

HAZRAT

KHADIJA

NAZ



The book is one of the series in the biographies of great Muslims. This is the biography of the first Muslim who embraced Islam and presents an enthralling picture of a great lady endowed with charm and affluence who belonged to a proud dynasty and whose domains and trade extended beyond national boundaries. It is the fascinating and stirring story of the first lady of Islam who through her generosity, munificence, steadfastness, faith in the Prophet of Islam and consistency, blazed a new trail in becoming a glorious example of womanhood for alltime to come.

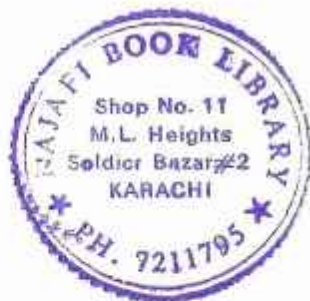
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Dedicated to

FATIMAH AHMAD

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Hazrat Khadija

CHAPTER I

Did you know that the first person in the world who accepted Islam (the religion preached by the Holy Prophet Muhammad—may God's peace be upon him), happened to be a woman?

What a grand boast the gentle sex can make for all times to come in favour of her sex! by being the first to place her faith and blind obedience in the words of God, as revealed to the Holy Prophet by angel Gabriel. This pious lady in fact proved to be a leader and a standard-bearer of Islam among the human-race. Who was this great lady that gave to the fair

sex such a rare distinction? Who was she and from where did she hail? For the answers let us take you to the land of Arabia and to the old city of Mecca some fourteen centuries ago.

A long time away at one busy corner of this city of commerce, close to the Ancient House of Worship built by Prophet Abraham and a famous pilgrim centre, stood a large and palatial house made of brick and wood, that over-towered all other houses of Mecca. This house belonged to the father of this lady, called Khadija. He was known as Kholeed—the merchant chief.

Kholeed belonged to one of the ten tribes of the Quraish. His forefather was Qasa—a chieftain of his times. In those days according to

the system of government these ten tribes were all of equal importance, each in charge of a separate assignment. The duty of the tribal chief, Qasa, was the care and management of Kaaba. This was a job of great responsibility and was considered most respectable. Pilgrims not only from Arabia, but all over the neighbouring world came to the city of Mecca to pay their homage to this ancient House of Abraham. Sometimes great kings seated on elephants and with a large entourage also arrived. They had to be dealt with great courtesy, tact and care. The function of the Kaaba's guardian was to make arrangements for water which was not close at hand, to receive gifts, donations for the upkeep and maintenance of the House, to take full responsibility and care of the pilgrims' property during

their stay and to make arrangements for their board and lodging according to their status etc.

When Qasa grew too old and feeble to continue in this heavy work, he left this charge in the care of his eldest son, as was the law of the land. Qasa had four sons by the following names and in the following order, Abd-Dar, Abd-Manaaf, Abd-Aza and Abd-Qasa.

Abd-Manaaf, the second son held a position of great honour among the tribes. Hence when the charge of Qasa was passed into the hands of Abd-Dar, Abd-Manaaf showed much resentment. Great disputes arose among the brothers which threatened to turn into war. In the interest of peace the wise-men of Mecca brought about a solution to the problem by dividing this work

equally between the two brothers. Prophet Muhammad was the descendant of Hashim, son of Abd-Manaaf. Khadija's father belonged to the tribe of Qasa through Abd-Aza. In this way Khadija was also remotely connected with the Holy Prophet. However in a manner of speaking since the Quraish consisted of these ten tribes and Mecca belonged to the Quraish, almost every one there was somehow related.

We do not know for sure of the then existing population of Mecca but we know this much that it had an army of two thousand soldiers. Hence we may safely assume that in number the Quraish must have amounted to roughly some fifteen thousand people. For a small city in the desert, hemmed in between high mountains and for as long ago as that, Mecca

must have been a most independent, free and unusual city. Outside this city on the borders of Arabia's desert expanse roamed the Arab Bedouin. The Quraish in pride of their ancestry, which they traced to Ishmael, son of Abraham, through his second wife Hajira or Hager, hardly counted these nomadic tribes among the Arabs, leave alone among the tribes of the Meccan Quraish. Kholeed belonged to this haughty race of the Quraish. Hence his house was like the house of a nobleman where merchants from all over the East assembled in connection with sometimes business and some times because of his association with the family of the Kaaba's guardians.

Khadija was brought up in this great big house under the shadow of the "House of God," as Kaaba was

known in olden times. Her mother's name was Fatima, a good-tempered old woman of handsome proportions. Kholeed was a sober, wise and responsible man. Khadija was the perfect combination of her parents' joint virtues. While still young, she was married to a rich trader by the name of Abu Haala. He was well-known for his generosity. From him she became a mother of two boys. But Haala soon died leaving Khadija a widow with two children.

As Khadija was still young, after some years she was again married, this time to one called "Aqeeq" from whom she got a daughter. Unfortunately "Aqeeq" did not survive long either, and Khadija found herself having become a widow twice and left with the care of three fatherless children. As though this was not

tragic enough, a few years later Kholeed also died leaving Khadija all alone, and in the absence of brothers that had been killed during some tribal wars it fell to the lot of Khadija to manage the family trade. Once having overcome her sad domestic tragedies, Khadija devoted all her energies and her time to taking care of this enormous business. She was soon counted among the leading traders of Mecca whose trade extended beyond the sea-ports of Syria and even beyond the great Roman Empire.

Caravans of camels and horses would set out from the city of Mecca carrying loads of dry-fruits such as currants, dates as well as wool from sheep and skins and hides from goats. Sometimes they also exported dairy products such as

dry-milk, butter and fat packed carefully in leather bags.

Khadija was the head of a flourishing trade. This she conducted well with the help of an old slave by the name of Misra. All the same she was in need of a proper agent who would be active, honest, hard-working and willing to travel on her behalf.

CHAPTER II

In the city of Mecca and from the tribe of the Hashmites there lived a trader by the name of Abu Talib.

Once this man had planned to embark on a journey to Syria. As he was preparing himself for the day of departure his young nephew Muhammad begged him to take him along. "You are much too young, my child, to be taken on such a long journey", the uncle tried to explain.

"No, no I must go with you, you must take me along", cried the young boy. Finally the uncle agreed to the lad's wishes and took him along.

When the caravan of Abu Talib halted at a church-yard in Basra, they met a christian seer by the name of Rahab Behera. This man had often seen Abu Talib before in the city carrying on his business of importing and exporting goods but he had never actually met him nor talked with him.

This time he took one hard look at the boy with him and began to ask many questions.

“Who is this little boy with you ?”

“He is my son”, said Abu Talib.

“It cannot be so”, said Rahab Behera “for according to my knowledge this boy ought to be fatherless.”

“Yes, you are quite right, Sir”, replied Abu Talib. “He is my nephew,

the son of my brother Abdullah. His father died before the child was born. At first my father Abdul Muttalib took care of him and after the old man's death he fell to my care. I have brought him up just like my own son."

At this Rahab Behera said to Abu Talib :

"Take your nephew back quickly and, as far as possible, keep him away from the evil eyes of the Jews, for should they discover who he is, they are sure to do him harm. I can assure you this nephew of yours is about to become a great man. So rush him away quickly and take good care of him."

Abu Talib was a simple and devout man. He was filled with much amazement but he did as he was

told. Muhammad (may God's peace be on him) was twelve years of age then.

Quite unaware of the prediction made about him, he was only happy and thrilled that he had seen a new land. Syria to him seemed a great big world, wide and full of rich pastures. Its market places were thronged by traders from all round the neighbouring countries. On the coasts brisk trade was carried on. The Syrians received merchandise from Mecca and other places and sent them forward by sea to the lands beyond.

Young Muhammad loved to stand with his uncle Abu Talib at the market squares and see how business was transacted. He loved to see those piles and piles of juicy red grapes, heaps of sweet dates, stores of food-grains and other crops, and see

how each of these things were exchanged for cloth and perfumes. Like all other children of his age, he was also fascinated by the different coins in use. In Mecca his own hometown he had often handled dirhams and dinars. He had also seen Syrian and Roman coins being used back home but to see them now in their own country bearing the effigies of their rulers, was a different thing. These coins along with gold and silver which also had exchange value, were very carefully weighed in order to keep a correct measure.

