle, he also encouraged his relatives and associates to assist the Prophet (S). His odes would comprise of significant imports, a few of
which were as follows,

“Nay! I swear by Allah that none can lay their hands on my nephew On this path, the brave warriors of Bani-Hashim shall draw their swords from the scabbard and like lions, which attack their prey, They will tear apart the enemies. (Even if) on this path, women may turn widows “

Abu Talib recited many such odes and one of them comprised ninety-four verses.[11]

Revolt against the Meccan chief

The infidels among the Quraish became helpless in the face of all-round support by Abu Talib for the Prophet, Islam and the Muslims. Thus, in the sixth year of the Prophet’s mission,[12] they gathered to find a solution. In this meeting, they agreed to revolt against their chief as well as the tribes of Bani-Hashim and Bani-Muttalib who were backing the Prophet (S).

For achieving this aim, they prepared an agreement to impose sanctions on the Prophet’s (S) supporters. They signed a covenant not to enter into matrimony with them, not to buy or sell anything from/to them and not to sit with them in any gathering. After signing this treaty, they hung it from the wall of the Ka.’ba.

At that moment, the two sects of Bani-Hashim and Bani-Muttalib (with the exception of Abu Talib) abandoned their houses in Mecca and took refuge with the help of Abu Talib in a valley, which still stands in his name and is called “Sheb Abi Talib “.

Under the circumstances, Abu Talib addressed the Quraish through the following brilliant poem,

1. ‘Lo! Send message on my behalf to Lui’s tribe and in particular the tribes of Ka’b:[13]

2. Don’t you realize that we have found Muhammad (S) to be a Prophet similar to Moses; whose name has come down in the first Book (the Torah)?

3. And that God has placed in the hearts of His slaves the love for Muhammad and who is better than the one in whose heart God has placed his love?

4. And whatever you have written down in your agreement shall indeed become ominous for you just as the cry of the young one of Prophet Saleh’s she-camel (after her union with her mother) became ominous for that nation. (In other words, a great calamity shall befall you as a result of your deeds).

5. Awake! Awake! Before your grave is dug and the innocent become like the sinful (equal in punishment)

6. Do not follow the slanderers and do not break off ties of relationship and kinship after friendship and fraternity!

7. And do not cause a severe prolonged war for it is likely to be unpleasant and severe for the one who kindles the flames of war.

8. I swear by the Lord of the Ka'ba that we shall never abandon Ahmad (S) in times of difficulties!

9. Until our hands and face are severed with the naked sword.

10. And in the battlefield are scattered pieces of spears and the black eagles gather for devouring the dead bodies.

11. And the hippodrome of horses and the roaring of the warriors fill the scene of the battlefield.

12. Is it not that our father Hashim tightened the belt and stated in his will that we should familiarize ourselves with the spear and the sword.

13. We, the Bani-Hashim never get weary and depressed from war until the war (itself) gets tired of us and we have no grievance against events following the war.

14. Yet, we are men of war and men of reason at the time when the lives of the champions are at their wit's end.

Abu Talib's odes had a comforting effect on the Quraish. Moreover, the Prophet (S) and the other Hashimiites were in peace from the harm of the Quraish. However, the economic sanctions had its effects on them, which lasted for years. During these three years, Khadijah (s.a.), the wealthiest lady of Quraish, donated her wealth to all those who suffered from this economic blockade.[14]

During this period, they procured their foodstuffs by way of smuggling. At night, Abu Talib would send his son Ali to Mecca for procuring the necessary provisions. In this regard, Ibn Abil Hadeed narrates,

"At night, Ali would exit from the mountain-valley and wear the disguise of a bandit in order to conceal his identity. Then, he would travel to the same place as instructed by Abu Talib and return carrying loads of wheat and flour.[15]

During this period, none would come out from the mountain-valley and others too would not visit them.[16]

Abu Talib would make the Prophet (S) sleep at night in such a place where he could not be seen easily. When a part of the night elapsed, he would transfer him to another spot and instead make Ali sleep in his place so that if in case anyone had marked the Prophet's (S) place with the intention of assassinating him, Ali would be there instead of the Prophet (S).[17]

Those at the receiving end of this economic blockade were severely afflicted with poverty and want.

