

# BILAL

OF AFRICA



# BILAL OF AFRICA

And Other African Companions  
of the Holy Prophet

By  
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## BILAL OF AFRICA

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I pray to Almighty Allah to favour us with His kindness and blessings.

Sheikh Yusuf Ali Nafsi.  
Representative of  
Ayatullah al-Uzma Sistani (Najaf - Iraq)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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Propagating the message of Islam is a task which calls for the co-operation of all. The Seminary invites you to join it in this task complying cordially with the verse of the holy Qur'an: "*Say: I give you but one admonition, that you stand for Allah's sake jointly and singly.*" (34:46)

May Allah bless you!

Yours in Islam,  
Publication Secretary.

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# INTRODUCTION

*In the Name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful*

BILAL is a familiar figure in the brilliant history of Islam. He was the loyal proclaimer of Monotheism and the spokesman of the Holy Prophet. He was also an outstanding and revolutionary figure in the Islamic Revolution and his personality assumed great importance in the School of Islam. In fact he was a protege of the Holy Prophet and one of his most devoted companions. Besides all this he was one of the most unknown and deprived persons in the barbaric society which was governed by the harsh aristocratic system and despotic regime of the Age of Ignorance (before the advent of Islam) i.e. he was a slave and that too from Ethiopia which did not even enjoy geographical credit in the eyes of the Arabs.

He was a person subdued by the class system; a captive in the hands of the most harsh tribe of Bani Jumuh and under the scourge of one of the dirtiest polytheistic elements of the Age of Ignorance - Umayyah son of Khalaf. However, what is greater and more important than all these trials and tribulations of Bilal's life, and what manifests his personality and presents him as a paragon of virtue during the course of history and for all times to come, and lends him greatness, is his deep, revolutionary, and unflinching faith in Monotheism and it is unparalleled in the history of religions and the destiny of the great heroes of humanity, because it is a psychological miracle that a person who is an illiterate slave of about twenty years old and has been brought up in the most deplorable system of values and has become habituated to it, should completely reform himself in the shortest possible time and display an exact effect of this reformation in spite of the severest spiritual and corporal torture and say: *Aḥad* - proclamation of Monotheism.

Although Umayyah son of Khalaf stared at the black and afflicted face of Bilal with red and murderous eyes and increased the pressure of black and hot stones of the burning desert of the

Peninsula on his chest and asked him to say: “*I worship Lāt and ‘Uzzā*” (names of idols), but Bilal continued to say: “*Aḥad, Aḥad, Aḥad*” till the last moment. What sort of change was this in such a man?

This book, which explains the character of Bilal and the role played by him in the advancement of the Monotheistic Movement of Islam with necessary research.

Now that we are living in the period of Islamic revolution, we have decided to show to the present generation of the Islamic revolution and other generations of ours, those magnanimous and eternal faces of the followers of Islam in its early days.

In the end we pray to Almighty Allah to keep the Muslim Ummah on His Right Path of Islam to obtain peace; progress and prosperity in both the worlds.

Publishers

**PART ONE :**  
**LIFE OF HAZRAT BILAL**  
*(RAZI ALLAHU TA'LA 'ANHU)*

**THE ANCESTORS OF BILAL**

In one of the hilly areas adjoining Makkah there lived a tribe named Bani Jumuh. All the members of this tribe were idolaters and were engaged, like other tribes, in animal husbandry and farming. Certain rules and customs were also prevalent among them. Killing, plundering and stealing could be observed in these people. This wealthy and powerful tribe had been able to capture some persons to utilise their services as slaves and slave-girls.

In short, this tribe possessed very few moral virtues and no signs of goodness and decent behaviour could be observed in their life.

Among the slaves of this tribe there was one named Rebah who excelled all others in the matter of morals, behaviour and integrity. This slave was entrusted the supervision of the property of the tribe and was liked by all.

When the 'Army of the Elephant' came to Makkah to demolish the Holy Ka'bah, Hamamah, the niece (sister's daughter) of Abraha, the Chief of the army, went to a nearby mountain for recreation and hunting. Soon some men, belonging to the tribe of Khath'am, reciding in the vicinity of Makka, like other savage and cruel tribes, attacked the soldiers of Abraha.

In accordance with the ways and customs of the Arabs this lady was attacked and eventually the golden royal camel-litter of this lady fell into their hands.

As friendship existed between the tribes of Bani Khath'am and Bani Jumuh they (Bani Khath'am) kept the golden litter and jewels etc. with themselves and gave this lady to Bani Jumuh as a present. In the circumstances one mom person was added to the slave-girls of this tribe.

Hamamah lived with this tribe for some time. She hoped that some developments would take place enabling her to join the army of Abraha. However, as time passed, she realised that she would not be able to get rid of this tribe and must stay on with them.

During the time of her stay with this tribe she was extremely impressed by the morals and good conduct of Rebah who was considered to be her guardian to some extent. On account of their compatibility with each other the Chief of the tribe gave her hand in marriage to Rebah.<sup>1</sup>

These two captives began their new life and spent many years with each other with love and sincerity. During this period they were blessed with two sons and one daughter. The names of the sons were Bilal and Khalid and the name of the daughter was Ghufrah. Like them their children were also treated to be the slaves and slave-girl of this tribe.

After a few years Khalaf, the chief of the tribe, passed away. He left behind some sons, the eldest of whom was Umayyah. He was a tall young man. He appeared to be very arrogant and harsh. All the members of the tribe were afraid of him and mostly looked at him with respect.

After some time Rebah also died and Bilal and his mother, brother and sister continued to live with the tribe.

Bilal was tall-statured with wheat coloured face which was more inclined to black. He held the title of “native-born” of this tribe and the members of the tribe, especially Umayyah were very kind to him.<sup>2</sup>

The entire tribe liked him, so much so that they gave him the office of his father and entrusted him the supervision of their property as well as that of their idol-temple.

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1 Qiblah-e-Islam, p. 688.

2 Qibla-e-Islam, p. 688 and Tafsir-e-Ithna ‘Ashari, Vol. II, p. 157.

Umayyah used to visit the city like his father along with the slaves. He developed special liking for this black slave who could not be compared with others.

### **ENVIRONMENT OF THAT AGE**

For years the sun had been shining on two big and civilised countries namely Iran and Rome.

These two big empires dominated over all the small countries of those time but Arabia and the region of Makkah with all their prolonged historical record, did not attract the attention of these empires, because Makkah was inhabited by the Bedouin tribes who did not deserve much notice.<sup>3</sup>

Those who lived in that region were exposed to all sorts of troubles and worries, and signs of ignorance, prejudice and oppression could be observed in them. It might be said that they lacked in human qualities. In every house they had prepared a special place for the worship of the idols and every tribe had a particular idol of its own. They had also made a number of idols decorated with gold and silver in the centre of the city.

Besides these they had sculptured for themselves idols equal to the number of days in a year and kept them in the Holy Ka'bah i.e. 360 idols belonging to the important Arab tribes had been placed there.<sup>4</sup>

The destructive fire of warfare flamed continuously in those distressing environments and a large number of young men lost their lives. At times these wars were prolonged so much that peace and comfort became extinct and one felt like living in Hell. Stealing was practised as a profession. The plunderers who were ignorant of the Almighty Allāh plundered the caravans which passed by and they also ill-treated and oppressed the people.

### **POSITION OF WOMEN IN THE MAKKAN SOCIETY OF THAT AGE**

All the Bedouin tribes of Arabia looked upon women with hatred

3 Tafsir-e-Surah wal 'Aşr.

4 History of Civilization, Gustave Le Bon, p. 103.

and contempt so much so that if the new-born child happened to be a female they used to bury her alive. The best woman was considered to be the one who killed and disposed of her new-born female child in order to please her husband. This thing formed part of their very ordinary activities and did not have the least effect on their hearts.

Sense of honour and manliness could not be seen in them. Only the aristocrats and the chiefs of the tribes led a happy and comfortable life. They lacked kind and philanthropic sentiments and had personified authoritarianism.

They captured the strangers and the helpless persons, kept them as slaves and exploited them. And even in this regard they carried their atrocities to such an extent that they took away all the privileges and freedom from them and they (the poor slaves) had no authority whatsoever. They were only the slaves of their masters who treated them in any manner they liked. On one day they were asked to do work, on the second day they had to fight in support of their master, and on the third day they had to compete with one another to amuse the master. For example two slaves were asked to attack each other and be killed, so that the master might enjoy the scene.

In such environments the corrupt women had freely set up brothels and engaged themselves openly attracting the customers by various means.

In short the environments of those days were replete with savagery, ignorance, debauchery, stealing, gambling and drinking wine. That society was ruled by racial and tribal prejudices, prosaic customs and ceremonies and limitless vanity. Truth, uprightness, honesty, chastity, philanthropy and kind feelings were meaningless words in that society.

All of them, whether young or old, were dejected and distressed on account of the ravages of the war which had been raging among

them for years and years. Wicked acts had taken the place of good deeds and all young men had given themselves to debauchery on account of moral and social evils commonly prevalent among them.

It is evident that in such societies many illegitimate children are seen. The statistics of obscene acts and immorality go up. Murders, plundering and oppression become common and decent morals are forgotten.

It is not possible to live in such environments and death is much better than such a life, because nothing except gradual death exists in a society in which the rule of law (in its real sense) does not exist and every group formulates laws according to its wishes and rules over the people, and in which law is for the subordinates and some particular persons so that if one of the near ones of the makers of law or of those who enforce the law commits a major crime he is not held liable to any punishment.

During the period when the thieves commit theft openly; bribe is taken and given the name of income; very few persons enjoy the privileges of life, and thousands sleep with empty bellies and no one is aware of their condition and a large number of persons can hardly make their both ends meet and no value is attached to their labour and personality, death is definitely better than life and people are justified in desiring death.

### **THE LIGHT WHICH ILLUMINATED IN DARKNESS**

It was in that dark, polluted, suffocating and backward society there suddenly appeared the brilliant star of virtue, freedom, and monotheism which illuminated the dark world of that time.

The great Prophet of Islam, Muḥammad (Peace be upon him and his progeny) was appointed, by the Almighty Allāh for the enlightenment and guidance of the people so that he might guide them to Divine prosperity, eradicate their wrong customs and uncalled for prejudices, show them the path of progress, perfection, knowledge and virtue, remove the curtains of ignorance, break the

chains of captivity, reform the polluted society, relieve the people of the bond of slavery and draw their attention to the Almighty Allāh, the Creator of the Worlds.

Certainly in a dark society like this which had been deprived of the blessings of the Prophets of Allāh for a pretty long time the truth-seeking eye had perished and, they could not make use of the light soon. And the ideas which had been nourished within the folds of the thick curtains of ignorance, illiteracy and deviation could not make them realise that there was also a path other than that on which they were treading. And it is surely difficult for a society, which has been pursuing a wrong course for a very long period, to return to the right path.

#### **BILAL AS SUPERVISOR OF THE IDOL TEMPLE**

As soon as the Prophet of Islam made his call public and invited the people to the worship of Allāh a strange hue and cry took place in the city of Makkah and within a very short time this new faith attracted the attention of the masses. The persons who still had a lustre of righteousness, humanity and understanding in their hearts gave a positive response to this invitation. Although their number was very small, their faith was very firm.

The chiefs of the tribes and the majority of the persons who were opposed to this celestial invitation decided to suppress this call as early as possible. The Holy Qur'ān says: *They desire to put out the light of Allāh with their mouths, but Allāh will perfect His light, however much the unbelievers are averse.* (Surah aş-Şaff, 61:8)

It is natural that when the arrogant persons who had ruled over the people for a very long period observed the instability of their power and authority and saw that the people did not care for their hollow acts and did not attach any importance to them they decided to oppose the Holy Prophet who extended the invitation, at the cost of their lives.



When the unjust plunderers and masters who had invaded the life, property and honour of the people for a very long period and did not desist from committing such crime saw that there was someone who was going to put an end to their activities and efface their abominable effects from the human society, they could not allow by any means that he should live in peace and pursue his object.

This opposing group gathered from all sides to do away with the guide and leader of this Divine invitation and joined hands to achieve their object. They held meetings and made speeches. And even after coming out of the meetings they talked about the matter in their houses or by the side of the roads and public cross-roads. Everyone of them pondered over the matter and everyone made suggestions, according to his ability, about putting an end to the life of the Prophet of Islam.

In fact, all their oppositions and enmity were very effective in making known to the people the message of this Divine religion and became the cause of all classes of the society studying carefully the purpose and policy of the Prophet.

On the contrary, the poor and the oppressed people who had no position in the society became aware of this matter and discussed it with one another.

During this strange crisis and the incoherent talks of the people of Makkah, Bilal, the supervisor of the idol-temple also began meditating.<sup>5</sup>

It was right for Bilal to think over this matter, because he had been associated with the idols for many years and had made supplications to them and considered them to be his gods, and now, after hearing this call, a new revolution had taken place in his thoughts and he, therefore, meditated as to which of the two faiths was better and nearer to reality.

<sup>5</sup> Tafsir-e-Ithna 'Ashari, Vol. XII, p. 157.

Although Bilal had been familiar with these idols for a very long time and used to complain before them while alone and requested them to meet his needs but now, on hearing this call he became perplexed and reflected whether it was possible that these lifeless images which could not move and could not even protect themselves should be 'God', and also whether these idols which were cleaned every day by Bilal could be the creators of the earth, the sky, the sun and the stars? He said to himself: "Do these beautiful stars, these galaxies, these seasons and this alternation of day and night really depend for their existence on the power and ability of these lifeless statues?"

However, ever since Bilal was born he had seen the idols have been respected. He was obliged to accept the words of the idol-worshippers but he was not satisfied and his soul was not comforted. He was always sad and perplexed when he thought about them and this made him reflect all the more.

### **PERPLEXITY OF BILAL**

Every morning when the sun rose from behind the mountains and stared on the tumultuous human life every one went his own way. However, perplexity and evil designs did not leave the people of Makkah alone and kept their intellects preoccupied. They meditated at night, assembled during day time and dispersed in the evening. Nothing except weariness and sadness was left for them.

Bilal did not keep himself aloof from this gathering. He meditated during all his vacant hours. At times he seriously considered the call of the Holy Prophet and at times he also pondered over his own faith as well as that of others.

He was psychologically perplexed and did not know what to do and which path to choose.

At times he said: "This call of Muḥammad (Peace be upon him and his progeny) satisfies man's intellect. However, it is impossible that this society which has been prostrating itself before the idols for a

very long time should abandon its object of worship". And at times he said: "If the opponents permit, it is possible that this faith may prevail. However, what can an individual do in the face of the idolatrous world?"

After some time a lightening flashed in Bilal's mind, the human spirit was revived in his body, his conscience was stimulated and he said to himself: "It seems that the Messenger of Allāh is right. What he says must be correct."

A storm rose in the depth of his heart. It would seem that Bilal reached another world and his soul flew up to the zenith of the skies, in the mountains and the deserts, and by the side of the meadows and the green palm-groves and brought the news that these skies and bright stars, these galaxies and this minute system which governs them, this rising and setting of the sun and the moon, these green trees and fresh gardens and the appearance of the four seasons and the creation of human beings, animals and plants, do not depend on the existence of the lifeless idols and certainly their Lord is some one else.

Bilal raised his head towards the sky and said: "I have found it! I have found it! I have found the thing which kept my thoughts busy for so long a time. Oh, how much mistaken I have been!

"Can these lifeless idols be the creators of this magnificent world? Can these stones hewn by us with our own hands be our creators and the creators of the earth and the heavens? Can an idol bring about day and night? Can these idols fulfil our needs? Can these lifeless bodies interfere with the working of the extremely minute system of this world?

"No. Not at all. They do not possess any such power. I have been mistaken. The world is mistaken. I must go and see the Divine Messenger who has extended this invigorating invitation to mankind. I can read this reality in the bright and angelic face of the Messenger. I love him from the core of my heart. He is a

righteous man who has kept himself aloof from the dirty society of today. He is the only man who has not gone down into the mire of abomination of dirty thoughts. The criminal hands of the society have not overpowered him. He is the only man who has not adopted the ways and manners of the society and has very bravely kept himself aloof from the corrupt people and has spent a good deal of his time in a cave of the mountain.”

It appears that he found the society so much polluted that he did not permit himself to live among them and preferred life in a cave of the mountain to the felonious and polluted atmosphere of the city.

He knew that a perfect man cannot live in a dirty society and he, who has been away from mischief and evil deeds, is the only person who can guide this corrupted society.

### **TOWARDS GOOD LUCK**

The sun rose gradually and brought the news of a very hot day. Owing to extreme heat the people took refuge in the shade of the walls and under the roofs. Gradually the streets became empty and people were also not seen on the roads. Only at times some beggars or nomads who had come to the city on account of some business could be seen.

Bilal came out of the idol-temple hoping that in this hour of seclusion he might meet his friend. Signs of weariness were apparent from his face and it was evident that some new ideas had occupied his thoughts. Severe heat did not make any effect on him. It seemed that he did not feel that the weather was hot. He passed through the streets, one after the other, crossed the roads and reached Masjidul Ḥarām. He had heard that at noon the Holy Prophet used to pray to Allāh by the side of the Ka‘bah and this was the best place to see him without attracting the attention of the people. When Bilal entered Masjidul Ḥarām he saw the Holy Prophet and his cousin Imam ‘Alī (peace be upon them) standing side by side and offering prayers. Bilal sighed. Love for the Holy Prophet enveloped his

entire frame. Tears of delight trickled down his eyes. He wished to go nearer and embrace him, but it appeared that someone was telling him in the depth of his heart: "Wait. Be patient. It is possible that someone may see you and the matter may take a dangerous turn."

The fire of love was burning within him. He was not satiated with looking at the heavenly face of Muḥammad. He did not look towards any other side. He was saying in his heart of hearts: "He is the man who can guide us, the slaves, to prosperity. He is the man who has brought news about the Creator of this magnificent world and it is he who has a message for me about what I had lost . . . . ."

Bilal was absorbed in thoughts and his eyes were constantly fixed on the Holy Prophet.

The Holy Prophet and Imam 'Alī rose from their places after having offered their prayers but Bilal remained fixed at his place. It might be said that he was lost in looking at the Holy Prophet. After a few moments he went up to them and caught the hand of the Holy Prophet and kissed it. He adopted Islam by pronouncing the '*Shahādatāyn*' (bearing witness to Monotheism and Prophethood)<sup>6</sup> and thus the number of the Muslims increased by one.

### **THE FIRST MUSLIM BELONGING TO ETHIOPIA**

Many days had not yet passed since the Holy Prophet extended the invitation of Islam to the people, and the number of the Muslims had not exceeded forty, when Bilal, the Ethiopian slave, accepted the invitation of Islam and placed his foot on the path of truth and perfection.

The opponents of the Holy Prophet were also extremely afraid of the penetration of Islam in the hearts of the masses. Day after day they took new decisions and did not at all expect that with all the

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6 *Ashadu an lā ilāha illal lah wa ashadu anna Muḥammadar Rasulullah*, (I bear witness that there is no deity save Allāh and Muḥammad is His Messenger).

insults and oppressions the master of this call would survive in the society for more than a few days, because the people had become habituated to evil deeds and were not likely to accept truth and reality so soon and to submit to a heavenly guide.

There was only one small group of persons in this polluted society which shone and did not drown in the mire of the corrupt society. Their value increased day after day and they joined reality like pure gold free from any alloy.

They were the luminous gems of humanity. They were the models of humanity. Although their number was small they accepted the invitation of the Holy Prophet of Islam with perfect sincerity. They suffered hardships valiantly for the sake of their faith and reserved this glory for themselves for all times to come.

Blessed be their souls for, in spite of all the hardships, they followed that celestial guide and saved humanity from annihilation.

Of course, the first person who accepted the invitation of the Holy Prophet of Islam was his cousin Imam 'Alī who was an Arab and belonged to the tribe of Quraysh and after his accepting Islam other persons also followed suit.

They were Salman Farsi from Persia, Sohayb from Rome, Bilal from Africa and Khubab from Nabat.<sup>7</sup>

Although Bilal was caught in the clutches of one of the most obstinate enemies of the Holy Prophet of Islam and was under surveillance in every way, his love for the Holy Prophet and the religion of Islam was not something valueless, so that he might abandon his faith so easily.

It might be said that Bilal carried on his shoulders the standard of the freedom of all black-coloured people. He was the first person who

<sup>7</sup> Rijāl Mā Maqāni, p. 182; Nafasur Rahmān, Chap. 10; A'yānush Shī'ah, p. 147 and Tabaqāt Ibn Sa'd, Vol. III, p. 165.

raised his voice for the freedom of the black, and made it known to the oppressive and savage world that there is no difference between the white and the black. With his black face and enlightened and luminous heart, and with all the worries and torments which he had to endure, he spoke out truth with loud voice and made the message of Islam reach every ear. So much so that he surprised those who were opposed to Islam and in whose house he worked as a slave on account for his strong and firm faith.

### **THE FACE OF REALITY**

Ever since Bilal had embraced Islam he remained all the more aloof from the people and had dedicated much of his time to meditation on this new faith. He liked to make supplications to Allāh and developed a spiritual state of mind.

He thought within himself. “How much mistaken the people are that they worship these idols instead of Allāh and make sacrifices and dedicate things to them, although they can do nothing whatsoever.”

He saw the indigence and bad luck of the people and was moved much on this account, because he did not know what to do so that they might come over to the Holy Prophet and give a positive response to his Divine invitation.

As and when he heard that the elders of the city had stood up against the Holy Prophet and were inimical towards him he sighed and was grieved and wondered as to why those people could not perceive the reality.

Whenever he met the elders and the bloodthirsty masters of the slaves he looked at them with grudge. Whenever he saw the nobles and the affluent masters his heart was filled with spite and hatred against them, because by being inimical towards the Holy Prophet and his followers they had made the life of all the people miserable. They had obstructed the way of the people and did not permit the masses to attain prosperity and salvation.

He said to himself: "What do these elders and chiefs of the tribes require from the lives of the people? Why don't they abandon their egotism and become the cause of the people remaining in abject poverty and corruption? What offence have the people committed that they have fallen in the clutches of these bloodthirsty brutes."

Whenever he met his friends and acquaintances, he wished to guide them. However, he could not pick up courage to speak directly, but said allusively: "Possibly the Messenger of Allāh speaks the truth. Has anybody heard a lie from him so far?"

The dirty and polluted environments of the city and the lack of restraint which had enveloped every place and was corrupting the young persons day after day, and the saloon-keepers who were very courageously exposing the thoughts, bodies and souls of the people to various dangers and were thus doing great harm to the society<sup>8</sup> extremely grieved Bilal and he said to himself: "O Lord! When will these people pay heed? O, I wish all were free! Why should it be that those who are polluting the society should be free, but the Messenger of Allāh and his friends should be invoked in difficulties? This state of affairs is not going to continue."

"Truly speaking my heart palpitates and dies with grief to observe that the thieves and the profligates are free but the Messenger of Allāh has so many enemies, and the noble-minded persons and the luminous lamps of virtue and perfection are persecuted by mean persons.

"Fie upon them who extinguish the lamp of guidance and struggle in the darkness of ignorance."

Bilal reflected and was pained and could not witness crimes, cruelties and pollutions, for as a poet has said: 'A just eye cannot see anything but truth.'

### **MEETING OF THE OPPONENTS**

As has been said above the elders of Makkah were very much

8 World in Danger of Declinem p. 51



perplexed on hearing about the invitation of the Holy Prophet and a new chapter was opened in their bitter life. They said to one another: “On Muḥammad coming at the helm of affairs and his monotheistic religion making progress, we shall lose our dignity and position in the eyes of the people of Makkah and other places, and a time will come soon when the condition of the society will undergo a change. We should take steps so that this voice for the worship of One Allāh is silenced as early as possible and this difficulty could be resolved.”

With this object in view they assembled at a place every day and exchanged views, so that they might possibly resolve this difficulty with the help of one another.

This place (*Darun Nadwah*) was the parliament of that time where all the problems, which cropped up, were solved. The representatives of all the Arab tribes and the elders of Makkah met there and the views expressed by every one were paid due attention to.<sup>9</sup> Only those persons whose age was not less than forty years<sup>10</sup> and who believed in the principles of ignorance and idol-worship and opposed the Prophet of Islam could participate in these meetings so much so that there should not have been any person in their houses who had embraced Islam.

Umayyah, the master of Bilal, was one of the persons who attended these meetings regularly and often delivered very harsh and threatening speeches for the elimination of the Holy Prophet, because he was one of the most obstinated enemies of the Prophet of Islam.

One day when they were conversing and every one of them talked about one thing or the other and different decisions were being taken and views were being exchanged among the representatives, Umayyah was more energetic than all others for finding out a new way to extinguish this light. In the meantime a man walked up to

9 History of Civilization by Georgie Zaidan p. 20

10 History of Civilization by Georgie Zaidan p. 20

him and sat down quietly by his side and said to him in his ear: “Permit me to tell you something, because I see that you are talking very boisterously and appear to be more serious than others.”

Umayyah condescended and replied: “There is no harm. Please speak out. We should be more active than we are so that we should be able to put an end to this undesirable state of affairs in the near future.”

The stranger began to talk and said: “I understand that it is a pre-condition for participating in this meeting that the persons concerned should be idol-worshippers and there should also be none in their houses who may have embraced Islam.”

Umayyah looked at the Arab angrily and said: “Am I deficient in this regard or has any one attached to me developed this defect?”

The spy said: “I have received information that one of the slaves in your family has embraced Islam.”

Umayyah said: “In my house? My slave? Really in my house? Which slave, for I have many? Where have you heard this from? From where has this news come to you? If this news is correct he will pay for it with his life, but if it is not correct I shall punish you immediately for this false accusation, by chopping off your head. It is certainly not true. None in my house can pick up courage to act in this manner.”

The spy said: “Of course this thing has taken place in your house and it is a slave of yours who has done this. I am not telling a lie. He usually meets Muḥammad at noon and in the darkness of night.”

Umayyah stood up, held the hand of the spy and left the meeting saying: “It is better that we should talk about it outside, lest some one should become aware of it.”

The stranger followed Umayyah and said: “Of course one of your slaves named Bilal has expressed faith in Muḥammad.”

Umayyah was astonished to hear this and said: “Bilal?” The spy replied: “Yes, Bilal. I myself have seen that he meets Muḥammad in private and has cordial connections with him.”

Signs of anger appeared on the face of Umayyah and his colour changed. His eyes became red. He trembled and grumbled, and said to himself: “How can a slave pick up courage to express faith in Muḥammad? If this news is correct he will have to pay for it with his life. Incidentally my honour has been tarnished. If I cannot take care of my own house how can I restrain others?”

Dejected and worried and with an angry face, Umayyah walked to his house.

### **INQUIRY FROM BILAL**

On the way, with thoughts savouring of mockery, he said to himself: “What a lie! Can Bilal pick up courage to do so? Even if he had only thought of it, as soon as he had realised that I was not happy about it, he would have abandoned the idea. He is well aware of my temperament.”

