

Khadija, The Loyal Wife of Prophet

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Qusayy, then, is the ancestor of all clans belonging to Quraysh. According to some historians, Quraysh's real name was Fahr, and he was son of Malik son of Madar son of Kananah son of Khuzaimah son of Mudrikah son of Ilyas son of Mazar son of Nazar son of Ma`ad son of Adnan son of Isma`eel (Ishmael) son of Ibrahim (Abraham) son of Sam son of Noah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon the prophets from among his ancestors.

According to a number of sources, Khadija was born in 565 A.D. and died one year before the Hijra (migration of the Holy Prophet and his followers from Mecca to Medina) in 623 A.D. at the age of 58, but some historians say that she lived to be 65. Khadija's mother, who died around 575 A.D., was Fatima daughter of Za'ida ibn al-Asam of Banu `Amir ibn Luayy ibn Ghalib, also a distant relative of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Khadija's father, who died around 585 A.D., belonged to the Abd al-`Uzza clan of the tribe of Quraysh and, like many other Qurayshis, was a merchant, a successful businessman whose vast wealth and business talents were inherited by Khadija and whom the latter succeeded in faring with the family's vast wealth.

It is said that when Quraysh's trade caravans gathered to embark upon their lengthy and arduous journey either to Syria during the summer or to Yemen during the winter, Khadija's caravan equalled the caravans of all other traders of Quraysh put together.

Although the society in which Khadija was born was a terribly male chauvinistic one, Khadija earned two titles: Ameerat-Quraysh, Princess of Quraysh, and al-Tahira, the Pure One, due to her impeccable personality and virtuous character, not to mention her honorable descent. She used to feed and clothe the poor, assist her relatives financially, and even provide for the marriage of those of her kin who could not otherwise have had means to marry.

By 585 A.D., Khadija was left an orphan. Despite that, and after having married twice- and twice lost her husband to the ravaging wars with which Arabia was afflicted- she had no mind to marry a third time though she was sought for marriage by many honorable and highly respected men of the Arabian peninsula throughout which she was quite famous due to her business dealings.

She simply hated the thought of being widowed for a third time. Her first husband was Abu (father of) Halah Hind ibn Zarah who belonged to Banu `Adiyy, and the second was Ateeq ibn `Aaith. Both men belonged to Banu Makhzoom. By her first husband, she gave birth to a son

who was named after his father Hind and who came to be one of the greatest sahabah (companions of the Holy Prophet).

He participated in both battles of Badr and Uhud, and he is also famous for describing the Prophet's physique; he was martyred during the Battle of the Camel in which he fought on the side of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (as), although some historians say that he died in Basrah. All biography accounts describe Hind as an outspoken orator, a man of righteousness and generosity, and one who took extreme caution while quoting the Messenger of Allah (pbuh). Besides him, Khadija gave birth by Abu Lahab to two other sons: al-Tahir, and, of course, Lahab, who is not very well known to historians despite the fact that his father is nicknamed after him.

Who were Khadija's children by her second husband? This is another controversy that revolves round the other daughters or step-daughters of the Prophet (pbuh) besides Fatima (as). These daughters, chronologically arranged, are: Zainab, Ruqayya, and Ummu Kulthoom. Some historians say that these were Khadija's daughters by her second husband, whereas others insist they were her daughters by Muhammad (pbuh). The first view is held by Sayyid Safdar Husayn in his book *The Early History of Islam* wherein he bases his conclusion on the contents of al-Sayyuti's famous work *Tarikh al-khulafa wal muluk* (history of the caliphs and kings). We hope some of our Muslim sisters who read this text will be tempted to research this subject.

Here is a brief account of Khadija's daughters:

Zainab, their oldest, was born before the prophetic mission and was married to Abul-`As ibn al-Rabee`. She had accepted Islam before her husband, and she participated in the migration from Mecca to Medina. She died early in 8 A.H. and was buried in Jannatul Baqee` where her grave can still be seen defying the passage of time. Ruqayya and Ummu Kulthoom married two of Abu Lahab's sons. Abu Lahab, one of the Prophet's uncles, stubbornly and openly rejected his nephew's preaching; therefore, he was condemned in the Meccan Chapter 111 of the Holy Qur'an, a chapter named after him. Having come to know about such a condemnation, he became furious and said to his sons, "There shall be no kinship between you and me unless you part with these daughters of Muhammad," whereupon they divorced them instantly. Ruqayya married the third caliph `Uthman ibn `Affan and migrated with him to Ethiopia in 615 A.D., five years after the inception of the prophetic mission, accompanied by no more than nine others.