Allah assigned the ants to eat away the writings of the pact. The Prophet (S) informed Abu Talib about this incident. Abu Talib approached the Quraish in Masjid-ul-Haram and narrated to them the incident and said, “Go and see the pact. If it is as my nephew says, then you should lift the economic sanctions. However, if his words turn out to be false, I shall
surrender him to you so that you may kill him “.

The Quraish became glad. They brought the pact and saw for themselves that the writings had been destroyed except the words: "باسمك اللهم" (In Thy Name O Lord). They said: ‘This is nothing but sorcery.....! At this moment, a group accepted Islam.[18]

Thereafter, five people (who were related to the Bani-Hashim) along with Khadijah (s.a.) got together and tore apart the pages in the presence of the Quraish.[19]

After this event, the Bani-Hashim and the Bani-Muttalib came out from the mountain-valley and returned to their houses in Mecca.

The Demise of Khadijah (s.a.)

As against the interests of the Arabs, Islam began to spread beyond the frontiers of Mecca. More than eighty Muslims traveled to the African continent and spread monotheism as far as Ethiopia. In all these places, they recited the Holy Quran and worshipped the One and Unique God. Under these circumstances, the Quraish could no longer impede the progress of Islam as they did in the first year of the Prophet’s (S) mission.

On the other hand, at the age of eighty-four and after severe confrontation with the Quraish, Abu Talib had turned old and feeble. Khadijah (s.a.) too, after completing sixty-five years of age and spending her entire wealth in the way of Islam, had become indigent and physically shattered. Both these companions sincerely strove to their utmost capacity in assisting the Prophet (S).

Finally Khadijah (s.a.) expired in the month of Ramadhan, three years before the Prophet’s migration.[20]

The last moments of Abu Talib’s life

When he was on his deathbed, Abu Talib put in his last effort in the path of Islam and protection of the Holy Prophet (S). He addressed the Prophet (S) thus:

.‘O nephew, after me, you may approach your uncles from the sect of Bani- Najjaar (from the tribe of Khazraj in Medina) as this tribe is more devoted than all other people from the viewpoint of protection and assistance of their household..’[21]

When Abu Talib was breathing his last, his brother Abbas and the Prophet (S) were besides him. Abu Talib spoke in a frail voice. Abbas listened attentively and could hear Abu Talib uttering, “La-ilaha-

illallah" (there is no god but Allah).22

Thus, during the last moments of his life, Abu Talib uttered the same words for which he had spent his life (in its promotion and propagation). He passed away while uttering the word: "Allah".

Taking into account his services on the path of Islam, his help to the Prophet (S) and the creed "La-ilaha-illallah", it can be said with certainty that Abu Talib was unparalleled. But since he was Ali's (a.s.) father, the pagans labeled such a Muslim an infidel due to their enmity with Ali! What a great injustice they have indeed inflicted on themselves!

Ya.'qubi says:

The Prophet uttered these words over the dead body of his uncle:

"O uncle! You fostered me while I was a child; you acted as my guardian when I was an orphan and assisted me in my adulthood. May Allah give you a good reward? "

"He would sorrowfully walk back and forth before Abu Talib's coffin and would then stand in front of the coffin and say:

"May you receive the reward for strengthening blood-kinship; and the reward for goodness has also been attained by you. "23

The Prophet of Islam (S) uttered these words. But the Muslims said, "Abu Talib shall burn in the Fire of Hell. " And they narrate this from this very Prophet (S)!

In our view, those traditions which are indeed inconsistent with these set of traditions (which were mentioned before) were forged by them during the era of Muawiya Ibn Abi Sufyan, and were falsely attributed to the Prophet (S).

Thereafter, all the Caliphs have substantiated and strengthened the aforesaid view, particularly the Caliphs of Bani-Abbas who faced the mutinies of Abu Talib's offspring.

