

The First Journey to Syria and his encounter with the Monk Bahira

When Rasulullah ﷺ turned twelve, his uncle Abu Taalib decided to travel to Syria with a trade caravan of the Quraysh. Owing to the difficult and long journey, Abu Taalib did not want to take him along but at the actual moment of departure, noticing signs of heartbreaking gloom and sorrow on his face, he finally relented and took him along.

En route to Syria, they halted at a city called Busra where a Christian monk by the name of Jarjis, popularly known as Bahirah the monk, lived. He was well acquainted with the signs of the final Prophet as mentioned in the divine books. The moment this trade caravan halted before Bahirah's monastery and his gaze fell on Rasulullah ﷺ, he at once recognised him as the Prophet referred to in the previous books. Bahirah then grasped Rasulullah's ﷺ hand in his own.

Abu Musa Ash'ari رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ narrates that once Abu Taalib travelled with some high-ranking elders of Quraysh to Syria. A Christian priest was living in the vicinity of the area where they had halted over for the night. They passed this priest on numerous occasions in the past but he never cast a glance in their direction. This time though, when the trade caravan broke their journey, the monk unexpectedly emerged from his quarters, came to the caravan and started to scrutinise each one of the travellers until he came to Rasulullah ﷺ. The moment he laid eyes on Rasulullah ﷺ, he grasped him by the hand and exclaimed:

هَذَا سَيِّدُ الْعَالَمِينَ هَذَا رَسُولُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ يَبْعُهُ اللَّهُ رَحْمَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ

"This is the leader of the worlds. This is the messenger of the worlds. Allah Ta'ala will commission him as the embodiment of mercy for the people of the world."

The elders of the Quraysh, quite dazed at this, asked: "How do you know this? What prompts you to make such a claim?" The monk replied: "When you emerged from the valley of the mountain, every single boulder and tree stooped down in prostration. And trees and boulders don't bow down to anybody but a Prophet. Furthermore, I recognise him from his seal of prophethood that is similar to an apple and appears just below his shoulder blade."

Saying this, the monk departed. Because of Rasulullah ﷺ, he prepared a meal for the whole caravan of travellers. When all of them turned up to eat, Rasulullah ﷺ was conspicuously absent. When he enquired, the monk established that Rasulullah ﷺ was out herding the camels. He sent for him. When Rasulullah ﷺ appeared, a cloud was sheltering him from the fierce rays of the sun. As he approached his people, he noticed that they had already taken whatever available shade there was under a tree. Since there was no shade available, Rasulullah ﷺ sat down on one side. The moment he sat down, the tree stooped in his direction to offer him some shade. The monk remarked: "Look at this tree, how it is bending towards him." The monk then got on his feet committing the travellers by force of oath not to take the young boy with them to Rome. If they catch sight of him, the monk explained, they would identify him from his attributes and features and they would surely put him to death. Whilst pleading with them, the monk suddenly noticed a group of seven Romans coming his way diligently searching for something. The priest asked them what they were searching for. They replied: "We are hunting for that messenger (whose glad tidings have been cited in the Towrah and Injeel and whom we have learnt will be travelling some time this month). We have despatched men in all directions and launched an extensive search for him." The priest responded: "Okay, tell me, if the Almighty has already decreed something, is anyone able to prevent it happening?" They replied in the negative. The seven Romans thereafter pledged before Bahirah that they would refrain from hounding him. Furthermore, they eventually resolved to settle down with Bahirah because the very reason they set out for unexpectedly underwent a rapid transformation. They reckoned it to be unbecoming to return home. Hence, the decision to settle down with Bahirah.

Swearing an oath to the travellers, the monk then enquired who his guardian was. They pointed towards Abu Taalib. The monk pleaded with Abu Taalib to send him back to Makkah. Abu Taalib sent him back to Makkah with Abu Bakr and Bilal. The monk also provided some bread and olive oil as provisions for the return journey.

According to the narration of Baihaqi, Bahirah rose to inspect Rasulullah's ﷺ blessed back where he noticed the seal of prophethood between his shoulder blades. He discovered it to be exactly like how he had expected it to be.

Second Journey to Syria and the Encounter with Nastoora, the Monk

Hadhrat Khadijah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا was an exceedingly wealthy woman of one of the most noble clans of the Arabs. Due to her noble lineage and her chastity, she was titled as Taahirah (pure) during the times of ignorance as well as the era of Islam.

When the Quraysh despatched their trade caravans, Hadhrat Khadijah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا would also despatch her trade goods with some reliable people as a form of Mudaarabah (business partnership). Her goods were equal to all the goods of the Quraysh put together. When Rasulullah ﷺ turned twenty-five and his trustworthiness became the talk of the town and when not a single person of Makkah failed to refer to him with the title of Al-Ameen, Hadhrat Khadijah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا sent him a message requesting him to take her goods to Syria with an offer to double his share of the profits in relation to her other normal business partners. Due to the financial constraints of his uncle Abu Taalib, Rasulullah ﷺ gladly accepted the offer and in the company of Hadhrat Khadijah's slave, Maysarah, he set off for Syria.