That was the first of two such migrations. After coming back home, she died in Medina in 2 A.H. and was buried at Jannatul Baqee`. `Uthman then married her sister Ummu Kulthoom in Rabi` al-Awwal of the next (third) Hijri year. Ummu Kulthoom lived with her husband for about

six years before dying in 9 A.H., leaving no children.

One particular quality in Khadija was quite interesting, probably more so than any of her other qualities mentioned above: she, unlike her people, never believed in nor worshipped idols. There was a very small number of Christians and Jews in Mecca, and a fairly large number of Jews in Medina. Waraqah ibn Nawfal, one of Khadija's cousins, had embraced Christianity and was a pious monk who believed in the Unity of the Almighty, just as all early Christians did, that is, before the concept of the Trinity crept into the Christian faith, widening the theological differences among the believers in Christ (as).

He reportedly had translated the Bible from Hebrew into Arabic. His likes could be counted on the fingers of one hand during those days in the entire populous metropolis of Mecca, or Becca, or Ummul-Qura (the mother town), a major commercial center at the crossroads of trade caravans linking Arabia with India, Persia, China, and Byzantium, a city that had its own Red Sea port at Shu`ayba.

Most importantly, Mecca housed the Ka`ba, the cubic "House of God" which has always been sought for pilgrimage and which used to be circled by naked polytheist "pilgrims" who kept their idols, numbering 360 small and big, male and female, inside it and on its roof-top. Among those idols was one for Abraham and another for Ishmael, each carrying divine arrows in his hands. Hubal, a huge idol in the shape of a man, was given as a gift by the Moabites of Syria to the tribesmen of Khuza`ah, and it was Mecca's chief idol.

Two other idols of significance were those of the Lat, a grey granite image which was the deity of Thaqif in nearby Taif, and the Uzza, also a block of granite about twenty feet long. These were regarded as the wives of the Almighty... Each tribe had its own idol, and the wealthy bought and kept a number of idols at home. The institute of pilgrimage was already there; it simply was not being observed properly, and so was the belief in Allah Whom the Arabs regarded as their Supreme deity. Besides Paganism, other "religions" in Arabia included star worship and fetishism.

The Jews of Medina had migrated from Palestine and settled there waiting for the coming of a new Prophet from the seed of Abraham (as) in whom they said they intended to believe and to be the foremost in following, something which unfortunately did not materialize; on the contrary, they joined ranks with the Pagans to fight the spread of Islam. Only a handful of them embraced Islam, including one man who was a neighbor of Muhammad (pbuh); he lived in the same alley in Mecca where Khadija's house stood; his wife, also Jewish, used to collect dry thorny bushes from the desert just to throw them in the Prophet's way.

Since Khadija did not travel with her trade caravans, she had always had to rely on someone

else to act as her agent to trade on her behalf and to receive an agreed upon commission in return. In 595 A.D., Khadija needed an agent to trade in her merchandise going to Syria, and it was then that a number of agents whom she knew before and trusted, as well as some of her own relatives, particularly Abu Talib, suggested to her to employ her distant cousin Muhammad ibn Abdullah (pbuh) who, by then, had earned the honoring titles of al-Sadiq, the truthful, and al-Amin, the trustworthy. Muhammad (pbuh) did not have any practical business experience, but he had twice accompanied his uncle Abu Talib on his trade trips and keenly observed how he traded, bartered, bought and sold and conducted business; after all, the people of Quraysh were famous for their involvement in trade more than in any other profession. It was not uncommon to hire an agent who did not have a prior experience; so, Khadija decided to give Muhammad (pbuh) a chance. He was only 25 years old. Khadija sent Muhammad (pbuh) word through Khazimah ibn Hakim, one of her relatives, offering him twice as much commission as she usually offered her agents to trade on her behalf. She also gave him one of her servants, Maysarah, who was young, brilliant, and talented, to assist him and be his bookkeeper. She also trusted Maysarah's account regarding her new employee's conduct, an account which was most glaring, indeed one which encouraged her to abandon her insistence never to marry again.