By such traditions, they wished to convince the Muslims that since they were from the descendants of Abbas (the Prophet's (S) uncle) who was a Muslim, they were the legal heirs to the Prophet (S) in all aspects, material and spiritual. On the other hand, the progeny (of Abu Talib) was from the descendants of Abu Talib (another uncle of the Prophet (S)) who according to them was an infidel and in Islam, a believer and non-believer cannot inherit from each other.

However, they do not possess any evidence to prove that Abu Talib was a non-Muslim. Besides, a lot has come down from the sayings and poems of Abu Talib in the books of history and biographies. In these books, not even one instance can be found wherein Abu Talib has called out the names of idols belonging to the Meccans and Arab infidels such as Laat, Hubal and Uzza.

In all the instances, words like Allah, Lord of the Ka.'ba and such other names of Allah were on his lips and he would swear by these names. Moreover, these names were his habitual phrase, whereas the names of such idols have excessively come down from the Arab polytheists.24

Abu Talib passed away25 just three days after Khadijah (s.a.)'s demise and as per some sources, he died even before Khadijah (s.a.). Thereafter, Allah assigned his son Ali (a.s.) to assist the Prophet (S) and Ali too exhibited such a role against the Quraish.

The stalwart of Islam face to face with the Quraish

After Abu Talib's demise, it was necessary on the part of the Bani-Hashim to instil some fear in the hearts of the Quraishite infidels so that they would never ever imagine that with Abu Talib's departure, the Prophet has now been left without any helper and that the Bani-Hashim would abandon the Prophet (S).

This task was performed by Abu Talib's son, Ali (a.s.) in the best possible manner. In the Arab society of those days, the best means were the very composition of odes. After his father's demise, Ali (a.s.) warned the Quraish in the form of a brilliant ode as such:

1. I remained awake at night after receiving news of Abu Talib's demise; (he was) a shelter for the helpless accompanied by generosity and forgiveness.

2. A master possessing forbearance, who was neither hot-tempered nor rough nor disabled. They gave me the news of my master's demise, a great master indeed.

3. Redresser for the distressed (such) that if any grievance would occur in any place, he would redress it; the protector of Bani-Hashim and the supporters of Bani-Hashim from oppression and aggression.

4. The Quraish became glad by his departure but I do not see life to be immortal.

5. They intended to commit such deeds, which their carnal desires manifested to be pure and good and eventually a day will come when these very deeds will cause them to deviate.

6. They wished to display the Prophet as a liar and wanted to kill him. They strove to defame him and disparage his affairs.

7. You have exhorted falsehood! Nay, I swear by the Ka'ba; until we make you taste the tip of the spear and the sharp sword.

8. And until you do not witness an irresistible and difficult scene from our side; at that moment when we shall be ironclad.

9. And until when either you shall destroy us or we shall annihilate you, or that you consider peace with

the people of your own tribe to be more prudent.

10. Otherwise, this tribe is on the side of Muhammad (S) and they are his heralds. I am speaking about the Bani-Hashim; those very ones who are the best warriors.

11. The Prophet's succor is Allah against you people.

12. A Prophet who has brought for us a revelation and my Lord has named him Muhammad in the heavenly Book.

13. His face is radiant like the sun so much that nothing can overcome the brightness of his face (just as the clouds cannot prevent the radiant sun from shining).

14. He is trustworthy upon what Allah has deposited in his heart, and whatever he utters is salvation.[26]

In this ode, Ali (a.s.) warns the Quraishite infidels that they should never ever imagine that since Abu Talib, the chief of the Quraish has passed away, the Bani-Hashim have now become helpless.

Like his father, Ali (a.s.) too declares in his ode, the prophet hood of Muhammad (S) from Allah's side and creates fear of Allah in the hearts of the Quraishite infidels. And if in case they do not fear and they will not fear so, he warns them of the fierce spears and sharp swords of Bani-Hashim who will be clad in iron.