When Umayyah reached his house he shouted with a thundering voice: “Bilal . . . . . Bilal!”

On hearing the loud voice of his master, Bilal hastened to go up to him, saluted him and stood still. Other slaves were looking here and there. Bilal had seldom seen his master in that condition. He realised that Umayyah had heard something about his embracing Islam. His face turned pale and he trembled with fear like willow. He murmured: “O Lord of the world! Come to my help, because this harsh man has become aware of my secret.”

Umayyah shouted with a trembling but angry voice: “Bilal! What are these things which people are saying about you? I hear that you have expressed faith in Muḥammad, the orphan. Have you gone after these absurd things? How dare you all this? Don’t you know that you are my slave? Don’t you know that you have no option whatsoever?”

Gradually Umayyah's voice grew louder and louder. All those who were present in the house were trembling with fear. Bilal had turned pale, as if the world had become dark in his eyes and he found himself face to face with a mountain of difficulties. However, he quietly kept standing in a corner.

Umayyah continued to utter harsh words and said: "You must disown immediately the mistake that you have committed and repent, and abuse the orphan Muḥammad who is insane. You have dishonoured me. No one had ever thought that any person in my house would be bold enough to do this."

Although Bilal could not turn that moment muster up his courage to speak and could not give a reply to what his master said, but as he had expressed belief in Allāh and was not afraid of anyone except Him, and considered all the fragile powers to be nothing as compared with the power of Allāh, he shook himself and said: "I have expressed faith and am not afraid and am not going to abandon my faith. I am your slave, but in the matter of faith I am free."<sup>11</sup>

Bilal's animating words had not yet come to an end when Umayyah rushed towards him angrily and interrupted the weak voice of Bilal with his powerful hands. He pressed his throat so much that he was about to be strangled. Then he showered very strong blows on him. To whichever aide he turned he received a strong kick on his body. Soon after that the first monotheist from Ethiopia lost consciousness and fell down in a corner.

Umayyah showed signs of extreme uneasiness and went round and said: "Alas! What has this Muḥammad done? He has penetrated into the houses and the slaves. Why don't the elders of Makkah take steps to do away with this great calamity? If this Muḥammad survives he will make life bitter for the people. Alas! What a time has come! A slave has acquired so much strength that he speaks before me and expresses his faith. The poor man does not know that he must not speak before me."

11 Stories from Qurʾān about the Holy Prophet p. 330

All those persons who were in the house took refuge in different places and were trembling with fear. At times they cursed Bilal in low tones for having annoyed their master. They were afraid that it was possible that some other persons might also be put to death.

Deathly silence prevailed over the house. Only the dreadful roaring of Umayyah and at times the heart-rending sad lamentations of Bilal who was lying in a corner and crying on account of severe pain, broke this silence and added to the frightfulness of the house.

None was able to speak. Once again Umayyah broke the silence and shouted with great harshness: "I swear by Lāt and 'Uzzā<sup>12</sup> that if this slave does not disown what he has said I shall kill him in the worst possible manner so that others should know that they do not possess any such power."

Signs of weariness and discomfort were apparent in his face. On account of severe listlessness he lay down in a corner. Hot weather was troubling him and the fire of anger flamed throughout his frame and burnt him all the more. However, he did not possess enough strength to do anything.

He said to himself: "If this slave does not die he will certainly desist from what he has said. He will no doubt desist from it. However, the matter should be given due thought and all the elders of Makkah should be appraised of the danger so that they may know what this Muḥammad has done."

At times he reflected thus: "This thing is not good for me, because the people will think that I do not wield any authority in my house. However, after Bilal reverts to his old faith or is killed, they will realise that my rule prevails in the house."

Umayyah wanted to take rest but the disturbed thoughts and the internal conflicting views and passions which were taking place in his mind did not permit him to go to sleep.

<sup>12</sup> Lāt and 'Uzzā were two big idols which were kept in the Ka'bah and were respected by idolaters (Tafsir-e-Surah wal 'Aṣr, p. 8-1)

All the slaves and slave-girls went after their work. Only the helpless Bilal was lying in a corner and was crying. Blood was flowing from his head and face and no one paid the least attention to him.

All of them said: "Bilal has put an end to his life with his own hands. This is not the time for doing such things. Not to speak of a slave like Bilal even the Arab chiefs have not so far accepted this religion." Every one of them spoke and expressed his views on the subject.

### **FAITH IS OPTIONAL**

After a few hours Bilal shook himself and sighed and lost his senses once again. When he regained his consciousness tears trickled from his eyes. He looked on all sides but did not see anyone who might come to his help. On all sides of the house he saw the demon of fear standing with his fiery clutches and showing off. The entire body of Bilal was besmeared with blood. It appeared that all his bones had been crushed and he did not possess enough strength to move. What could he do? To whom could he appeal? He raised his half-open tearful eyes to the sky and said with a very sad heart: "O Allāh! Come to my help. O Allāh of the people! O Creator of the World! I am innocent. O Almighty Lord. . . . ."

Bilal cried incessantly. He was shedding tears but could not move from his place. He was waiting to see what was going to happen to him.

Umayyah rose from his place and with his eyebrows raised and his eyes like two cups of blood approached Bilal. He was expecting that Bilal would say immediately: "O my master: I submit to you. I regret what I have done. I believe in Lāt and 'Uzzā! Hereafter I will not go to Muḥammad."

He stared at the face of Bilal and waited to see what he would say as he had regained his senses. Bilal was not, however, able to speak owing to severe pain. He opened his tearful eyes and while the tears were flowing down from his eyes he shook himself and said: "My dear master" and lost his senses once again.

Umayyah became happy and said: “It appears that he has reverted to his old faith and wants to repent. Even if he returns to his old faith he must be cudgelled so that he may not desire to do this thing again.”

Bilal regained his consciousness and said: “Master! My faith has nothing to do with you. My faith in Muḥammad is no sin and it has not brought about any defect in my work.”

Umayyah did not expect to hear these words and they fell so heavy on his ears that it seemed as if the world had become dark in his eyes. He said in a thunderous voice: “O unlucky person! Don’t you know that you are my slave? Your intellect, soul, and body, belong to me. Your heart is not authorised to express faith in whatever it likes. Your thinking is not free to proceed in whichever direction it likes.”

Bilal said: “It is true that I am your slave and I do not also deny this. So much so that if you order me to walk in dark deserts during night I shall do so. And if you order me that during daytime I should carry heavy stones on my shoulders in the heat of the sun I will comply with your order and will not show any weariness. However, my intellect, thinking and faith do not belong to you, and they are not the things which may be owned by you. I must perform my duty although my faith may be different from the faith of my master. Faith is optional.”

Umayyah who was trembling with rage said: “No. No. Everything which is yours belongs to me. You are my slave. Your entire self belongs to me. Your faith and thinking is my property and even the movements of your tongue are under my control. I will give you such a severe beating that you will uproot this faith from your heart and intellect.”

After having said this Umayyah attacked Bilal like a fiend and kicked him so severely that he looked like a dead person.

Indeed, what do the bullies want to do with the helpless people? What do these harsh persons desire from the life of the nation? To what extent are the egotistic masters prepared to be rough to obliterate the weak people? What is the crime committed by Bilal and by others like him?

Is expression of faith in purities a sin on account of which one should face death? Is it necessary that speaking and defending truth should cost one's life? What wrong had Bilal done and what offence had he committed that he should have been subjected to such persecution?

Of course, when the tyrants and the aristocrats who had been oppressing the people through ages saw their authority and mastership in danger and could not rule the helpless persons as before and could not dominate over the life, property and honour of the people, they showed off in this manner and did evil deeds against the pious and godly people.

### **SATANIC DREAMS**

On account of extreme uneasiness Bilal's master could find no peace or comfort and it seemed that as if he was fighting with doors and walls and the earth and the sky. Wherever he placed his foot he felt more pressure and the world became dark in his eyes.

Umayyah said to himself: "What a great affliction has befallen the society! Even a slave makes unreasonable demands from his master. What religion is this? What does this Muḥammad say?" And at times he also said to himself: "I shall kill this slave so that I may be comforted and others may also know how much power I possess!"

After experiencing great uneasiness he decided to leave his house and go and meet the elders and chiefs of the city and the representatives in the parliament and inform them about the developments. By going out he also wanted to get rid of fatigue and uneasiness to some extent and to acquire fresh strength to torment a helpless man.



He went out of his house to find out a way to get rid of this worry. He went to see the elders of the city and to apprise them of this great and real danger. He went to find out a way to destroy Muḥammad, the Prophet of Islam and his followers. He went to give an account to the people of his class of his bravery vis-à-vis a helpless slave so that others might help him to solve his problem.

After a few hours during which Umayyah contacted the elders of Makkah and informed them about his worries, he returned home and saw that Bilal was still lying in a corner like a dead person. He shook his head and said to Bilal: “Do you believe in Muḥammad?” Then he went into his house to take rest for some time.

No one could muster up his courage to speak. A deathly silence prevailed over the house! However, Umayyah was uttering incoherent words in sleep. At times he shouted and broke the silence of the house and at times he also dreamt how Bilal had regretted and disowned his belief in Muḥammad. This made Umayyah very happy and he woke up from sleep but did not see anyone before him. This made him more uneasy and he slept again!

Before he went into a sound sleep he again saw Bilal trembling and crying and abusing Muḥammad and requesting his master to accept his repentance and forgive his mistake.

Umayyah sprang up very quickly on account of extreme happiness but saw that they were satanic dreams and nothing else. This increased his weariness and discomfort and he said: “I wish that this slave may allow me to sleep properly. What Satanic dreams are these which I am dreaming?”

The poor man sat down and recollected the harsh decisions which he had taken about Bilal and said: “I must punish Bilal for his misdeed because he has made life, sleep and wakefulness unbearable for me. What torture is it which I have to endure? How is it that my lap has caught this fire first? What is this development which has taken place for me only?”

## AT THE ZENITH OF ASPIRATIONS

With the severe hardships which Bilal had to suffer for the first time in this path, he prepared himself for limitless persecution and torture and realised that this was the beginning of his self-sacrifice. He perceived that if he wanted to carry the flag of freedom on his shoulders and to stand up against the tyrants and the ignorant ones for the first time there was nothing in store for him except persecution, hardship, torture and discomfort. He, however, bore all this for the sake of his school of thought and valuable revolution and did not abandon his faith in any circumstances.

The pillars of Bilal's faith were so firm that these storms could not shake or destroy them. His love for freedom did not permit him to give up his faith on account of a brief pressure and submit to the foolish ideas of Umayyah. However, the only thing which grieved and tormented Bilal was the lack of feeling and absence of responsibility by his people who had deviated from the right path and worshipped the lifeless idols and their unjust masters instead of worshipping the Kind Allāh.<sup>13</sup>

Alas! How much the masters and the ignorant persons oppress their subordinates and there is none who might come to their rescue! How much the selfish and powerful persons play with the life, property and faith of the people and how many crimes they commit to satisfy their carnal desires and live a life of pleasure! And how much blood of the innocent people they shed! Day after day the position of the chiefs of the tribes and the Arabs who live in pleasure is becoming stronger and human nobleness is being exposed to danger.

No doubt Bilal could see that the society was placed on the precipice of destruction and everything was in danger and in a state of decline.

Indeed this affliction and hundreds of others tormented Bilal, and his only desire was that the helpless people should get rid of their

<sup>13</sup> World in Danger of Decline p. 33.

pitiable condition. It was for this reason that for the fulfilment of his desire he tolerated all hardships with patient.

### **IMPRISONMENT WITH HARD LABOUR**

Umayyah decided to put into practice the plans which he had chalked out for punishing Bilal for the enmity which he had in his heart for Muḥammad and his followers so that he might satisfy himself and achieve his object.

He commenced Bilal's punishment by keeping him hungry, giving him difficult tasks to do, and sending him out of the house. He also gave orders that no one should contact Bilal or take pity on him.

He thought that this was the shortest way to achieve his end and if Bilal remained hungry and if heavy and difficult tasks were entrusted to him and he had no access to anyone, he would regret and repent and would certainly relinquish his faith, and would be obliged to respect his master and seek forgiveness for his past deeds. Furthermore, it was obligatory for Bilal to perform the tasks entrusted to him failing which he was to be punished. On the whole this is perhaps the greatest persecution which can make a criminal surrender and place him under maximum pressure.

Of course, the tyrants and the imperialists always resort to such actions to dominate over a community and a nation and to safeguard their rule and also achieve positive results, because the only way to dominate over weak nations is to make them still weaker and to expose them to pressure, hunger and indigence, so that they may follow the imperialists, flatter them, act according to their wishes, and become their slaves in order to fill their bellies. They do what they say and achieve what they desire and with this programme they carry out their wicked plans. But has such nefarious plan penetrated into the Muslim masses as well? Can they make a nation surrender with all its values and faith by means of an economic pressure? Certainly not, because we have observed an identical example in the economic ban of the underdeveloped world. They wanted to make the Muslims and revolutionary people

of Iran surrender, we saw that they went forward with greater determination and administered a forceful blow on the face of imperialism and exploitation.

Anyhow, contrary to expectation, this method did not also make any impression on Bilal. He remained patient in his imprisonment and hard labour and expressed his faith in Islam in more eloquent and louder words.

### **SERENITY IN THE CLUTCHES OF CHAINS**

When Bilal, of Ethiopia, finished his hard and difficult tasks, Umayyah ordered that instead of his taking rest and eating his meals his hands and feet should be tied firmly with chains and he should be thrown among the animals, and food in very small quantity should be given to him.

Evidently he suffered much in these dark and damp places and amongst the stables of animals and was perhaps trodden under their hooves and was thus subjected to great pain and hardship. Umayyah thought that this was the best method of putting an end to a person's life because one who regularly worked hard during daytime with empty belly and worn out body, and spent his night with the animals with hands tied with chains, could hardly survive.

At times Umayyah ordered that Bilal's feet might be tied with ropes and gave the end of the rope in the hands of the children so that they might run and pull Bilal. The children took Bilal to the right and to the left and forward and backward, and he also ran with them because if he had stood he would have fallen on the ground and the children would have pulled him by throwing stones and sand.<sup>14</sup>

Very often his body was wounded with stones and sand and there was none who might take pity on him!

Alas! How much he was tormented and oppressed and what a great

<sup>14</sup> Qiblah-e-Islam, p. 691.

injustice and meanness it was that those people committed such crimes to protect their own existence! What was the justification for persecuting a person so much because he was not prepared to pay respect to stubborn persons and lifeless images, and to submit to their wrong thinking and sensuality? Why was a person tormented so much only because he understood the reality and was not prepared to prostrate himself before the idols?

Is faith not something optional? Is it a sin to understand the reality?

In fact suffocating atmosphere ruled the Hijaz and the clutches of the oppressors had gone down into the throats of the people including that of Bilal and they could not even breathe freely.

What had Bilal done? What was his offence? What wrong had he done? Is it a crime not to tolerate the tyranny of others and not to fall on the ground before them? Is the society not ruled by law? Which law permits that a person should be caught in the clutches of egotistic persons on account of professing a religion and speaking the truth and the oppressors should be free to subject him to all sorts of cruelty and injustice?

Of course, law and conscience do not rule in an atmosphere of fear and tenor. Even if something is said concerning law it is only to stimulate and to protect the rule and mastership of a few persons. And in such an atmosphere it is surprising to expect the enforcement of law.

In such societies if a person says something which, though correct, does not accord with the wishes of certain persons, he is immediately subjected to arrest, imprisonment, exile, torture and hundreds of injuries and inconveniences!

### **STEADFASTNESS AND SELF-SACRIFICE**

In spite of all the hardships, which one feels ashamed to narrate, and which Bilal had to face one after the other, he remained solid and firm like a mountain and knew that success would follow patience.

Amid all the tortures the free man of Africa elevated his soul by murmuring sweet referrals and prayers. And not only that these difficulties and torments did not weaken his faith but they increased his steadfastness and devotion. Although his body was wounded and his stomach was hungry and he cried on account of weariness his soul was strong and enlightened.

Of course, Bilal, the standard-bearer of freedom remained patient so that the zealous Muslims might know to what extent they should remain firm in the path of their faith and should not vacate the field, on account of a promise or a threat, and should not be intimidated by the drunken brawls, which came out of the throats of the harsh and unjust persons. They should not forsake their faith to please others and should stand before such persons like solid mountains and should know that the victory is theirs.

The steadfastness and self-sacrifice of Bilal put his master out of patience. He showed signs of extreme uneasiness so that his face underwent a change and he thundered: "How obstinate this man is? What should I do? I have tortured him as much as I could. He is not prepared to abandon his wrong thinking and faith. I, however, swear by Lāt and 'Uzzā that he must die in this condition. I shall do such thing that he will be buried under dust with all his ideals."

Bilal was a quiet and patient witness to all these words. He received encouragement from other friends and said with a soul filled with love for the school of Islam and the Holy Prophet: "The only thing which you can do is that you may kill me. However, I am not afraid of being killed. On the other hand I will feel proud that I should be killed in the path of the Prophet of Allāh and for the deliverance of the masses from cruelty and oppression. It is better to die with honour than to live in abjectness. Only those persons who are egotistic and do not believe in the Day of Judgement fear death. For me, however, it is nothing else but honour and perfection!"

Umayyah reflected every day and said to himself: "What else should I do? I have put all my plans into practice. I have subjected him to the severest torture. . . . ."

Of course, he imprisoned Bilal. He entrusted him heavy and tiresome tasks! He cudgelled him! He kept him hungry. However, none of these things had any effect on Bilal except that they made him more firm and gave him the strength to cry out and to say things which must be said and to disgrace certain faces.

At last Umayyah decided to put his last Satanic plan into practice so that either Bilal should die or abandon his faith. His plan was very harsh and fatal. No one possessed enough strength and perseverance to withstand his determination. This plan was equivalent to Bilal's death.

The weather was hot and the sun was shining on the region of the Hijaz. The sand of the desert had assumed the shape of scorching Hell.

Umayyah caught the hand of the dejected and afflicted Bilal and walked to the desert till he reached the hot and burning sandy region. There he stripped the weak and lean Bilal and made him lie on hot stones which were red-hot like iron and also placed heavy stones on his chest. His skin was burning and he was finding it difficult to breathe. A moment later he felt the blows of the whip of his master. The greatest honour of all those persons who were with Umayyah was that every one of them whipped the weak Bilal and smiled victoriously. Unfortunately, however, they were deaf as well as blind because the cries and the persecution of Bilal were the cries of hundreds of thousands of innocent persons who were being persecuted unjustly and the cries of the masses whose ideals, aspirations and desires were the victory of the school of Islam and the elimination of polytheism, despotism, hypocrisy, imperialism and exploitation.

At times Bilal became unconscious owing to severe torture and when he regained his consciousness he had to face the angry yelling of his master who wanted him to disown Muḥammad and his Lord. However, Umayyah said incredibly that Bilal said slowly with closed eyes and trembling voice: '*Aḥad, Aḥad*'.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> The slogan of monotheism. It means Allāh is only One.

Uttering the words ‘*Aḥad, Aḥad*’ the sincere companion of the Holy Prophet and faithful and loving slave of Allāh threw the entire frame of the enemy into fire and he could not permit himself to believe that it was the same former Bilal. He could not tolerate that such a slave should have attained so great and high a position that he might be prepared to sacrifice his life for the sake of his monotheistic faith. However, Umayyah said with a dirty and unkind heart: “You must either die or disown Muḥammad’s Lord.” But the resistant and undaunted Bilal who had been filled with passion for the Holy Prophet was not negligent even for a moment and repeated the eloquent and permanently effective word ‘*Aḥad, Aḥad*’.

Umayyah got tired. At times he returned to the city alone and left Bilal to himself and at times he brought him to the city with himself.<sup>16</sup>

Days passed on and Bilal continued to be tormented and tortured. History does not record such steadfastness. And the historians, have not been able to record an identically perseverance and strength as was shown by Bilal and have not believed for a moment that the idols can be defeated and deliverance obtained as a present.

No. No. for I say that not only the historians but the people who were living with Bilal and had close contact with him and had heard about his severe torture and were eye-witnesses of his persecution were wonder-struck and could not believe the steadfastness devotion and strength as was shown by Bilal.

### **TRIBUTE TO BILAL**

Every day the sun rose in the morning from behind the mountain and the higher it rose and the more apparent it became it burnt the body of Bilal with its intolerable heat.

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<sup>16</sup> Al-Kāmil Ibn Athir, Vol. II, p. 45; Rijāl Mā Maqāni p. 182 Bābul Bā; Tabaqāt Ibn Sa’d Vol. II, p. 165; Nasikhut-ul-Tawārikh, Ḥubuṭ p. 579; Tafsir-e-Ithna ‘Ashari, Vol. XII, p. 157; Usudul Ghābāh, Vol. I, p 207.



Howmuchever the hot and fiery sand and the big stones burned the body of Bilal they made no impression on him. It seemed that the solid and hot stones taught him resistance and his faith became stronger.

When night came the moon lit up the desert of Makkah and lent a special purity to the mountain, the jungle and the desert. Bilal enjoyed seeing it and made silent prayers to his Lord - the Lord for Whose greatness he was bearing all these hardships and afflictions which had affected his entire body.

When some persons went to the desert to see the pitiable condition of Bilal, Umayyah became all the more rude and subjected him to severer torture. However, Bilal showed his faithfulness by reciting ‘*Aḥad, Aḥad*’. All those people wondered and stared at him with eyes full of praise and lauded his steadfastness. But this steadfastness did not move them and they did not take a lesson from it.

When Waraqah son of Nawfal passed by that place he stopped and looked on all sides with wonder. He developed a great love for Bilal and wanted to embrace him at once. He went a little nearer to him and said loudly: “Well done Bilal! I also say that there is only one Allāh. I also accept your logic.” Then he turned to Umayyah and said: “I swear by Allāh that if Bilal dies in this condition I shall make his grave a place of pilgrimage for myself and shall seek blessing from his dust, and this place shall certainly be the one where Divine blessings will descend.”<sup>17</sup>

No doubt the wise and pious men who give up their lives in the path of Allāh and make self-sacrifice for the sake of their faith and religion remain alive for ever and death has no meaning for them. As Sa’di the Persian poet says: “He who is mentioned with goodness remains alive.”

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17 Al-Kāmil Ibn Athir, Vol. II, p. 46; Sirah Ibn Hishām Vol. I, p. 340; Rijāl Mā Maqāni Bābul Bā p. 182; Usudul Ghābāh, Vol. I, p. 206.

Of course, the dust of their graves becomes the place of pilgrimage of the pious persons. Their tombs become the centre of unlimited blessings of the Lord of the worlds.

They are those living beings, who teach the human society the lesson of life, and with their steadfastness and patience teach the oppressed people the lesson of jihad in the path of faith and freedom.

The earth of their graves teaches the lesson of freedom and their sacred dust keeps self-sacrifice and steadfastness alive for ever, inculcates the spirit of valour and courage in every man and woman of every society and invites the society to piety and goodness. This is the secret of according honour to the graves of the commanders, the leaders and the unknown soldiers who are the martyrs of the world of humanity.

### **OH! OH! I AM BURNT!**

The pressure of the stones, the blows of the whip and the scorching heat of the sands could not make a dent in the iron-like strong determination of Bilal. Umayyah then took a more dangerous decision. He decided to make a rod red-hot in fire and then to thrust it in the flesh of the thigh of Bilal.

Bilal was lying on the ground and a big stone could be seen on his chest which did not permit him to see as to what they were going to do with his leg. He could only see that they had made a piece of iron red-hot and had brought the same for him. He felt suddenly that his leg had caught fire. It appeared that the fire had penetrated into his entire body and was burning it. He shook his body and while he was going to lose his senses, he exclaimed helplessly: "Oh, I have been burnt!" Thereafter he could not say anything. All those present said that poor Bilal had breathed his last.<sup>18</sup> It was an extremely severe torture.

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18 Abū Jahl performed this act. He asked Umayyah to entrust this task to him and he did so. It is also written that he first cut the thigh of Bilal with a knife and then thrust the iron into it. (Ghuftar-e-Wu'āz, p. 456)

One, who has been tormented for a number of day cannot bear such pain. All those present were moved by the sight. The sun was also dazzled to see this tragic scene. A deathly silence prevailed over the entire desert. The face of Bilal's master became grim. It seemed that he was regretful for what he had done and the sand of the desert was cursing him.

The time was passing slowly. The forbearing, oppressed and brave Bilal shook himself. Drops of tears flowed down from his eyes. He breathed slowly. His black colour had become white. He was not able to move. He did not possess enough strength to speak. Whoever was near him could observe that Bilal was crying in low tones and complaining to Allāh. After a long time he said slowly *Aḥad* i.e. Allāh is One only, and the; he lost consciousness again. The quietness of the desert was broken with the words of Bilal and all those present wondered and everyone was talking about him.

After a few moments he parted his lips again. He turned his half-opened eyes to all sides and observed his stone-hearted master and making a sign to him began speaking slowly: "Do you think that my faith is hidden in the flesh of my thigh and therefore, you wish to brand it with red-hot iron and destroy it and take out the love of One Allāh from it?"

"Do you think that faith in Allāh and attachment to Him is in my apparent body so that you may destroy it with these tortures and torments? No. No. Do not be mistaken. Faith in Allāh and His Prophet has penetrated in my entire self and love for Him has taken root in the depth of my soul. You cannot take it out and destroy it by means of these chains and whips You must know it for certain that you cannot defeat me and weaken my faith with these cruel acts."

Honestly speaking, should these words, which uttered by Bilal, not bring the proud and haughty persons and the aggressors to their senses, so that they may realise that they cannot take away the faith of the people with force, torture, deceit and wealth? Can they not think that the spirit of religion and faith exists in the arteries and

veins of the Muslims, especially the loyal Muslims and they cannot tolerate that anything else should take its place?

The enemies of humanity cannot weaken the faith of the people with their poisonous propaganda by vain and hollow words. They should know that faith and love for Allāh and the school have been blended with their blood. Those who think that they can pull out the faith and belief of the individuals from their hearts entertain false ideas and thereby cut their own roots. The Holy Qur'ān says: *They want to put out the light of Allāh with their mouths, but Allāh will make His light shine for ever, however much the disbelievers are averse.* (Surah aṣ-Ṣaff, 61:8)

Faith cannot be defeated and belief cannot be destroyed. On the contrary they become brighter day after day.

In short, Bilal the champion of Africa, lover of freedom and knowledge did not forsake his faith and said even in extreme torture that Allāh is One. The more he was tortured the more he gained patience and steadfastness. Truly speaking one is astonished to see as to how a person can make so much self-sacrifice in the cause of faith and belief in Allāh and in order to achieve freedom and justice. Who are they who live like this and embrace death with honour? What are they made of, and to which side do they look, and who has created all this strength and dignity in them that even the gravest and most intolerable crises do not frighten them and they stand undauntedly before the tyrants and the oppressors and do not abandon their faith? In fact they teach the lesson of life to the world of humanity.

### **BILAL IS DEAD**

The pitiable condition of Bilal had created a sad scene for the passers-by. All the persons who passed from there were worried on account of his condition and the torture to which he was subjected by his master.