Before embarking upon his first trip as a businessman representing Khadija, Muhammad (pbuh) met with his uncles for last minute briefings and consultations, then he set out on the desert road passing through Wadi al-Qura, Midian, and Diyar Thamud, places with which he was familiar because of having been there at the age of twelve in the company of his uncle Abu Talib. He continued the lengthy journey till he reached Busra (or Bostra) on the highway to the ancient city of Damascus after about a month. It was then the capital of Hawran, one of the southeastern portions of the province of Damascus situated north of the Balqa'. To scholars of classic literature, Hawran is known by its Greek name Auranitis, and it is described in detail by Yaqt al-Hamawi, Abul-Faraj al-Isfahani, and others. Arab trade caravans used to go there quite often and even beyond it to Damascus and Gaza, and few made it all the way to Mediterranean shores to unload their precious cargoes of Chinese paper and silk textiles bound for Europe.

What items did Muhammad (pbuh) carry with him to Busra, and what items did he buy from there? Meccans were not known to be skilled craftsmen, nor did they excel in any profession besides trade, but young Muhammad (pbuh) might have carried with him a cargo of hides, raisins, perfumes, dried dates, light weight woven items, probably silver bars, and most likely some herbs. He bought what he was instructed by his employer to buy: these items may have

included manufactured goods, clothes, a few luxury items to sell to wealthy Meccans, and maybe some household goods. Gold and silver currency accepted in Mecca included Roman, Persian, and Indian coins, for Arabs during those times, including those who were much more sophisticated than the ones among whom Muhammad (pbuh) grew up such as the Arabs of the southern part of Arabia (Yemen, Hadramout, etc.), did not have a currency of their own; so, barter was more common than cash. The first Arab Islamic currency, by the way, was struck in Damascus by the Umayyad ruler Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan (697-698 A.D.) in 78 A.H., 36 years after the establishment of the Umayyad dynasty (661-750).

The time Muhammad (pbuh) stayed in Busra was no more than a couple of months during which he met many Christians and Jews and noticed the theological differences among the major Christian sects that led to the disassociation of the Copts, the Syrian (Chaldean) Nestorian, and the Armenian Christians from the main churches of Antioch (Antakiya), Rome, and Egyptian Alexandria. Such dissensions and differences of theological viewpoints provided Muhammad (pbuh) with plenty of food for thought; he contemplated upon them a great deal. He was seen once by Nestor the monk sitting in the shade of a tree as caravans entered the outskirts of Busra, not far from the monk's small monastery. "Who is the man beneath that tree?" inquired Nestor of Maysarah. "A man of Quraysh," Maysarah answered, adding, "of the people [the Hashemites] who have guardianship of the Sanctuary." "None other than a Prophet is sitting beneath that tree," said Nestor who had observed some of the signs indicative of Prophethood: two angels (or, according to other reports, two small clouds) were shading Muhammad (pbuh) from the oppressive heat of the sun. "Is there a glow, a slight redness, around his eyes that never parts with him?" Nestor asked Maysarah. When the latter answered in the affirmative, Nestor said, "He most surely is the very last Prophet; congratulations to whoever believes in him."

One of Muhammad's observations when he was in that Syrian city was the historical fact that a feud was brewing between the Persian and Roman empires, each vying for hegemony over Arabia's fertile crescent. Indeed, such an observation was quite accurate, for after only a few years, a war broke out between the then mightiest nations on earth that ended with the Romans losing it, as the Holy Qur'an tells us in Chapter 30 (The Romans), which was revealed in 7 A.H./615-16 A.D., only a few months after the fall of Jerusalem to the Persians, just to win in a successive one. Only four years prior to that date, the Persians had scored a sweeping victory over the Christians, spreading their control over Aleppo, Antioch, and even Damascus. Muhammad (pbuh) was concerned about either of these two empires extending its control over the land inhabited by Muhammad's Pagan fiercely independent Pagan people. The loss of

Jerusalem, birthplace of Christ Jesus son of Mary (as), was a heavy blow to the prestige of Christianity. Most Persians were then following Zoroastrianism, a creed introduced in the 6th century before Christ by Zoroaster (628-551 B.C.), also known as Zarathustra, whose adherents are described as worshippers of the "pyre," the holy fire. "Persia," hence, meant "the land of the worshippers of the pyre, the sacred fire." Modern day Iran used to be known as "Aryana," land of the Aryan nations and tribes. Not only Iranians, but also Kurds, and even Germans, prided in being Aryans, (Caucasian) Nordics or speakers of an Indo-European dialect. Some Persians had converted to Christianity as we know from Salman al-Farisi who was one such adherent till he fell in captivity, sold in Mecca and freed to be one of the most renown and cherished sahabis and narrators of hadith in Islamic history, so much so that the Prophet of Islam (pbuh) said, "Salman is one of us, we Ahl al-Bayt (People of the Household of Prophethood)."