And he warns them that for the sake of the Prophet's protection, confrontation is inevitable, wherein either the Bani-Hashim or the Quraishite infidels will be annihilated except if the Quraish follow the path of peace with their cousins Bani-Hashim. And here too, like his father, Ali (a.s.) strives to enliven the affection for ties of relationship amongst the tribe of Quraish.

In this ode, Ali (a.s.) appears to be the same Abu Talib, who is rebuking the Quraishite infidels. How beautifully the Arabs have painted the scenario, (Verily, this lion-cub is the son of that same lion). The effect of this ode

In order to perceive the effect of this ode, kindly pay attention to the following story:

After the end of the battle of Jamal in Basra, Amir-ul-Mumineen (a.s.) went to Kufa and in a sermon delivered on the pulpit in the mosque of Kufa, he called the people to prepare themselves for a battle with Muawiya in Syria.

At this moment, a man stood up and facing Ali (a.s.) said, 'You wish to send us to Syria so that we kill our brethren just as you took us to kill our brethren in Basra? Nay, I swear by God that we shall never do such a thing!.'

This talk had its effect on the morale of the people. However, the brave commander of Ali (a.s.), "Malik al-Ashtar" sprang on his feet and said that very soon he would give him his reply. Seeing Malik's mood,

the man took to his heels. The people chased him until they caught him in the market where mules were sold. There, they trampled him (down) and fisted and kicked him to death. Amir-ul-Mumineen (a.s.) gave his blood money to his family members from the public treasury and then said: "His murderer is unknown and his blood-money is being given from the public treasury of the Muslims ".27

Here, if Malik Ashtar had not stood on his feet and uttered these words then those of the same mind (as the murdered man) would have approved the murdered man's sayings and consequently, Amir-ul-Mumineen (a.s.) would have been defeated. However, Malik Ashtar's (the chief of the Hamadan tribe) remark prompted the people of his tribe and others to get on their feet and kill that man. In this manner, the enemies held back their breath.

The situation in Mecca was equally or even more dangerous. Bani-Hashim had lost their chief and leader and one critical blow from the Quraish was enough to destroy them. This ode from the son of the Quraish chief left two positive effects on that society:

1-Effect on the tribe of Bani-Hashim and the entire believers

The Bani-Hashim needed a strong-hearted pivot, who could cheer them up and give them hope and release them from dispersion and fear. Ali's ode met such a need and also filled the other oppressed Muslims.' hearts too with hope and courage.

2-Effect on the Quraish

Under the given circumstances, if only one person from the Quraish had attacked the Prophet (S), hundreds of others would have followed suit and a common assault resulted on the Prophet (S), the Bani-Hashim as well as the oppressed Muslims.

Allah appointed Ali (a.s.) and by means of this ode transformed the state of Mecca to the advantage of the Prophet (S), Islam and the Muslims just as Malik Ashtar's statement had changed the situation to the benefit of this Ali (a.s.) in Kufa.

The Quraishite infidels intensify their persecution on the Muslims Although the unbelievers amongst the Quraish were aware that after Abu Talib's demise, the Bani-Hashim would not abandon the Prophet (S) and they would not succeed in killing the Prophet (S), nevertheless, they inflicted such persecutions on the Prophet that they never ever dared during Abu Talib's lifetime.28

Now we shall mention the names of two tormenters who tormented the Prophet (S) throughout his stay in Mecca and describe a few instances of the impediments laid by them in the way of Islam and the Prophet (S).

Abu-Lahab and his wife Umm-Jameel

Abu-Lahab was Abdul-Muttalib's son and the Prophet's uncle. "Lahab" Means the flames of fire and he was titled as Abu-Lahab because of his handsome face (i.e. one whose appearance emits light like the flames of fire).

The persecution and impediments by Abu-Lahab began right from the day the Prophet (S) invited Bani Abdil Muttalib to his house. It continued until after the battle of Badr, when Abu-Lahab died from a contagious disease called "Adsah ", similar to the disease of plague. Amongst his persecutions and impediments were the following:

At the outset of his general invitation, the Prophet (S) once climbed the mountain of Safa and cried out: "Wa Sabahah! " This cry is commonly used amongst the Arabs for inviting the people and warning them from frightful events.