In Mecca silver and gold were both cheap and in abundance. Muhammad was proud to compare the market places of his own city with those of the land of Syria.

Mecca had three very famous bazaars, hundreds of people came

there from various neighbouring countries for trade. Meccans were basically a race of traders and merchants who were, by and large, rich. It was a city that was the whole world of the ten tribes of the Quraish, chief vied with chief and trader with trader in order to become strong and powerful in the land. Most of the chiefs were land-owners as well as merchants, they did not till the land themselves nor did they have to transact business themselves but employed slaves and agents to work on their behalf. Since trade was a very profitable work a trader was considered a respectable and honourable man.

Muhammad was well-acquainted with the slave-markets of Mecca and now he had a chance to see those of Syria. Slaves were bought and sold

just like any other commodity. A chief was counted rich by the number of slaves, camels and horses, mules and oxen that he owned. All these things the young boy observed and bore in his heart.

Muhammad noted many other differences too between the land of Arabia and that of Syria. Mecca was the heart of Arabia—the centre of all there was to it. Outside of it stretched a vast desert wilderness where the Bedouin nomads roamed in search of pastures and water. The Meccans would hardly accept them as Arabs. In short, to their minds Mecca was Arabia.

The Meccans had some very good reasons to be proud and haughty in the land. They claimed the descent of their ten tribes from

Abraham through Ishmael, son of Hager or Hajira. The latter was a young Egyptian. When Sara had given up hope of ever giving birth to a child she herself suggested to her husband that he take another wife some younger woman who was able to bear children. Abraham listened to his wife and married a Cannanite. But the moment Hajira became with child Sara began to feel her barrenness deeply and in a moment of jealousy which is natural among co-wives, she asked Hajira to leave her house. Abraham tried to pacify Sara but all the same took Hajira away to some place in the wilderness to dwell away from the sight of Sara.

Poor Hajira stayed away in a desert, the water provided for her by Abraham got finished. Her child was thirsty and there was no water

to be found anywhere. The child cried with thirst and the mother with distress. At last an angel appeared to her and told her not to be sad for the Lord God had heard the cry of the child. He would protect him from harm and bless him so that a great nation would come out of his seed. Hence Hajira stayed for a while in the valley of Faran at the foot of mount Sinai from where even Moses saw the light of God.

The Meccans were the descendants of Ishmael through his numerous offsprings. God had promised to bless the seed of Abraham after he had passed the great test imposed upon him of offering his first-begotten son as sacrifice. It was another matter that God saved his son from being slaughtered by replacing him by a ram

at the last moment. But Abraham was willing to carry out the command of God and God in return gave him as his reward a great blessing: "I shall make a great nation out of you and I shall bless you and I will make your name great; and prove yourself a blessing. And I will bless those who bless you."

The Meccans were proud they belonged to the blessed race of Abraham. Their temple, the Kaaba, had been built by Abraham for the worship of the one God. It was still called the House of Allah. Year after year many pilgrims from all over the lands came to Kaaba. In this way Mecca was always in close touch with the people of the neighbouring countries and in a manner of speaking became a great tourist centre.

Abraham did not belong to the pagan religions of his times but was a simple worshipper of the one God called Allah, but in course of time the House of Allah that he had built became the house of many idols. At first each tribe had a different idol of worship then each man began to make his own idol till finally each day of the year began to produce a new idol. The year had three hundred and sixty-five days and the Arabs of Mecca collected almost that many idols which were housed in the Kaaba.

Muhammad found Syria to be no better. There were all manner of people there with their own manner of worship. Some worshipped stones and idols, some fire, some the sun, moon and stars, others like the Jews followed the law of Moses and

Judah, the Christians worshipped Christ as God and the Virgin Mary as the mother of God.

Muhammad's trip to Syria taught him a great deal about trade, religion and history. It was a great experience for the little boy.

CHAPTER III

Abu Talib did not gain much profit from his journey. He decided not to go again. He had made a small amount which was barely enough to keep the house going for a while. His young nephew, Muhammad, realizing his difficulties would go out by day to tend flocks of sheep and goats for one man or another and thereby help his uncle by adding a few extra dirhams to the family income. In the evenings and during his spare time Muhammad, like all other boys of Mecca, would go to the nearby bazaars and market-places to enjoy himself. Here a whole manner of people would gather and indulge in gossip. Often

fairs were held and so were acrobatics, gymnastics and poetic sessions.

Muhammad (may God's peace be upon him) was never taught to read or write. These places gave him a chance to meet the wise, learned, talented men of Mecca and other lands.

Mild and gentle by nature, he kept himself aloof from fights and quarrels that would often arise in such places. He learnt that if a person was honest in business there would be no cause for fighting and so honest was he himself in his dealings with his neighbours, friends and fellow-men that the Quraish gave him the epithet of "Ameen"—the trustworthy. About these bazaars Muhammad himself tells us of a certain incident in his boyhood.

He said, "Once when I was tired of minding sheep I told a shepherd friend of mine: 'Take care of my flock while I make a round of Mecca's night life.' From there I went to a place where a party of singers had gathered. I was very keen to listen to them but it seemed God had His mercy on me, for once among them I found myself so over-powered by sleep that I never heard them at all. By the time I woke up it was broad day-light. I went straight back to my companion and told him what had happened.

"The following night I went again and once again the same thing had occurred. Thereafter I kept away from these pastimes having come to know such places were not meant for me."

During a battle that had started between two different tribes of the Quraish and lasted almost for four long years young Muhammad also played a minor part. His job was to pass the bows and arrows to his uncles. At this time Muhammad lost a very dear friend of his—the brother of Khadija, the daughter of Kholeed, whom we have mentioned earlier. This boy though four years older in age loved Muhammad very much.

After this famous battle a treaty was made by the two warring tribes whereby both the parties had to pledge that should there be another war, entire people of Mecca would rise up to defend the weak. Muhammad was also present when this treaty was made. He was twenty years of age then.

This was the beginning of Muhammad's importance and greatness. The whole of Mecca began to know him as a wise, honourable and honest young man.

CHAPTER IV

However great Muhammad was beginning to get, Abu Talib, his uncle, was none the richer. And so he said to his young nephew:

“You know how badly we are faring my child. Poverty and hardship is getting us down day by day. Something has got to be done. I believe Khadija, the daughter of Kholeed, has sent somebody in charge of her goods to Syria and she is paying him two camels. May be if you applied for a job she would give you more. If you like I could speak to her to give you a chance.”

Muhammad realized that the time had come for him to do something

solid to take up a regular job and help his uncle who was growing older day by day and needed some one to help him look after the family. So he agreed that Khadija be approached for the job.

Abu Talib went to Khadija and addressed her as follows :—

“My dear good lady, I hear you have already sent some one in charge of your goods but still need another man. I have a young nephew who is willing to work for you but demands four camels instead of the two you have offered the other.”

Khadija had already heard of Abu Talib's nephew's good name and honesty. So she said:

“Even if he had asked for more I would have been willing to give

him, for is he not Ameen—the trust-worthy?”

After that in keeping with her promise she kept Muhammad in her employment and soon dispatched him to Syria.

Once again Muhammad visited Syria, the land he had seen in his childhood. How happy he was to do business there among all the big traders and merchants just as he had seen his uncle do a long time ago! Having disposed of the goods at a fair price, he soon returned to the city of Mecca. As he was coming down the sandy desert on a camel he found Khadija waiting for him and watching him from her balcony. At seeing him she came down-stairs and took the day's account. She was astounded to see the profits he had made. No one be-

fore had ever handed her the correct amount. Indeed ! Muhammad rightly deserved the name the Quraish had given him.

Khadija had also sent Misra, her old slave, to take care of Muhammad. He came back with some strange reports not only of his wisdom and the faithful way in which he had discharged her business but some wonders that were attributed to him while he journeyed to Syria.

A Rabbi who had been watching from his roof-top had come to meet him saying, "I swear to you I am the first to have recognised a Prophet".

They say one of the signs of the coming Prophet was a piece of cloud that would hover over his head and shade him from desert heat.

Just such a cloud had been seen hovering over Muhammad's head as he travelled through the land.

As time wore out, Khadija grew more and more thoughtful about the young man's qualities. Then one day she dreamt that the sun had descended from the heavens into her house and its light was so great that it spread beyond, catching up the valleys and the mountain-tops all around.