The war referred to above was between the then Byzantine (Eastern Roman) emperor Heraclius (575 - 641 A.D.) and the Persian king Khusrau (Khosrow) Parwiz (Parviz) or Chosroes II (d. 628 A.D.). It was one of many wars in which those mighty nations were embroiled and which continued for many centuries. Yet the hands of Divine Providence were already busy paving the path for Islam: the collision between both empires paved the way for the ultimate destruction of the ancient Persian empire and in Islam setting root in that important part of the world. Moreover, Muhammad's (and, naturally, Khadija's) offspring came to marry ladies who were born and raised at Persian as well as Roman palaces. Imam Husain ibn Ali ibn Abu Talib (as), Muhammad's grandson and our Third Holy Imam, married the daughter of the last Persian emperor Jazdagird (Yazdegerd) III son of Shahryar and grandson of this same Khusrau II. Jazdagird ruled Persia from 632-651 A.D. and lost the Battle of Qadisiyyah to the Muslim forces in 636, thus ending the rule of the Sassanians. Having been defeated, he fled for Media in northwestern Iran, homeland of Persian Mede tribesmen, and from there to Merv, an ancient Central Asian city near modern day Mary in Turkmenistan (until very recently one of the republics of the Soviet Union), where he was killed by a miller. The slain emperor left two daughters who, during their attempt to escape, following the murder of their father, were caught and sold as slaves. One of them, Shah-Zenan, ended up marrying our Third Holy Imam Husain ibn Ali ibn Abu Talib (as), whereas her sister married the renown scholar and acclaimed muhaddith (traditionist) Muhammad son of the first Muslim caliph Abu Bakr. Shah-Zenan was awarded a royal treatment and was given a new name in her own Persian mother tongue: Shahr Banu, which means "mistress of the ladies of the city." The marriage between her and Imam Husain (as) produced our Fourth Holy Imam (Zainul-Abidin,

or al-Sajjad) Ali ibn al-Husain ibn Ali ibn Abu Talib (as).

The profits Khadija reaped from that trip were twice as much as she had anticipated. Maysarah was more fascinated by Muhammad (pbuh) than by anything related to the trip. Muhammad (pbuh), on the other hand, brought back his impressions about what he had seen and heard, impressions which he related to his mistress. You see, those trade caravans were the only links contemporary Arabs had with their outside world: they brought them the news of what was going on beyond their drought-ridden and famine-stricken desert and sand dunes.

Waraqah ibn Nawfal, like Bahirah, the monk who had seen and spoken to Muhammad (pbuh) when Muhammad (pbuh) was a lad, adhered to the Nestorian Christian sect. He heard the accounts about the personality and conduct of young Muhammad (pbuh) from both his cousin Khadija and her servant Maysarah, an account which caused him to meditate for a good while and think about what he had heard. Raising his head, he said to Khadija, "Such manners are fit only for the messengers of God. Who knows? Maybe this young man is destined to be one of them." This statement was confirmed a few years later, and Waraqah was the very first man who identified Muhammad (pbuh) as the Messenger of Allah immediately after Muhammad (pbuh) received the first revelation at Hira cave.

The trip's measure of success encouraged Khadija to employ Muhammad (pbuh) again on the winter trip to southern Arabia, i.e. Yemen, the land that introduced the coffee beans to the rest of the world, the land where the renown Ma'rib irrigation dam was engineered, the land of Saba' and the renown Balqees, the Arabian Queen of Sheba (Saba') of Himyar, who married King Solomon (Sulayman the wise, peace be upon him), in 975 B.C.