One day 'Amr 'Ās was passing by the place saw Umayyah

speaking harshly to Bilal. He went near and saw that Bilal was lying on the ground with tied hands and feet and Umayyah was saying to him: “Disown the God of Muḥammad and express belief in Lāt and ‘Uzzā.” However, Bilal was saying: “Allāh One. Allāh is One.”

‘Amr says: “I saw suddenly that Umayyah’s face under went a change and his eyes became red with rage. He roared and approached Bilal like a demon, sat down on his chest and pressed his throat so severely that I thought that he was dead. I became extremely sad and was moved so much that I could no longer stay there and see that pitiable scene. I left Umayyah heedlessly and said to myself: “Fie upon these people who are so harsh, cruel and unjust. Bilal is dead. No doubt they have been very cruel to him.”

“I went and performed my task. However, throughout the time I remained disturbed and the pitiable condition of Bilal continuously remained before my eyes till I returned. Now I thought that I might go and see what Bilal’s condition was. I went and saw that he was still lying on the ground. I said to myself: ‘The poor man is dead’. Suddenly I saw that he shook himself and Umayyah ran up to him and said: ‘Say: I believe in Lāt and ‘Uzzā.’ However, as he was too weak to speak he pointed to the sky and made it known that his Lord was the Lord of the worlds.”<sup>19</sup>

Of course, this is steadfastness in religion and this is self-sacrifice in the path of faith and belief. These are the persons who, by laying down their lives, preserve spirituality and humanity for mankind. These are the persons who have taught others the lesson of self-sacrifice and freedom.

Peace be upon these worshippers of Allāh! Greetings to these freedom lovers of the history of mankind! Indeed, what did cruel Umayyah do? Where did his business end? What did he want from Bilal’s life? Why did he not attach any value to Bilal’s life? In fact it would appear that he did not possess any human quality. He was a wolf in the garb of man and played with the lives of faithful people.

<sup>19</sup> Tafsir-e-Ithna ‘Ashari, Vol. XII, p. 157

If such persons speak about philanthropy, peace and comfort in the society they tell lies and say these things to deceive and befool the people. Such persons are the enemies of mankind and humanity. These are the people who commit crimes with regard to the weak and helpless persons to preserve their own authority. These are the people who murder thousands of human beings to achieve their personal ends. Accursed be these wolves in the shape of man who have existed in all times and as the blood spots remain in their generation so that they can attain their nefarious plots.

### **BITTER THAN POISON**

Sometimes Bilal got very much tired and felt uneasy owing to severe pain and complained to himself and said: "What should I do? What is the remedy?" He could not think of anything! Bilal saw all the paths of deliverance closed before himself. Of necessity, therefore, he at times made supplications to the Almighty Allāh and at times conversed with himself. At times he also looked around himself and it appeared that he complained to the mountains and the jungles and the deserts with his eyes. And when night came he fixed his eyes on the sky and opened out his heart to the beautiful stars.

He said with his mute language: "This time which is more bitter than poison will pass away. This black night will pass away. This dark period will come to an end. These mysterious hands will be severed. These uproars will be quietened down and the circumstances will not remain profitable for the stubborn persons and the oppressors. The sun will come out from behind the thick and dark clouds. The superfluous limbs of the society and the useless and obtrusive parasites which are like foam on the face of water will disappear and cease to exist and the dawn of victory will become apparent."<sup>20</sup>

"Truth and reality have always been attacked by foolish and ignorant persons. I am not the only person who has been tortured in this connection. I am aware that at all times victory is for the worshippers of Allāh and the seekers of truth, and the annihilation of the oppressors commences.

<sup>20</sup> Please refer to the Holy Qurʾān

“The Omnipotent Lord knows about the evil deeds of the oppressors and is aware of their tyranny and injustice. He has granted them this short respite so that they may fully expose their ugly faces to the people, and the people should also reject them with full knowledge, express belief in the Almighty Lord, and know that Allāh has provided eternal punishment and disgrace for the oppressors and the idol-worshippers.”<sup>21</sup>

Bilal bore the hardships and afflictions but was never negligent of remembering Allāh and reciting His Name. He continuously made supplications to his only Lord saying:

“O Creator of the world! How long will the existence of the people be plundered by the lascivious and selfish persons?

“O Omnipotent Lord! Has the time not arrived that You may topple down the unjust and stubborn persons and pull their noses to the dust of disgrace and make their filthy root dry and rescue the weak and pious persons from their wicked clutches and give them mastery over Your blessed land?

“O Mighty Lord! How long will this tyranny and injustice continue? How long will the weak be insulted and how long will their rights be trampled on?

“O Kind Lord! I have no refuge other than Yourself; wherever I see there is immorality, hard-heartedness, murder, crime, plundering and treachery.

“O Rescuer and Refuge of the helpless! I have none to help me except You. Come to my help. O Lord! Come to my help for I have surrendered myself to death and consider it a shame to live the life of humiliation and I wish to sacrifice myself freely in the path of Islam, Your Prophet and all that You hold dear.

“O Lord of the worlds! I have chosen death but kindly give me a little respite so that I may see the freedom of my descendants, the freedom of my object and the freedom of the weak masses and may also see Your Prophet Muḥammad victorious and the bearer of ‘There is no deity but Allāh’ hoisted on the highest summit. I only desire the deliverance of the people of Makkah and of the oppressed ones of the world and the victory of Islam, although I may die,

21 Please refer to the Holy Qurʾān

because I consider my own death to be a new birth and my blood to be the reviver of the dead souls of the people and my cry to be the beginning of a rising against polytheism and blasphemy. And my message, which is the message of all the generations soaked in blood, of all the chained masses, and of the faith of all the sincere and responsible persons, is eternal and honoured. It divulges the faces of hypocrites and blasphemers in history for ever and leaves their dirty impression as a remembrance for generations to come. “O my Lord! O Great Lord! Grant me respite!”

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Days passed by and the condition of Bilal grew more pitiable. He was about to depart from the world and get rid of the bloody clutches of Umayyah. Every person related a story about him. The Holy Prophet of Islam was very much disturbed. What should he do? How should he save these noble and wise men of the society from the clutches of the oppressors? He thought about the matter but did not find a solution. He also consulted others but all of them expressed hopelessness. It was not only the Prophet of Islam who was unhappy but all the Muslims were grieved and were endeavouring to find a way for the deliverance of Bilal and others like him.

Bilal was a human being as well as a Muslim and as Sa'di says: “The human beings are the limbs of one another because they have been created from the same origin. When it gives pain to one limb, other limbs do not feel comfortable.”

Was not Bilal a member of that society? Islam has been founded on love and kindness of one another. If one Muslim is harmed or hurt it amounts to all other Muslims being hurt. Islam says that the society is like a body. If one limb of the body aches other limbs also feel uneasy. In the same manner if one Muslim is inconvenienced other Muslims are also inconvenienced.<sup>22</sup> All the Muslims are like

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22 A believer is the brother of a believer like one body; if one part is afflicted all the other parts are also effected.



one soul and one body, and like a solid building they have given their hands in the hands of one another to set up a Muslim society and their souls are connected with one another.<sup>23</sup>

Of course, this is the logic of Islam. It says: “When a Muslim passes his night and does not think about the welfare of the Muslims is not a Muslim.”<sup>24</sup> It also says: “The Muslims are brothers of one another.” It wants that they should walk on one path and should stand firmly against the enemies like a strong fort.

We believe that if the Muslims of the world revive this logic within themselves and all of them are united and extend the hand of mutual brotherhood, unity and oneness in such a way that they consider the pain of a brother Muslim to be their own pain, this logic and system of Islam will never face defeat in any circumstances. On the other hand they will be able to cut off the hands which are extended towards the Holy Qur’ān and Islam, and the freedom giving flag of Islam will hoist with great glory permanently in all the regions of the world, and the obstinate enemies of Islam will be annihilated and a new society will be founded.

If the Muslims of the world revive within themselves the reality that the origin of all of them is one and the same and they are brothers of one another, no one can trespass on them and establish colonies in their lands!

If we go back a little and study the invigorating history of responsible commanders and messengers we know that in the early days of Islam the Muslims, who were small in number, overwhelmed the world of blasphemy and idol-worship, and were able, with their power, to convey the message of Prophet-hood and monotheism to the world of polytheism.

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23 A Muslim with a Muslim is like a solid wall whose bricks are strongly attached to each other.

24 One who gets up in the morning and has no concern with the affairs of the Muslims is not a Muslim

Of course the Holy Prophet of Islam was very much disturbed because a Muslim named Bilal was being tortured by the infidels and the Muslims were also grieved and all were thinking what to do. After thinking over the matter for quite some time the Holy Prophet said: "If any one of you can purchase Bilal and set him free it is possible that this problem may be solved." Abū Bakr accepted the proposal and undertook to carry out the job.<sup>25</sup>

### **ABŪ BAKR MEETS BILAL'S MASTER**

Abū Bakr proceeded to the house of Umayyah and was reflecting within himself as to how Umayyah would receive him and whether he would be successful in his task and Umayyah would be prepared to sell Bilal to him.

He was thinking about these matters when he reached the house of Umayyah and called him. When they saw each other they exchanged greetings and expressed mutual love and affection.

Umayyah said: "Since long you have ceased to be kind and do not call on us. You have degraded our condition."

Abū Bakr replied: "I hope to maintain closer contact with you in future."

Umayyah said: 'I am living in very critical circumstances. This Muḥammad whom you follow is likely to destroy our society very soon and not only I but all the Arab elders are worried. With all the power that I possess I have not been able to compel a slave of mine to abandon faith in Muḥammad.'

Abū Bakr interrupted him and said: "These matters will be corrected. I have come to relieve you of this trouble."

Umayyah said: "Can you really remove this trouble? Has Muḥammad abandoned his preaching?"

Abū Bakr said: "I have come to purchase from you the slave on account of whom you are so much distressed or to exchange him with one of my slaves who is a follower of your religion."

25 Al-Kāmil Ibn Athir, Vol. II, p. 45

Umayyah said: “Do you mean Bilal?”

Abū Bakr replied: “Yes, Bilal.”

Umayyah’s countenance underwent a change. He cast a harsh look at Abū Bakr’s face and said with surprise: “Have you come with this object? He is of no use. He has become an apostate and impure person. He has become impudent. He has confused the condition of our life. He can serve the purpose of death only. I must kill him in the worst manner so that I may find comfort and it may also serve as a lesson to others. You should not allow him to enter your life.”

Abū Bakr said: “I am prepared to buy him at any price and if you want an idolatrous slave I shall give you one in exchange.”

Umayyah gave a harsher reply and said: “No. I cannot accept your proposal. He must die in this condition. In this way I shall find comfort and others will also take an account of themselves.”

Abū Bakr said: “Instead of doing all these things and worrying yourself you should sell him to me and be at peace.”

Umayyah said: “You do not know what this black man has done to me. The pangs of my heart cannot be cured by selling him.”

Abū Bakr said in a low tone: “You are mistaken. If you do not sell him you will suffer more.”

Umayyah said: “Do not insist. He is not worth selling.”

Abū Bakr said with a look expressive of a complaint: “I have made a request to you and have also told you that I have a slave who is much stronger than Bilal and I am prepared to give that slave to you. Why are you worrying yourself?”

At last Abū Bakr was able somehow to purchase Bilal from Umayyah. He cut the cords of Bilal’s legs with his own hands and thanked Umayyah and went away.<sup>26</sup>

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26 Some historians believe that on the Holy Prophet’s suggestion Abū Bakr purchased Bilal with his own money and set him free. Others attribute this act to Ibn Abbās that he purchased Bilal on behalf of the Holy Prophet. There are still others who write that, the Holy Prophet purchased him with his ⇒

## BILAL WINS FREEDOM

Bilal got rid of the clutches of captivity of his monstrous master like a bird with burnt plumage. However, he was not able to walk. Signs of torture were visible on his black skin. The bones of his chest had become weak. The signs of weariness and hunger could be observed in his features. He was not able to speak. However, he was saying to himself quietly: “Have I become free? Has the Lord of the world delivered me from the clutches of this cruel man? Have I gained victory so soon? O my Lord! I thank you! . . . . .”

Bilal’s hand was in the hand of Abū Bakr and he was walking slowly. At times he sat down. At times he lost consciousness and fell on the ground. Abū Bakr sat by his side and caressed his face. Bilal felt that a hand other than the former was caressing him. He then picked up strength, stood up and began to walk.

With much difficulty Abū Bakr brought Bilal before the Holy Prophet of Islam. On seeing the bright and celestial face of the Holy Prophet a fresh spirit was blown into the body of Bilal and it seemed that he had forgotten all the calamities and inconveniences. Abū Bakr was very happy on having been successful and he freed Bilal there and then in the presence of the Holy Prophet for the sake of Allāh.<sup>27</sup>

Bilal looked on different sides staringly. He cast a glance at the sky and then turned towards the Holy Prophet. While he sighed and tears of delight trickled down his eyes on his black face and fell on

← own money and set him free. They believe that Bilal became the slave of the Holy Prophet and then became free. However, most of them have written that Abū Bakr purchased him at the instance of the Holy Prophet and freed him. And during the Caliphate of Abū Bakr, Umar protested to Bilal in connection with this matter and said: “Abū Bakr purchased you and set you free.” (Al-Kāmil Ibn Athir, Vol. II, p. 45; Nafas-al-Rahman Chapter 10; Majālisul Mu’minin Vol. I, p. 268; Al-Asābah, p. 169 — Rijāl Mā Maqāni; Bābul Bā — Tabaqāt Ibn Sa’d Vol. III, p. 166.)

27 It is written in Tarikh Ibn Sa’d that Abū Bakr purchased Bilal in partnership with the Holy Prophet and he was set free by the Holy Prophet (Tabaqāt Ibn Sa’d, Vol. III, p. 169.) And some others have written that Abū Bakr purchased him and set him free himself.

the ground, he said: “O Prophet of Allāh! Till today I was being tortured. I remained patient and took care not to say anything against the pleasure of Allāh. Am I on the right path?”

The Holy Prophet said: “Yes, you are on the right path” and prayed for him.

The resistant and loving Bilal remained patient and steadfast in spite of great afflictions, till, at last, he became free and attained prosperity and success. He demonstrated to the mortal world how the Islamic future could bear fruit by means of patience, steadfastness and campaign and how it was possible to defeat the idol and destroy blasphemy and make it a historical event which contributed to the victory and freedom of the downtrodden people.

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On the first day of Bilal’s professing Islam he was devoid of all human rights and privileges. He did not carry any value in the so-called human society of that time and he was treated like an animal. He was the slave of a bully and tyrant and did not possess any freedom. He was a captive. But now by accepting Islam he treated all these privations to be invalid and set his foot for the first time on the ground of human life and realised that he, too, was a human being like others. And now he began a new life in the lap of good luck and came out victorious. He was relieved of all the tortures and inconveniences, which he loved with patience and forbearance. He acquired victory and success and special value and credit in the eyes of the Holy Prophet and the Muslims.

Indeed when Bilal realised that he, too, was a human being and had a right in the society and should lead, like others, the life of a free man. He did not consider idol-worship and egotism to be right and expressed faith in the Almighty Allāh and rebelled against evils and wickedness with the hope that Allāh is the refuge for the helpless and rescuer of the afflicted, and with the hope that truth is always

victorious and eternal, and falsehood is ever bound to vanish,<sup>28</sup> he began a new life.

He stepped into the field of life and devotion with the hope that the darkness of night will not continue to remain forever and cover the bright face of dawn. He chose patience and steadfastness as his profession and bore all inconveniences and carried the flag of freedom on his shoulders and was victorious. He provided guidance to all: to the leaders who rise for the deliverance of the nations and the States from the clutches of the imperialists; to the free men, who are enthusiastic to secure the freedom of the masses, and human values; to the scholars, to the students, who endanger their lives for the progress and evolution of their revolutionary State; to the soldiers and sentries, who sacrifice their lives for their prestige and honour and for their Islamic, human and revolutionary standards, and fight valiantly; and to all the deprived classes of various nation who have become captives of the executioners, and blood-thirsty racists owing to their only offence of being black. He gives the hope of living under the protection of sublime Islamic teachings and proceeding towards human life and establishment of the rule of Divine Justice, victory, perseverance and self-sacrifice. Truly speaking if all the people of the world had known that as a result of patience, forbearance and effort they can achieve freedom, the hands of the unclean criminals would already have been cut off and the wolves in the garb of human beings, who are after the lives of the people and are devouring them, would have been disgraced and their abominable impressions would have been rooted out and all would have lived in purity, virtue, good Luck, comfort and peace.

### **SLAVERY OR FREEDOM**

The object of all human beings is that they should be free in their life and this freedom is so valuable for them that they are prepared to disregard their own existence in order to achieve it, and they even lay down their lives for it. They consider death of freedom better than life of captivity, because life in which there is no

28 Refer Surah Bani Israel, 17:81.

freedom is no life.<sup>29</sup>

The greatest glory for man is that he sacrifices his life to achieve freedom. No doubt man is inimical to slavery and has always hated it and cursed those who deprive the human being of freedom.

It is only on one occasion that bondage is acceptable to man and that is bondage vis-à-vis the Lord of the world and the Creator of man. It is here that bondage is not only not a matter of disgrace, but is the greatest glory and honour for man.

The greatest among mankind consider being bondman of the Almighty Allāh to be an honour. How nicely has Imam ‘Alī said: “O Kind Lord! It is the greatest honour for me that I am your bondman.”

Being a bondman of the Almighty Lord of the world is freedom itself. It lends greatness to man and makes him reach a lofty position. However, slavery to man, lust, idol, passions, wealth and authority is abominable. This slavery is the greatest disgrace. Free man have always endeavoured to be delivered from the clutches of the slavery of the tyrants. Bilal was the slave of Umayyah - The slave of a deviated and proud man. He wanted Bilal to prostrate himself before the stones and the idols. It was this thing which made Bilal resist strongly and he regained the human glory. He wanted to become the slave of Allāh and not the slave of His creatures.

No doubt it pained Bilal to submit before the idols and before his tyrannical master and he made sacrifices to acquire freedom so that instead of being the slave of others he should become the slave of Allāh.

Intellect says: Be happy and prosperous

Love says: Be a slave (of Allāh) and be free.<sup>30</sup>

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29 Imam Ḥusain said: “It is better to die an honourable death than to live in disgrace with the tyrants.”

30 Payām-e-Jawānān, p. 69. (The message of Alamma Dr Mohammad Iqbal)

After a little deliberation we realise that the sincerity of intention of Bilal was complete submission and surrender to Allāh and that he stood for the complete freedom of mankind and his name will ever shine in the annals of Islamic History, for in those days there were bloody wars between Monotheism and polytheism and which ultimately triumphed in the victory of Monotheism. Such persons as perceive their own human reality and value have always been immortal and have always attained great successes in the path of Allāh and His school under the banner of submission to Him.

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### **SAVAGE BEHAVIOUR**

Time passed on and Bilal got rid of Umayyah and was taking part in various activities along with other Muslims.

Most of the residents of Makkah knew him and we aware of his life history and had observed his steadfastness the face of persecution by Umayyah.

The elders of Quraysh and their agents hurt Bilal in the same manner in which they hurt the Holy Prophet and other Muslims. Whenever they saw him they ridiculed him, attacked him collectively and cudgelled him. Some times they poured into his house and sometimes they insulted and abused him.

At last the hands of the criminals did not permit that Bilal and other Muslims should live in peace. Everyday inauspicious plans were made against them and savage behaviour was resorts to. Consequently the Muslims were in a strange predicament.<sup>31</sup>

It was during these very days that some enlightened men from Medina came to see the Holy Prophet and invited him to migrate there so that he might get rid of persecutions by it Quraysh.

When this news spread in Makkah the infidels among Quraysh

31 Tafsir-e-Surah wal ‘Aṣr, p. 309.



increased the tortures of the Muslims and molest them so much that the Holy Prophet was obliged to send some persons to Medina. Hence, a few Muslims proceeded to Medina in compliance with the orders of the Holy Prophet.

After these persons another group of emigrants was formed including Bilal and some others and they left Makkah as ordered by the Holy Prophet.<sup>32</sup>

It was night and dreadful darkness had spread everywhere. The only light which shone in that darkness was that of the stars of the sky which twinkled quietly. Most of the people had gone to bed. At times the voice of the vagrants and drunken quarrelsome persons could be heard from far and near. The persons appointed by the people of Makkah had gone to sleep. Suddenly the gate of the residence of some shelter-less Muslims was opened slowly and looking towards each side very cautiously they conversed with one another and left the house. The sound of the feet of the walkers broke the silence of a part of the city and created more fear. They walked through the streets very quietly one after the other and eventually went out of the gate of the city of Makkah.

After leaving the city they were comforted a little. However, it was quite possible that someone might have become aware of their plan and might follow them and frustrate their object at the very outset.

This caravan was very much disturbed and worried. Every time after taking a few steps they looked back and fixed their eyes on the gate of the city.

The more they were distant from the city the more hopeful they became and walked at a quicker pace. The time was passing rapidly. They said to one another: "We must be quick and get rid of the clutches of these ill-natured persons."

Fatigue, disturbance of mind, and fear, had wearied all of them.

32 Tabaqāt Ibn Sa'd, Vol. III, p. 268; Nāsikhut-Tawārikh Ḥaẓrat-i-Rasūl, p. 33

They were, therefore, obliged to decide that they should sit on a sand mound and take rest and also see whether or not some person was following them.

When they looked at distant places and did not locate anyone they became happy and reflected for a while about the city of Makkah, the House of Allāh, the Holy Prophet, the companions of the Holy Prophet and the grim and abominable faces of the infidels among the Quraysh.

A few moments passed and then they continued their journey with grief. They walked on till dawn came and light began to spread.

The weather was clear and invigorating breeze was blowing. The sky had become quite bright. The caravan of the emigrants decided to pray to their Lord. All of them began to offer prayers. The soul of every one of them had elevated. It seemed that the sands of the desert had also joined their voice with them and were praising Allāh. They were engrossed in the worship of Allāh and were attentive to Him in such a way that it seemed that they had forgotten everything else and were flying up to the limitless sky.

They offered prayers and made supplications to the Lord of the worlds. While the atmosphere was going to be bright they re-started their journey.

Every day that this small caravan became farther from Makkah and nearer to Medina its members became more happy and the hope of success increased in their hearts. Bilal and his companions were going away from their homeland and birthplace and were going to take refuge in a foreign land and this was something hard for every person, but for a brave man like Bilal who had suffered so much in this path this weariness and remoteness, too, was very insignificant and unimportant.

Whenever the companions of Bilal complained of weariness and of being away from their homeland he consoled them and said:

“Whoever walks on this path of Allāh and perseveres achieves decisive victory. Allāh does not leave alone a person who walks on His path but guides and helps him.<sup>33</sup> Allāh is always with the pious and who do good deeds.<sup>34</sup>”

In order to perform their duty in the path of truth and to affirm their monotheistic faith, the brave men of different periods always resorted to migration and, following in the footsteps of a leader, bore all hardships, and with their migration took positive steps for the revival of Divine values, and with their martyrdom they made firm the spirituality and reality of their movement. They said ‘no’ to all the devilish standards and regulations and carried themselves from the stage of temptation to that of satisfaction and made their diligence the pattern of life and showed their enthusiasm and intelligence in the battlefield by risking their lives and fought vehemently to save their beloved ones.

### **THE BEAUTIFUL SPECTACLE OF MEDINA**

The small caravan of the Muslims somehow completed the tedious journey between Makkah and Medina and reached near Medina. Everyone of them was reflecting as to what his position would be in that foreign land. They said to themselves: “Shall we be able to live without our dear ones and friends? Is there no one in this place who may molest us?”

Possibly Bilal was asking himself: “Can we worship here the Lord of the worlds without any hindrance and prepare the ground for the establishment of Divine rule?” All of them were lost in their thoughts when suddenly the spectacle of the city of Medina attracted their attention.

Just at that time the sun had risen from between the date palm trees and had scattered its golden rays on the mountains and trees of the city of Medina and created a very beautiful and animating sight.

33 *As for those who strive in Us, We surely guide them to Our paths.* (Surah Al-Ankabut, 29:69).

34 *Allāh is with those who keep their duty unto Him and those who are doers of good.* (Surah An-Nahl, 16:128)

Gentle breeze was blowing and pushing the branches of the date palm trees to this side and that side. The spectacle of Medina was very beautiful and pleasing. They felt the sweet smell of peace and sincerity from everywhere, so much so that all the members of the caravan forgot the weariness of the journey and conveyed to one another the good news of meeting and union. They were happy to reach a place which was like Paradise on the face of the earth. All of them enjoyed this beautiful spectacle. Sometimes they also stared at the sky and thanked the Almighty Allāh and prayed to Him thus from the core of their hearts: “O Lord! Make this land the base of Your religion and grant us strength that we may, following in the footsteps of Your Prophet, hoist and hold high the honourable flag of Islam and may spread the light and logic of Islam in the entire world and may make the Islamic revolution a pattern for all the oppressed ones.”

On finding that they had reached near the city and had not to experience any harm at the hands of the enemies of Islam, Bilal and his companions were very happy and forgot all the inconveniences. However, they felt to some extent that the atmosphere of the city of Medina was heavy. They said: “Certainly we are fatigued and shall gradually become accustomed.” Very soon they found themselves in the city of Medina. Some magnanimous and pious Muslims of Medina came to receive them. They embraced and welcomed them and then they arrived at the houses of some Anṣār.<sup>35</sup>

### **A CRITICAL PROBLEM**

The atmosphere of the city of Medina was heavy and thick. At times hot and suffocating winds blew. The people fell a victim to ailments like cholera, fever etc. Many persons died every year. Especially the newly arrived persons who were not accustomed to the weather of Medina fell ill more as compared with others.

Lack of sufficient means of comfort, separation from the near ones

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35 The book, “Come with me to the House of Allāh” p. 182; Tabaqāt Ibn Sa’d, Vol. 3, p. 169. Ibn Sa’d writes that Bilal and his companions arrived at the house of one of the Anṣār named Sa’d Ibn Khathima.

and the trouble of being a stranger in Medina became the cause of many Muslims especially Bilal falling sick. This was a great problem which the emigrants (the Muhājirs) had to face for the first time.

Bilal who was very weak and had recently got rid of the clutches of the idol-worshippers and oppressors fell sick immediately after his arrival in Medina. He felt very uneasy. At times the Muslims came to see him. They consoled him and prayed for the restoration of his health.

At times when Bilal felt very uncomfortable on account of fever and pain he cried and complained to the Almighty Allāh saying: “May Allāh curse ‘Atbah, Shibah and Umayyah, son of Khalaf who sent us to this land.”<sup>36</sup>

At times he recited verses in remembrance of the atmosphere of Makkah and said: “Will a time ever come when I may convert my night in Makkah into morning and see pretty and sweet smelling flowers on all my sides? And shall I see the day when I drink the wholesome water of that land and the high mountains of Makkah are before my eyes.”<sup>37</sup>

“O Lord! It is You who delivered me from the clutches of Umayyah and helped me so that I arrived in this land. This time, too, deliver me from this heavy and polluted atmosphere.”