She did not know what to make of it but felt certain in her heart that this dream had a special meaning for her. Many things had been happening lately each pointing her mind and heart to the same direction. She remembered the words of a passing stranger at a ladies' party, who had predicted the rise of a Prophet in Arabia whose name would be

Ahmed. Even then she had not taken them lightly as a mere joke like the other women. She was the only one who had not pelted the stranger. Why had she not done that?

It was surely because Khadija like a devout woman believed in the scriptures of old times that clearly foretold the coming of prophets. The belief that a Prophet would emerge from Arabia was not uncommon. Both the Jewish Rabbis and Christian sages believed in it and spoke of it.

The Arabs were quite used to these predictions and stories of old. Lying out in the cool open air in the long and beautiful desert nights many an elder would recount by mouth the tales of the old prophets and their sayings. And the

young inspired by awe and reverence would listen with rapt attention till day-light broke on them and the morrow dismissed them from their minds for a while as they got lost in the feverish heat of the day's activities.

Among other vaguely believed stories there also existed the belief in super-natural spirits—angels of light and darkness, who could, whenever ordained by God, assume any shape they liked to bless, warn or frighten men.

CHAPTER V

Now that even others had started telling Khadija about Muhammad (may God's peace be upon him) that he showed signs of being a Prophet and this fact also seemed to tally with her dream, Khadija began to think more and more about it.

Muhammad may be the "Ahmed" with a "meem" (an m) and why not? She knew that prophets, too, were really like other mortals. They ate, drank, married and had children like any other person, only that they were chosen by God as His messengers to guide His people on the right path.

These prophets although like other men were nevertheless diffe-

rent too, for they did have in themselves some seeds of righteousness and some great point to their credit that God blessed them. God can bless whomsoever He likes and curse whomsoever He likes, too, because He is a knower of men's hearts.

Now Khadija could not help getting the idea that Muhammad, her travelling agent, had brought great blessings to her home. If some learned and inspired men believed that he was the one that was to come, then he might very well be. But somehow she had to be sure. So she went to her cousin Warka-bin-Nofel and told him about her dream. This cousin of hers was a Christian and well informed about these matters.

He said :—

“You shall marry a man of great renown, whose fame shall spread not only all over Arabia but even beyond. He may very well be the promised Prophet.”

Khadija kept the secret of her fears and hopes to her heart.

She would often sit for long hours at her balcony looking out for Muhammad's return at sunset after the day's business.

One evening when he returned and she stood watching him dismount the camel, she noticed how radiant his face was and how his eyes glowed with a strange and divine light. She was struck by the thought that there might be some possible connection between him and her dream. He might be the very one —

the promised Messiah spoken of by the learned Jewish Rabbis and foretold by her cousin.

At first she only wondered but later as she began to think of the out-standing qualities to be found in Muhammad (may God's peace be upon him) and the difference in him from the average run of men in Mecca she began to get more and more confirmed in her belief.

It was not from now but from his childhood that he had acquired the reputation of being the trustworthy.

In having shown her high profits in her business he had proved utterly selfless and scrupulously honest. The Arabs were traders from times immemorial. Abu Talib, Muhammad's uncle, was himself a trader. Hence he was not naive and trade was not

new to him. It was plain to see that he was unwilling to keep for himself anything more than was his agreed due.

These were indeed the qualities of a great man, thought Khadija, who else but he in entire Mecca showed signs of future greatness from his child-hood? And then Warqa bin Nofel had said she would marry a great man. Should she then not marry Muhammad?

In wanting to marry Muhammad (may God's peace be upon him), it is clear that Khadija was more inspired by the qualities of his head and heart than anything else. That she was a noble lady with noble aspirations is abundantly clear from her choice of a husband. Muhammad, although from a well-known stock, was certainly not rich and there was no other worldly glamour attached to him to

entice such a wealthy and beautiful lady as Khadija.

Even after the death of her two husbands and having three children, she was a lady of such good repute that various chieftains and rich merchants were still willing to marry her. But as always, it seemed virtue and righteousness in a man meant for more to her than anything else. Her first husband "Abu Haala" and her second "Aqeeq", were both good men. Women had the choice to decide their own marriages but among the respectable and honourable families they had to be approved of by their parents and guardians.

One tradition says that when Muhammad first took permission from Abu Talib to accept the invitation of Hazrat Khadija to meet her

at her residence, a maid servant by the name of Nijah was sent along with him.

Nijah is said to have reported to Abu Talib on her return that the moment Khadija heard Muhammad's approaching foot-steps she at once came out to the door to greet him. Taking his hand affectionately in her own she said with much warmth "Babi Amta Wahi" which means "my father and mother I would sacrifice for you", and added, "By God I feel that you are the Prophet that is being spoken of. If that ever comes true I implore you not to forget to bestow your blessings on me." And Muhammad answered :—

"If that ever comes true, truly I shall bear this in mind, but should another more deserving be the chosen

one, then, too, God, for whose greater glory you are saying this will not deprive you of this blessing.”

It appears from the very outset the love of Khadija for Muhammad was divine and because he seemed to be a man of God. This lady must have herself been a person of peculiar piety and grace.

The love of Muhammad which had taken root in Khadija's heart was a love that demanded quite a good bit of sacrifice. It had always been a tradition in her family to marry for wealth and social status that would be in keeping with her own. Both her former husbands were men of wealth and high status and these must have been factors of some consideration among her people or else, as is said, Warka-bin-Nofel's

proposal of marriage for her would not have been rejected.

Muhammad (may peace be upon him) was from the well-known Hashmite tribe of the Quraish but was all the same a man of no means at all. Abu Talib, though a respectable trader by profession, was all the same a never-do-well in life as we have seen for ourselves. Khadija's desire to marry her own paid employee could have had no other satisfactory explanation than this that in Muhammad she found the signs of no ordinary man.

CHAPTER VI

At last came the time when it was necessary for Khadija to express her desire to marry Muhammad. Considering their relationship of mistress and employee it was essential that she take the lead. One day when sitting with Nafisa, her best friend, and telling her of the dream she had dreamed and all that she had experienced she also said that none else but she and her cousin Warqa-bin-Nofel had shared her confidence.

“What did your cousin have to say?” asked Nafisa.

Khadija informed her that he had predicted a very strange thing that she would marry a man whose

great light shall illumine the whole land of Arabia and go even beyond it. This man may very well be the Prophet that was to come.

“Then why shouldn’t you ask Muhammad to marry you since you cherish the desire and also think that he might be the man of your dreams.”

“I am,” she said, “and I do cherish the desire but how may I proceed?”

“You leave that to me”, said Nafisa. “I shall find out the mind of the young man.”

Soon thereafter she contacted Muhammad and during the course of her conversation with him she asked him plainly.

“Why don’t you get married Muhammad?”

“I cannot afford to, Nafisa. What have I got to get married with”, answered Muhammad simply.

“Suppose you could marry a woman who had enough money of her own to care for such a thing and suppose she was beautiful too. Would you then be willing?” asked Nafisa cleverly.

“Where is such a woman?” asked Muhammad.

“Why? There is Khadija for instance”, said Nafisa promptly.

Muhammad was much taken aback. “How would Khadija be willing to marry me?”

“You forget that, suppose we made her to agree, would you be ready.” “I would be,” said Muhammad.

“Then send her a proper proposal through the elders in your family and await the result,” suggested the clever friend.

Muhammad agreed to do so hoping it would work out.

Hardly had Muhammad agreed when Nafisa ran to Khadija telling her of what had come to pass. She advised her to prepare her elders for receiving Muhammad’s official proposal for marriage.

Khadija, happy beyond words, asked her paternal uncle Umroa-bin-Asad to handle the affair.

At last the two elders of the respective family met and united the couple in an ever-lasting union.

CHAPTER VII

Heaven was now at Khadija's door and the sun of blessings that had descended upon her home lit her life with a strangely wonderful and unearthly glow.

The noble lady knowing the nature of the man she had married and fully aware of the great role she had to play in his life, settled down to her domestic duties with a hope and devotion hitherto unknown.

In the beginning the arrangement was that Muhammad should shift into her house and occupy his rightful place there as the master of her heart and hearth.

Generous by nature, she placed all her wealth and property at his disposal to do with it as he thought best.