(after the completion of the construction of the famous Solomon's Temple [1]), the land of natives skilled in gold, silver and other metal handicrafts, not to mention their ingenuity in the textile industry and domestic furniture..., and it may even be the land that gave Arabic its first written script which, as some believe, was modelled after written Amheric, then the official language in Ethiopia and its colonies. Yemen, at that time, was being ruled by an Ethiopian regent. This time Khadija offered Muhammad (pbuh) three times the usual commission. Unfortunately, historians do not tell us much about this second trip except that it was equally

profitable to both employer and employee. Some historians do not mention this trip at all. Khadija was by then convinced that she had finally found a man who was worthy of her, so much so that she initiated the marriage proposal herself. Muhammad (pbuh) sat to detail all the business transactions in which he became involved on her behalf, but the wealthy and beautiful lady of Quraysh was thinking more about her distant cousin than about those transactions. She simply fell in love with Muhammad (pbuh) just as the daughter of the

Arabian prophet Shu`ayb had fallen in love with then fugitive prophet Moses (as). Muhammad (pbuh) was of medium stature, inclined to slimness, with a large head, broad shoulders and the rest of his body perfectly proportioned. His hair and beard were thick and black, not altogether straight but slightly curled. His hair reached midway between the lobes of his ears and shoulders, and his beard was of a length to match. He had a noble breadth of forehead and the ovals of his large eyes were wide, with exceptionally long lashes and extensive brows, slightly arched but not joined. His eyes were said to have been black, but other accounts say they were brown, or light brown. His nose was aquiline and his mouth was finely shaped. Although he let his beard grow, he never allowed the hair of his moustache to protrude over his upper lip. His skin was white but tanned by the sun. And there was a light on his face, a glow, the same light that had shone from his father, but it was more, much more powerful, and it was especially apparent on his broad forehead and in his eyes which were remarkably luminous.

By the time he was gone, Khadija sought the advice of a friend of hers named Nufaysa daughter of Umayyah. The latter offered to approach him on her behalf and, if possible, arrange a marriage between them. Nufaysa came to Muhammad (pbuh) and asked him why he had not married yet. "I have no means to marry," he answered. "But if you were given the means," she said, "and if you were bidden to an alliance where there is beauty and wealth and nobility and abundance, would you not then consent?" "Who is she?!" he excitedly inquired. "Khadija," said Nufaysa. "And how could such a marriage be mine?!" he asked. "Leave that to me!" was her answer. "For my part," he said, "I am willing." Nufaysa returned with these glad tidings to Khadija who then sent word to Muhammad (pbuh) asking him to come to her. When he came, she said to him:

O son of my uncle! I love you for your kinship with me, and for that you are ever in the center, not being a partisan among the people for this or for that. And I love you for your trustworthiness, and for the beauty of your character and the truth of your speech.

Then she offered herself in marriage to him, and they agreed that he should speak to his uncles and she would speak to her uncle `Amr son of Asad, since her father had died. It was Hamzah, despite being relatively young, whom the Hashemites delegated to represent them on this marriage occasion, since he was most closely related to them through the clan of Asad; his sister Safiyya had just married Khadija's brother `Awwam. It was Abu Talib, Muhammad's uncle, who delivered the marriage sermon saying,

All praise is due to Allah Who has made us the progeny of Ibrahim (Abraham), the seed of Isma`eel (Ishmael), the descendants of Ma`ad, the substance of Mudar, and Who made us the

custodians of His House and the servants of its sacred precincts, making for us a House sought for pilgrimage and a shrine of security, and He also gave us authority over the people. This nephew of mine Muhammad (pbuh) cannot be compared with any other man: if you compare his wealth with that of others, you will not find him a man of wealth, for wealth is a vanishing shadow and a fickle thing. Muhammad (pbuh) is a man whose lineage you all know, and he has sought Khadija daughter of Khuwaylid for marriage, offering her such-and-such of the dower of my own wealth.

Nawfal then stood and said,

All praise is due to Allah Who has made us just as you have mentioned and preferred us over those whom you have indicated, for we, indeed, are the masters of Arabs and their leaders, and you all are worthy of this (bond of marriage). The tribe (Quraysh) does not deny any of your merits, nor does anyone else dispute your lofty status and prestige. And we, furthermore, wish to be joined to your rope; so, bear witness to my words, O people of Quraysh! I have given Khadija daughter of Khuwaylid in marriage to Muhammad ibn Abdullah for the dower of four hundred dinars.