After this call, the Quraish gathered around the Prophet (S). The Prophet (S) sough confirmation, 'If I tell you that mounted soldiers are approaching you (for attack) from this mountain slope, will you believe me?.' They affirmed, 'We have never heard you utter a lie..'
At this moment, the Prophet (S) said, 'I warn you from a severe retribution..'

Amongst all the people, it was the Prophet's (S) uncle Abu-Lahab who reacted and said, "May you perish! Have you called us here just to listen to these words? "29

Abu-Lahab continued his vitriolic, "This Muhammad promises us the world after death and in this regard, makes certain claims. I for myself do not reckon that there is any news after death. " To display his mockery, he opened his hands and blew into it and said, "May it be severed! I do not see anything but vain words coming out from Muhammad's mouth. "30

Abu-Lahab's wife, "Umm-Jameel" (daughter of Abu Sufyan and aunt of Muawiya who belonged to the tribe of Bani-Umayyah) was another person who tormented the Prophet (S) with no end. She would throw thorns on the Prophet's (S) path and excite sedition against him. About Abu-Lahab and his wife, the blessed verse of "Masad" was revealed where Allah says:

تَبَّتْ يَدَا أَبِي لَهَبٍ وَتَبَّ مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُ مَالُهُ وَمَا كَسَبَ ,سَيَصْلَىٰ نَارًا ذَاتَ لَهَبٍ وَامْرَأَتُهُ حَمَّالَةَ الْحَطَبِ فِي جِيدِهَا حَبْلٌ مِّن مَّسَدٍ

"Perdition overtakes both hands of Abu Lahab, and he will perish.
His wealth and what he earns will not avail him,
He shall soon burn in fire that flames,
And his wife, the bearer of fuel,
Upon her neck a halter of strongly twisted rope." (***Qur'an, 111:1-5***)

Abu-Lahab's two sons "Utbah " and "Utaibah " had married the Prophet's (S) two daughters and "Aas-ibn-Wael Sahmi " had married yet another daughter of the Prophet (S). The Quraish advised them to divorce the Prophet's daughters so that their lives turn miserable and the Prophet's (S) invitation to Islam is hindered. In return, we shall allow you to marry any woman from the Quraish of your choice.

Aas-ibn-Wael did not accept the advice and refused to divorce the Prophet's (S) daughter. However, Abu-Lahab's two sons divorced the Prophet's (S) two daughters since, after the revelation of Sura Lahab, their mother Umm-Jameel threatened them that, "If you refuse to divorce Muhammad's daughters I shall not speak a word to you. "

Umm-Jameel did not stop here in her enmity with the Prophet (S). Once, while reciting a poem condemning the Prophet (S), she picked up a stone and went to the House of God for flinging it at the Prophet's (S) face. However, even though she came face to face with the Prophet (S) she could not see him and returned disappointed.31

The obstacles created by Abu-Lahab on the Prophet's (S) path were more than the all other Quraishites put together.

As stated earlier, following the pact designed by the Quraishite infidels, the Holy Prophet (S) and his followers (the two sects of Bani-Hashim and Bani-Muttalib) were left in "Sheb Abu Talib ", walled on all sides by the infidels.

Moreover, the Quraishite had prohibited all sorts of trade with them and they passed their lives in hardship and hunger.

At that time, whenever a trade caravan would enter Mecca and someone from Sheb Abu Talib would approach the caravan to purchase some provisions, the enemy of God (Abu-Lahab) would stand up and address the traders thus,

"Increase the prices of your merchandise for Muhammad's followers so that they are unable to buy them. You are aware of my wealth and know very well that I fulfill my promise and agreement. I give you a guarantee that you shall face no loss or damage. "

Thereafter, the tradesmen would increase the prices of their goods to such an extent that the Prophet's (S) followers were rendered helpless and would return empty handed while their children would cry and wail due to hunger. At the end, Abu-Lahab would give the tradesmen a good profit for whatever clothes and foodstuffs they had not sold to the Prophet's (S) followers. In this manner, the Muslims passed their lives in hardships and difficulties.32

1. Refer to Seerah Ibn Hisham 1/11 and the biography of the tribe of Fahr in the book Ansab Ibn Hazm.
2. Refer to "Tarikh Ya'qubi"- Vol: page 242- 252.
3. Tarikh Tabari, European Ed., 3/1163.
4. Seerah Ibn Hisham (hadith regarding .'Construction of Ka.'ba) Vol 1; pg. 204-210.