Soon the home of Muhammad and Khadija became the sanctuary and refuge of the many needy and poor. Khadija began to learn a great many new things from Muhammad that money was not to be hoarded but spent freely in the way of Allah. It gave Khadija a great pleasure to do as she was told. Muhammad settled down to a peaceful homelife with his wife but it did not mean he gave up work, only his status was much more changed. He attended business meetings and affairs of the State in an advisory capacity. Traders came to him consulting him in matters of trade and people in general

sought his good advice on all important issues of the community.

Once there started a great dispute between the tribes of the Quraish over the over-hauling of the Kaaba (Mecca's house of worship). The problem was as to which chief should have the honour of placing Kaaba's sacred stone called "Hajr-e-Aswad" (the Black Stone) at the altar. There was much exchange of hot words and bad feelings between the tribes.

You must remember at this point that Khadija herself belonged to a well-known tribe. Her fore-fathers were Sirdars who for long had spent their lives in the service of the Kaaba. Between themselves various members of these tribes were equal rulers over the people.

At this time Muhammad showed signs of great wisdom. He decided to settle the matter. He made every chief hold the edges of a large sheet in the middle of which he placed the sacred stone, thus everyone among the chiefs took part in the important task.

No doubt Muhammad's marriage with Khadija gave him a great position and rank among the notables of Mecca but it appears he was born to be a leader among men in any case. This incident is an historic example of Muhammad's natural wisdom.

Nevertheless Khadija played a great role in making the personality of her husband shine in the eyes of all Mecca. With her constant support, approval and admiration she drew out the best in her husband.

CHAPTER VIII

Khadija's pride and happiness knew no bounds. She considered herself a very fortunate woman in that God had blessed her with a husband not only young and handsome (he was twenty-five while she was forty) but full of virtues and extraordinary qualities.

Soon she settled down to keep a nice and comfortable home for him and to see that she served him and made him happy in all ways. Muhammad (may peace be upon him) was good to her children from her former husbands, and she in return offered to bring up the infant son of Abu Talib, her husband's nephew, called Ali. Abu Talib was not doing

too well, and bad circumstances had compelled him to seek the help of his brother Abbas in looking after one child and entrusting the other to the care of Muhammad and Khadija.

Khadija was only too happy to add to her small family. Little did she know that she was taking in her protection and care one of history's bravest, noblest and most courageous of sons—one who would be called the sword of Allah. Also that one day this small child would grow up and marry her daughter Fatima from Muhammad and be the forerunner of his race.

Muhammad (may God's peace be upon him) was very pleased and contented to have found such an understanding life-companion as Khadija; for not only was she dutiful and obedient but she went out of her

way to please him always treating his pleasures and wishes above her own. It was as though she knew by instinct what he wanted. Wherever he spent her money freely in alms-giving and charity, she was never heard to have complained, rather she was proud and pleased over his generosity. How we know this, you shall find out later—Khadija was a business woman, she was expected to be worldly-wise but these do not seem to be the ways of a worldly-wise or even an ordinarily worldly woman.

Although Muhammad was a man of great wisdom in handling affairs of the state and of the world, his heart and mind however were inclined towards a direction entirely different. Often at home Khadija would find him retiring to quiet corners absorbed in deep thought. During the holy

month of Ramazan, for greater solitude and meditation he would even go to a nearby cave at the foot of mount Hira. At the time of these strange spells, Khadija, the devoted and devout wife of Muhammad, would often herself carry his meals to him at break of day and at sun-set. These actions and ways are of a woman who must be herself endowed with the virtues of a saint—a woman who was in complete harmony of thought with her husband.

CHAPTER IX

At this stage the reader must surely ask many questions as to what kind of prayer, fast and worship Muhammad offered before he was finally given light on the right path.

In the Arabia of those days as we have mentioned before, there were many religions. Kaaba was the general place of worship for all. It had been built by Abraham for the worship of the one God. It was still called the house of Allah but the chief objects that were worshipped were really idols which were called by different names such as Laat and Habal etc. Idols of goddesses too were made and given names; these were considered to be

daughters of Allah and those who had power with other gods to plead on behalf of men. However there were also some people among the Arabs who wished to keep religion purely for one God as their ancestor had done. They felt disgusted with idol-worship—a practice that had continued for ages. They knew this practice was exactly what all the previous prophets had opposed.

Abraham, Moses and, much later, Jesus Christ—all preached against any other god but Allah. Abraham as a child plainly told his father that he would not worship idols, Moses received a commandment from God : “You must never have any other god against my face” Further more, the second command out of ten that he

received clearly said, "You must not make for yourself a carved image or a form like anything that is in the heavens above or that is on the earth underneath or that is in the water under the earth. You must not bow to them or be induced to serve them because I, your God, am a God that wants devotions only for Himself".

Jesus Christ, too, was appalled by the so-called house of God which had become a place for fish-mongers, robbers and thieves.

God had himself once told the Israelites that He would choose a certain place "to have His name reside". They were to visit it three times a year on special festivals. This place was known as Salem (peace) at the time of one king.

King David also cleared it of heathens and brought some purity to it. It saw its greatest splendour at the time of Solomon. He built a great temple for the true God's worship. Time and again this city was destroyed and rebuilt. The Jews, too, at one time helped to keep it clean of idols, courts and heathens but in course of time they themselves made it impure by their false worship.

And so was the case with the Kaaba in Mecca. When it was first built by Abraham it was to glorify the one true God Almighty. Muhammad, too, was much appalled by the state of affairs in the Kaaba. The special tribe to which he belonged were not out-and-out pagans but they did believe in stones even if one of the stones

dated from the time of Abraham and was duly held sacred.

Muhammad was among those people who from the very beginning revolted against the idea of idol-worship. Hence Muhammad's manner of prayer could only have been a free communion with God without the fetters of meaningless traditions.

Arabia of those times was a loose term applied roughly to a peninsula, the small strip stretching from Mecca to Medina composed of some one hundred and fifty to two hundred miles was the only civilized portion of the land. All round lay the desert dotted with palm trees and sand dunes, mountains and valleys. In the heart of this peninsula lay Mecca, a small flourishing little town bristling with trade and commerce with a population not more than

roughly fifteen thousand or so this was the home-town of Muhammad and Khadija. In Mecca apart from other pagan creeds there were two dominant religions that were slowly gathering importance. These were Judaism and Christianity.

Judaism is the religion of the Jews coming down from the eldest son of Jacob from the line of Abraham, and Christians were the believers of Jesus Christ having the same descent from the side of Mary, the daughter of Imran. Khadija's uncle's son Warqa-bin-Nofel was a Christian—well-versed in ancient scriptures. Hence Khadija, too, was well-informed on Christianity.

Muhammad soon began to get aware how these religions once believing in the one true God, were slowly going off the mark set by

their prophets. The Pope, as head of the Christians, was considered infallible, one who could not make mistakes in his dictates as far as religious instruction was concerned. Yet the Christians of those times had begun even to bow before the statues of the Virgin Mary and refer to her as the "Mother of God". Christian priests, and especially the Pope, during their devotional services dressed in garbs of gold embroidery, satins and silks, and lived in pomp and show quite unlike Jesus Christ—the humbly clad bare-footed preacher of the words of God.

There was also a great confusion in Christianity. Many people began to believe that Christ was God. Not only was he referred to as the son of God and the Holy Ghost but also as "Lord God Jesus Christ".

Muhammad was a man of unique intelligence, capable of showing great wisdom. His common sense did not allow him to believe in the pagans and heathens abounding in the city of Mecca, nor was he impressed by Judaism and Christianity. Although both were sister religions, there was not much love lost between them, nor did any one around him seem to hold fast to the simple Law of Abraham—the worship of one true Allah. His mind was tormented by enquiry, doubt and debate. The practice of fasting was not an uncommon one, all the Prophets in the past had fasted. Moses fasted for forty-days when he went up to Mount Sinai and before he brought forth from God the Ten Commandments. Christ, too, had fasted for a similar term. During

this fast Satan himself came to tempt him to break his fast. He offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the earth if he would do just one act of worship before him. This made Jesus Christ really angry, for he said, "Go away Satan ! For it is written, it is God you must worship and it is to Him alone you must offer sacred service".

If Jesus was himself God, there would be no need for him to hold a fast unto himself, nor could Satan have dared to tempt his own creator. Plainly Jesus was only a Prophet although a great Prophet who had upon him the spirit and breath of God. Just like Adam had. God had breathed His spirit even in Adam and told him "to be" and "he was".