Then Nawfal paused, whereupon Abu Talib said to him, "I wished her uncle had joined you (in making this statement)." Hearing that, Khadija's uncle stood and said, "Bear witness, O men of Quraysh, that I have given Khadija daughter of Khuwaylid in marriage to Muhammad ibn Abdullah."

These details and more are recorded in Ibn Hisham's Seera. After his marriage, Muhammad (pbuh) moved from his uncle's house to live with his wife in her house which stood at the smiths' market, an alley branching out of metropolitan Mecca's long main bazaar, behind the mas`a, the place where the pilgrims perform the seven circles during the hajj or `umra. In that house Fatima (as) was born and the revelation descended upon the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) many times. This house, as well as the one in which the Prophet of Islam (pbuh) was born (which stood approximately 50 meters northwards), were both demolished by the ignorant and fanatical Wahhabi rulers of Saudi Arabia last year (1413 A.H./1993 A.D.) and turned into public bathrooms. The grave sites of many family members and companions of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) were all demolished by the same Wahhabis in 1343 A.H./1924 A.D. against the wish and despite the denunciation of the adherents of all other Muslim sects and schools of thought world-wide.

The marriage was a very happy one, and it produced a lady who was one of the four perfect women in all the history of mankind: Fatima daughter of Muhammad (pbuh). Before her, Qasim and Abdullah were born, but they both died at infancy.

By the time Khadija got married, she was quite a wealthy lady, so wealthy that she felt no need to keep trading and increasing her wealth; instead, she decided to retire and enjoy a comfortable life with her husband who, on his part, preferred an ascetic life to that of money making. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) had no desire to accumulate wealth; that was not the purpose for which he, peace and blessings of Allah upon him and his progeny, was created. He was created to be savior of mankind from the darkness of ignorance, idol worship, polytheism, misery, poverty, injustice, oppression, and immorality. He very much loved to meditate, though his meditation deepened his grief at seeing his society sunk so low in immorality, lawlessness, and the absence of any sort of protection for those who were weak and oppressed. Khadija's period of happiness lasted no more than 15 years after which her husband, now the Messenger of Allah (pbuh), started his mission to invite people to the Oneness of God, to equality between men and women, and to an end to the evils of the day. Muhammad (pbuh) was forty years old when the first verses of the Holy Qur'an were revealed to him. They were the first verses of Surat al-Alaq (chapter 96), and they were revealed during the month of Ramadan 13 years before the Hijra, at the cave of Hira in Jabal al-Noor (the mountain of light), his favorite place for isolation and meditation, a place which is now visited by many pilgrims. Muhammad (pbuh) went back home heavy-hearted, profoundly perplexed, deeply impressed by the sight of arch-angel Gabriel and by the depth of meaning implied in those beautiful words:

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful
Proclaim (or read)! In the Name of your Lord and Cherisher who created (everything). (He) created man of a (mere) clot of congealed blood. Proclaim! And your Lord is the Most Bountiful Who taught (the use of) the pen, Who taught man that which he knew not... (Qur'an, 96:1-5)

He felt feverish, so he asked to be wrapped and, once he felt better, he narrated what he had seen and heard to his faithful and supportive wife. "By Allah," Khadija said, "Allah shall never subject you to any indignity..., for you always maintain your ties with those of your kin, and you are always generous in giving; you are diligent, and you seek what others regard as unattainable; you cool the eyes of your guest, and you lend your support to those who seek justice and redress. Stay firm, O cousin, for by Allah I know that He will not deal with you except most beautifully, and I testify that you are the awaited Prophet in this nation, and your time, if Allah wills, has come.

" After a short while, Khadija told her husband about the prediction of the Syrian monk Buhayra regarding Muhammad's Prophethood, and about her dialogue with both her servant Maysarah, who had informed her of what Bahirah (or Buhayrah) had said, and with her cousin Waraqah ibn Nawfal. She then accompanied her husband to Waraqah's house to narrate the whole incident. "Let me hear it in your own words," Nawfal said to Muhammad (pbuh), adding, "O noble master!" Having heard the Prophet's words, Nawfal took his time to select his words very carefully; he said, "By Allah, this is the prediction which had been conveyed to Moses (as) and with which the Children of Israel are familiar! [Moses] had said: `O how I wish I could be present when Muhammad (pbuh) is delegated with Prophethood to support his mission and to assist him!"