When Rasulullah ﷺ reached Busra, he took a seat under the shade of a tree. A monk by the name of Nastoora lived in the vicinity of this tree. On seeing Rasulullah ﷺ beneath this tree, he approached him and said: "From 'Isa bin Maryam عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ right up to this present moment, besides you no other prophet has sat beneath this tree." He then remarked to Maysarah: "He (Rasulullah ﷺ) has this redness in his eyes." Maysarah responded by revealing: "Yes, this redness has never left his eyes."

The monk exclaimed:

هُوَ هُوَ وَهُوَ نَبِيٌّ وَهُوَ اخِرُ الْاَنْبِيَاءِ

"Yes, surely this is the Prophet. This is the final Messenger."

Rasulullah ﷺ thereafter continued engaging in his trading activities. During this time, a person once started arguing with Rasulullah ﷺ. The man demanded that Rasulullah ﷺ swear an oath on the idols of Laat and 'Uzza. Rasulullah ﷺ very calmly replied: "I have never taken an oath on Laat and 'Uzza. In fact, even if I perchance come across these idols, I try to avoid them altogether." The man replied: "Indisputably, you are right." In other words, you are truthful and trustworthy. The man then commented: "By Allah! This is a man whose description and attributes our 'Ulama find inscribed in their religious manuscripts."

Maysarah says: "In the severe heat of the afternoon, I would notice two angels offering shade to Rasulullah ﷺ."

As he was returning from Syria whilst the two angels were shading him from the fierce midday sun, Hadhrat Khadijah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا witnessed this extraordinary scene as she was sitting in one of the upper floors of her house. She summoned the women around her to come and view this incredible spectacle as well. This took all of them by surprise. Soon after, Maysarah gave her a detailed account of the strange phenomena and particulars of the journey. He then made over her goods and money to her. Due to the barakah (blessings) of Rasulullah ﷺ this time round, Hadhrat Khadijah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا realised such a huge profit from this trade caravan that she had never before made from a single trade caravan. Hadhrat Khadijah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا awarded Rasulullah ﷺ much more than the initial profit she had originally promised him.

Marriage to Hadhrat Khadijah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا

Hadhrat Khadijah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا, after listening to Maysarah's account of his travels including Nastoora the monk's statement and the spectacle of the angels providing shade etc., went to Waraqah bin Nawfal and conveyed the details of these miraculous events to him. Waraqah remarked: "Khadijah! If these incidents are true, then most certainly Muhammad is the prophet of this Ummah. I am well aware that this Ummah is patiently waiting to be graced by a prophet whose advent is imminent."

On hearing about these miraculous events, Hadhrat Khadijah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا developed a longing to be wedded to Rasulallah صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. As a result, two months and twenty-five days after his arrival from the Syrian trade journey, she sent a proposal to Rasulallah صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. Acting on the advice of his uncle, Rasulallah صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ accepted this proposal. On the predetermined date of the Nikah, together with his uncles Abu Taalib and Hamzah and a few other chieftains of the family, Rasulallah صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ set out for Hadhrat Khadijah's رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا residence. Hadhrat Khadijah's رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا father had already passed away before the battle of Fujjaar. Her uncle 'Amar bin Asad was present at her Nikah.

Abu Taalib recited the Khutbah of Nikah, the closing words of which were:

أَمَّا بَعْدُ فَإِنَّ مُحَمَّدًا مِمَّنْ لَا يُوَازَنُ بِهِ فَتَى مِنْ قُرَيْشٍ إِلَّا رَجَحَ بِهِ شَرَفًا وَنُبْلًا وَفَضْلًا وَعَقْلًا
وَأَنَّ كَانَ فِي الْمَالِ قَلٌّ فَاتَهُ ظِلُّ زَائِلٌ وَعَارِيَةٌ مُسْتَرْجَعَةٌ وَلَهُ فِي خَدِيجَةَ بِنْتِ خُوَيْلِدٍ رَغْبَةٌ
وَلَهَا فِيهِ مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ

"Muhammad is a young man who, if weighed against any other youngster from the Quraysh, Muhammad will outweigh the other in nobility, eminence, intellect and graciousness. He may be lacking in wealth but wealth is after all a passing shadow and a trust to be ultimately surrendered. He is interested in getting married to Khadijah bint Khuwailid and she also cherishes the same interest."

At the time of this blessed Nikah, Rasulallah صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ was twenty-five years old whilst Hadhrat Khadijah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا was forty. The Mahr (dowry) was fixed at twenty camels. According to Seerat Ibn Hishaam and Hafiz Abu Bishr Dawlami, the stipulated Mahr (dowry) was twelve and half awqiyah of silver. Each awqiyah is equivalent to forty Dirhams. Hence, the total dowry was five hundred Dirhams.

This was Rasulallah's صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ first Nikah whilst it was Hadhrat Khadijah's رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا third.