Muhammad in going up to the cave of Hira for offering his prayers

and his fasts, was simply doing the same as many devout and God-fearing or God-loving people would have done.

No doubt he was in search of some truth about God since all around there seemed to be nothing but confusion. Since none knows or may claim to know what exactly he meditated upon, we may very well guess from the existing conditions of his little world during those times that he was tormented by many questions, the many mysteries that shroud the existence of the Great Being.

Perhaps what happens later may give us a small clue to the mind of Muhammad as to what were the things that were exercising his mind.

CHAPTER X

Once in the Holy month of Ramazan Muhammad (may peace be upon him) returned from the cave of Hira looking all pale, shivering and trembling.

His wife Khadija watched him with growing anxiety as he lay himself on the bed and cried, "I am in mortal fear of my life, wrap me up in a sheet, wrap me up."

Khadija felt something terrible must have happened (to her otherwise strong and healthy husband) and so she covered him quickly with a blanket, begging him at the same time in the following words :—

"I can barely wait to be told.

I implore you to tell me what has happened.”

Then Muhammad (may God bless him) said, “I was in a trance when I heard a voice say. “Read”. I said, “I cannot read.” The voice again said, “Read” and again I replied, “I cannot read”. The third time a voice more terrible commanded: “Read”! I said, “what can I read?” The voice said :

“Read in the name of God, thy Lord who createth.

“Createth man from a clot.

Read : “And it is thy Lord, the most Bountiful.

“Who teacheth by the pen.

“Teacheth man that which he knew not.”

“When I came out of the trance the words remained as if inscribed upon my heart.”

“When I went out of the cave into the hill-side I heard the same awe-inspiring voice say! “O Muhammad! thou art Allah’s Messenger and I am Gabriel.” Then I raised my eyes and saw the angel in the likeness of a man standing in the sky above the horizon and again the terrible voice said: “O Muhammad thou art Allah’s Messenger and I am Gabriel”. I stood quite still, turning away my face from the brightness of the vision but wherever I turned I saw the face of the angel looking at me. I remained like that for a long while till at last the angel vanished.”

As Muhammad narrated his experience, Khadija wiped the

perspiration from his face and the tears that were brimming in his eyes, and like the ever-believing faithful wife that she was, she expressed the hope that he was the Prophet in the following words :—

“God Almighty will never forsake you. You are kind and full of pity. You are the hope of the poor and the needy; always hospitable; absolutely just; truthful; honest; and trust-worthy. Why should God not choose you to be His Prophet.”

This simple utterance is the most wonderful word-picture Khadija has drawn for us about the goodness and virtue of Muhammad (may God's peace be upon him) no one but a wife or a man's closest associate is in a position to cast a clear light on the character and bearing of a man. As for the Prophet's valet, the slave Zaid, was

among the third person in the house to have accepted the Prophet; Ali being the second.

Khadija's words are the words of a wife endowed with the greatest of understanding and virtue. Rather than turn aghast with fear and horror at the mention of the uncanny experience, she not only turned a sympathetic ear but with the strongest of faith vouchsafed for the truthfulness of his words.

It was as though Hazrat Khadija was destined to be (from the very beginning) the particularly chosen spouse for the coming Prophet. From her words it appears she had long before believed that he was the "Ahmed" that was to come. To her it does not seem to be a matter of surprise. The sun of blessing had

indeed descended upon her house and to be sure, soon it must also spread its light on the hill-tops and the valley beyond. Her words that 'God will not let you down', were no words of mere comfort uttered by any ordinary comforting wife for an ordinary distraught husband.

They speak of all her past hopes, presentiments, dreams and good-wishes for Muhammad whom she had married because he seemed acceptable not only to her but to God Himself.

She had not married him for any earthly gain but for the spiritual strength of his being. To be led by such noble aspirations alone, to have the faith that at last God does reward the righteous on earth for the good done to his fellowmen.

All the virtues of the holy Prophet recounted by his good wife were those that concerned his treatment towards his fellow-beings. Mark! how she did not mention his habit of prayer, fasting or meditation but only those good actions which benefited other human beings.

Hazrat Khadija's words have a great lesson for humanity—a lesson that was preached later by the Prophet as the only path leading to God. Tell the truth; be honest, just and trust-worthy; be hospitable, pay the poor-due and spend freely in the way of God. These are without doubt the marks or the standard by which a righteous woman judged a righteous man.

“God will not leave you”. These were words of great comfort for any tormented husband. We say

tormented or afraid because the experience of the Prophet was so abnormal and unusual as to send any man into a state of wonder and fear.

Muhammad (may God bless him) could not have had doubts about his vision but a sense of profound humility as to his worthiness of being chosen for prophethood—a task so enormous and serious—the great responsibility to fulfil God's command.

The first person in whom he had confided this sacred secret was his own good wife Sayeda Khadija Tahira (The pure.)

What a complete relationship !
How supreme the trust and faith which he had for her!

CHAPTER XI

Awed by the development of events of which Hazrat Khadija had an insight and foreboding earlier, the pious lady once more set off for counsel and advice to the house of her cousin Warqa-bin-Nofel. This time she took her husband along.

Warqa-bin-Nofel as we have said before was very learned in the study of the scriptures. He had knowledge of both Arabic and Hebrew. He was an elderly man who had spent a lifetime in the study of the Holy Bible. She had often consulted him before and it was he who had first told her about the meaning of her dream and had also told her how this man might

very well be the Prophet that was to arise from the soil of Arabia.

Since now almost fifteen years later when her husband was in his fortieth year, the prediction seemed to have come true. It was natural for Hazrat Khadija to run to this holy cousin again.

Warqa-bin-Nofel looked at Muhammad deeply and questioned him extensively.

Warqa-bin-Nofel is reported to have said to Muhammad:—

“This is the same angel that appeared to Moses.”

Warqa-bin-Nofel, a good Christian by faith, was a man with an open clear mind. Although he died as a Christian before Muhammad had begun to preach and warn, in his own

way, by accepting Muhammad as a Prophet, he was a believer. In any case according to the teaching of the Prophet, the Christians and the Jews are considered believers belonging to a simple and ancient faith of Abraham. Anything that was distorted by them or changed, Muhammad had come to straighten out and make clear.

However when Hazrat Khadija and Muhammad (may God bless him) were taking leave of Warqa-bin-Nofel, the old man said very sadly: "I wish I was young and alive to see the day when you shall be turned out of your city and be of some help to you".

Here was another prophecy of the Prophet Isiah about Prophet Muhammad which finally came true and Warqa-bin-Nofel was a holy man well conversant with the scriptures.

Khadija acted on the advice of her cousin that a spirit should be carefully tested. It is said she tested the spirit according to the way devised by John the Baptist.

Warqa-bin-Nofel soon departed from the world but his words Hazrat Khadija bore to close her heart.

CHAPTER XII

Hazrat Khadija should be rated among the most notable women of Islam, not only because she was the first wife of the Prophet but because she was the first woman in the history of the world to have accepted Islam. It must have been from her staunch faith in her husband that the rest of the household like Ali, the slave Zaid, her son Hinda from her former husband and later, the best friend of Muhammad—Abu Bakr—readily accepted the revelations made to the Prophet by God through the angel Gabriel.

Hazrat Khadija proved to be a most calm, composed, patient and faithful woman among all women.

She had accepted Muhammad (may peace be upon him) at a time when he did not have a dirham to his name. She allowed her husband a free hand to deal with her wealth and her property as he wished, believing in his honesty and goodness of purpose.

She did not fear, nag or get uneasy when the Prophet did not make a provision for the morrow but allowed each day to look after itself.

She had complete faith in her husband and was his faithful companion at a time when his life was full of struggle. They were married for many years and those years were the hardest as far as his mission was concerned.

She stood steadfast and firm as a rock at a time when her husband

gained nothing but enmity and hostility from the powerful tribes of the Quraish.

The married life of a prophet is never a bed of roses. Khadija was aware of this fact and accepted it with the spirit of a missionary. Rather than lure her husband away by cajolery (such as most women are wont to do) from his habit of constant prayer and meditation, she encouraged him by making him pursue his search for the truth without any domestic hitches.

The Prophet before marrying Khadija was only her assistant or travelling agent, her paid employee, and it took him years to be the Ruler of the whole of Arabia.