It was only natural for Khadija to receive her share of the harassment meted to him by none other than those who, not long ago, used to call him al-Sadiq, al-Amin. Khadija did not hesitate to embrace Islam at all, knowing that her husband could not have put forth any false claim. Yahya ibn `Afeef is quoted saying that he once came, during the period of jahiliyya (before the advent of Islam), to Mecca to be hosted by al-Abbas ibn Abdul-Muttalib, one of the Prophet's uncles mentioned above. "When the sun started rising," says he, "I saw a man who came out of a place not far from us, faced the Ka`ba and started performing his prayers. He hardly started before being joined by a young boy who stood on his right side, then by a woman who stood behind them.

When he bowed down, the young boy and the woman bowed, and when he stood up straight, they, too, did likewise. When he prostrated, they, too, prostrated." Then he expressed his amazement at that, saying to al-Abbas: "This is quite strange, O Abbas!" "Is it, really?" retorted al-Abbas. "Do you know who he is?" al-Abbas asked his guest who answered in the negative. "He is Muhammad ibn Abdullah, my nephew. Do you know who the young boy is?" asked he again. "No, indeed," answered the guest.

"He is Ali son of Abu Talib. Do you know who the woman is?" The answer came again in the negative, to which al-Abbas said, "She is Khadija daughter of Khuwaylid, my nephew's wife." This incident is included in the books of both Imam Ahmad and al-Tirmithi, each detailing it in his own Sahih. And she bore patiently in the face of persecution to which her revered husband and his small band of believers were exposed at the hands of the polytheists and aristocrats of Quraysh, sacrificing her vast wealth to promote Islam, seeking Allah's Pleasure.

Among Khadija's merits was her being one of the four most perfect of all women of mankind, the other three being: Fatima daughter of Muhammad (pbuh), Maryam bint `Umran (Mary daughter of Amram), mother of Christ (as) and niece of prophet Zakariyya and Ishba

(Elizabeth), and `Asiya daughter of Muzahim, wife of Pharaoh.

Prophet Zakariyya, as the reader knows, was the father of Yahya (John the Baptist), the latter being only a few months older than prophet Jesus (as). The Prophet of Islam (pbuh) used to talk about Khadija quite often after her demise, so much so that his youngest wife, `Ayesha daughter of Abu Bakr, felt extremely jealous and said to him, "... But she was only an old woman with red eyes, and Allah has compensated you with a better and younger wife (meaning herself)." This caused him (pbuh) to be very indignant, and he said, "No, indeed; He has not compensated me with someone better than her.

She believed in me when all others disbelieved; she held me truthful when others called me a liar; she sheltered me when others abandoned me; she comforted me when others shunned me; and Allah granted me children by her while depriving me of children by other women." Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Abu Hatim, al-Dulabi, al-Tabari, and many others, all quote `Ayesha saying: "One day, the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) mentioned Khadija affectionately, so I was carried away by jealousy and said about her what I should not have said. It was then that his face changed color in a way I never saw it change except when he (pbuh) was receiving revelation, so I realized what I had done and felt overwhelmed by regret to the extent that I could not help uttering these words: `O Lord! If You remove the anger of Your Messenger right now, I pledge not to ever speak ill of her as long as I live.'

Having seen that, he forgave me and narrated to me some of her merits." Both Muslim and Bukhari indicate in their respective Sahih books that among Khadija's merits was the fact that the Lord of Dignity ordered Jibraeel (Gabriel), peace be upon him, to convey His regards to her. Gabriel said to Muhammad (pbuh): "O Muhammad! Khadija is bringing you a bowl of food; when she comes to you, tell her that her Lord greets her, and convey my greeting, too, to her." When he (pbuh) did so, she said: "Allah is the Peace, and He is the source of all peace, and upon Gabriel be peace." Khadija died of an attack of fever on the tenth or eleventh day of the month of Ramadan, ten years after the start of the Prophetic mission (in the year 619 A.D.), 24 years after her marriage with Muhammad (pbuh), and she was buried at Hajun in the outskirts of Mecca. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) dug her grave and buried her... Funeral prayers (salat al janaza) had not yet been mandated in Islam. It is reported that by the time she died, her entire wealth had already been spent to promote Islam; she left not a single gold dinar nor a .single silver dirham, nor anything more or less