“O Almighty Lord! In all my difficulties I turned to You and You rescued me. You taught me perseverance. I migrated to this land to worship You and to preach Your religion and I do not have any one other than You. Kindly solve this problem as well and deliver me and all the Muslims from sickness.”

Owing to the condition of Bilal and of other Muslims the matters took such a turn that the Muslims were unhappy with Medina and

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36 O Allāh cursed be ‘Utbah, Shaybah and Umayyah bin Khalaf in the same manner as they drove us towards the land of epidemic.

37 Nāsikhut-Tawārikh Ḥaẓrat-i-Rasūl, p. 35; Qiblah-e-Islam, p. 699.

lived there gloomily. Every day they remembered their birthplace, Makkah. All of them prayed to Allāh that He might open a way for them to get rid of this place.

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### **THE SUPPLICATION OF THE HOLY PROPHET**

The Holy Prophet of Islam felt very much distressed on account of the pitiable condition of the Muslims. He reflected as to what he should do. Furthermore, nothing can be done with regard to the atmosphere of a city. None possesses the power to change the atmosphere. However, it goes without saying that in all difficulties and predicaments the Holy Prophet of Islam turned towards Allāh and placed all his problems before Him. In this emergency also he turned to the Almighty Allāh and said:

“O Lord! Relieve the Muslims of this affliction and cure their ailments.

O Lord! The people are somewhat fed up with this land. The atmosphere of Makkah and love for their homeland is not obliterated from their minds at any time.

O Almighty Lord! You possess the power to change this heavy and impure atmosphere and to help us out of this difficulty.

O Lord! Make the atmosphere of the city healthy and pure and remove the various diseases from this land.

O Lord! Make the Muslims love this city from the core of their hearts in the same manner in which they love their birth place, Makkah.”

The supplication of the Holy Prophet of Islam had not yet come to an end that the atmosphere of the city of Medina became pure and pleasant. The patients who were confined to their beds were cured of their ailments. They heaved a sigh of relief. Now they became attached to this land and no longer remembered Makkah, their native place.

From that day onwards Medina began to be called Medina-e-Tayyabah and its atmosphere became very gentle and pure. The atmosphere of the city underwent a change as a consequence of the

Holy Prophet's prayer and supplication to Allāh.<sup>38</sup>

It is possible that on coming across this part of history for the first time you may be surprised and say: "How was it possible that the atmosphere of a region should have undergone a total change?"

If this part of history had not been recorded it would have been a difficult problem for all. However, as the writers of '*Seerah*' (life history of the Holy Prophet) have written about this event and it has also been quoted in many reliable books of history it is acceptable and this miraculous problem may be treated as solved.

The Almighty Lord who had helped His dear Prophet at all times and had been his helper and supporter in all difficulties possessed power (at this time, too; when the Holy Prophet was faced with a great problem) to change the atmosphere of a city and this was one of the miracles of the great Prophet, because such matters and similar changes shown by the Messengers of Allāh cannot be linked with persons other than Prophets.

One of the difficulties in the way of the Muslims was removed by means of the supplications of the Holy Prophet. However, they were still faced with even a greater problem.

The Muhājirs who had left behind their homes, wives and children, and had courted the great ordeal of migration had no money with them. They had neither homes nor sufficient means to lead a comfortable life.

It is evident that for such persons separation from their relatives, remoteness from their homeland and lack of social relations was an unbearable affliction. No one was prepared to establish contact with them except a few persons who had recently embraced Islam.

Savage killings, attacks on one another, and class distinctions still ruled the society. Most of the Muhājirs lived in perfect solitude

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38 Qiblah-e-Islam, p. 699

in the streets and in the cabins situated near the Holy Prophet's mosque. Their attention was directed solely towards Allāh and they hoped that the Lord of the worlds would solve their problems.

It is indisputable that the people who turn to Allāh in all circumstances and place all their difficulties before Him never lose hope or become disappointed. The Almighty Allāh says: *As for him who takes step in Our path we make the paths clear and straight for him.* (Surah al-Ankabut, 29:69)

And there were the people who took steps in the path of Allāh and remained patient in all difficulties *and put their trust in Allāh and Allāh helped them on all occasions.* (Surah al-Talaq, 65:3)

Of course, when there are persons who leave their city and homeland and settle in a foreign land in order to worship the Lord of the worlds and to protest against idol-worship, cruelty and oppression the Almighty Lord also makes them respectable and removes all the difficulties from their path.

None could think of the formation of the society which had been stained with all sorts of lowliness and pollution, but the Lord of the worlds solved this problem very easily by setting forth a celestial law. It was the law, which breathed a new life into the body of the society of those times, and which is still alive and is eternal. It was the law of fraternity and the spirit of brotherhood. With the promulgation and enforcement of this law Bilal and other Muhājirs became tranquil and acquired peace of mind.

### **SPIRIT OF BROTHERHOOD IN ISLAM**

In order to lay the foundation of a healthy and civilised society it is necessary to traverse many paths and to enact sound and essential laws. One of the paths which the Holy Prophet Muḥammad traversed in order to civilise the world was that first of all he connected and united the members of the society with one another and created mutual love amongst the various classes.



He uprooted class differences, jealousy, grudge, hypocrisy and separation, because a society can only be free and independent when in the first instance it reforms and purifies itself and then takes steps for the progress and independence of its members and by this means safeguards its frontiers against the enemy attacks.

A community can become the forerunner of the caravan of civilisation when all its members are philanthropic and kind to one another and strive for the happiness of others and practice the true Islamic morals.

A nation can live in peace and tranquillity when in the first instance it roots out corruption and internal differences and then its members lead life of fraternity and love for one another.

Prosperity and success is achieved by nation and community which destroys class differences and whose members are sincere and kind to one another and break the chains of captivity and slavery.

Of course, only that community whose members are responsible and are mindful of the welfare of one another can attain success and glory.

The Divine religion of Islam dawned in a society which had lost all the true and real humanitarian values of the life and had become similar to that of animals. The only thing which could not be seen in that society was kindness and philanthropy. However, Islam solved all the problems of those days one after the other and abolished most of the improper laws.

In short this attractive plan opened an era of prosperity and good luck in the life of the Muslims.

As ordained by the Almighty Allāh, the Holy Prophet of Islam gathered the Muslims together in the mosque and recited the formula of brotherhood between himself and Imām 'Alī, the Commander or the Faithful and between the two of all other Muslims and made them brothers of each other.

On the day Bilal and Obaydah, son of Hārith joined hands as brothers.<sup>39</sup> From that day onwards all the Muslims became brothers of one another<sup>40</sup> and by the implementation of the plan the second difficulty with which the Muhājir Muslims were faced was removed in the sense that they participated in one another's joy and so they and became like one body and soul. The pain of one Muslim was felt as the pain of all of them, When one Muslim experienced hardship and was in trouble all the Muslims shared his trouble. And it was agreed that they would not be treacherous to one another or tell lies and would love one another.

The greatest factor which became the means of the progress of this very small group was this very pact of brotherhood. A specimen of this claim can be observed in the later life of these persons. In the battle of Badr 313 faithful stood against 1000 infidels and gained victory. The only factor of this success of theirs was that they were perfectly united and were fighting for one cause.

In one of the battles ten persons died of thirst, although water was available. This happened because they preferred their brother to themselves. Hundreds of similar events are recorded in history and all of them took place as a consequence of unity and brotherhood.

It will not be out of place if we say here that if the law of brotherhood is revived in Muslims countries and it gains strength and all the people sympathise and cooperate with one another so that they consider the hardship of one Muslim to be their own hardship and if they are sincere in saying that they are brothers, then they will certainly attain their advancement, civilisation and independence in the world as assured and they will be able to destroy their biggest enemy in a very short time.

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39 Qāmus-ur-Rijāl, p. 243; Al-Isābah, p. 169; Usud-ul-Ghabah, Vol. 1, p. 208. Some 'Seerah' writers have said that Bilal was made the brother of Abū Doyah (A'ayan-ush-Shi'ah, Vol. XIII, p. 144.)

40 *The believers are surely brothers*, (Surah Hujarat, 49:10); Tabaqāt Ibn Sa'd, Vol. III, p. 165. (Some have written that Bilal was made the brother of Abdullah son of Abdur Rahman Khath'ami, Nāsikh p. 35).

If the pact of brotherhood and unity amongst the Muslims had remained intact how could the imperialists find their way into the Islamic countries and make them fight with one another and then make Zionism dominate over them? How could they interfere with the destiny of the Muslims and subjugate them gradually? How could they throw aside the celestial laws of the Muslims and enforce their own baseless laws among them?

Indeed, how could Zionism predominate over a part of the Muslim lands and subjugate the Muslims so much that they might not be able to sleep peacefully?

It is quite evident that these blows are being administered on the body of Islam by those persons who have made the name of Islam a tool to safeguard their own interests.

We say that it was brotherhood and equality which developed the backward society of that age and the Muslims were able to reach the farthest points of the world under the shadow of the banner of unity and hoisted the glorious flag of Islam in those regions. We say again that brotherhood and harmony is the only means of progress and advancement.

The pact of brotherhood means uprooting class distinction, destroying the roots of hypocrisy and double dealing, inculcating faith and love in the frame of the human beings, and preparing them for campaign against imperialism and Zionism for the victory of Islam and the Muslims.

### **THE GREAT SLOGAN OF ISLAM**

During the thirteen years which the Muslims spent in Makkah they could not at any time gather together, form a society freely and offer congregational prayers. However, when they migrated to Medina and built a big mosque there, it was decided that they should not miss congregational prayers, especially the Friday prayers. However, as there were no means of making an announcement for the prayers the people came to the Masjid in scattered

batches. Some arrived earlier and the others arrived later. At times it so happened that some of them missed the blessings of congregational prayers or could participate in only a part of it.

On the other hand the Holy Prophet of Islam mentioned so much excellence and spiritual reward for congregational prayers that the people were encouraged to come and participate in them and wishes that as far as possible they might offer their prayers in congregation.

For example, one day when a Muslim who could not participate in a part of the congregational prayers for instance *Takbīratul-Eḥrām* asked the Holy Prophet: “Will I be entitled to as much spiritual reward if I set a slave free?”<sup>41</sup>

The Muslims were anxious to find out a facility to summon the people to the mosque at a fixed time. Every person made a suggestion and the Holy Prophet said that in order to study the suggestions made by various persons the Muslims should gather in the mosque for mutual consultation and exchange of views.

It was necessary that all the suggestions should be considered by the Holy Prophet. Some persons said: “It will be good if horn is blown at the time of prayers so that the people may come to know that the time for prayers has come.”

The Holy Prophet said: “Blowing of horn is peculiar to the Jews and we cannot become followers of the Jews.”

Another person said: “It will be better if we procure a bell like the bell of the Christians and make use of it.”

41 It is said that that person was Abdullah son of Mas'ūd who said “I forgot to pronounce one *Takbīratul-Eḥrām* Can I acquire spiritual reward equivalent thereto if I set a slave free?” The Holy Prophet, replied: “No”, He said: “How will it be if I set two slaves free?” The Holy Prophet replied: “O Ibn Mas'ūd! Even if you spend all that is on the face of the earth for the sake of Allāh, you will not be able to acquire the excellence (attached to the *Takbīr* which you forgot to pronounce).”

The Holy Prophet said: “The method of the Christians does not serve our purpose. We must be independent.”

A group expressed the view that when the time for prayers approached a mighty fire be kindled so that the people might take notice and present themselves in the mosque.

The Holy Prophet replied: “Fire can be made use of only at night. Further more kindling fire is the religion of the Magi.”

In the meantime a man stood up and said: “O Prophet of Allāh! It will be better if at the time of prayers a man with a loud voice makes a proclamation so that, on hearing his voice, the people may come to the mosque.”

The Holy Prophet liked this idea and improved it in the following manner: “At the time of prayers a man should shout: *Aṣ-ṣalāt Jami’ah*.”

The Holy Prophet then ordered Bilal to proclaim the time for prayers to the people by pronouncing the above-mentioned words.

Every day Bilal used to say loudly ‘*Aṣ-ṣalāt Jami’ah*’ at the time of prayers and thus invited the people to the mosque.

Though the Muslims came to the mosque on hearing the voice of Bilal, yet pronouncing these words alone for coming together of the Muslims for the establishment of prayers was not sufficient, and a more firm, effective and fervent slogan was needed.

One day when the Holy Prophet was in the house of Imam ‘Alī, the Commander of the Faithful, the Archangel Jibrael descended and brought ‘*Azān*’ and recited its invigorating sentences before the Holy Prophet.

The Holy Prophet asked Imam ‘Alī: “Have you heard the *Azān*?” ‘Alī replied: “Yes.”

Then the Holy Prophet said: “Teach Bilal how to pronounce *Azān* so that in future he should pronounce it at the time of prayers.”<sup>42</sup>

Thereafter the system of ‘*Azān*’ became the best and the most sublime means of announcing the time of prayers and gathering the Muslims.

At the time of prayers Bilal used to pronounce *Azān* with a sweet and loud voice from the roof of the mosque. The spirit of faith and enthusiasm for perfection and deliverance was breathed into the body of the Muslims and they hurried to the mosque as fast as they could.

It should be known that *Azān* is not a sound only. It is not an illogical, empty and mute voice which should be meant for only gathering the people for propaganda purposes as is in other religions and creeds. On the other hand it is a symbol of the principles and secondary matters of Islam. It is an inspiring slogan. It stirs one to action. It is an enthusiasm, fervour, hope and search. *Azān* is a call which invites the people to unity and mutual co-operation under the shadow of Divine Unity and calls them to perfection and advancement under the guidance of the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet of Islam.

Of course, when the animating voice of Bilal raised from a corner of the mosque of the Prophet resounded in the space of Medina it animated the spirit of the people and attracted them both the mosque for offering their prayer with great fervour.

The people relished *Azān* and its wordings so much that they kept waiting so that celestial melody might rise from the throat of the muezzin of the Holy Prophet of Islam and invite them to Allāh.

When Bilal’s *Azān* ended the Muslims formed compressed rows by

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42 Furu’ul Kāfi Vol. 3, p. 302; Qāmus-ur-Rijāl p. 1; Majma’ul Bayān p. 268; Majālisul Mu’minin p. 268. Chap. “Muslims gathering”.

the side of one another and the Holy Prophet led the prayers.<sup>43</sup>

The assembly and standing in rows of the Muslims made the enemy tremble and dazzled the eyes of every on-looker.

The fame of Islam and the new society of the Muslims which was controlled by the spirit of brotherhood, equality, monotheism and campaign against oppression and injustice had spread in the entire Arab world.

The enemies of Islam were afraid lest one day this magnificent revolution should influence the heart and soul of all the people and become universal and topple down their flimsy and dirty world. They, therefore, drew a new plan every day and resorted to foul intrigues to destroy the revolution and the revolutionaries of Islam.

#### **THE EXCELLENCE OF AZĀN AND THE MUEZZIN**

Abdullah bin ‘Alī says: “When I was carrying merchandise from Basra to Egypt I met on the way an old man whose white hair added to his luminous and holy aspect and the light of faith and greatness was shining in his face.<sup>44</sup> He had only two clothes on his body, one of which was black and the other white.

I asked the people: “Who is this old man?”

They replied: “He is Bilal, the muezzin of the Holy Prophet.”

I was very much pleased to learn this and decided to benefit from his knowledge. I procured the writing material and then approached him. I saluted him and heard the reply.

I said: “May Allāh bless you. You are one of the companions of the Holy Prophet and have benefited from his company. I wish that you may relate to me the traditions and words which you may have heard from him.”

43 Safīnatul Bihār Vol. I, p. 165; The Life of the Holy Prophet p. 261; Muntahul Āmāl p. 67.

44 This incident took place after the passing away of the Holy Prophet and possibly after Bilal was exiled to Syria.

Then Bilal said: “How do you know me?”

I said: “You are Bilal, the muezzin of the Holy Prophet of Islam.”

When I uttered these words tears began to flow from his eyes and I also wept and the persons who had gathered round.

Bilal asked: “Where do you come from?”

I replied: “I am from Iraq.”

He was glad to know this and after reflecting for a few seconds he said: “O Iraqi brother! Write: *In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful*, I heard the Holy Prophet of Allāh saying: ‘Those who pronounce *Azān* are the trustees of the prayers and fasting of the people’.

“The meat purchased from a bazaar from which the voice of *Azān* rises is pure and lawful and fighting with the people of the city from which the voice of *Azān* is heard is unlawful.<sup>45</sup> The muezzins do not seek anything from Allāh which is not granted to them and do not intercede for any one except that their intercession is accepted.”

Abdullah says: “I relished the words of Bilal and said: May Allāh bless you. Say something more.”

Bilal said: “Write: I heard the Holy Prophet of Islam saying, ‘Whoever says *Azān* for forty days for the sake of Allāh will arrive on the Day of Judgement in such a condition that forty good deeds of his will have been accepted - the deeds which will not separate from him on that Day.’”

I said: “May Allāh bless you. Say something more.”

Bilal continued and said: “Write: I heard the Holy Prophet of Islam

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45 It must be mentioned here that the war waged by the Islamic Republic of Iran was not against the afflicted Iraqi nation but against the Bā’th Party of Aflaqi which was fighting with the support of the USA, the then USSR and the reactionary powers. The circumstance was self-defence and not war.



saying: ‘If a person says *Azān* for twenty months the Lord of the worlds will make him rise on the Day of Judgement with a light which will be about as much as the sky. (It is an allusion to the excess of light).

“If a person says *Azān* for ten years Allāh will give him the same place in Paradise as will be given to Prophet Ibrahim.

“I also heard the Holy Prophet saying: ‘If a person says *Azān* for one year Allāh will make him arrive on the Day of Judgement in such a condition that all his sins will have been forgiven even though they may be as big as Mount Uhud.’”

Abdullah said: “Kindly say something more.”

Bilal said: “Very good. Keep it in your mind and act according to it. The Holy Prophet said: ‘If a person says *Azān* for one prayer for the sake of faith in Allāh and for His proximity, Allāh forgives his sins and makes him a companion of the martyrs in Paradise.’”

Abdullah says: “Curiosity kindled within me. I said with great emotion and fervour: ‘Praised be you. Kindly quote for me the best words which you heard from the Holy Prophet.’”

He said: “Ah! You have played upon my heart strings” and began to weep in such away that I too, wept. Then he said: “Write: I heard the Holy Prophet saying: ‘On the Day of Judgement Allāh will gather the people together and will send angels who will be carrying flags of light in their hands and will be riding the horses whose reins will be of chrysolite and whose pillions will be of musk. They will enter the Plain of the Day of Judgement while they will be standing on those horses and will pronounce *Azān* loudly.’”

“I swear by Him who has appointed me to the Prophetic mission that when Resurrection takes place the muezzins will be riding valuable horses and will pass by the people saying: ‘*Allāhu Akbar*’ (Allāh is Great).

“When they utter these words my followers will weep. And when

they say: 'I affirm that there is no deity but Allāh,' my followers will say: 'We used to worship the One Allāh in the world.' And when they My: 'I affirm that Muḥammad is the Prophet of Allāh' my followers will say: 'We are the followers of the same Prophet whom we did not see but in whom we believed.' Then they will add: 'He is the same Prophet who has fully discharged his duty as the Messenger of Allāh.'

“Then it is for the Almighty Lord to assemble you and the Prophets. Then the muezzins will go to their places and there are gifts there which no eye has seen and no ear has heard of.”

Abdullah says: “Then Bilal looked at me and said: ‘If possible do not abandon *Azān* and endeavour that you do not pass away except that you should be a muezzin.”<sup>46</sup>

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The saying of *Azān* was a special gift of the personality of Bilal. All knew him well and looked at him respectfully. This personality of Bilal and the respect enjoyed by him roused jealousy in some persons. These were the people who did not previously attach any value to persons like Bilal. They could not see the members of lower classes enjoying such a position. Gradually they thought of preventing Bilal from saying *Azān* and were trying to find a pretext for this.

To achieve this end they made and executed various plans. For example, they approached the Holy Prophet and said to him: “This position of muezzin is very high and valuable and it is not proper that it should be given to a person who was previously a slave. It is better that the muezzin of the Prophet is one of the personalities well-known to the Arabs.”

On another day they came and said: “The voice of Bilal is not  
46 Al-Wāfi, Vol. II, p. 87; Amāli Aṣ-Ṣadūq p. 127; Nafasur Rahmān, Chap. 10.  
p. 127.

good at all. The muezzin should have a sweet voice so that he may attract the people as much as possible.”

The third and most important weapon against Bilal was that they said: “He cannot pronounce the Arabic words correctly e.g. he says ‘Sin’ instead of ‘Shin’ (*As-hadu an lāilāha Illallah* in place of *Ash-hadu an lāilāha Illallah*) and this is a great defect which cannot be ignored.”<sup>47</sup>

In short the purpose of the objections, which were at times propounded sentimentally and at times also with harshness, was nothing else except that Bilal should not say *Azān*. According to them the *Azān*, which was heard by the Muslims as well as the non-Muslims, should have been pronounced by a person with a sweet voice who did not say ‘Sin’ instead of ‘Shin.’

At times they ridiculed Bilal directly and in order to justify their action: “We say all this to protect the honour of Islam and the Qur’an.”

The opponents of Bilal whose number was considerable carried their obstructionist activities and put forward arguments to such an extent that the Holy Prophet, with all his greatness, began to reflect as to whether he should accept their suggestion and restrain him from saying *Azān* or might allow him to continue at his post.

At this juncture Jibrael descended and informed the Holy Prophet of the evil plan of the enemies and their prejudices of the age of ignorance and confirmed Bilal as muezzin and said “Almighty Allāh accepts the ‘Sin’ of Bilal for ‘Shin.’ As Bilal cannot pronounce ‘Shin’ correctly his ‘Sin’ is accepted for ‘Shin.’”<sup>48</sup>

47 Muntahul Āmāl p. 87; Safinatul Biḥār p. 105.

48 A man came to Imam ‘Alī and said: “A man finds fault with Bilal and criticizes him in the matter of pronunciation of ‘Sin’ and ‘Shin.’” The Imam said: “The words we pronounce are for keeping intact good acts. If a person pronounces the words properly but his deeds are wrong and unjust the pronunciation of the words is of no use to him. The ‘Sin’ and ‘Shin’ of Bilal do no harm, because his deeds are good and correct.” (Nafasur Rahmān Chap. 1)

Thus a clear-cut reply was given to the opponents of Bilal and he continued to hold his high position. Of course, the obstructionists and enemies of the revolution and Islam were very active to prevent Bilal from saying *Azān* but Allāh disgraced them and divulged their ugly plan and proved that on this pretext they were supporting racial and social discriminations and wanted to fish in troubled waters.

Later these persons disclosed their nature in the history of Islam and some of them were reckoned to be well-known hypocrites.

### **THE LIAR IS BURNT TO DEATH**

The sound of the *Azān* of Bilal resounded in the city of Medina every morning and evening. The Muslims were fond of hearing it and the enemies of the Holy Prophet disliked it. Every enemy said one thing or the other about the *Azān* and its invigorating words.

One of the opponents, who, on the one hand could not divulge his opposition and enmity, and on the other, felt extremely distressed due to the advancement of Islam and the Muslims, showed signs of uneasiness on hearing the *Azān*. And especially when Bilal reached the sacred name of the Holy Prophet and testified his Prophethood, the face of that man changed and he said with anger and grudge: “Just see how this black liar glorifies the name of Muḥammad as a Prophet! Just see how with these words he gathers the people at one place!”

At last the invocation of this hypocrite which he used to utter for the oppressed Bilal was accepted for himself. One day while he was kindling a lamp at the time of *Azān* for evening prayers and was saying: ‘May the liar be burnt’ a flame of fire suddenly burnt his finger and gradually it reached his other fingers as well. Although he tried his best to extinguish the fire he did not succeed in doing so. At last the fire enveloped his entire frame and very soon he was crying and struggling amidst the flames of fire. His neighbours and relatives tried their best to control the rife but did not succeed.

At last therefore, the liar and enemy of the Holy Prophet of Islam stood in a corner and was soon reduced to ashes before the very eyes of the people.

### **BILAL IS REPROACHED**

When the army of Islam conquered the forts of Khaybar under Imam ‘Alī, the Commander of the Faithful and marched back victoriously to Medina, the base of monotheism, some persons from amongst the Muslims were carrying the war booty and some captives with them. Of these persons one was Bilal who was taking two female captives with him. Bilal made those two women pass through the battlefield and from between the dead bodies of those who had been killed in the battle. The women created a very pathetic scene by weeping bitterly and scratching their faces and tearing their clothes.

The Holy Prophet came to know about the incident and was very unhappy. He, therefore, called Bilal before him and said: “Had pity and compassion forsaken you that you acted like this?”<sup>49</sup>

Bilal was one of those companions, for whom the Holy Prophet had special regard. He was considered to be his treasurer and servant and the Holy Prophet was fully aware of his efforts and sacrifices but none of these things could stop him from criticising Bilal and reproaching him for his unjust act.

Bilal was a companion of the Holy Prophet and was always praised and treated kindly by him, but all this kindness and favour was for his piety and good deeds and if he changed his conduct and deviated from his path he was subjected to severe criticism.

Although Bilal had not committed a major sin and his act could only be treated as opposed to good behaviour and justice, the Holy Prophet called for his explanation so as to make it clear that he was not prepared to tolerate the least deviation from the path of Islam even on the part of his nearest Companions.

49 Zindaghi-e-Payambar Vol. 2, p. 81; Safinatul Biḥār Vol. 1, p. 104; Muḥammad wa Yārān Vol. II, p. 69.

Islam is the religion, which is a complete code of life and discipline and it does not tolerate any deviation on the part of the believers. It is not like other schools and religions wherein the offences of the relatives and the near ones are ignored. Here it is the order of Allāh which has to be implemented and Allāh desires that Islam should take into account the same standard and law for all and the Prophet should respect this law and act according to it.

Of course, in this religion exception is taken to Bilal's actions as well - the same Bilal who is so close to the family of the Holy Prophet that he helps the honourable daughter of the Holy Prophet in her work by soothing her children and he performs this duty admirably well. He sees that Lady Fāṭimah Zahra is grinding barley with a hand-mill and as she is not free to look after the children they are crying. He then requests her to be permitted either to soothe the children or grind barley himself.

The Holy Prophet's daughter replied: "No, I can look after the children better, so you may grind barley." Incidentally on that day Bilal reaches the mosque for saying *Azān* later than usual and meets the inquisitive looks of the Holy Prophet and the Muslims. Later he informs the Holy Prophet about the matter and hears this reply: "May Allāh bless you and Fāṭimah."<sup>50</sup>

However, in spite of all this the Holy Prophet points out his mistake so that all should know that before Allāh and His Prophet nobody is honoured or humiliated without cause and whatever the position of a person may be he has to give an account of his irregularities.