Although she did feel that her husband might some day become a prophet and a spiritual leader of the

land, she knew such a position had no worldly gain for her in the bargain.

One is instantly moved by her devout spirit when, taking both the hands of Muhammad in her own, she begs him not to forget to bestow his blessings upon her should he be the chosen Messenger of God. The blessings of God seemed to be foremost in her mind. An ordinary woman of the world is not attracted by saints, prophets or holy men with a view to marriage. Hazrat Khadija was beyond doubt a woman of extraordinary aspirations.

No wonder the Prophet always remembered her after her death and spoke very highly of her. Once when an old friend of hers long after her death had come to call on the Pro-

phet, the two of them sat for a long time chatting to each other and recounting between themselves the virtues and wonderful habits of Hazrat Khadija.

At this, the last and youngest wife of the Prophet, Hazrat Aisha Siddiqa, grew jealous. "Who was this lady," she asked, "who encroached upon your time talking of Khadija who was such an old woman."

At hearing this the Prophet rebuked his young wife Aisha and told her not to talk like this, for Khadija was a woman of great qualities; she had faith in him when none else had. She put all her wealth at his disposal when nobody was willing to offer him a dirham. Hazrat Khadija was one wife during whose life-time the Prophet never took another wife.

She gave her husband no male heir (the only one she gave birth to died in his infancy), he could easily have taken another wife but it appeared Muhammad (may peace be upon him) was very attached to Hazrat Khadija. After many years of marriage when she died, the Prophet was still not too old—while she was sixty-five or so. Yet for a long time after her death he did not take another wife. When finally he did contract other marriages it was during the great fights for Islam when he invariably took into his protection, women that had lost their husbands or were divorcees and discarded by society or he made a political marriage to serve the cause of Islam. Hazrat Aisha, the Prophet's youngest wife and a very young girl, was the daughter of his best friend Abu Bakr who, out of sheer devotion

and honour for the Holy Prophet, had offered him his young daughter in marriage.

It was the highest honour Abu Bakr could have paid the Prophet and refusing such a match would have been a point of disregarding a good friend.

The detractors or those who speak against the Holy Prophet having married many wives do not realize how many Prophets before him did exactly the same.

If the prophet married too young a girl in his old age, he is the same young man who married an elderly woman (twice a widow) in his early age. Disparity of age, it appears was a matter of little or no consequence to him who was charged with a holy mission. All that was important was

to marry believing women and not to allow them to fall into the hands of disbelieving men.

In Sura IV named "Women", the Prophet of Islam shows great concern over widows and orphans. This verse was revealed after the "Battle of the Trenches," when many women had lost their husbands in the war for Islam. The Prophet enjoins marriage on believing men rather than debauchery. "(Allah would make the burden light for you, for man was created weak)".

In the same Sura God says through the mouth of the Prophet, "Allah would explain to you and guide you by the example of those who were before you and would turn to you in mercy. Allah is knower, wise."

CHAPTER XIII

Hazrat Khadija was truly a magnificent lady. She showed faith and courage at a time when, in the first three years the Prophet merely extended the invitation to join Islam to his nearest and dearest friends and relatives, at a time when the people of Mecca and the proud and difficult tribe of the Quraish expressed the opinion that Muhammad had gone mad, or the revelation that he received was mere propaganda stunt.

It was only at the end of the third year that the Prophet received the command to "arise and warn". It is after this that he began to preach his faith publicly. He warned the idol-worshippers to desist

from their evil practices of making useless sacrifices to stones. This naturally aroused their anger and vengeance. This period of the Prophet's life was really critical and it was at this time that Hazrat Khadija's care and support was a source of great strength and inspiration to him.

That Hazrat Khadija was not only loved by her husband but also by God Almighty is clear from a certain revelation made to the Prophet by Gabriel. Said Muhammad her husband once :

“The angel Gabriel appeared to me and said, O Messenger of God! the Almighty has sent this greetings to Khadija, when she arrives deliver this message to her.”

This tradition has exalted Hazrat Khadija to the status of one of

Islam's most blessed of women and to the position of a saint.

Slowly Islam began to spread but started from the Prophet's closer associates, Hazrat Khadija, Hazrat Ali, the slave Zaid-bin-Harsha, Abu Bakr. These early converts, a few in number to begin with, soon began to increase. They were well aware of the fate ahead. They knew too well the day would come when the Quraish (now indifferent) would soon rise up against them. The Prophet was getting more and more active in spreading his teachings. The new converts to this new but glorious faith began to say their prayers in secret and in remote places. Whenever a non-believer happened to see them praying, he laughed and scoffed at them. There came a time when a believer by the

name of Sad-bin-Abi Waqas threw a bone of a camel at the head of a scoffer and seriously injured him for having offended his feelings. This was the first time that blood had flown in the name of Islam.

Hazrat Khadija, first among the small band of followers, was sure of final victory and hence stood steadfast and firm all through this trying period. Among her own children, her daughter Zainab (married to Abu-Alhas Khadija's nephew), had also by now accepted Islam but her husband, did not nor did her mother-in-law—Khadija's real sister Hala.

The other daughters of Hazrat Khadija by Prophet Muhammad, Ruqaiya and Kulsoom, also got converted but not their husbands. For a time it seemed the Prophet would have to face not only the different

tribes of the Quraish but even his own household. Fatima, the youngest and favourite daughter of the Prophet, was not yet married but she had, like the other sisters, accepted the faith of her father.

Hazrat Khadija had since long cherished the desire for a male child who would perpetuate her husband's race but so far there did not appear a sign of any such hope ever fulfilling. Time passed and soon this hope, too, began to die out in her breast for by now she was almost a woman of sixty years of age.

The Prophet loved his daughters, no doubt, but he also wanted a son. At last this dream too came true though only for a while, for Khadija did bear her husband another son who was called Abdullah after the Holy Prophet's father but this child

too like an earlier male child called Qasim, died in infancy.

Hazrat Khadija felt very grieved at the death of yet another precious son, so did the Prophet, but both bore this great loss patiently. It seems God wanted it that way so that people may learn a lesson from the life of the Prophet that female children were not to be despised but to be cherished and loved as much as male children.

The ignorant treated their female children badly. It would appear that among well-to-do circles women seemed to be quite free to work side by side with men as business women, servants in a household etc. and to move about freely.

There are untold incidents in Arab history when women dictated

terms to kings. Sahawa, the daughter of Arashtur, shortly after the death of the Prophet, went with applications on behalf of her people to the Caliph Moawiya. She helped Hazrat Ali during the battles. Khansa, the poetess and proud mother of two warrior sons, accompanied her boys to the battlefield just to see that they did not turn their backs on the enemy.

These women were exceptional in the history of Arabia. It takes time and years for seeds such as these to blossom and bear fruit, so Hazrat Khadija was among the few business women in Arabia, especially as a widow, who did not have a man to support her, to take up a trade.

CHAPTER XIV

Prophet Muhammad had a tremendous work ahead of him and since it was a command from God that he should openly declare his mission (and he had already started doing it) there arose a great many problems day by day. At this time when he came home Hazrat Khadija was always anxious to know about the progress he was making.

By this time the Quraish had begun to see that Muhammad's religion was slowly but steadily gaining ground. They got alarmed and once all the tribes came together and after conferring with each other they decided to go and talk to Abu-Talib so that by his influence he

would stop Muhammad from going too far in changing not only their religion but the Arabs' entire way of life. They said to Abu Talib :—

“On account of your nephew we are all in a mess. He asks us not to worship our gods, he finds faults in our religion. He attacks the faith of our fathers. He accuses them of having gone astray. It has become impossible for us to tolerate this any further. Either you stop him from behaving the way he is, or allow us to deal with him as we think fit. Because you, too, Abu-Talib are an important member of our tribe and belong to our faith, we implore you to do something to stop Muhammad from going further.”

Abu Talib spoke to the delegation gently and somehow sent them away pacified.

Muhammad (may peace be upon him) carried on with his task as usual. By the evening when he came home, Khadija was ever beside him and talked to him anxiously about the happenings. She was one person whose faith in him was unflinching. When the Quraish found that their warning had had no effect on Muhammad, they went upto Abu Talib again and said :—

“Abu Talib, we have great respect for you and have always held you in great esteem, that is why we came to you to speak to your nephew and use your influence on him. But it appears you have paid us no heed. This time we swear to you if he does not stop abusing the faith of our fathers, we shall leave no stone unturned in wreaking vengeance on him and even on you and not only

that we will not stop our fight against you till we have put a complete end to either one or the other party.''
Saying this they went away.