5. Tarikh-Tabari, European Edition, Vol. 3, p. 1161.
6. Refer to Tarikh-Tabari; 1/1171-1172 and Uyoon al-Athar 1/98-100.
7. Refer to Tarikh-Ya.'qubi; 2/23 and 28.
8. This verse refers to the above event:
وَانطَلَقَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْهُمْ أَنِ امْشُوا وَاصْبِرُوا عَلَىٰ آلِهَتِكُمْ إِنَّ هَٰذَا لَشَيْءٌ يُرَادُ
9. Tarikh Ya'qubi; vol. 2, p. 31.
10. Seerah Ibn Ishaaq, p. 157; Seerah Ibn Hisham, vol. 1, p.373.
11. Seerah Ibn Hisham; 1/286-298.
12. Tarikh-Ya.'qubi 2/31; Beirut print-1379.
13. Lui-ibn-Ghalib is the great ancestor of the Quraish tribe and Ka.'b and Aamer are his sons. The lineage of the tribes of Quraish traces back to this very Ka.'b-ibn-Lui who is the addressee in Abu Talib's statement. Refer to the genealogies of Ibn Hazm; the detailed account of the tribes of Bani-Lui.
14. Seerah Ibn Hisham, vol.1,p.373-376.
15. Sharh-o-Nahjil-Balagha by Ibn Abil Hadeed; vol.13,p.254
16. Ibid., vol.14, p.58.
17. Sharh-o-Nahjil-Balagha, vol.14,p. 64, and Uyoon al-Athar, vol.1,p.127.
18. Tarikh al-Ya.'qubi vol. 2, p.31-32.
19. Seerah Ibn Hisham, vol.1,p.400, and Tarikh Tabari vol.1,p.1196-1199.
20. Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, vol.2, p.35.
21. Tarikh al-Islam by Zahabi, vol.1, p.138
22. Seerah Ibn Ishaaq in the Chapter of 'Demise of Abu Talib', p. 238, and Seerah Ibn Hisham vol.2, p.95.
23. Tarikh-Ya'qubi 2/35.
24. It is worth mentioning that numerous books have been written about Abu Talib's faith. Some of them have been mentioned in the book "Az-Zariah" 2/510-514 mainly: Baghyat-ul-Talib and Imaan Abi-Talib wa husna khatamah written by Allama Suyuti; Asnal-Matalib-fi-Nejat Abi-Talib written by Shafaee Mufti of Mecca Sayyed Ahmad-ibn-Zaini Dehlan and the books which have been been recently printed like: Imaan Abi-Talib written by Shamsuddin Abi Ali Fakhr-ibn-Ma'dal-Musavi and Abu Talib-the innocent figure in history, written by Allama Amini which is the translation of a portion of Al-Ghadir.
25. About Abu Talib's demise, refer to Seerah Ibn Ishaaq; page 236; Seerah Ibn Hisham and Tarikh al-Ya'qubi.
26. Seerah Ibn Ishaaq; page 239-240.
27. This was narrated in brief from "The Event of Siffeen " by Nasr-ibn-Muzaahem; page 94.
28. Concerning the events in the post Abu Talib era, refer to Seerah Ibn Ishaaq, Seerah Ibn Hisham and Uyoon Athar.
29. Refer to the exegesis of Sura Lahab in the books of exegesis and in Sahih Bukhari.
30. Seerah Ibn Hisham 1/372.
31. Refer to Seerah Ibn Hisham 1/378-379.
32. Seerat un-Nabawiya 2/17.

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