### **BILAL IN THE BATTLE OF BADR**

Bilal was not only a worshipper so that he might say *Azān* at the time of prayers and should have no other duty to discharge. On the other hand he was an active member of the society, and he played an important role in the formation of the new society and the spreading of Islam. He possessed a great spirit and firm determination.

50 Safinatul Biḥār Vol. 1, p. 104;

In the battles which were fought between the Muslims and the infidels after the migration of the Muslims to Medina, including the battles of Badr, Uhud and the Ditch,<sup>51</sup> he was in the frontline row of the battlefield and his strength and perseverance were praised by all.<sup>52</sup>

After the migration of the Holy Prophet to Medina the condition of the Muslims underwent a change and they resorted to preaching Islam freely.

Islam began to spread. A ‘model society’ was established and the Holy Prophet of Allāh was ordered, contrary to his policy in Makkah; to stand against the infidels and to fight with them, if necessary.

The Battle of Badr was the first important battle which took place between the Muslims and the infidels. The matter was that in the second half of Jamādi’ul-awwal a report was received in Medina that a caravan was going from Makkah to Syria for trade. The Holy Prophet pursued the caravan up to “*Zātul-Ashira*” and stayed there till the commencement of the following month. However he could not find the caravan and returned. The information received was as follows:

- (i) It is a big caravan and all the Makkites have their shares in it.
- (ii) The leader of the caravan is Abū Sufyan and five persons are responsible to guard it.
- (iii) The merchandise is loaded on one thousand camels and its value is about fifty thousand dinar.

The Holy Prophet left Medina in the month of Ramazan of the second year of migration along with three hundred and thirteen persons to confiscate the property of Quraysh and encamped near Badr.

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51 Muntahul Āmāl, p. 119.

52 Qāmus-ur-Rijāl p. 238; Tabaqāt Ibn Sa’d p. 170; Safīnatul Biḥār vol. I, p. 105; Jāme’ur Ru’at, p. 131; Rijāl Mā Maqāni p. 182; Life of the Holy Prophet p. 697.

Abū Sufyan who had become aware of the fact that his caravan was being pursued by the soldiers of Islam did not fail, at the time of his return from Syria, to exercise necessary care, and realised after investigation that this time he could not escape the Muslims. Therefore, he sent a messenger to Makkah to apprise Quraysh of the intention of the Holy Prophet and to seek help from them.

At this moment the sentiments of the people of Makkah were roused and all the brave men and fighters, except Abū Lahab, got ready to go and fight. He also engaged Āṣi bin Hisham in his own place and sent him with 4000 dirhams.

Umayyah son of Khalaf, who was one of the elders of Quraysh, was not inclined to take part in this general mobilisation as Muḥammad had been reported to have said: “Umayyah will be killed at the hands of the Muslims.”

The rich men among the infidels saw that non-participation by such a person would be harmful to them. They, therefore, gave a tray and a collyrium-box to two persons and asked them to take the same to Umayyah. Those two persons reached Umayyah who was sitting in Masjidul-ul-Harim with some others and said to him: “Now that you have declined to defend your wealth and trade and have chosen to be like women, to live in seclusion, instead of fighting in the battlefield, it is better that you should use collyrium like women and your name may be struck off from the list of brave men and fighters.”

These words stirred Umayyah so much that he picked up necessary equipment for the journey immediately and left along with Quraysh to defend Abū Sufyan’s caravan.

At last after a few days the army of the infidels reached the region of Badr. There a battle took place between the forces of truth and falsehood. In this battle the adherents of truth were victorious.

The forces of Quraysh suffered a disgraceful defeat. Most of them



either ran away or were made captives. Some of them were also killed.<sup>53</sup>

### **BILAL TAKES REVENGE**

After the army of Quraysh fled away, some Muslims proceeded to collect the war booty. Among them was ‘Abdur Rahman son of ‘Awf who went for this purpose to the former base of the enemies. Before embracing Islam he was a friend of Umayyah son of Khalaf, but thereafter their connections were severed.

Umayyah who realised that his being made a captive was almost certain, was standing in a corner along with his son in a state of terror. Suddenly he saw his former friend ‘Abdur Rahman, who was coming towards them.

When Umayyah saw ‘Abdur Rahman, he became very happy and thought that it would be better to surrender to his former friend willingly and become his captive so that he might regain his freedom. With this object in view he cried: “O ‘Abdul ‘Uzza! (Before Abdur Rahman embraced Islam his name was ‘Abdul ‘Uzza).”

‘Abdur Rahman, while he was holding some pearls in his hands, hurried towards them.

Umayyah said with a trembling voice: “Throw away these things and make us prisoners because, as compared with those things, we shall be more useful to you.”

On hearing these words of Umayyah, ‘Abdur Rahman, without entering into conversation with him, tied his hands as well as those of his son and decided to take them to the encampment of the Muslims. However, they had not taken more than a few steps when they met Bilal. When Bilal saw Umayyah his former master, who had persecuted him so much, he shouted: “O Muslims! Here is Umayyah, son of Kilalaf, one of the leaders of blasphemy and obstinate enemy of the Holy Prophet. He has been arrested. Allāh may not keep me alive if I allow him to live.”

53 Kamil Ibn Athir Vol. II, p. 82.

‘Abdur Rahman said: O Bilal! Do you want to kill my prisoner?” Bilal replied: “Yes. I cannot allow this devilish oppressor and impure enemy of Allāh to live.”

‘Abdur Rabman said angrily: “O son of a slave-girl! Do you know what you are saying?” Bilal said with a still louder voice: “Yes, I know.” Then he turned to the Muslims and said: “O companions of the Holy Prophet! Come as quickly as possible and do away with this enemy of Allāh. I mean Umayyah, son of Khalaf. If you do not recognise him you should know that he is my persecutor as well as of some others. He ought to be killed.”

All the Muslims knew Umayyah and had heard stories of his enmity against Islam and the Muslims and the unbearable torture to which Bilal had been subjected by him. Hence, on hearing the thunderous voice of Bilal some of them gathered round Umayyah and his son.

‘Abdur Rahman tried to protect his prisoners from being hurt in any manner and to take them to the Holy Prophet alive. However, the angry cry of Bilal neutralised his efforts. It might be said that it was the Divine will that Umayyah should not escape death.

One of the Muslims drew his sword with great agility and struck it on the foot of Umayyah’s son in such a way that it was severed and he fell down on the ground. On seeing this Umayyah shrieked savagely the like of which had not been seen or heard by anyone. ‘Abdur Rahman turned to Umayyah and said: “It is all over with your son. Now you should run away so that possibly you may be saved.”

Umayyah who had. been very much distressed on account of his son’s death kept standing motionless. It might be said that he wished to die.

While ‘Abdur Rahman was still trying to save his old friend, a Muslim caught Umayyah by his nose, while he was looking at his wounded son, and made him fall on the ground, and a blow of the sword of another Muslim finished him.

Thus an old desire of Bilal was fulfilled. He looked up to the sky and thanked Allāh.<sup>54</sup>

Umayyah, who had so hard-heartedly tortured the Muslims and had opposed Islam and the Holy Prophet's revolution till the time of his death, was killed before the eyes of dozens of persons. It was the same Umayyah who had always been inimical towards the Holy Prophet, Bilal and the Muslims in various ways and had not refrained from any contempt, insult, accusation, ridicule, and idle gossip against them.

And it was the same Bilal, the African, who had at one time endured the severest persecution at the hands of Umayyah. And why should he not have endured it?

Was it not Islam which gave him freedom and personality? - the Islam which elevated him from the lowest level of the society to the highest degree of advancement? It sent him to the roof of Ka'bah and made him the proclaimer of Monotheism.

Islam supports the weak and crushes the haughty.

Umayyah did not at all think that it is not possible to fight against the Will of Allāh and the people, and it was possible that a band stronger than his own might also appear.

### **BILAL IN THE PRESENCE OF IMAM 'ALĪ**

From the time Bilal became free and joined other Muslims he always showed a special devotion of Imam 'Alī and usually remained in his presence and benefited from his company.

In the meetings and discourses he spoke highly of Imam 'Alī. This practice of Bilal was so conspicuous that all knew that he honoured

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54 Al-Kāmil Vol. II, p. 89; Tarikh-e-Tabari, Vol. II, p. 153: The Life of the Holy Prophet p. 310; Muḥammad Rasul Akram p. 223; Who is 'Alī? p. 27; Sirah Ibn Hishām Vol. II, p. 272; Stories from Qur'an p. 372; Biographies of the Prophets p. 372

Imam ‘Alī more than anyone else, and this became a matter of surprise and occasionally a topic of discussion among the people. Some of them said: “Bilal should accord this respect to Abū Bakr, because it was Abū Bakr and not ‘Alī who relieved Bilal from the clutches of the oppressors.”

Bilal realised this difficulty and discourse of the people. One day when he reached an assembly where this matter was being discussed he gave the following reply: “If it is agreed that I should honour a person on account of the good done to me by him, I ought to respect Abū Bakr more than the Holy Prophet, because even the Holy Prophet has not done that for me which Abū Bakr has done. What do you say in this regard?”

All of them said with one voice: “We have talked about Imam ‘Alī as compared with Abū Bakr. As respect to the Holy Prophet the matter is quite different. It is incumbent upon everyone to accord respect to the Prophet of Allāh.”

Bilal replied: “The question is whether respect is to be accorded on account of the service rendered by a person or on account of his being better and more pure. If it is to be accorded on account of service the position is as stated by me i.e. I should accord more respect to Abū Bakr than to the Holy Prophet (although Abū Bakr purchased me and set me free at the instance of and in compliance with the orders of the Holy Prophet whereas the Holy Prophet is the best and dearest person in my eyes).”

Those present said: “We do not question the fact that the Holy Prophet is the most honourable person among the human beings and is entitled to as much respect as possible.”

Bilal said: “Very good, ‘Alī, too, is the greatest person after the Holy Prophet as he is his ‘self’ and ‘spirit.’<sup>55</sup> Abū Bakr himself knows that ‘Alī is superior to him. Hence ‘Alī enjoys more right on me than Abū Bakr does. Abū Bakr relieved me from persecution by

<sup>55</sup> This refers to the verse relating to Mubahila (Surah Ali Imran, 3:61).

Umayyah and I am grateful to him for this. However, if he had not set me free and I had died in that condition I would have attained proximity of Divine blessing and if I had lived the torture of this world, would have been small and transient.

“However, Imam ‘Alī enjoys such a position that his friendship is the means of salvation from the fire of Hell and ensures eternal life in the Hereafter. It is for this reason that I hold ‘Alī more dear.”<sup>56</sup>

Bilal suffered hardships to acquire faith and the path of good luck and perfection, and could not give away all those pains and sufferings for nothing. He supported truth and as we shall read later he did not surrender to the authority of the caliphate along with those persons who were given to idle talk and he did not abandon the friendship of Imam ‘Alī and ultimately passed away from the world with this faith.

### **TO THE BIRTH PLACE**

In the eighth year of Migration the Holy Prophet received orders from Allāh for the conquest of Makkah. This duty was entrusted to the Holy Prophet at a time when the infidels among the Quraysh and the people of Makkah had broken the pact made with the Muslims two years earlier and had to some extent become the cause for this attack.

On the other hand the Muslims, who had suppressed most of the internal enemies, wished to conquer and bring Makkah under their own control. It was the central place, and their real homeland which housed the Qiblah (Ka‘bah) towards when they turn in their prayers.

Another reason for this attack was that the real enemies of Islam were in Makkah. This city had become the centre of spying, enmity, conspiracies and rumours and the dirtiest subversive plans were drawn in this most sacred centre of Monotheism.

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56 Safinatul Biḥār, vol. I, p. 104.

It was necessary for the followers of the sacred movement of Islam to bring that place under their own control and put an end to idol-worship, sinning, oppression, extortion, bullying and racial discrimination.

It was intolerable for the Muslims to see the House of Allāh, the memorial of the Prophet Ibrahim and the centre of Divine worship to remain in the world as a place of corruption, and the leaders of blasphemy, polytheism and idol-worship like Abū Sufyan should determine the political, economic and social affairs of Makkah.

It was for this reason that the Holy Prophet mobilised a twelve thousand strong force consisting of loyal and brave persons and proceeded to Makkah.

The subtle and most important point which is hidden in this movement and deserves consideration is that this mobilisation and movement by the Holy Prophet was not with the intention of fighting, shedding blood and conquering. On the other hand its object was to free the society from the clutches of blasphemy and polytheism, to spread monotheism and to form a healthy society.

After a few days journey the Muslims arrived at a place four leagues away from Makkah. The Holy Prophet ordered the Muslim soldiers to kindle fire at many places. On the other hand due to the fear of the Muslims, the people of Makkah had appointed volunteers on the road to Medina.

In the meantime Abū Sufyan who was one of the arch enemies of Islam and the Muslims, came out of Makkah along with some of his companions to assess the position and find out the chances of his own forces resisting the fierce might of the army of Islam. The flames of fire attracted his attention and he said: "This excessive fire has been lit by a big army which is coming towards us."

Being afraid he went a little forward and saw Abbās, the uncle of the Holy Prophet, riding a mule and coming towards them. When

Abbās met Abū Sufyan and his companions he told them that the Muslims intended to proceed to Makkah.

Abū Sufyan and his companions who were extremely terrified said: “What should we do?” Abbās replied: “You should embrace Islam.”

When Abū Sufyan saw that there was no other alternative he said unwillingly that he was ready to become a Muslim. He, therefore, came to the Holy Prophet of Islam and apparently accepted Islam and became a Muslim.

Abbās looked towards the Holy Prophet and said: “As Abū Sufyan has become a Muslim and is ambitious of position it will be good for the advancement of the Muslims if he is encouraged.”

The Holy Prophet said: “A person who enters Abū Sufyan’s house or remains indoors and shuts the gate of his house or enters Masjid-ul-Ḥarām will be safe.”

Abū Sufyan was pleased to hear this. Later he returned to Makkah and apprised the people of the situation. All were disturbed and distressed and everyone was saying one thing or the other. Some of them asked: “Now what are we to do?”

Abū Sufyan repeated the words of the Holy Prophet regarding the grant of general amnesty.

The people were feeling very uneasy and were in a critical situation. They were waiting for some happening, when the organised and magnificent army of Islam reached the gate of Makkah and entered the city without an encounter with or resistance by the enemy.<sup>57</sup>

The city of Makkah which was the base of the enemies of Islam and the centre of all conspiracies against Islam and spying was conquered.

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57 Nāsikhut Twārikh, p. 283.

## RECOLLECTION OF THE PAST

Placed between his brother Muslims, Bilal began remembering those days when he was a captive and slave in the clutches of the oppressive and proud persons in this land and, even after being delivered from captivity and persecution by his master, was tormented by others, till he was compelled to quit this city one night. Now on seeing the eventful fall of Makkah he began recollecting past incidents.

He sighed and raised his head towards the sky and thanked Allāh with joy, because the desire of his heart had been fulfilled and he had seen the base of the enemies of Islam in the occupation of the army of Islam.

Of course, there was a time when Bilal could not pick up courage to utter a word in this city because of the fear of the enemies, but today, owing to the blessing of Islam and help of Almighty Allāh, he was entering Ummul Qura, the Mother of the cities, victoriously and with full freedom.

The sun had illuminated the city of Makkah for welcoming the army of Islam and had scattered its golden rays on its doors and walls when Bilal and other Muslim entered the city.

The beautiful and pleasant spectacle of the Ka'bah attracted the attention of the Muslims. Bilal was shedding tears of joy and his actions showed that he had enjoyed very much the victory of truth over falsehood. He said to himself: "Where are those persons, who used to call us and our dear leader imprudent and insane, and the teachings of our celestial religion 'the stories of the ancients'?"

"And where is my oppressive and proud master, so that he might see the greatness and victory of my Lord with his own eyes and might test for himself that the idols to whose worship he used to invite us are worthless things."

It might be said that Bilal was sitting on the top of the clouds and



was addressing the people of Makkah from there: “O oppressors! It was you who made us wander away from our city and homeland and made our lives so miserable that we had to leave this place at night and went to an unknown fate. O you who considered us to be humble and despicable, just see now as to who is victorious. Now our Lord has fulfilled His promise and has made the weak victorious over the proud.”

### **AWAITING THEIR FATE**

The sun was rising slowly. The fear of the people was increasing every moment. They were standing or sitting in their houses, by the side of the roads, and on the turns of the streets and awaiting their unpredictable fate.

Not only that they did not find themselves in a position to resist the great upsurge of the army of Islam but they were worried even about their lives.

The women were sitting in their houses with down-cast and gloomy faces and were trying to calm down their crying children.

At times the people blamed themselves and regretted very much the harsh treatment which they had meted out to the Holy Prophet of Islam and his companions in the past.

The entire city was engulfed in grief and sorrow. They were at their wits' end to understand what to do.

A group of persons recited verses from the Holy Qur'an which showed their regrets and fear, and reproached themselves in this way.

Some others fled away to the mountains and stayed there in a state of grave anxiety.<sup>58</sup>

And some of them who were guiltless drew themselves aside and  
58 Tārikh-e-Ya'qūbi, p. 46.

cursed the elders and chiefs of Makkah, because it was they who had, in the early days of Islam, instigated the people to rise against the Holy Prophet and they were also the first persons who, so to say, embraced Islam.

Some persons said to themselves: “How will Muḥammad treat us? Shall we escape death, because we did all we could do was confront him.” However, very soon this silence and disturbance of mind came to an end with a happy news. A Muslim representing the Messenger of Allāh asked the people with a loud voice: “Now what do you expect?”

All of them replied: “We expect forgiveness, pardon and magnanimity.” The Holy Prophet said: “Proclaim it and let it reach the ears of all that they should not be worried. I have set all of them free!”<sup>59</sup>

A strange commotion took place. Cries of joy could be heard from every side. This proclamation which was the proclamation of Islam blew a new spirit into the half-dead bodies of the people of Makkah.

Tears of joy flowed down from the eyes of many of them on account of the kindness and magnanimity of the Holy Prophet. Especially some former enemies of Islam were wonder-struck on observing this indulgence and forgiveness on the part of the Holy Prophet. They proceeded to their homes with great shame, and regretted their past doings. One of them was heard saying: “The honest Muḥammad has always been kind and magnanimous. Even now he has set us free on account of his magnanimity.”<sup>60</sup>

### **BILAL ON TOP OF THE KA‘BAH**

The sun had reached the middle of the sky and it was the hottest hour of the day. Makkah was under the control of the Muslims. In the meantime the holy Prophet ordered Bilal to go on the roof of the Ka‘bah and proclaim the arrival for the time of noon prayers by

59 Tārikh-e-Ya‘qūbi, p. 46; Qiblah-e-Islam, p. 567.

60 Muḥammad Rasul Akram, p. 488.

saying *Azān*, so that the people might get ready to offer the noon prayers.

Thus Bilal the African, the slave and black man of yesterday and present day's spokesman of the Mission of the Holy Prophet went on the top of the Ka'bah i.e. on the top of the first sacred House of Monotheism so that he might proclaim the Prophethood of the Last Celestial Messenger, make the most progressive ideology reach the ears of all, and tell them with those revolutionary slogans that the First congregational prayer was going to take place in Makkah.

Bilal, who was overjoyed and thanked Allāh every moment, made his invigorating voice resound in the horizon of the city from the top of the House of Allāh by Pronouncing the beautiful and magnificent sentence of '*Allāhu Akbar*' (Allāh is Great). The slogan of '*Allāhu Akbar*' (Allāh is greater than that it may be possible to describe Him) is the sign of the establishment of the rule of Allāh, the Destroyer of the authority of the Devil.

The people of Makkah had come out of their houses in that hot weather to become aware of the state of affairs. They stretched their necks and attended to the proclaimer. They heard the slogans of Islam coming from the mouth of Bilal, made signs to one another with their eyes and said: "It is the same black slave Bilal. Now he is considered to be one of the close companions of Muḥammad."

The signs of wonder and fear coupled with hopefulness for the future could be observed on the faces of the people. In spite of the announcement of amnesty by the Holy Prophet some persons were worried and feared the outbreak of war. Most of the women who were terrified were standing on the roofs of the houses in expectation of certain happening.

The sides of the House of Allāh were more crowded than other places. Eyes were fixed on Bilal from far and near. There was so much noise that the voice of Bilal got drowned in it. However, he

continued to say *Azān*.<sup>61</sup>

### THE WAVE OF OBJECTIONS

The voice of Bilal was as much heartening to the Muslims as it was distressing to the infidels and the polytheists. The position of Bilal was annoying to the idolaters and the hypocrites among the Muslims and was a pretext to their objection. It was something unacceptable to them that a black slave might hold or be entitled to hold such a position and office. It was for this reason that they thought that if Islam was a Divine and great religion why those (slaves) had accepted it, because they had been habituated to it and imagined that personality was peculiar to the white-kinned, the capitalists, those fond of luxuries, and the proud persons. They did not know that those were not the standards for the assessment of personality in Islam. After Bilal had finished the *Azān* those persons became very unhappy. They cast down their heads and because of extreme uneasiness their faces were agitated and the veins of their necks became apparent so much so that they were about to die on account of grief.

Various objections were raised by them and every one of them was saying one thing or the other.

Harith bin Hakam said: “Oh! Did Muḥammad not have any other person except this black crow to entrust this office to him?”

Another person grumbled and said: “Oh! Death is better than this life. This world is no longer a proper place to live in.”

A group of persons in which the daughter of Abū Jahl was also included cried out: “Our ancestors were lucky because they died and did not see the scene like this that Bilal should say *Azān* for them. Where are our forefathers so that they may see what a dark day has come for us. Would that we had also been killed like them in a battle and had not seen this day.”

61 *Tabaqāt Ibn Sa’d*, Vol. III, p. 169; *Qāmus-ur-Rijāl* Vol. II, p. 243; *Sirah Ibn Hishām*, Vol. IV, p. 33.

Some others said: “Would that the earth had opened its mouth and devoured us because as compared with this disgraceful life it is better to be buried alive under the dust.”<sup>62</sup>

Some other persons like Abū Sufyan and Sohayl bin ‘Umar who were very much enraged said: “At present we do not want to say anything because it is possible that Muḥammad may come to know about it and may be annoyed.”

By pondering on these futile words which came out of the throats of thoughtless and ignorant persons, we realise to what extent racial discrimination was prevalent in that society. By observing the freedom and power of a black kinned person they became so angry that they wished to die rather than tolerate the position of Bilal, a slave.

Undoubtedly it is very difficult to bring about a change in such thoughts, The chiefs of the tribes and the tyrants had for years made the deprived classes their slaves and had provided themselves a comfortable life at the cost of their poverty, affliction, ignorance and hunger. They made illogical demands from them and amassed wealth, and considered their disgraceful life to be an absolute reality and something very honourable. How difficult it was to fight against this thinking and to remove all such futile and anti-human ideas from their mind?

At this juncture, when the people of Makkah were expressing such views, the Archangel Jibriel came to see the Holy Prophet and brought a verse containing orders regarding equality of human beings: *O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female and have made you nations and tribes that you may know one another. The noblest of you, in the sight of Allāh, is the best in conduct.* (Surah al-Hujarāt, 49:13)

In the eyes of Islam there is no difference between a white man

62 Tabaqāt Ibn Sa’d, Vol. III, p. 169; Safinah Vol. I, p. 105; Tārikh-e-Ya’qūbi, Vol. I, p. 46; Tafsir Abul Fütūh Rāzi Vol. IX, p. 193.

and a black man, a poor man and a rich man and an Arab and a non-Arab so far as the essence of humanity is concerned. Those who consider blackness to be a matter of shame and the black persons to be mean and want to banish them from the society, are sadly mistaken.

A black man is also a human being. His body and soul, too, have some needs like those of a white man. A person who is short of material wealth or whose skin is black does not carry any defect in the matter of his human nature and has not committed any offence. And the bad or good physical features are neither a defect nor a merit for a person.

Only the purity of soul, which comes from piety and fear of the Almighty, is a virtue for man, and such a person is honourable in the eyes of Allāh, the Creator of the Worlds.

This verse of the Holy Qurʾān and the celestial law is the charter of the equality of human beings and the most just law which humanity has so far seen for itself.

It is the law which was presented to the human beings in one of the most dangerous and critical periods of history and incidentally recognised formally the rights of the black persons and other coloured people and also opened for them the paths of effort, activity and advancement. Only Islam enjoys this distinction in the history of mankind that in its early days it practically annulled racial discrimination and even today it is matchless in the civil laws of the world and in the light of its substance the Muslims do not permit any discrimination with regard to the coloured people.

Of course, the revelation of the above-mentioned verse gave a firm and striking reply to those persons, who blamed Bilal or said with surprise as to why such black persons, slaves and poor people should hold any high office or position.

## **RACIAL DISCRIMINATION**

Although in Islam racial discrimination did not carry any meaning

from the very first day and the Holy Prophet saw all the Muslims belonging to different races with one eye still the thinking of the period of ignorance and the superstitions continued to exist in the minds of some persons till a few years after the advent of Islam and made their appearance at one time or the other. There were persons who prided themselves on their ancestors, tribes and races and considered others to be mean and humble.

The Holy Prophet endeavoured to erase such thoughts from the minds of the people so that these ridiculous things might be eliminated for ever.

In order to prove what has been stated above we consider it necessary to narrate an incident which took place between Salman, Bilal and Sohayb of Rome on the one hand and an Arab on the other so that we may see self-conceit at its peak.

One day Salman of Persia, Sohayb of Rome and Bilal of Africa were sitting side by side in an assembly. An Arab named Qays also arrived there. He was very much annoyed to see how they had got rid of humiliation and helplessness under the shadow of Islam and had achieved honour, greatness and freedom. He said to them: "Aws and Khazraj have made the Prophet of Islam great. What do these three foreigners say?"

Evidently they felt uneasy on hearing these words but they did not give any reply to Qays. Nevertheless the Holy Prophet became aware of what had happened and spoke thus in a gathering of the Muslims: "Discard these improper prejudices. Your Allāh is One. Your religion is one. And originally you are descended from one father and one mother, your Arab lineage on which you pride yourself is neither your father nor your mother, but it is actually a harmful notion."<sup>63</sup>

Thus on every occasion the Holy Prophet declared racialism to be nonsensical.

63 Tab'izāt-e-Najādi p. 137

Indeed they did not know that the difference between human beings in the matter of race, colour, nationality, skin, apparent figure, tallness or shortness of stature etc. is for that they may be distinguished from one another and the order and affairs of the society may not be deranged, and this in itself is a piece of Divine Wisdom.

### **THE IDOLS ARE TUMBLED DOWN**

The affable voice of Bilal resounded in the horizon of Makkah and touched the ears of the idolaters who had been reduced to a minority after the fall of the city. The sound of the *Azān* of Bilal was a turning point in the eventful history of Makkah at declared that: “The period of polytheism and idol-worship has come to an end and monotheism and the Islamic human regulations have reached their zenith.”