This time Abu Talib got a little worried. To have the rest of the tribes all against him was no small matter. How could they fight so many people. So he called Muham-
mad and said to him :—

“My dear child, one entire tribe has arisen against you and has come to me with a serious complaint that you decry our faith and accuse our elders of being false and in error. I beg you to have mercy on yourself and on me and please put no more burden on me than I can bear.’”

Muhammad (may God bless him) heard the words of his uncle carefully and realized by now that the old man

was losing his nerves. All the same he said :—

“My dear uncle, even if these people put the sun on my right hand and the moon on my left, even then I will not forsake this work that God has assigned to me, nor will I rest till God has given me either victory or death.”

Saying this the Prophet's eyes filled with tears.

Abu Talib at noting the conviction in his nephew's tone soon began to relent. Finally he said :—

“My dear nephew, go ahead then and proceed with your work, as long as there is life in me I shall continue to defend you to my utmost capacity.”

When Hazrat Khadija heard of what had transpired between the

uncle and the nephew, she got really worried, knowing well by now that the Quraish were all worked up against her husband and that now they would surely begin to torture and torment the Muslims—the followers of Muhammad.

Once again the Quraish realized that their former missions had failed, because they had too much regard for Abu Talib, they decided to give Muhammad yet another chance. This time taking a young lad with them they said :—

Abu Talib, here is a young and handsome boy for you. You take him for a son and hand over Muhammad to us. He has created a great confusion amongst us. He has divided father and mother, brother and sister, husband and wife, and

ruined our family lives. For this crime we are ready to put him to death and thereby save our people from destruction."

Abu Talib answered, "What a bargain you people make with me that I should adopt your child and give up my own to be slaughtered by you! By God this will never happen."

Then out of the tribes arose a man saying :—

"Abu Talib, our people out of deference for you, have made every possible effort to improve the situation, but nothing seems to be acceptable to you, now you yourself suggest to us as to how we should deal with you".

Abu Talib answered, "I swear to you, you are not being fair to me.

On the contrary you have all united against me and have left me with an impossible choice. Now I leave you to do as you please since I have no option."

At this the Quraish rose up in great fury and vowed to persecute the Muslims. The early converts were, by and large, a humble and defenceless folk. The Quraish became so cruel to them that it became impossible for them to live in Mecca. At one stage the Prophet even advised the poor people to go away to some Christian country such as Abyssinia where at least there would be no tribal feuds.

But the small band of Muslims began to increase and grow in number all the more. The Quraish became more and more alarmed.

Their House of worship, Kaaba, was in great danger. It was Mecca's greatest attraction. People came here on a pilgrimage from far and wide. Every year fairs were held, trade was conducted and these pilgrims and tourists were to them a source of great wealth too.

As far as their faith was concerned, the Meccans considered themselves the guardians of this Holy place. Fighting the Muslims was now a matter of honour. At first they did try to make some compromise with Muhammad whereby he would at least allow some room for their different gods and goddesses to exist. If not side by side, at least as mediums between them and Muhammed's God.

But the Holy Prophet of Islam whose main mission in life was to

undo idol-worship altogether refused to make any allowances whatsoever.

As a result, the Quraish became worse than ever before. They began to warn every pilgrim about the mad man in the city.

They advised every Meccan house to boycott all the Muslims, not to allow them drinking water from their wells, not to make purchases or sell anything to them. They even began to throw them out of the city, all those who believed in the faith of Muhammad and even those idolators who supported or tolerated them.

At last things became so bad that Muhammad's entire household and relatives were completely shut up in a stronghold which was situated at a gorge which runs upto Mecca.

It was only at the time of the pilgrimage that Muhammad and his

family could come to the city of Mecca. This precious time he used in giving sermons to the people.

These times must have been very trying for the Prophet's family. Hazrat Khadija had spent her last penny on her beloved husband's mission. She was with him through thick and thin. Whatever luck was hers was all that God had bestowed on her, before and after a few years of marriage. The greater part of her life was spent in serving the needs of the poor relatives and needy friends that thronged her house.

Indeed Khadija's and Muhammad's house, from the beginning of their marriage upto now when the revelation was being made to him, was nothing but a great big mission house where people ran for asylum or

succour. Hazrat Khadija was an ideal wife for a man charged with such a responsible and difficult work.

When the clan of the Prophet had been boycotted long enough and stayed far and away from people for quite awhile, some good old Meccans began to miss and remember them. They thought perhaps after all they had had enough of a lesson and would soon mend their ways. Some important documents bearing the seal of the Prophet and the Meccans had been lying deposited in the Kaaba. The Quraish thought of giving them over and finding a way out of making grounds for some kind of truce between them. But when they opened the documents they found to their utter amazement that all had been moth-eaten except the words : "Bismillah Arrahman Arrahim" (In

the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful). When the elders saw this they were filled with great wonder and amazement. They once again allowed Muhammad to go about freely in the city, and once again Muhammad preached: "There is no god but God and Muhammad is His Apostle."

CHAPTER XV

Hazrat Khadija knew that such a success was only a small one. The persecution of the Muslims that she had witnessed earlier where believing women had been shamefully dishonoured, and believing men dragged disgracefully in the streets of Mecca; where water and food were withheld from the thirsty and the hungry; where trade and employment was denied to the worker and the trader. Khadija could not but help worry about the fate of her dear husband and Allah's faithful Apostle.

Once when Muhammad; (may peace be upon him) had entered the Kaaba with a view to making a pilgrimage to the House of God as set

up by Abraham, the important people of the city that happened to be sitting there abused him. Muhammad insisted that they were on the wrong; they were worshipping useless idols that could neither see, nor hear, nor be of any use to them.

At this one man got up from the temple and throwing his mantle as a noose around Muhammad, tried to strangle him to death. But the Prophet's best friend Hazrat Abu Bakr turned up in time and saved him from the clutches of the much infuriated man.

You can well imagine the state of Hazrat Khadija when she heard of such things happening to her husband. However brave, she must have always been living on her nerves lest harm should befall him.

Once when the Prophet had not come home in time, Hazrat Khadija rushed out to find him. On the way she found a stranger enquiring after her husband. She got a little worried thinking the man might have been anxious to know the whereabouts of Muhammad with an evil intent. When she came back to the house and found her husband there, she related her fears to him. Said the Prophet to her consolingly:

“The man that you saw in human shape was the angel Gabriel. He paid his respects to you and has promised Paradise for you where you shall find palaces of gold and where peace and contentment will reign supreme.”

Tradition has it that this is the second time the angel Gabriel sent his greetings and good tidings to Hazrat

Khadija. It appears that Angel Gabriel was not only always at the side of the Prophet in spirit but was also very often there in human garb. He seems to be the Prophet's constant companion although unseen by others. The angel's words of consolation for Hazrat Khadija were a reminder of God's approval of her love and concern for the Prophet.

They are words full of extreme gentleness and of a great promise. They are also as such a reflection of the Prophet's feelings for his wife.

“The best men are those that are kindest to their wives.” (Quran)

CHAPTER XVI

Since we are writing about Hazrat Khadija, it is necessary at this stage to say something about the attitude of her kinsmen towards Muhammad and his religion.

Like many other Meccans, a great many relations of Khadija were also idol-worshippers but there were a few such close members of her family like Warqa-bin-Nofel who had been in search of a better faith. These found peace in Christianity. Unfortunately Warqa died before the advent of Islam but there were others in the family who did accept the faith of Muhammad, some openly and some in secret. The number of these converts, however, was very

small. All the same Hazrat Khadija's family was all very fond of Muhammad. Practically all of them approved of this match and were constant visitors to their happy home. Some of course refused to give up their old beliefs and Khadija did fear that in case of an open feud between the tribe of the Hashmites and others, these relations would be of no help to her or her husband. However Muhammad preached in general and did not force his family members to accept him. He was very attached to his wife's relatives. Once when Warqa-bin-Nofel's brother had a quarrel with someone and this man was speaking against Warqa-bin-Nofel, the Prophet hearing of this incident, was very hurt. At once he called the fellow to him and asked him to refrain from speaking against

Warqa. It shows how fond of Warqa-bin-Nofel he was. Once when Hazrat Khadija after the death of this cousin asked her husband as to where Warqa stood in the next world. The Prophet said :—

“I see him in a white garb. From this it appears that God Almighty has granted him heaven, for had he been in hell he would never have been in white.”