It is said that when Bilal pronounced ‘*Takbir*’ from the roof of the House of Allāh the idols which had been installed inside the Holy Ka‘bah fell on the ground.<sup>64</sup>

The city which had been under the control of the polytheists, the idolater and the tyrants for many many years was conquered through a great celestial leader and the shouts of ‘*Allāhu Akbar*’ - the slogan of Divine Unity and Monotheism filled the entire environment and atmosphere of Makkah.

Of course, with the arrival of truth, falsehood is eliminated, the idols fall down and the Devil disappears; the stubborn dictators are made to stoop down and the role of their shameful rule is brought to an end. The flag of blasphemy is turned upside down and the flag of truth and justice flies and the invigorating zephyr of Monotheism restores the society to life.

### **THE HOLY PROPHET IS CONFINED TO BED**

The bright sun of Prophethood illuminated the world of humanity for twenty three years. The coagulated, decayed and backward

64 Safinatul Biḥār, Vol 1, p. 105.



society came into motion under the auspices of his sublime thoughts and proceeded on the path of advancement and perfection.

It was the society which consisted of illiterate persons and was exposed every day to various happening like devastating wars, murders for very insignificant reasons, thefts, great plundering etc.

The Holy Prophet endeavoured for twenty three years to establish a human society with these people and succeeded practically in this task. And at the end of a life full of struggle and endeavour and after communicating his message to the people and acquainting them with Almighty Allāh and presenting the last and most perfect laws for individual and collective life he fell ill on return from the Farewell Hajj and was confined to bed.

During the days of the increasing ailment of the Holy Prophet the city of Medina was drowned in grief and the fear of the terrible and unspeakable event could be seen in the faces of the people.

The champion Bilal was very much grieved on account of the illness of the Holy Prophet and could find no comfort in this hour of extreme worry to him.

In those days the Muslims were engaged in campaigns against the Romans on the Western front. The Holy Prophet ordered an army to leave Medina under the command of Usamah bin Zayd to strengthen the forces of Islam. It is said that the object of the Holy Prophet was that certain persons should be attached with the army and should not remain in Medina for he wished that in the event of his death Medina should be vacant of all sorts of intrigues and conspiracies so that his successor and Caliph 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib might be able to strengthen the foundations of his Caliphate.

The Holy Prophet's ailment increased day after day and the colour of his face became pale. At times when his condition became a little favourable he went to the Masjid to offer prayers and at times he sent Imam 'Alī in his place so that he might lead the prayers.

One day when a little strength was visible in the Holy Prophet he went to the Masjid. After offering prayers he ascended the pulpit and spoke his last words to the people and made recommendations to them. He also left as his memorial the famous tradition (Hadith) of Thaqaalayn saying: "I am departing from amongst you and am leaving two valuable things with you. If you hold fast to them you will never go astray: One of them is the Qur'ān and the other is my progeny (the members of my household)."

After his return from the mosque the ailment of the great leader of the Muslims increased and his condition grew serious.

The critical condition of the Holy Prophet increased the worry of the people. Those persons, who should have joined Usamah's army according to the Holy Prophet's strict orders, remained in Medina on the pretext of his illness, and those who had departed returned to be informed about his condition. Hence the cause of the collective texture of the Muslims becoming weak, and ground being prepared for deviation in the matter of succession to the Holy Prophet.

#### **BILAL MAKES INVESTIGATION**

The Holy Prophet was confined to bed and Bilal used to say *Azān* as usual at the time of prayers and then went to the door of the Holy Prophet's house and announced the time of prayers. If the condition of the Holy Prophet was favourable he himself came into the mosque and led the prayers. Other-wise he sent Imam 'Alī to lead the prayers.

In the morning of the night during which some persons, including Abū Bakr turned back from Usamah's army and came to Medina, Bilal said *Azān* and then went to the Holy Prophet. The condition of the Holy Prophet was not favourable at that time. Ayesha availed herself of the opportunity and sent a message to Abū Bakr asking him to lead the prayers in place of the Holy Prophet.

Bilal arrived in the mosque and saw Abū Bakr in the prayer niche

saying that he had been deputed by the Holy Prophet to lead the prayers. However, the people were making much noise and asking various questions. Everyone was suggesting one thing or the other and there was a possibility of differences cropping up among them.

Bilal immediately drew the attention of the people to himself and said to them: “Be quiet and leave aside differences. The Holy Prophet is still alive and is between us. Just now I am going to bring the correct news.”

Bilal left the mosque at once and went to the house of the Holy Prophet and reported the matter to him.

The Holy Prophet was very much annoyed and said to Imam ‘Alī and Ibn Abbās: “Hold me. Raise me up. I swear by Him, in Whose hands my life is, that it is an emergency in Islam. A big emergency and confusion.” Imam ‘Alī and Ibn Abbās helped the Holy Prophet and they proceeded to the mosque along with Bilal. When they arrived there the Holy Prophet himself led the prayers and silenced the hue and cry. Then he delivered the famous speech which is recorded in detail in history books. He made necessary recommendations and there-after returned home.

Indeed, the noble-minded and faithful Bilal restrained the fire of dissension at the first stage, and with a revolutionary act made known to all the identity of those who could also possibly conspire in future.

Bilal used to perform his permanent duty and after saying *Azān* informed the Holy Prophet about the arrival of the time for prayers by saying “*Aṣṣalāt yā Rasullāh*” (O Prophet of Allāh! It is time for prayers). One day, during his illness, the Holy Prophet said to Bilal on hearing his voice: “O Bilal! May Allāh bless you for you have performed your duty admirably well.”

### **MEDINA CONDOLES THE DEATH OF THE HOLY PROPHET**

The Great Prophet of Islam breathed his last while he was extremely worried about the future of Islam and the Muslims.

With the passing away of the Holy Prophet inadmissible acts were performed by the people and various problems appeared in the newly formed Islamic society.

The great enemies like Persia and Rome and similarly the Jews and the hypocrites had been waiting for this day. They had entertained hopes and drawn schemes for the future. Most dangerous of all were the unchanged persons amongst the Muslims themselves who hoped to revive the ways and manners of the age of ignorance and to attain positions and offices. After the passing away of the Holy Prophet they put into practice their treacherous plans to achieve their nefarious ends.

Unpleasant events were likely to take place. Underground conspiracies and activities which were being resorted to make the situation more serious.

The Muslims were very much disturbed on account of their having lost their great leader. The entire city of Medina was expressing lamentations. Tears were flowing down from their eyes like spring rains and dark clouds had covered the sky of the city. It might be said that the earth as well as the sky were condoling the death of the Holy Prophet.

The people were astonished and perplexed. They abandoned their daily work, came out on the streets and proceeded in different groups to the house of the Holy Prophet.

The mournful women came out of their houses and, while lamenting, proceeded to the house of Lady Fāṭimah Zahra, the beloved daughter of the Holy Prophet, to offer their condolences.

Bilal was too much grieved on account of this calamity. He was lamenting beside the house of the Holy Prophet and saying: "Alas! The Prophet of Allāh has passed away! My back is broken and my hopes are frustrated! Would that I had not been born to see this day!"<sup>65</sup>

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65 Rowzatush Shuhada p. 109

## HOUSE OF GRIEF

Imam 'Alī and some close companions of the Holy Prophet were sitting by his body grief stricken. The groaning and lamentations of the people had reached their peak.

According to the will of the Holy Prophet Imam 'Alī began bathing his sacred body after a few hours. Thereafter they waited so that at the time publicly announced, the sacred body of the Holy Prophet might be buried, the people had arrived at the place fixed for the purpose.

At this delicate stage in the History of Islam some persons gathered in Thaqifah Bani Sā'idah and began deliberations to select a successor to the Prophet of Islam.

Evidently this action was opposed to the recommendations and orders of the Holy Prophet pertaining to Imam 'Alī's being his vicegerent (*Wasi*) and Caliph, because the Caliph of the Prophet had already been appointed at Ghadir al-Khum by Allāh's order executed through the Holy Prophet.

The number of the persons who assembled in Thaqifa was very limited and could be counted on fingers.

At a time when the sacred body of the Holy Prophet had not yet been buried and the words of the Holy Prophet regarding the appointment of the Caliph after him had not yet been obliterated from the minds, and his daughter and son-in-law were still mourning and shedding tears, some well-known persons were discussing the selection of a Caliph!

Evidently this meeting is to be reckoned as defective, in-opportune and opposed to the decision of Allāh and that of His Prophet.

Furthermore, the most distinguished person among the Muslims and the most diligent individual in the path of Islam viz. Imam 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib did not participate in the deliberations of this

inopportune council and it did not receive the confirmation of the Muslims of Medina and faithful companions of the Holy Prophet like Bilal, Miqdad, Abū Zar, Salman, Ammar etc.

To speak the truth when a person reads in the history of Islam that those, who set up this council for the selection of the Caliph, did not wait even till the burial of the Holy Prophet and proceeded with their seeking power, he is astonished.

Indeed, they left Imam ‘Alī alone by the side of the sacred body of the Holy Prophet and, in order to acquire Caliphate and to govern the people, they signed forever the document of dissension and adversity of the Muslims till the Day of Judgement.

#### **THE INCIDENT OF THAQIFAH**

On that day a few persons belonging to the tribe of Aws brought Sa’d bin ‘Ubadah Anṣārī, a very old man, to Thaqifah and nominated him as a candidate for caliphate from amongst Anṣār.

On the other band when some persons belonging to Khazraj tribe came to know that a council had been formed in Thaqifah to select the successor of the Holy Prophet they also hurried to that place.

It is said that some particular persons had been kept in view and were invited there. In the meeting everyone was speaking in his own interest and desired that he himself or the person whom he supported should become the Caliph. Some were saying that the Anṣār had the prior right to the Caliphate and the Caliph should be from amongst them, because it was they who welcomed the Holy Prophet and other emigrants to their city and helped them. Some others were, however, saying that the Caliphate should be given to the emigrants because it was they who abandoned their homes for the sake of Islam.

One of the Anṣār said: “The Caliph should be from amongst Quraysh, because if inconvenience and if self-sacrifice be the standard who is more entitled to the Caliphate as compared with Imam ‘Alī?”

One of the persons was irritated to hear the word ‘‘Alī’ and said harshly: ‘‘Keep quiet.’’

There was a hue and cry. Every group of persons laid the other group aside and found fault with it. Objections and counter objections were at their peak. In the meantime Abū Bakr interrupted the speeches of others and said: ‘‘My view is that the Caliphate should be with the emigrants and I consider Abū ‘Ubaydah and ‘Umar fit for it and am prepared even now to take oath of allegiance to any one of them.’’

‘Umar who was awaiting this opportunity mustered up his courage and said: ‘‘I heard the Holy Prophet saying that the leaders of the religion would be from amongst Quraysh.’’ Abū Bakr became happy and said: ‘‘You have said well.’’

At this juncture Abū ‘Ubaydah and ‘Umar said with one voice: ‘‘We swear by Allāh that we shall not at all take precedence upon you in this matter because you have been the best companion and faithful friend of the Holy Prophet and there is no one who may be superior to you.’’

The Anṣār realised from this conversation that they were being deprived of the Caliphate. They therefore, immediately changed their stand and shouted slogans in favour of the Commander of the Faithful and said: ‘‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib should be the Caliph of the Holy Prophet.’’ This slogan made some of the chiefs tremble, because they knew that, if Imam ‘Alī became free from the burial rites of the Holy Prophet and attended the meeting in Thaqifah, all the people would take the oath of allegiance to him and he would gain the votes of the majority.

It was for this reason that ‘Umar turned to Abū Bakr hastily and said: ‘‘Give me your hand so that I may swear allegiance to you, for you are the elder of the nation and deserve this position.’’

Then he stretched out his hand and caught the hand of Abū Bakr

and pressed it by way of allegiance. Thereafter, with the exception of two or three persons, all those present took the oath of allegiance to Abū Bakr, the son of Abū Quhāfah.

Thus the council for the selection of the Caliph concluded its task and its members returned to the city and announced that they had selected the son of Abū Quhāfah to succeed the Holy Prophet.<sup>66</sup>

The only subject which was not mentioned in the council was about *Ahlul Bayt* - the Holy Prophet's Household. The only name which was mentioned least was that of Imam 'Alī and the only thing which was not discussed was the recommendations and statements of the Holy Prophet about the succession and Caliphate of Imam 'Alī.

The companions and the near ones of the Holy Prophet like Bilal, Salman, Abū Zar, Miqdad etc. were not present there and even if they had been present they would certainly have been rejected.

After the stabilisation of the allegiance for Abū Bakr a group of persons belonging to the family of Bani Umayyah, being aware of Imam 'Alī, proceeded to his house led by Abū Sufyan.

The object of this group and especially of Abū Sufyan was this that with their help Imam 'Alī should take back his right from Bani Tamim. And in his heart of hearts Abū Sufyan wished that in lieu of this help he should gain distinction and he himself and his sympathisers should become a part of the real and essential administrators of the Islamic territories in the government of Imam 'Alī. Or he wished to exercise his old enmity with Islam and the Muslims and achieve his nefarious ends by creating a civil war.

Abū Sufyan said in the gathering of his friends: 'O Bani 'Abdul Muṭṭalib! Caliphate has gone out of the hands of Bani Hashim and has been transferred to Abū Bakr. And tomorrow this coarse man ('Umar) will rule over us. Stand up so that we may go to 'Alī and after discussing the matter with him may take oath of allegiance to him and may kill every one who opposes us.'"

<sup>66</sup> Extract from the book *Aḥtijajuz Zāhir*.



With this object in view Abū Sufyan approached Imam ‘Alī on that day and told him that if he (Imam ‘Alī) rose to get back his right he (Abū Sufyan) would not withhold from him any assistance that he might require.

The Commander of the Faithful cast a look on Abū Sufyan and it seemed that he read his purpose from his face and came to know that he was seeking an opportunity to give a death-blow to Islam. For this reason he gave a negative reply to his offer and spoke thus before him and his companions:

“O people! Split the waves of disturbances with the boats of deliverance and cross them. Set your foot outside the path of enmity and remove the crown of egotism from your head and throw it on earth. Whoever rises with plumage (friends and supporters) is tranquil and peaceful, and whoever surrenders on account of compulsion or good purpose goes in seclusion.

“Going after the Caliphate in the manner suggested by you is unwholesome like bitter water. Hence armed rising in these conditions is not in my interest, because a person who plucks unripe fruit is like one who cultivates in another’s land.

“If I speak about my right and my being deserving of leadership it will be said that I am very much desirous of rulership and if I keep quiet it will be said that I am afraid of being killed, although the son of Abū Ṭālib loves death more than a child loves his mother’s breast. Hence my silence on the matter of Caliphate is not due to fear of death or defeat or retreat, but it is on account of the thing, which I know, and which stops me from desiring the Caliphate in the present conditions. And if I reveal what I know, you will tremble and be disturbed like a rope in a deep well.

“Hence, the thing to which you are inviting me is not in my own interest nor in the interest of Islam and the Muslims. Get up and go away.”<sup>67</sup>

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67 Nahjul Balagha, Faizul Islam, Vol. I, Sermon 5.

Bilal and hundreds of other Muslims had gathered near the house of the Holy Prophet and were shedding tears. They had not seen a day more sad than that of the death of the Holy Prophet. The grief and the severity of the calamity had affected them so much that they could not pay heed to the current problems of the city.

Suddenly the news was received that a group of persons who had come together in Thaqifah Bani Sā'idah had nominated Abū Bakr as successor to the Holy Prophet. Bilal and other mourners were wonder struck to hear this. They said: "What does this mean? What a wrong and illogical act has been committed when the sacred body of the Holy Prophet has not yet been buried and the tears of his survivors have not yet dried up? Was the Caliph of the Holy Prophet not appointed at Ghadir al-Khum by the Divine Commandment?"

"Is it possible that a person other than Imam 'Alī should be the successor of the Holy Prophet?"

"Did these very people not swear allegiance to Imam 'Alī at Ghadir al-Khum as Caliph? The event of Ghadir is still fresh and the recommendations of the Holy Prophet are still ringing in our ears!"

However, the proceedings were completed and Abū Bakr began functioning as the Caliph. These persons who had chalked out their plan many years earlier implemented it after the Holy Prophet's death. This they ought not to have done, because by this act of theirs the unity and harmony of the Muslims was broken and the seed of differences was sown in the society and Allāh knows what problems they created for the Muslims.

The ruling clique despatched a number of persons as representatives, governors, and collectors, to Islamic lands. They were persons who had been preparing themselves for such an opportunity since long and now they became active for obtaining oath of allegiance from the people and strengthening the seat of the than Caliphate.

At times some persons said things in favour of Imam ‘Alī but their voice was silenced immediately by promises, threats and deceit and such a situation was created that if anyone raised an objection his name was entered in a special register and a file was opened for him and he was subjected to inconveniences and torture.

The spies and the supporters of the Caliphate had created such a tense atmosphere that, if any person spoke on the subject of usurpation of the Caliphate, reproach and threat awaited him.

### **THE ROLE OF THE IMAM IN PRESERVATION OF ISLAM**

Abū Bakr’s coming at the helm of affairs created a very delicate situation for the world of Islam.

It is evident that in this condition an internal armed conflict would have completely destroyed Islam and the Qur’ān, because the Persian and Roman Empires on the one hand and the internal enemies - the Jews and the Christians - on the other hand were waiting for such days so that with the outbreak of civil war they might commence their attack and totally destroy Islam in its initial stages.

A number of the supporters of Imam ‘Alī came to him in those days and requested him to stage an uprising. However, the Holy Imam did not hesitate for a moment in deciding that was not in the interest of Islam and the Muslims. He was aware of the real intentions of the external and internal enemies. He had heard the Holy Prophet saying: “O ‘Alī! You enjoy the position of the Ka‘bah. The people should come to you rather than that you should go after them for the sake of leadership.”

In those delicate conditions the Holy Imam preferred not to defend his right with an armed strength so that Islam should remain safe from harm by the enemies and should perform a constructive and saviour’s role in future.

Imam ‘Ali had chosen patience and silence as his profession for twenty five years and led a secluded life like a fledgling bird and by this means showed his spiritual greatness and bravery for the benefit of Islam and the Muslims and guided the people from behind the curtain.

It was not only that he forsook his right and adopted silence to protect Islam from the fire of differences, although this silence was a cry in itself.

### **BILAL GOES ON STRIKE**

From the day the Holy Prophet and other Muslims migrated to Medina till the time he was alive, Bilal used to call the people to the mosque and to gather them there i.e. at the time of prayers and mobilisation of the army, or when there was a problem which was to be solved, he used to say *Azān* and immediately the people poured into the mosque and formed a gathering.

All were familiar with the voice of Bilal and they always waited to hear his invigorating call which invited them to Allāh and to good things.

However, when after the Prophet, Abū Bakr attained to Caliphate he decided to go to the mosque in that capacity and to stand in the Prophet’s niche so that by this means he might strengthen the pillars of his government and contact the people directly. The first step for the formation of a gathering and coming of the people to the mosque till the time the Holy Prophet was alive was the saying of *Azān* by Bilal inviting them to the mosque. However, Bilal did not say *Azān* after the Holy Prophet’s demise and this was the most sensitive, the most natural and at the same time most dangerous tactics which Bilal employed against the Caliphate. And from that time onwards Bilal did not participate in any official gathering of ‘theirs.’ The absence of Bilal, who held a delicate post, from the stage and the society, could make the people think about the problem of the day.

The supporters of the Caliph thought that if Bilal said *Azān* the hue and cry of the opponents of the Caliph would die down and the people would come to the mosque as they were accustomed to do on hearing the voice of Bilal. The saying of *Azān* by Bilal could draw a curtain on the intrigue of the administration of the Caliphate and deceive the simple-minded and common people.

With these thoughts in mind they located Bilal after a good deal of search and asked him to say *Azān* for the prayers.

Bilal had been trained in the lap of Islam for twenty three years and had been directly concerned with the various events which formed the history of the new nation. He had recognised and accepted Islam with sincerity and had heard what the Holy Prophet had said with regard to the leader and leadership. Especially he was aware of the unambiguous remarks of the Holy Prophet about the Caliphate of Imam ‘Alī and knew that the ruling administration had come to power against the orders of Allāh and the Holy Prophet. According to his belief only the Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Alī was entitled to attain to the Caliphate. In the circumstances it is evident as to what reply he was going to give to those who approached him.

The messengers of the Caliph insisted much but Bilal repeated the same reply every time and did not pay any heed to their words.<sup>68</sup>

By not saying *Azān* Bilal wished to oblige the people to think about the matter and to remind themselves gradually of the time of the Holy Prophet and the recommendations made by him with regard to Imam ‘Alī and his Imamate. It was for this reason that when people asked him as to why he did not say *Azān* he said in reply: “After the Holy Prophet of Islam I shall not say *Azān* for another person.” On the other hand non-participation of the Commander

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68 Nafasur Rahmān Chap. 10; Majālisul Mu’minīn Vol. I, p. 268; Jāme’ur Ruwāt Vol. I, p. 131; Majma’ul Bahrain Bābul Lām; Muntahul Āmāl, p. 78; Usudul Ghabah Vol I, p. 209; Rijāl Mā Māqani, p. 192; Qāmus-ur-Rijāl Vol. II, p. 213.

of the Faithful, Salman, Abū Zar, Zubayr, Bilal, Miqdad, Sohayb etc. in the gatherings which were usually formed in the mosque strengthened Bilal's stand and became the cause of the people doubting the rightfulness and legality of the ruling body and even objecting to it.

The administration of the Caliphate was scared and worried because of the stand taken by Bilal and tried to make him and other opponents surrender.

It was in this state of fear that the Caliph sent some persons formally to Bilal to make that "obstinate and inflexible black man"<sup>69</sup> surrender to the Caliphate at any cost by means of promises or threats or allurements of money and position.

However, Bilal was not prepared to ignore truth and "to do as the Romans do." He saw Islam personified in Imam 'Alī and believed that even if the recommendation of the Holy Prophet had not been there no one except Imam 'Alī was fit for the Caliphate. He was convinced that true Islam was the same which was put forward by Imam 'Alī and his friends though a few in number. He, who had borne hardships and suffered torture for the same Islam, could not now see it as a plaything of material desires and of the administration of the Caliphate. He, therefore, gave a clear-cut reply to the representatives of the Caliph in these words:

"I shall not say *Azān* for anyone except the person whom the Holy Prophet selected as his successor."<sup>70</sup>

At last Umar, who was a close friend of the Caliph (Abū Bakr) and was considered to be the most important factor for his selection as Caliph and great supporter of his continuance in that office decided to discuss the matter with Bilal personally.

When Umar saw Bilal he was thinking: "Now I shall make him

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69 This was the title which the administration of the Caliphate and the followers of that thinking have given to Bilal in history.

70 Majālisul Mu'minīn

surrender and shall take him out of the fold of the opponents of the Caliph.”

After salutation and exchange of compliments Umar said: “O Bilal! Why have you left us alone these days? I was very keen that you should be with us so that we could entrust you some tasks. Why don't you come to the mosque? We expect you to say *Azān* and call the people to the mosque to offer prayers with the Caliph of the Holy Prophet. I understand that you have said that you will no longer say *Azān*. Why so? Do you remember that this very Abū Bakr delivered you from the slavery of and persecution by your cruel master. Is it proper that you should abandon him now and should not say *Azān* for him?”

Bilal began recollecting the past events of history like persecution and the period of his banishment and homelessness, his migration to Medina, military engagements with the infidels and the polytheists, conquest of Makkah and the passing away of the Holy Prophet. He said to Umar: “How happy were the days when the Holy Prophet was among us and invited the people to Allāh and justice. And how hard, dark and calamitous these days are! With what conditions are we confronted?”

Bilal turned the conversation to the matter under discussion and while tears were flowing down his cheeks he continued to say: “Let us see whether Abū Bakr purchased me for the sake of Allāh and set me free for the sake of Allāh, or he had some other motive. If he did all this for the sake of Allāh he does not enjoy any right on me and if he did not act for the sake of Allāh, I am still his slave and under his control, but I am free in the matter of faith. And as I have said already I am not going to say *Azān* for any other person after the Holy Prophet. Furthermore I am going to swear allegiance only to that person whose allegiance is my responsibility. I accept only that person as Caliph who has been nominated by the Holy Prophet as his successor. And then I say to you: If Abū Bakr had not purchased me and set me free on that day and I would have died in that condition, because I was then certainly a true believer and would have gone to Paradise. But in the present circumstances when you want me to participate in this matter I do not know whether I am

destined to go to Paradise or Hell and whether or not I can preserve my faith.”

Umar was very much annoyed on hearing these words and cast on Bilal a harsh and angry look full of scorn. After a few moments he got up and went away very much agitated.<sup>71</sup>

### **BILAL IS EXILED**

All the plans of the administration of the Caliphate for making Bilal surrender were frustrated and it could not cause the slightest damage to his firm determination. He persevered fearlessly, did not listen to the promises made with him, remained undaunted in the face of threats, and did not surrender. In view of the stand taken by Bilal and the sensitiveness which had been created in the society owing to his refusing to take the oath of allegiance to Abū Bakr the administration of the Caliphate drew its last plan to punish him. As it was feared that some persons might join him and trouble might increase one of those present suggested that it would be better if Bilal was exiled from Medina to a place distant from the capital so that by this means the hue and cry might come to an end and the people might forget him.

However, the advisers of the Caliph said: “If we exile him openly we shall be blamed more. It is possible that Imam ‘Alī may object to it. In that event our action will produce a result contrary to that desired by us. It will, therefore, be better if he is subjected to threats and torture so that he may be compelled to leave Medina. This is the ‘Best way’. All will say that he has left Medina of his own free will.”

This scheme was approved by the majority vote and accordingly Bilal was tortured during day and night and subjected to threats of death. At last he received a message on these lines: “Either you should swear allegiance to Abū Bakr and say *Azān* or quit Medina.”<sup>72</sup>

Some historians have written thus: “Umar said to Bilal: ‘Now that you do not say *Azān* you should not remain in Medina so that you may not become the cause of corruption of others.’ And he

71 Majālisul Mu‘minīn, Vol. I, p. 268; Qāmus-ur-Rijāl, Vol. II, p. 243; Rijāl Mā Maqāni p. 182.

72 Majālisul Mu‘minīn, Vol. I, p. 268; Qāmus-ur-Rijāl, Vol. II, p. 243;



subjected Bilal to pressure.<sup>73</sup>

Thus the spokesman of the movement of Islam was placed in a strange predicament. On the one hand it was difficult for him to forsake 'Medina-tur-Rasul' (the City of the Prophet) and on the other hand it had also become "impossible" for him to stay on there. He pondered as to whether he should stay on in Medina or resist the pressure.

After all how could he abandon Medina and the tomb of the Holy Prophet his master, as it was the city of his friend with many remembrances? However, he was obliged to prefer going away from there so that possibly he might persuade the people more to think about the current and unsatisfactory affairs and also they might resort to objection, criticism and occasionally disobedience, and possibly the usurped right might return to its owner. This had to be done because there was no other remedy. If he had stayed on in Medina it would have been necessary for him to agree with the rulers and he would have to explain the existing situation and his own stand. If he had stayed on he would have to confirm the actions of the government and this was impossible for Bilal, because in his opinion these actions were unjust. He decided to go to Syria and got ready for the banishment, come what might. Before deciding to leave Medina Bilal had consulted the family of the Holy Prophet. When he got ready to depart he first of all went to see and say farewell to the Commander of the Faithful Imam 'Alī.

This meeting took place in a very disturbing atmosphere and the Holy Imam was much moved. Tears were rolling on the black cheeks of Bilal like pearls and perhaps he was saying:  
"If I had the option I would not at all have gone away from you and the tomb of the Holy Prophet. I hope that I shall return."

Then he visited the Holy Prophet's tomb in a state of extreme sadness and kept weeping for a long time. He said:  
"O honourable Prophet of Islam! You yourself are aware how sad days we are passing and what a strong blow has been struck on the body of your religion. O Prophet of Allāh! I have in fact been

73 Rijāl Mā Maqāni p. 182.

compelled as a consequence of the ever-increasing pressure of the administration of the Caliphate to go away from your city to Syria.” At the time of dawn of that night Bilal departed from Medina and proceeded to Syria.

At last after surmounting various difficulties faced by him on the way between Medina and Damascus, Bilal completed the journey. When he came near Damascus he stopped for a moment and stared at the city with surprise and said to himself:

“What a dull and sad city it is! It appears that death has cast its shadow everywhere. O Lord! How can I live here? I have been thinking that the journey has come to an end and I can take rest for a while, but now I have become more tired and sad. O Lord! What should I do?”

“I ought to put up with their condition and remain patient while I am away from my master Imam ‘Alī and his faithful companions. When I have borne all these inconveniences how can I live here as in the past?”

Bilal proceeded to the gate of the city with a very heavy heart and located a place for himself after a good deal of wandering and search.

Bilal was pleased and satisfied because he had been able to withstand the oppression and strength of the powerful persons and to speak the truth. He thanked Allāh and prided himself on his own existence on seeing that his very being was dangerous for the rulers and they feared even his silence.

Bilal resided in Damascus for some time. Though he himself was in Damascus, yet his soul was in Medina. He was continuously thinking about some solution of the problem. At last he lost patience and decided to return to Medina so that he might see the family of the Holy Prophet and his honourable Imam once again. He also thought that the political condition of the government would not consider his return to be expedient, and it was possible that they might restrain him. However, as he had taken a decision

he said to himself: "I shall perform this journey even though it may cost my life."

Bilal left Damascus with great courage and enthusiasm and special attachment to the Prophet's family. The path which seemed to be long at the time of his starting for journey was covered soon. He reached near Medina and saw the quiet spectacle of the city. He saw that walls of the Holy Prophet's mosque from a distance and recollected the sweet memories of the past. He sighed and tears began to flow from his eyes.

After his arrival in the city Bilal went immediately to the tomb of the Holy Prophet. The spies also saw Bilal and thought of arresting him. However, they did not consider it expedient to do so, but went to the authorities and reported the arrival of Bilal to them. The authorities were scared and worried on hearing this news. On the other hand this news reached Lady Fāṭimah Zahra, the beloved daughter of the Holy Prophet and in the meantime Bilal came to know that she was not keeping good health. This news distressed him and he began humming by the side of the tomb of the Holy Prophet:

"O Prophet of Allāh! After you the world has become dark and Imamate has been converted into caliphate and it has been usurped by persons who are not fit for this position.

"O Prophet of Allāh! I have come to know that your daughter is not keeping good health.

"O Prophet of Allāh! Your successor 'Alī is staying at home. By means of his silence he is preserving the exaltation of Islam and the unity of the Muslims.

"O Prophet of Allāh! I have just returned from my journey to Syria. I had been exiled there. . . ."

Then, due to acute disturbance of mind Bilal fell down on the ground and became unconscious.

## **The Last *Azān***

After the demise of the Holy Prophet his only daughter Fāṭimah who dearly felt the separation of her beloved father, gradually became ill. And when she heard that Bilal had returned to Medina she expressed the desire that he should say *Azān* once again.

Time for noon prayers approached. The muezzin of the Holy Prophet went on the roof of the mosque and began to say *Azān* with his loud voice as he had been doing in the recent past. He said: “*Allāhu Akbar.*”

On hearing the voice of Bilal, the first muezzin of the Holy Prophet the people of Medina came out of their houses and proceeded to the mosque. All of them wondered as to how Bilal was saying *Azān* again after the passing away of the Holy Prophet. A few moments later a larger number of persons gathered in the mosque and Bilal continued to say *Azān*.

When Bilal pronounced ‘*Takbir*’ loudly and Lady Fāṭimah heard it in her house she was reminded of the glorious and sweet days of her father’s time. She sighed and began to weep. Her children also joined her in weeping. When Bilal said: “*Ashhadu al lā ilāha Illallah*”, Lady Fāṭimah wept more bitterly. However, when the *Azān* reached the delicate stage she lost her sense owing to intense grief. Bilal was, therefore, advised to stop saying *Azān* at once, because the life of Lady Fāṭimah Zahra was in danger.

The people, who had gathered near the mosque and in the streets and on the roads, and in whose eyes a particular enthusiasm and fervour was rolling, suddenly came to themselves when Bilal’s *Azān* was cut off, and wondered as to why this had happened.

Of course, Bilal said his last *Azān* with his entire self and with his faith in the Holy Prophet and love for his school.

Bilal who was no longer keen to live owing to the pressure of

hardships got ready to play an enlightening and informative role among the people with his political activities. He mobilised the people against the people of authorities in government by means of discussions and fiery speeches in such a way that the people began to raise objections and shouted harsh slogans of protest against the government and it was feared that they might cause disturbances. The agents of government, therefore, poured into the mosque, arrested Bilal and exiled him to Syria once again.

After his second exile Bilal was not permitted even to take permission from the Holy Prophet's sacred tomb because the officials kept a watch over him everywhere and he himself realised the position very well. Hence he turned his face to the tomb of the Holy Prophet and opened out his heart for quite some time after offering him salutations.

Bilal arrived in Damascus and was much grieved on account of the conditions which had been created for him. He prayed for Islam and the Muslims day and night and felt very sad when he saw in danger the pains taken by the Holy Prophet for many years.

Indeed Bilal was living in Damascus under extreme pressure by government. It was very rare that anyone might be able to see him and at all times he lived alone. The matters had come to such a pass that he now greatly suffered on account of loneliness.

### **THE MOMENT OF MARTYRDOM**

Bilal was born like this and lived like this and eventually ascended the alter of love. It was an ascension which took him to the highest peak of glory and martyrdom. Now he is in the great world with a world of greatness. All his friends were shedding tears on his martyrdom. It was Bilal, the black slave who made history and rolled up the old aristocratic order of the age of ignorance and began to shine as an eternal face which will serve as an example in the annals of the history of mankind. He has really made himself immortal. He has become a paragon of piety and purity.

The people were endeavouring much to glorify and attend his funeral. All those who were participating in the ceremonies of his burial were weeping bitterly. Damascus was one of the important bases of Umayyad imperialism and the theatre of appearance of the usurped Caliphate of the unlawful heirs of the Islamic revolution, still, in spite of the savage and tyrannical rule of Bani Umayyah, a large number of the people attended his funeral. In other cities of the Islamic territories and especially in Medina the people were very much grieved and saddened. They mourned Bilal's death for a long period.

Bilal was one of those few persons who defended truth till the last moment of their lives. He preached true Islam. Neither the tortures of different kinds weakened his firm determination, nor was he allured, nor terrified by threats, nor did he swear allegiance to an undeserving person, nor did he sacrifice Islam and reality for the sake of expediency, worldliness, name and wealth.

After leading a life of freedom and self-sacrifice in the path of Islam Bilal passed away in such circumstances that he possessed no material thing. Noble-minded Muslims buried his dead body in the grave-yard named 'Şaghīr' (small) situated in Damascus<sup>74</sup> and mourned his death for some days. His grave is a place of pilgrimage of the Muslims and freedom-loving persons of the world from that time till today. It is the grave from which lessons of freedom, reality, sincerity, self-sacrifice and steadfastness are learnt and which teaches us as to how a person should live and how he should die.

And the Muslim historians, to whichever sect they belong, while mentioning the close and faithful companions of the great leader

74 Usudul Ghābah Vol. I, p. 209; Majālisul Mu'minīn Vol. I, p. 268; Nafasur Rahmān Chap. 10; Jāme'ur Ruwāt Vol. I, p. 131; Al-Isāhah p. 169; Muntahul Āmāl p. 87.

Some writers have said that Bilal died in Aleppo and was buried in Bābul Arba'īn. It is commonly said that he died in Syria of plague and was buried in Bābuş Şaghīr. The late Shaykh Abbās Qummi has written that he paid homage to the tfrave of Bilal in Damascus.

of Islam, have named Bilal as one of them and have placed him in the category of those who were near him. Thus it is observed that in consequence of Islam and enforcement of its commands and valuable teachings, Bilal, who was not more than a slave before the dawn of Islam, secured such a status that he was reckoned to be one of those persons who were the most sincere, the most devoted and the most proximate companions of the Holy Prophet.

So long as Bilal was alive he endeavoured for the advancement of Islam and was sincerely devoted to the family of the Holy Prophet till the last movement of his life.

\* \* \* \* \*

Greetings to you, O Bilal, O son of Rebah. . . . In what a splendid manner and with what sincere faith you professed Islam and with what a devotion you risked your life in this path!

Greetings to you O Muezzin of the Holy Prophet! Greetings to you Oh the first proclaimer of *Azān* in the world of Islam!. . . . Would that you had been alive now to observe that after the passage of so many centuries those sacred words which were pronounced for the first time in Medina with your inspiring voice are broadcast throughout the world every day from the minarets of millions of mosques and draw the Muslims to them to perform their obligatory daily prayers.

Greetings to you O Bilal! for the sacred call of *Azān* personifies in the eyes of all of us your name, your devotion, and the position which you enjoyed in the eyes of the Holy Prophet of Islam and we wish that on the Day of Judgement we may be by your side and in your company, and avail ourselves of your intercession which will certainly be acceptable to the Almighty Allāh. Amen.

## PART TWO : AFRICAN COMPANIONS OF THE HOLY PROPHET

### PREFACE

Even if Africa had not produced a single Muslim from the beginning of Islam to the present day, we still cannot afford to ignore the great service the Africans rendered to Islam when they ungrudgingly offered to shelter the Muslims who had been denied their homes in Arabia.

The children of Islam were in utter despair. Savagely persecuted by the Quraysh, their very existence was threatened. It was during this terrible time that Bilal and the other Muslims had to face every kind of adversity. Moreover, Prophet Muḥammad (Peace be upon him and his progeny) was thrown into the centre of all the trouble. He was the target of many plots against his life and his adversaries would fling stones and rubbish at him. They were ready to kill him at any moment if only they could manage it. But it was due to the shining example and great courage of Abū Ṭālib, uncle of the Holy Prophet and father of Imam 'Alī, that they did not dare translate their wishes of killing him into practice. The protection Abū Ṭālib gave to the Holy Prophet deterred the Quraysh from harming the Prophet.

In these times of unbearable persecution, the only land to give shelter to the Muslims was Africa. And, indeed, it was Africans who were the first to endure torture. The first people to be martyred in the cause of Islam were Sumayyah and her husband Yāsir, (See: *Ammar Yāsir*, an Islamic Seminary Publication) who chose death rather than to utter blasphemy.

It all started when Prophet Muḥammad preached Islam and obtained some followers in Makkah. The Quraysh polytheists were displeased. First, they tried to dissuade the Holy Prophet from his mission. Later, they tried to threaten him. But, unyielding, he



fearlessly asserted, “I cannot stop even if they were to place the sun in my one hand and the moon in the other, for what I preach is verily the true religion.”

Thus convinced of his indomitable courage and resolve, they then resorted to torturing the Muslims, for they could do little to harm the Holy Prophet himself because of the protection given to him by his uncle, Abū Ṭālib. Their persecutions were severe and varied and cost the lives of some of the Holy Prophet’s Companions.

Now, finding the growing persecution beyond control and patience, the Holy Prophet instructed the Muslims to leave Makkah and migrate to Habasha (present-day Ethiopia). Thus the first band of Muslims, consisting of 11 men and 14 women, somehow managed to board a ship for Ethiopia, where Africans offered them shelter and hospitality.

When the polytheists of Makkah came to know of the migration, they unleashed a fresh set of attacks against the Muslims remaining in Makkah. The Holy Prophet then directed Ja’far, son of Abū Ṭālib, brother of Imam ‘Alī, to migrate to Ethiopia. He too reached Ethiopia, with a group of 103 Muslims of whom 85 were men and 11 women from the tribe of Quraysh and 7 Muslims from other tribes. They were like the previous group of migrators, given shelter and protection by Negus — the King of Ethiopia.

The polytheists sent a delegation to Ethiopia to persuade the King of Ethiopia to drive away the Muslim refugees from his territory, but the King refused and continued to give shelter and protection to the Muslims, thus securing a unique place for Africa in this era of the history of Islam.

Besides this, Africa has the privilege of counting Umme Ayman as a daughter of her soil. She nursed the Holy Prophet on her lap in his infancy and soothed him. The Holy Prophet used to call her ‘Mother.’

Another credit that goes only to Africa is that, after Khadija. if any other woman bore a child to the Holy Prophet, it was an African lady named Māriya Qibtiyya.

Furthermore, it is Africa which has the honour of claiming Bilal as the muezzin and Treasurer of the Holy Prophet. Africa is also proud of her right to extol Asmaha. the exemplary King of Habasha, who was the first among the kings and emperors of the world to accept the truth of Islam and to submit to the teachings of Prophet Muḥammad (Peace be on him and his Progeny).

These are the facts which add to the glory of Africa's history; the glory which other parts of the world surely miss.

We have tried to present the known facts about the lives of these African Muslims during the early period of Islamic history. We intend to give a short history of those Muslims who embraced Islam during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, who in one way or other were related to Africa, and whose lives will illustrate the truthfulness of the message of Islam to the world. Their life sketches are arranged in order of their embracing of Islam, but those whose years of embracing Islam are not known are given towards the end of the book.

Many of the Africans who had embraced Islam had attained such inner strength and spiritual purity that their biographies will, by the Grace of Allāh, inspire all Muslims to follow them.

Publishers

## **IBRĀHIM BIN MUḤAMMAD**

In the 8<sup>th</sup> year of the Exodus (Hijrah), Ibrahim, son of the Holy Prophet, was born to Māriya Qibtiyya. His mother was an Egyptian and had been a Copt (Native Egyptian Christian sect) prior to her acceptance of Islam and marriage with the Prophet of Islam.

Ibrāhim resembled the Holy Prophet very much and the Prophet loved him greatly. He would carry him on his shoulders and show him with great pride to his other wives.

Ibrāhim's Mother was weak in health and could not suckle the baby. The Holy Prophet, therefore, bought a sheep whose milk was fed to the child. In spite of this, he did not live long and in the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the Exodus (Hijrah), Ibrāhim died when he was only 18 months old.

The Holy Prophet was stricken with great grief and sorrow at his death. At his burial, the Prophet said: "My eyes are wet and my heart is full of grief, but I shall utter what may but please Allāh. .... O Ibrāhim! I am grieved and moved at your departure."

## **ASMAHA NAJJĀSHI - THE EMPEROR OF ETHIOPIA**

When the persecutions reached their highest point, the Holy Prophet advised some of his followers to take refuge in Abyssinia. In the fifth year of his preaching, 11 men and 14 women departed from Makkah to Abyssinia (now called Ethiopia) and lived a peaceful life there under Emperor Asmaha's shelter. (The Emperor's actual name was Asmaha and his title was Najjāshi which in English is often written 'Negus').

After some time, they returned to Makkah. But on their return, the polytheists of Makkah increased their persecutions and tortured the new converts to Islam. The Holy Prophet advised them to take refuge in Ethiopia once again. A group of 85 men and 11 women from the tribe of Quraysh and 7 people from other tribes took shelter in Ethiopia where they led a peaceful and safe life.

When the polytheists of Makkah learnt of this, they sent two representatives, ‘Amr son of ‘Āṣ and ‘Amāra son of Walid, with gifts for the Emperor and a request that the Muslims be returned to Makkah from his empire.

On gaining access to the Emperor, they presented the gifts and requested him to return the Muslims as they claimed they were trouble-makers.

Emperor Najjāshi replied that he could not do so until he had investigated the matter himself. He therefore called Ja‘far son of Abū Ṭālib, brother of Imam ‘Alī, who was the leader of the refugees, to his court and asked him to explain their new faith. Ja‘far delivered a lengthy speech explaining the position they were in before accepting Islam and what Islam had taught them. He then recited from Surah Maryam (Chapter 19) of the Holy Qur‘ān which contains the following verses about the birth of Prophet ‘Isā (Jesus Christ):

*“And make mention of Mary in the Scripture, when she had withdrawn from her people to a chamber looking East, And had chosen seclusion from them. Then we sent unto her our spirit and it assumed for her the likeness of a perfect man. She said, ‘seek refuge in the Beneficent One from you, if you are God-fearing.’*

*He said: ‘I am only a messenger of your Lord, that I may bestow on you an infallible son.’*

*She said: ‘How can I have a son when no mortal has touched me, neither have I been unchaste?’”*

*He said: ‘So (it will be).’ Your Lord said: ‘It is easy for me. And (it will be) that We may make of him a revelation for mankind and a mercy from Us, and it is a thing ordained.’*

*And she conceived him, and she withdrew with him to a far place. And the pangs of childbirth drove her near the trunk of the palm tree. She said: ‘Oh, would that I had died of this and had become a thing forgotten.’*

*The (one) cried unto her from below her, saying: ‘Grieve not! Your Lord has placed a rivulet beneath you. And shake the trunk of the palm-tree toward you, you will cause ripe dates to fall upon you.’*

*So eat and drink and be consoled. And if you meet any mortal, say: 'I have vowed a fast upon the Beneficent, and may not speak this day to any mortal.'*

*Then she brought him to her own folk, carrying him. They said: 'O Mary! You have come with an amazing thing. O sister of Aaron! Your father was not a wicked man nor was your mother a harlot.'*

*Then she pointed to him. They said: 'How can we folk to one who is in the cradle, a young boy?'*

*He spoke: 'I am the slave of Allāh. He has given me the Scripture and has appointed me a Prophet. And has made me blessed wheresoever I may be, and has enjoined upon me prayer and alms-giving so long as I remain alive. And (his made me) dutiful toward her who bore me, and has not made me arrogant, unblessed. Peace on me the day I was born and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive.'*

*Such was Jesus, son of Mary: (this is) a statement of the truth concerning which they doubt."* (Surah Maryam, 19:16—34)

On hearing the speech of Ja'far and these Divine verses of the Holy Qur'an from the chapter named 'Maryam' (Mary), the Emperor was moved and he said, 'By the Great God, the truth is that this verdict and what was revealed to Moses and Jesus have sprung from the same source.'

Then, turning to the two representatives of the polytheists, he said: 'I take a vow that I shall never hand these people over to you and I shall help them to the extent I can.'

The two representatives of the polytheists also told Emperor Najjāshi that the Muslims considered Jesus Christ a Messenger of God and not a God Himself as believed by the Christians.

The leader of the Muslim refugees, Ja'far bin Abū Ṭālib, replied that the Muslims believed Jesus Christ to be a 'Servant of God and His Messenger.'

Emperor Najjāshi was convinced by the arguments presented by Ja'far and after Ja'far's speech, he said, "There is little difference

between the facts we know about Clirist and what has been narrated by you Muslims.”

“Blessed be you and the person who has sent you, I bear testimony to the fact that he (Muḥammad peace be on him) is a Messenger of God.”

Then turning to the polytheists he returned the presents they had given him and bade them leave his country. They left disappointed and returned to Arabia empty-handed whilst Ja‘far and his companions continued to live in Abyssinia peacefully.

Having realized the truthfulness of Islam through the preaching of Ja‘far son of Abū Ṭālib, the Emperor became a Muslim and as a consequence a number of Christians in his empire embraced Islam too.

Forty of these new converts sought permission from the Emperor to visit Arabia to meet the Holy Prophet of Islam. The Emperor permitted this and gave them presents of clothes and slave-women for the Holy Prophet. The leaders of this group have been mentioned in History as (i) Abraha, (ii) Idris, (iii) Ashraf (iv) Ayman (v) Buhaira (vi) Tamān (vii) Tameem and (viii) Nāfe’.

It is to these people that the following verse of the Holy Qur‘ān refers:

*“Those to whom We reavead the Scriptures before it, they believe in it.”* (Surah al-Qasas, 28:52)

They reached Madina where they met the Holy Prophet and eventually took part with him in the Battle of Uhud.

Emperor Najjāshi himself died a Muslim in his kingdom before the conquest of Makkah (8 A.H.) by the Prophet. The Holy Prophet said *Ṣalātul Mayyit* (prayers for the dead) for him.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Tārikh-e-Baghdad Vol. I, by Khatīb Baghdādi.

### **AYMAN BIN ‘UBAĪD - THE MARTYR OF HUNAIN**

Ayman was the son of Umme Ayman, the female slave of the Holy Prophet, and was the brother of Usāmah son of Zaid, on his mother’s side.

In the pre-Islamic period Umme Ayman had married ‘Ubaīd bin Amārah of Ethiopia and had moved to Madina from Makkah with her husband. Zaid was born to her at Madina. When her husband died, she returned to Makkah.

Ayman was a staunch Muslim who gave his life for the sake of Islam whilst fighting in the Battle of Hunain.

When most of the Muslims were panic-stricken in the Battle of Hunain and fled from the battle-ground, Ayman Ibn ‘Ubaīd was one of the eight people, including Imam ‘Alī and ‘Abbās, uncle of the Holy Prophet, to stand steadfast with the Prophet. He fell down and died, a martyr in fighting for Islam in this battle.

However, the Muslims finally won this battle and after it was over ‘Abbās bin ‘Abdul Muṭṭalib, one of the uncles of the Holy Prophet, composed couplets praising the bravery and steadfastness shown by Ayman bin ‘Ubaīd and saluting his martyrdom.<sup>2</sup>

Ayman bin ‘Ubaīd was a shepherd and he also looked after the eight milk-goats of the Holy Prophet.

### **MAHJA - THE MOST VIRTUOUS**

Mahja was one of the slaves of the Holy Prophet.

He was one of the most pious people. One of the companions of the Prophet stated that among the Muslims of African origin, Mahja, Luqman and Bilal were the most virtuous.

### **LUQMĀN - THE VIRTUOUS SLAVE**

Luqman was one of the three slaves of the Prophet.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Istī‘āb by Abdul Bir.

He was considered one of the most virtuous people.

### **YĀSIR - THE MARTYR OF KHAIBAR**

Yāsir was a slave of a Jew named Kamir and lived at Khaibar. He used to look after the sheep of his master. During the time the Muslim army laid siege on some of the forts of Khaibar, Yāsir approached the Prophet and asked him to explain to him about Islam. The Holy Prophet enlightened him on Islam and he became a Muslim.

Yāsir, on becoming a Muslim, joined the Muslim army but he was worried about his responsibility to look after his master's sheep. He therefore asked the Prophet: "What shall I do with these sheep whose master has entrusted them to me and who are under my care!" The Holy Prophet replied: "Turn their faces towards the house of their master and before long they will have got to him."

So Yāsir took a handful of earth and hurled it at the faces of the sheep saying: "Turn you all back to your master. By Allāh, I shall not be back with you." At this all the sheep, without any herdsman, moved back into the fort where their master lived. It seemed as if some invisible shepherd was guiding them.

Yāsir then joined the Muslim army and died a martyr's death whilst fighting. He was hit by a large stone flung from one of the forts to which the Muslims had laid siege. The Holy Prophet rushed to his sacred dead body and personally shrouded him and performed his burial ceremony. At his funeral the Prophet said: "With him are now the celestial-brides as his wives."<sup>3</sup>

Thus Islam bestowed upon him a three-fold honour: he became a man of supernatural powers, he achieved martyrdom and received celestial-brides to look after him in heaven.<sup>4</sup>

### **YĀSIR - THE MAN OF PRAYERS**

This Yāsir was one of the slaves of the Holy Prophet. He looked after the Prophet's ten milk-camels.

3 Al-Istī'āb by Ibn-e-Hajar Asqalāni.

4 Usudul Ghābah, Vol. V by Ibn-e-Athīr al-Jazā'eri; Istī'āb; Isābah.



His abstinence from worldly pleasures, his piety and his deep attachment to prayers so impressed the Holy Prophet that he set him free. He moved to a place called Hirah, where despite being free, he continued to look after the Prophet's camels which were kept there.

Some men from the tribe of Umayyah came to the Prophet and accepted Islam. They were all suffering from the effects of malnutrition and their bellies were swollen. The Prophet sent them to Yāsir. They then drank the milk from the camels and after some time their stomachs returned to the usual size.

What a pity! When these people, having once recovered their health, thrust thin bars into Yāsir's eyes and killed him. After his murder, Yāsir's body was brought before the Holy Prophet at a place called Quba, where he was eventually buried.<sup>5</sup>

#### **MABŪR AL-HĀHI**

Mabūr was a Copt. He had been sent to the Prophet together with Māriya Qibtiyya by the King of Egypt. He became a Muslim during the lifetime of the Prophet. According to some reports he was one of the cousins of Māriya Qibtiyya.<sup>6</sup>

#### **MAHIR**

Mahir was also a Copt, and had been sent to the Holy Prophet by the King of Egypt.<sup>7</sup> He later became a Muslim but further details of his life are not available.

#### **ABŪ RĀFĒ' IBRĀHIM QIBTY**

Abū Rāfē' Ibrāhim was a Copt and slave of 'Abbās son of Muṭṭalib, one of the uncles of the Holy Prophet. He was also known as Aslam. 'Abbās presented him to the Holy Prophet who set him free when he gave him the happy news of the conversion of 'Abbās (his ex-master) to Islam.

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5 Usudul Ghābah, Vol. V

6 Usudul Ghābah, Vol. IV

7 Isābah, Vol. I

Abū Rāfē' was one of the refugees who left Makkah to seek protection in Madina. He was present at the battles of Uhud and Khandaq and was in charge of the Prophet's Food

Abū Rāfē' relates that the Holy Prophet said to him: "O Abū Rāfē', how will you fare when a mass of people will be engaged in fighting against 'Alī notwithstanding that 'Alī (the rightful successor of the Holy Prophet) will be in the right and they in the wrong; and it will be obligatory on people to wage Holy war against them, and the person who will be incapable of fighting will have to fight with his speech and if he will not be able to fight even with his words, he will have to invoke hatred in his heart against them so that, he is free from blame?"

Abū Rāfē' requested the Prophet to pray for him so that if he survived to see that occasion, Allāh would help him fight with them and give him strength. Abū Rāfē' relates that when people pledged loyalty on Imam 'Alī's hands and Mu'āwiya (Governor of Syria) began to mobilize his opposition, he affirmed in his mind that it was these people against whom the Holy Prophet had urged them to wage Holy War.