The children of Khadija from her former husbands had all accepted Islam. Hind was practically reared in the arms of the Holy Prophet himself. He was the son of Khadija's first husband Abu Hala. The first son was named Hala after his father and the second was named Hinda. This was a girl's name but in those days women were superstitious. To guard their sons against the evil eye.

of jealous women, they often gave their sons feminine names. The second son of Hazrat Khadija was a great pet of Muhammad. When he grew up he very proudly called himself the son of Muhammad. He used to say :—

“I am an important person among the Quraish, for my father is Muhammad, my mother Khadija, my brother, Hashim and my sister, Fatima.”

Hala, too accepted Islam. Out of Khadija's closest family members from the house of Kholeed, Zubair bin Awam was the first to accept the religion of Muhammad. He was twelve years of age then but some sources even say that he was only eight when he was converted. The Prophet loved this little boy very much and even went as far as saying

“Every Prophet has a disciple and mine is Zubair”.

Khadija's brother Nofel's son Asud also accepted the faith of Islam. Strangely enough, his father (Khadija's real brother) was a great opponent of the new religion. The poor boy had to suffer a great deal at the hands of the Quraish as well from the wrath of his own father.

You can judge for yourself here what a great movement the Prophet had started in Mecca. Indeed as the Quraish had feared it divided father from son etc. and caused great hostility between members of the same family.

Yet another nephew of Khadija's also accepted Islam. His name was Khalid, son of “Hazaam”. He was

the last to make the flight from Mecca to Yathrib. This city was called Al-Medina, the city par excellence. At Yathrib or Medina there were many learned Jews and Rabbis who had often, like the learned Christians, spoken to the pagans and the heathens about a coming prophet who would hail from Arabia and who would eventually destroy the idol-worshippers as the tribes of A'ad and Thamud had been destroyed before in the olden times. These Jews now fully accepted Muhammad to be that prophet that they had long expected. When they went back after their pilgrimage to Mecca and told the people of Yathrib of all that they had seen and heard, many people came to Mecca at the next time of the pilgrimage just to see Muhammad.

When they saw Muhammad they soon accepted his faith and took a vow to defend him with their heart and soul. This pact was called the first pact of Al-Aqabah. Soon there was barely a house in Yathrib that had not heard of the Messenger of Allah.

The next year about seventy-three Muslims from Yathrib who had come on a pilgrimage made another pact with Muhammad vowing to stand by him through thick and thin and they also invited him to come to Yathrib. They swore to defend the honour of every Muslim woman and child of the Prophet's faith, should they decide to come. It was here at the dead of night at "Al-Aqabah" that a plan to migrate to Medina or Yathrib was hatched. This migration in Arabic is referred to as the Hijrat.

The support of the people of

Yathrib emboldened many a Meccan Muslim and gradually they began to dispose of their properties in Mecca and go away to Yathrib. Now Khalid, son of Hazaam, and the nephew of Khadija, was the last to migrate. His arrival was very eagerly awaited at Medina by the rest of the family that had migrated but unfortunately he died on the way. About him his cousin Zubair-bin-Awam used to say:—

“I feel so grieved about the death of Khalid because besides myself he was the only male member from the tribe of Asad bin Abdul Ghara who would have been in Yathrib.”

We speak of these people at length because they were the relatives of Hazrat Khadija. Although not all her family had converted to Islam, nevertheless they did not try to be too hostile towards the new reli-

gion. This was all on account of Hazrat Khadija. In the end even Hala, her real sister, accepted the faith. Her son Abu Alhas spent most of his time in the house of the Prophet and Khadija. The Holy Prophet liked him very much and it is on account of this reason that he gave his daughter Zainab in marriage to him. Although he did not accept his father-in-law's faith he never troubled his wife for having done so. "He is a fine son-in-law", the Prophet used to say about him.

From all this it is clear that Khadija's house was always full of relatives and she had a large household to look after. Her three children from her former two husbands, Zainab, Ruqaiya, Kulsoom (other than Qasim and Abdullah who died shortly after their birth), Hazrat Ali,

son of Abu Talib, who later became the greatest soldier, scholar and preacher of Islam.

Scores of relations seemed to be going in and out of the house, all well-connected and wealthy. From the respect shown to Abu Talib by the Quraish, you can see for yourself in what esteem Muhammad's own family was held, although off and on Abu Talib became a victim to bad days.

From the story of Hazrat Khadija we learn in how much respect and harmony families lived with each other and how they all helped their poorer relatives in time of trouble. We must respect our relatives more than our friends because while friends can be of our own choice, our relatives are God-given. No matter how poor or badly off they are, we should never feel ashamed of them because

whatever they are by no means of marriage, they are a part of us.

From the life of Hazrat Khadija and Prophet Muhammad we see how very generous and large-hearted they were towards their own relatives such as Abu Talib's son Ali as well as poor out-siders who always came to them for help.

That money was no consideration to Hazrat Khadija is obvious from the beginning. Although from a very rich home and a family that was known for its status and wealth in the whole of Mecca, she married Muhammad (may God bless him) and never ceased to spend her wealth in the cause of the poor and the needy. This was her greatest quality.

Allah is just with all men and gives them a fair measure. To some He

gives wealth but takes away from them another heart's desire. To others He gives poverty but gives in lieu many other things, which they would want deeply and intensely if deprived of it. Our daily bread is promised to all human beings by God and a fair measure of it is ordained for us on earth. That we consume our share of all that is ordained for us in one day or spread it over a larger period is our own choice. Should a man have more than his share of food or wealth at a given period, it is only proper that he share it with his fellow-men rather than allow it to go to waste or be hoarded.

We write of this because Hazrat Khadija seems to have been a lady reposing complete faith in God's promises. She spent freely because

she knew God in turn would give her freely too.

Her first words after the revelation made to the Prophet are full of this philosophy: "God will not forsake you or bring you harm because you are good to the poor and the needy etc. etc.

After these words we do not need to know more about the character and personality of this great lady. It sums up her entire self and the story of her life.

Hazrat Khadija was a constant companion of the Prophet during the years of his hardest struggles. He always came home and told her all that was happening. She was one companion who had the great honour of enjoying the Prophet's complete trust. Considering she was fifteen

years older than her husband, it is only her good qualities of head and heart that bound her so deeply to the Prophet, that long after her death he kept on remembering her.

Once when Hazrat Khadija's sister's (Hala's) voice was heard at the door, at once the Prophet was startled into saying "This sounds like Khadija's voice".

Hazrat Aisha, the last and youngest wife of the Prophet, used to say: "I was jealous of no other wife of my husband as I was of Khadija although the poor lady had died long before and I had never set eyes on her. It was because the Holy Prophet remembered her so much and so lovingly."

Hazrat Aisha, too, was a good lady, because she was so truthful in narrating these facts about the life

and feelings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

When Hazrat Aisha spoke lightly and jealously of Hazrat Khadija, the Prophet was displeased with her and did not speak to her for some days. It was Hazrat Aisha's mother who had to come and plead on her daughter's behalf.

Long after Hazrat Khadija's death, the Prophet kept up the custom of sending gifts to the good friends of Hazrat Khadija. After the "Battle of the Trenches" the Muslims had got hold of some enemy prisoners and the Prophet had ordered that they be set free on certain conditions.

Hazrat Khadija's sister's son Abu Alhas was also among the prisoners. His wife, Zainab, sent a necklace for his ransom, a gift given by Hazrat Khadija to her daughter in her dow-

ry. When the Holy Prophet saw this necklace tears welled up in his eyes and he said very sadly to his Companions:

“If you like, you may return this necklace to Zainab as it was a gift from Khadija.”

This was not said in consideration of any other reason than this that the necklace was a token of Hazrat Khadija's memory, otherwise the good son-in-law was an open enemy of Islam.

Indeed! Hazrat Khadija was herself a garland of many gem-like qualities which made it impossible for the Prophet to forget her. May God bless her and may this pious wife of the Holy Prophet forever remain an example for all wives to follow.

END





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