So Abū Rāfē' immediately disposed of the lands he had at Khaibar, and along with all his family moved to live with Imam 'Alī and remained with him until Imam 'Alī's martyrdom. He then returned to Madina with Imam Ḥusain.<sup>8</sup> He was present at the time of the Muslim victory of Egypt.

### **USĀMA BIN ZAID BIN HĀRITHA - THE COMMANDER**

Usāma Bin Zaid bin Hāritha was the son of Umme Ayman who had once held the infant Holy Prophet in her arms.

Towards the end of his life, when he was sick in bed, the Prophet appointed Usāma, who was then only twenty years old, as commander of the Muslim army to fight, a war against the Romans of Syria who had killed Usāma's father. The army,

<sup>8</sup> Arjahul Maṭālib by 'Ubaidullah Amraisari Hindi.

however, did not leave Madina for the battlefield because of the Prophet's sickness. The Prophet died before the army could go into action. Abū Bakr dispatched this army on its mission after the Holy Prophet's death.<sup>9</sup>

Because of his young age Usāma was impressionable and sided with the opponents of Imam 'Alī. They flattered him and gave him great respect. In later life, however, he realized his mistake and repented. He paid allegiance to Imam 'Alī in 35 A.H. when Imam 'Alī was elected Caliph by the general Muslim public, but did not participate in the battles fought by Imam 'Alī. In his later life, he used to grieve over this fact and repent of not having fought by the side of Imam 'Alī.<sup>10</sup>

He once fell very ill and Imam Ḥusain (son of Imam 'Alī) went to see him. Imam Ḥusain found him very depressed. Imam Ḥusain asked him the reason for it, whereupon, Usāma replied that he was a debtor of 60,000 dirhams (the currency of that time) and was afraid that he would die before it could be repaid. Imam Ḥusain promised to pay it before his death which the Imam did.<sup>11</sup>

Imam Muḥammad Bāqir, the fifth Imam of Shi'ah Muslims, stated that Usāma Bin Zaid had repented so 'I like him to be remembered with nice words.'<sup>12</sup> He died in the year 54 A.H. of the Islamic Calendar.

### **'UBAIDULLAH IBN ABŪ RAFE' - THE AUTHOR**

'Ubaydullah was one of the sons of Abū Rafe' Ibrāhīm Qibty and was one of the companions of the Holy Prophet. He was appointed an official scribe by Imam 'Alī during his time as Caliph.<sup>13</sup> 'Ubaydullah is counted among the earliest Muslim writers. He wrote several books, one of which was on the Judgements of Imam

9 Al-Isābah, Vol. I, p. 31

10 Manāqib-e-'Alī Abī Ṭālib. Vol. III, p. 221 by 'Allāmah Rashiduddin Ibn-e-Shahr-ā-Shob.

11 Tanqihul Maqāl, Vol. I, p. 169 by 'Allāmah Shaikh Mā Maqāni.

12 Tanqihul Maqāl, Vol. I.

13 Tanqihul Maqāl, Vol. II, p. 237

‘Alī.<sup>14</sup> It is to the great credit of ‘Ubaydullah that he started Writing books when no other Muslim was alert to the need for this. He is also a *Muḥaddith* (narrator of the traditions) and some traditions of the Holy Prophet are reported by him in the Islamic Literature. He had a son named ‘Awn, who was reputed to be one of the most intelligent people in Madina.

### ‘ALĪ IBN ABŪ RAFE’

Though not counted among the companions of the Holy Prophet, ‘Alī ibn Rafe’ was born during the lifetime of the Prophet. He was a companion of Imam ‘Alī and one of the Official Scribes.

He knew a great many traditions by heart. He wrote books on many aspects of Islamic Jurisprudence such as prayers and *wuḏū* (ablutions).<sup>15</sup>

### THE SONS OF FIZZAH

Da’ūd, Muḥammad, Musā and Yahya are mentioned in the biography of Lady Fizzah (at the end of this book) as being her sons but no further details about them are known.

### ABŪ NAIṢAR - THE COMPANION OF IMAM ‘ALĪ

Abū Naiṣar was one of the descendants of Najjāshi, the Emperor of Ethiopia.

At, a tender age he was fascinated by Islam and embraced it and went to meet the Holy Prophet. He lived with the Prophet who brought him up, and then on his death, he went to live with Lady Fāṭimah, the daughter of the Holy Prophet.

He joined Imam Ḥusain in the battle of Karbala and attained martyrdom. He is buried with other martyrs of Karbala (Iraq) near the mausoleum of Imam Ḥusain. Every year during Muḥarram, the first month of the Islamic Calendar, hundreds of thousands of Shi‘ah Muslims go to pay their respects and homage to these martyrs.<sup>16</sup>

14 Tanqihul Maqāl, Vol. II, p. 237

15 Tanqihul Maqāl, Vol. II, p. 263

16 Translation of Abṣārul ‘Ain.

### **NāṣIR IBN ABŪ NAIṢAR**

Nāṣir was the son of Abū Naiṣar who has been described in the preceding paragraph. He joined the group travelling with Imam Ḥusain from Madina and stayed with him until his arrival at Karbala. When the battle started at Karbala he was one of the first defender of truth to be martyred in the very first round of attack. His feet were slashed while he was mounting a horse.

He was buried with his father among the other martyrs of Karbala.<sup>17</sup>

### **JAUN BIN HUWĪ - THE SLAVE OF ABŪ ZAR**

Jaun bin Huwī was Abū Zar's slave whose life history depicts the training of Abū Zar. According to Mā Maqāni, the genealogy of Jaun is as under:

Jaun bin Huwī bin Qatādah bin Ā'war bin Sā'idah bin 'Awf bin Ka'b bin Huwī Habashi.<sup>18</sup>

It is recorded in Islamic history that by race he was an African and was in the ownership of Faḏl bin 'Abbās bin 'Abdul Muṭṭalib, from whom 'Alī bought him for 150 golden coins and he gave him as gift to Abū Zar. By this Imam 'Alī wanted Jaun to serve Abū Zar.

Accordingly, Jaun rendered a meritorious service to Abū Zar who was extremely happy with him. Jaun served Abū Zar as well as received the benefit of his company. He observed every aspect of Abū Zar's character very carefully and was deeply impressed by it.

Of course Jaun left no stone unturned to serve Abū Zar. Also there was no place where he did not have the honour of Abū Zar's company except at Rabzah where his presence is not testified by any reliable book of history. Anyway, Jaun served Abū Zar as best as he could. After the departure of Abū Zar to Rabzah he stayed back in the service of Imam 'Alī. After Imam 'Alī's martyrdom he served his son, Imam Ḥasan and when in the year 50 A.H. Imam Ḥasan was martyred he came to serve his brother, Imam Ḥusain.

<sup>17</sup> Translation of Abṣārul 'Ain.

<sup>18</sup> Tanqihul Maqāl, Vol. I

In short, he rendered sincere sendees to the virtuous personalities all his life. When Imam Ḥusain left his hometown first for Makkah and then for Karbala during the month of Rajah in the year 60 A.H. Jaun was also with him during this journey.

‘Allāmah Majlisi and ‘Allāmah Samāwi write on the authority of Sayyid Raḥī Dā’ūdi that when fighting started at Karbala on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Muharram in the year 61 A.H. Jaun came to Imam Ḥusain and desired his permission to fight. Imam Ḥusain said: “You have my permission. But O Jaun! You have stayed with me to live in peace and now wish to be killed!” At these words Jaun fell at the feet of Imam Ḥusain and said: “O my master, I am not one of those who flatter you during the period of peace and comfort, and leave you in times of adversity. O my master! There is no doubt that my sweat gives a horrid smell, my lineage is not noble, and my colour is black, but with your blessing my sweat will become fragrant, my lineage will become noble and my colour will get white in Paradise. By Allāh, I will not forsake you unless my blood mixes up with your blood.”

At last Imam Ḥusain accorded him permission. Jaun came to the battlefield, started fighting and recited the following *rajaz* (epic verses):

“O you damned ones! Did you see the fight of the African slave? See how he fights in support of the Progeny of the Holy Prophet!”

After the recital of the *rajaz* Jaun made a fierce attack upon the enemy, fought continuously till he killed twenty five enemies and attained martyrdom.<sup>19</sup>

Muḥammad bin Abī Ṭālib Makki has written that when Jaun was martyred Imam Ḥusain came to his dead body placed his head in his lap and prayed to Allāh: “O Allāh! Brighten the face of Jaun, make his sweat fragrant and associate him with the virtuous ones in Heaven, so that he may accompany the Holy Prophet and his Progeny (*Ahlul Bayt*)”

<sup>19</sup> Muntahul Āmāl by Shaykh ‘Abbās Qummi.

Scholars quote Imam Muḥammad Bāqir who quotes his father Imam Zaynul ‘Ābidīn as saying that a few days after Bani Asad had buried the dead bodies of the martyrs of Karbala and gone away, they found the dead body of Jaun whose face was bright and whose dead body gave out the sweet fragrance of musk.<sup>20</sup>

In short, this faithful slave of Abiizar laid down his life for his master, Imam Ḥusain, fighting against Yazid bin Mu‘āwiyah, — the Umayyad tyrant, with courage, boldness and bravery and attained martyrdom.

### **ḤAJJĀJ AYMAN ‘UBAYD - THE ETHIOPIAN**

His grandmother, Umme Ayman (mother of Ayman), was a female servant of the Holy Prophet. Ayman was martyred in the battle of Ḥunain in 8 A.H. and the Holy Prophet died in 11 A.H. Ayman’s son Ḥajjāj was bom during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. Many traditions (Ahadith) of the Holy Prophet have been quoted from Ḥajjāj in the Islamic Literature.<sup>21</sup>

### **MĀRIYA QIBTIYYA - THE MOTHER OF THE FAITHFUL**

The Emir (ruler) of Alexandria (Egypt) sent Māriya the Copt, her sister Sirīn and her brother Mabūr, along with 1000 *mithqāls*, 20 soft garments, a mule called ‘Duldul’ and a donkey called ‘Ya‘fūr’ as presents to the Holy Prophet.

Māriya and her sister Sirīn accepted Islam from Habib Ibn Baltara who brought them to the Prophet, before they reached Madina. Their brother Mabūr, however, did not accept Islam until some time later but it was during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet that he embraced Islam.

Māriya was married to the Holy Prophet and thus she became one of the Mothers of the Faithful as stated in the Holy Qur’an: *The Prophet is closer to the believers than their own selves, and his wives are as their mothers* (Surah al Aḥzāb, 33:6)

20 Abṣāruḥ ‘Ain p. 165 printed in Deccan 1357 A.H.; Biḥārul Anwār, Vol. I.

21 Al-Isābah, Vol. I, p. 367

She came to Madina and was married to the Prophet in 7 A.H. In 8 A.H. she gave birth to a son named Ibrāhim but this son died at the early age of 18 months.<sup>22</sup>

**MĀRIYA BINTE SHAM‘ŪN QIBTIYYA -  
THE SLAVE-GIRL OF THE PROPHET**

Māriya daughter of Sham‘ūn was a Copt who later embraced Islam. She was one of the two slaves, the other being Raiḥāna, daughter of Zayd, presented by the ruler of Alexandria to the Holy Prophet. Māriya died five years after the Holy Prophet’s death.<sup>23</sup>

**SIRĪN - THE WIFE OF A POET**

Sirīn was the sister of Māriya the Copt, one of the wives of the Holy Prophet, and she had been sent as a present to the Prophet by the ruler of Alexandria (Egypt). She got married to Hassan bin Thābīt, a Companion of the Holy Prophet and one of the most famous Arab poets of his time. She bore him a son who was named Abdurrahmān.<sup>24</sup>

**UMME AYMAN - THE ‘MOTHER’ OF THE HOLY PROPHET**

Her name was Barka and she was an Ethiopian. She was a slave of ‘Abdullah, father of the Holy Prophet. She looked after the Holy Prophet in his infancy and when he grew up he set her free.

She was one of the first converts to Islam and joined the exodus to Ethiopia from where she returned to Madina.

She was married to ‘Ubayd bin ‘Umair in Makkah during the pre-Islamic period. She had a son named Ayman and was thus called Umme Ayman (mother of Ayman). After the death of ‘Ubayd, she was married to Zaid bin Hāritha by whom she had another son named Usama about whom we have already mentioned before. The Holy Prophet called her ‘Mother’ and would regularly call upon her to pay his respects.<sup>25</sup>

22 Al-Isābah, Vol. IV; Usudul Ghābah, Vol. V; Manāqib-e-‘Alī Abī Ṭālib Vol. I.

23 Manāqib-e-‘Alī Abī Ṭālib Vol. I.

24 Usudul Ghābah

25 Al-Isābah; Usudul Ghābah.



When the Prophet's daughter, Lady Fāṭimah, was married to Imam 'Alī in 2 A.H., Umme Ayman was entrusted with the marriage ceremony by the Holy Prophet. She had witnessed the Prophet's marriage to Lady Khadija, one of the richest ladies of Arabia, and when she saw the frugal dowry and simple ceremony of the marriage of Lady Fāṭimah (daughter of the Holy Prophet and Lady Khadija) she burst into tears. The Prophet consoled her.<sup>26</sup>

After the death of the Holy Prophet, a dispute arose between Caliph Abū Bakr and Lady Fāṭimah, daughter of the Holy Prophet, which is known as 'the Case of Fidak'.

Fidak was a piece of land given to Lady Fāṭimah by the Holy Prophet. After the death of the Holy Prophet her right to Fidak was denied by Caliph Abū Bakr. She went to the court of the Caliph to submit her claim. She was asked to produce witnesses to show that the Holy Prophet had given it to her. She produced her husband Imam 'Alī, her two sons Imam Ḥasan and Imam Ḥusain and Umme Ayman.

The sixth Imam of the Shi'ah, Imam Ja'far-aṣ-Ṣādiq, has stated that when Abū Bakr's Caliphate was established, and he denied the right of Lady Fāṭimah to Fidak, Fāṭimah went to the Caliph demanding to know why her agent was deposed from Fidak. She said: "Fidak was one of the pieces of land which the Prophet gave to me. . ." Abū Bakr said: "Produce your witnesses on that." Whereupon Fāṭimah brought Umme Ayman forward as a witness.

Umme Ayman said: "Abū Bakr! unless I make you confirm the statements made by the Prophet about myself, I shall not give any evidence." Then she said: "Abū Bakr, I ask you to state on oath; has not the Prophet, said that Umme Ayman is a woman of paradise?" Abū Bakr replied: "Yes, the Prophet has." Then Umme Ayman said: "I bear testimony to the fact that Allāh had revealed to His Prophet: *And give to the near of kin his due. . .* (Surah Bani Israil, 17:26), and the Prophet, upon this order of Allāh, gave Fidak to Fāṭimah."

<sup>26</sup> Manāqib-e-'Alī Abī Ṭālib Vol. IV.

Imam ‘Alī then followed and used the same line of argument. On hearing this evidence, Abū Bakr drafted an ‘order’ to the effect that Fidak be returned to Lady Fāṭimah. Meanwhile Umar (who later became the Second Caliph) dropped in and asked Abū Bakr what the draft was about. He replied: “Fāṭimah had voiced her claim to Fidak and Umme Ayman and Imam ‘Alī bore witness to that, so I decreed in writing for the return of Fidak to her.” Umar snatched the draft from his hand, and tore it into pieces. Lady Fāṭimah wept whilst returning home.<sup>27</sup>

Referring to this incident, one of the famous Sunni Muslim authorities, ‘Allāmah Shaykh ‘Abdullah Mā Maqāni has written, “Umme Ayman is the very person whom Fāṭimah, the greatest of the truth fills, had produced in witness to the dispute of Fidak, and who was rejected on the ground that she was a non-Arab woman. From the fact that Umme Ayman was taken for a witness by Lady Fāṭimah, I infer that she must have been a very reliable and trust-worthy lady, for it does not convince a normal mind that a lady of the rank of Fāṭimah should produce an unjust and incredible person as her witness.

“Another point in favour of her credibility and trust-worthiness is that the opponents of Fāṭimah dismissed Umme Ayman just because she was a non-Arab and not that she was unreliable or unjust.”<sup>28</sup>

It is related that after the death of Lady Fāṭimah she did not like to stay in Madina and left for Makkah. When she reached a place called Hajafa (Juhfa), she was overcome by thirst and she looked up to the heavens and prayed. In response to her prayers, people saw a leather bucket full of water descending from heaven from which she quenched her thirst. The effect of this was that she did not feel hunger or thirst for years.<sup>29</sup>

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27 Bihārul Anwār, Vol. III by ‘Allāmah Majlisi

28 Man Lā Yahzuruhul Faqih, by Shaykh Ṣadūq

29 Al-Isābah, Vol. IV

[The author has not been able to trace a record of her death in the Islamic History books].

### **FIZZAH - THE MEMORIZER OF THE HOLY QUR'ĀN**

Fizzah was a Nubi and had come to Arabia as a slave. She arrived in Arabia a short time after the Exodus (Hijrah) of the Holy Prophet to Madina. She was named Fizzah by the Holy Prophet and when the Prophet's beloved daughter Lady Fāṭimah requested a maid-servant, the Prophet gave her Fizzah.

Lady Fāṭimah in accordance with the teachings of her father, the Holy Prophet, did not treat her as a slave-girl. She divided the house chores equally between herself and Fizzah and some tasks they undertook in alternate turns.<sup>30</sup>

Fizzah was married to Abū Tha'labā an Ethiopian by whom she had a son. After her husband's death she was remarried to Abū Malīk Ghatfāni. Her son by her former husband also died. She however, had several children by Abū Malīk.

The Holy Prophet taught Fizzah special supplication for recitation whenever she found any task 'heavy'. The supplication is as follows: "O the One, Who has no one like Him. Who causes everyone to die; causes everything to perish; Who is the only One in the Heavens; Who neither slumbers nor sleeps."

Fizzah relates that many a difficult task was made easy for her by recital of this supplication.<sup>31</sup>

She had the honour of figuring in 'The Three Days Fast' which led to a whole chapter in the Holy Qur'ān descending from Heaven in their praise. (Vide: Surah ad Dahr, 76:5-31)

It is related that once Imam Ḥasan and Imam Ḥusain the two grandsons of the Holy Prophet fell sick. The Holy Prophet went

30 Al-Isābah, Vol. IV

31 Al-Isābah, Vol. IV

to his daughter Fāṭimah's house to enquire about their health and suggested that Imam 'Alī make a vow to fast for three days for the recovery of the children. Accordingly, when the children recovered their health Imam 'Alī, Lady Fāṭimah, Imam Ḥasan, Imam Ḥusain and Lady Fizzah fasted.

Five loaves of oats were prepared and just when they sat down to eat to break their day-long fast, a man cried at the door of their house for some food, saying: "O People of the house (*Ahlul Bayt*) of the Prophet of Allāh, I am a poor man, feed me." Everyone, including Fizzah, gave away to him their share of the bread. They then broke their fast with water and slept without food.

Next day they fasted and Lady Fāṭimah prepared five loaves and again when they were sitting down to break their fast, a man appeared at their door and cried: "O People of the house of the Prophet of Allāh, I am an orphan, hungry, with nothing to eat, feed me." They all gave away their loaves to the orphan and remained hungry.

On the third day of their fast and in the evening just as they sat down to break it, a person appeared and cried: "O People of the house of the Prophet of Allāh. I am a helpless captive, hungry, feed me." They once again gave away their loaves to him and broke their fast with water.

Their remaining hungry for the sake of Allāh and giving in charity all that they had to eat, Allāh revealed Surah ad-Dahr (76) to the Holy Prophet in their praise. This chapter contains 31 Verses some of them are as follows:

*They ('Alī, Fāṭimah, Ḥasan, Ḥusain and Fizzah) who fulfil their vows, and fear the day of the woe of which stretches far and wide.*

*And (while needing it for themselves) they give away food, out of love for Him (Allāh), to the poor and the orphan and the captive.*

*(Saying): We feed you only for Allāh's sake, we intend not of you any recompense nor (even) thanks (thereof)!*

*Verily, we dread from our Lord, a stern day of distress.*

*So Allāh will guard them from the evil of hot day and bless them with freshness and pleasure; And shall recompense them, for what they endured with patience, with garden (to abide) and silk (to wear).* (Surah ad-Dahr, 76:7-12)<sup>32</sup>

Fizzah was a maid-servant in the house of members of *Ahlul-Kisā* and *Ahlul Bayt* (People of the house of the Holy Prophet, i.e. Imam ‘Alī, Lady Fāṭimah, Imam Ḥasan and Imam Ḥusain) who were the most Holy and respected people after the Holy Prophet Muḥammad himself (peace be on them).

Fizzah lived in this Holy environment which made her a lady of uncommon piety and spirit. She memorized the whole of the Holy Qur’ān by heart, and for the last twenty years of her life she did not speak even a single word but by using the verses of the Holy Qur’ān in her conversations.

A very interesting incident, about her has been related by Abul Qāsim Qushairi. He states: “Once I was left behind in my caravan, alone in a plain. There I saw a lady whom I asked: ‘Who are you?’ She replied: ‘. . . *And say ‘Salām’* (i.e. “Peace” the Muslim form of greeting) *for they shall soon know!*’ (Surah az-Zukhruf, 43:89). So I greeted her in the Islamic way by uttering the words ‘*Salāmun ‘Alaikum*’ (Peace be on you) and asked her: ‘What are you doing here?’ She replied: ‘*And when Allāh guides there can be none to lead astray!*’ (Surah az-Zumar, 39:37). On hearing her reply: ‘I asked her: Are you from mankind or from the genii?’ She replied: ‘*O Children of Adam! Wear your beautiful clothes. . .*’ (Surah al-A‘raf, 7:31). I asked her: ‘Where are you coming from?’ She replied: ‘*These are like those who called from a place far off!*’ (Surah Fussilat, 41:44). I asked: ‘Where are you intending to go?’ She said: ‘*. . . and (purely) for Allāh, is incumbent upon mankind, the pilgrimage to the House. . .*’ (Surah Ali Imran, 3:97). I enquired, ‘When did you get separated from the caravan?’ She replied: ‘*And indeed We created the heavens and the earth and what is between them two, in six days. . .*’ (Surah Qaaf, 50:38). I asked her: ‘Do you feel hungry?’ She replied: ‘*Nor did we give them bodies that ate no food. . .*’ (Surah al-Ambiya, 21:8).

32 Usdul Ghābah, Vol. IV

I gave her food and asked her to hurry up to catch the caravan but not to rush. She replied: '*On no soul does Allāh place a burden greater than it can bear . . .*' (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:286). I suggested her to sit on the camel behind me. She replied: '*Had there been (in the Heavens and the Earth) (other) deities except Allāh, there would have been confusion in both.*' (Surah al-Ambiya, 21:22). On hearing this, I got down from my camel and mounted her on it. When she mounted the camel, she said: '*Glory to Him Who subjected this to us*' (Surah az-Zukhruf, 43:13).

When we overtook the caravan, I asked her: 'Is there anyone in the caravan who is your relative?' She replied:

- (i) *O Dawud! Verily, We have appointed you a vicegerent in the earth . . .* (Surah Sad, 38:26).
  - (ii) *And Muḥammad is not but a Messenger* (Surah Ali Imran, 3:144).
  - (iii) *O Yahya! Hold the book fast!* (Surah Maryam, 19:12).
  - (iv) *O Musa! Verily it is, I am your Lord, . .* (Surah an-Nahl, 27:9).
- (These are the names of four Prophets).

I began to call out these four names at which four youths came out of the caravan and ran towards Lady Fizzah.

I asked her who these four youths were and she replied: '*Wealth and children are the adornment of this World.*' (Surah al-Hijr, 18:46)

When the four youths reached near their mother, she said: '*O my father! Employ him, verily the best of these who you can employ is the strong (man), the trusted (one).*' (Surah al-Qasas, 28:26).

Whereupon the youths gave me some money at which Lady Fizzah said: '*And verily Allāh gives abundantly to whosoever He wills.*' (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:261)

The youths added to whatever they had already given to me. I enquired from the youths as to who that respectable noble lady was and the youths replied: 'She is our mother Fizzah, the maid-servant

of Lady Fāṭimah — the daughter of the Holy Prophet. She has conversed in nothing but by the verses of the Holy Qurʾān for the last twenty years.”

Lady Fizzah accompanied Imam Ḥusain on his journey to Karbala (Iraq) where the Imam and his followers were martyred. When Imam Ḥusain came to bid farewell on the day of ‘Āshura (tenth Muharram, 60 A.H.), he called out the names of his sisters, wives, daughters and Fizzah.

Fizzah accompanied the Ladies of the house of Imam Ḥusain in captivity and suffered with them humiliation and tyranny at the hands of Yazid’s soldiers and followers. She was eventually released with other members of the family of Imam Ḥusain and went to Madina with them.

Every year, the Muslims, especially the Shiʾah Muslims, commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusain during the first two months of Islamic Calendar (Muharram and Safar) and reciters mention Fizzah’s great piety, her knowledge, devotion and sacrifice to the family of the Holy Prophet. Her name and sacrifices are household words in every Shiʾah house.

### **SHOHRA - THE GRAND DAUGHTER OF FIZZAH**

Shohra was one of the maternal grand daughters of Lady Fizzah. She was also endowed by Allāh with supernatural powers because of her piety. An incident about her has been related by Mālik bin Dinār. He states that once he saw an old woman riding a weak camel going for the Hajj (Pilgrimage to Makkah). On the way the camel felt very weak and could not go further. The Lady riding the she-camel raised her eyes towards heaven and said: “O Allāh! Neither You let me remain in my home nor you let me reach Your House (Kaʿbah). If someone else (than You) would have behaved like this with me I would have come to You to complain.”

No sooner had she uttered these words than a person appeared

from the desert holding the nose of a she-camel. He came to this noble lady and said, "Lady! Ride this." She mounted the she-camel and disappeared from our view with supernatural speed. When I reached Makkah, I saw her doing Ṭawāf of Ka'bah (circumambulation of the Holy House at Makkah). I put her on oath as to who she was and she replied that she was the maternal grand-daughter of Lady Fizzah.<sup>33</sup>

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33 Manāqib-e-'Alī Abī Ṭālib Vol. IV.



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“Have you fully realized what Islam is?  
It is indeed a religion founded on truth.

It is such a fountain-head of learning  
that several streams of wisdom  
and knowledge flow from it.

It is such a lamp  
that several lamps will be lighted from it.

It is a lofty beacon  
illuminating the path of Allah.

It is such a set of principles and beliefs  
that will satisfy every seeker of truth and  
reality.

Know you all!  
that Allāh has made Islam the most  
sublime path

for the attainment of His supreme pleasure  
and the highest standard of His obedience.

He has favoured it with  
noble precepts

exalted principles

undeniable wisdom

undoubtable arguments

and unchallengeable supremacy.

It is upto you to maintain the eminence  
and dignity granted to it by the Lord,

to follow it sincerely,

to do justice to its articles of faith and  
belief,

to obey implicitly its tenets and orders  
and to give it the proper place in your  
lives.”

Imam ‘Alī (Peace be on him)