Conditions of Arabia before Islam

The social conditions of Arabs were deplorable. They raided caravans and robbed highway travelers. The society was overflowing with barbarism and superstition. The blemish practices like stealing, gambling, drinking, and usury were prevalent in the society. Immoral acts were uncontrolled. Slavery was a common act, and the owner possessed the right of the life and death of the slave.

To Arabs, war was a pastime or rather a dangerous sport, or a species of tribal drama, waged by professionals, according to old and gallant codes, while the “audience” cheered. Eternal peace held no appeal for them, and war provided an escape from drudgery and from the monotony of life in the desert. Religion in pre-Islamic Arabia was a mix of polytheism, Christianity, Judaism, and Iranian religions. Arab polytheism, the dominant belief system, was based on the belief in deities and other supernatural beings such as djinn. Gods and goddesses were worshipped at local shrines, such as the Kaaba in Mecca.

The cultural conditions were quite good. The Arabs regarded Arabic as an expressive language and considered the completely non-Arab part as mute and dumb. The poetry of Arabs was vibrant and was written in majestic Arabic. Their chief virtues were tribal bravery, tribal loyalty, courage, honor, and glorification of the tribe. They were incredibly brave but used their courage in the wrong path of evil and grim. They had no moral or ethical value.

The economic conditions were poor. Arabs lived in a nomadic manner and had no proper settlement. They kept on moving from place to place in search of pasture and water. They lived in forms of tribes, and the leaders were chosen upon the basis of wealth and bravery. Tribal disputes were common on matters like water springs, cattle herds, and horseracing. The disputes often continued for decades. Trade was the main source of the income for the Arabs. Trade caravans were sent to other countries when routes used to be safe. There was no industry or any agriculture. All women were qualified in the art of spinning yarn, but due to tribal wars, the production was nearly negligible. They were jobless and poverty-stricken.

The position of an Arabic woman was inferior. They were bought and sold like they were nothing. They were treated like animals and were not given any social status. An Arab could marry as many women as he likes. Some tribes were so cruel that they used to bury their newborn daughters alive, as they considered a female as a sign of disgrace.
Despite living through the days of ignorance, the Prophet remained true to his mission. What lessons can Muslims learn from this today? [4]

‘The Prophet’s family was important in preparing him for prophethood.’ Agree or disagree, giving reasons for your answer. [4]

The Prophet (pbuh) faced challenges in his early years but maintained his good character. How can Muslims learn from this today? [4]
Q5: Write a note on the Migration of Muslims to Abyssinia. (10)
Isra and Mairaj

The event of Miraj took place in CE 621. It was the time when the Prophet’s wife Khadija (R.A) and uncle, Abu Talib had died, visit to Taif had failed and the persecution of Makkans was on peak. One night the Prophet (S.A.W) was awoken by Jibraiel (A.S), and from Makkah (Masjid al Haram), his chest was opened and washed with Zam Zam and wisdom was added to it spiritually. He was taken to Jerusalem (Masjid Al Aqsa) on a white horse-like winged creature (Burqra) which could run extremely fast.It is said that there he met all prophets who came before him. He also led the prayer of these prophets. This is a clear indication that Mohammad (sw) is the leader of all prophets and he is also the last prophet of Allah. Jibraiel (A.S) brought two vessels to him, one filled with wine and the other with milk. He chose the one with milk upon which Jibraiel (A.S) said: "You have been guided to the right Fitrah, if you had chosen your followers would have become misguided." This part of the journry is called ‘Isra’. It is mentioned in the Quran in these words.”Glory to Him who took His servant for a journey by night from the Sacred mosque to the Farthest mosque”

From Jerusalem, he was taken to heavens. In the heavens, he met Adam (A.S). He saw him as an old man who smiled when he looked to the people sitting on his right and wept when he turned to the people on his left. Jibraiel told the Prophet that this was Adam and the people on his right are his children who will go to paradise and the ones on the left will go to hell. The Prophet met Yahya (A.S) and Isa (A.S) on the 2nd heaven, Yusuf (A.S) on the 3rd heaven, Idrees (A.S) on the 4th, Musa (A.S) on the 5th, Harun (A.S) on the 6th and Ibrahim (A.S) on 7th heaven. They gave Mohammad (S.A.W) respect and welcomed him as ‘brother’. Mohammad (S.A.W) also visited and saw paradise and hell. He had the opportunity to see Malik, the guardian of Hell, with a cheerless frowning face. He saw the Hell dwellers, of whom were those who unjustly eat up the property of the orphans, being punished severely.

He was also shown the treatment of good and bad deeds. It means that he saw people going through rewards given by Allah or the punishments they suffered due to their bad deeds. It may be guessed that these rewards and punishments were not in the paradise or hell but they were going on in Barzakh, the place where the spirits of good and bad people are kept. The Prophet [pbuh] told that he saw two manifest rivers, the Nile and the Euphrates, and two hidden ones.

At one point, Jibraiel (A.S) stopped. Here Mohammad (S.A.W) saw a strange huge tree from which heavenly lights were coming out. The point is called ‘Surat Muntaha’ which means ‘The Remotest Lote Tree’. Jibraiel (A.S) said that he was allowed to go beyond this point because if he did his wings would be burnt off, and Mohammad (S.A.W) alone went inside. It was the occasion when the last two verses of surah Sajdah were revealed to him, a promise was given that all sins could be repented from in return if he made fifty prayers obligatory upon Muslims but when the Prophet became back, he met Musa (A.S) who said: "Your followers cannot perform so many prayers. Go back to your Lord and ask for a remission in number." the Prophet (S.A.W) went back and forth between Mohammad and Hazrat Musa (A.S) until finally, five times prayers became obligatory. Musa asked him to get the prayers reduced further but he said "I feel ashamed now of repeatedly asking my Lord for reduction. I accept and resign to His Will." When Muhammad [pbuh] went farther, a Caller was heard saying: "I have imposed My Ordinance and alleviated the burden of My servants." According to many Hadith and a strong Hadith from Aisha (ra), he did not see Allah. The Prophet was also taken to Bait-ul-Mamoor, a qibla of the angels where 70,000 angels visit daily and never get a chance to visit again because angels are too much in number.

From heavens, he was taken back to Jerusalem. From there he came back to Makkah where his bed was still warm. On his way back to Makkah, he saw two caravans coming towards Makkah. Next morning he was commanded by Allah to narrate this event to pagans of Makkah. When the Prophet (sw) did this, the natural reaction came, they mocked the Prophet (S.A.W) and went to see Abu Bakr on account of this event, and he readily said: "Yes, I do verify it." It was on this occasion that he earned the title of As-Siddiq (the verifier of the truth). When the pagans asked about the proof of his visit, Mohammad (S.A.W) described every detail about Jerusalem and the surroundings of Aqsa mosque. Mohammad (S.A.W) also told about two caravans which were travelling towards Makkah and told about the time of their arrival which proved correct in a short time. In spite of these signs, they did not accept the truth of the Prophet Mohammad (S.A.W).
Pledges of Aqabah

After the Holy Prophet’s (PBUH) failure to preach the message of faith at the valley of Taif, he returned to Makka and now shifted his attention towards the Hujjaj (pilgrim offs) from Medina. They had come to Makka for performing the pilgrimage. It was in the 11th year of Prophethood that Prophet (PBUH) began his preaching to the Medinite pilgrims. He initially met six Khazraj pilgrims which included influential people like Swaid bin Samit, Eys bin Muadh and Abu Zar Ghibari. These people accepted Islam and agreed with Prophet (PBUH) to preach whatever they have learnt from him, to their fellow Medinites. Because of them, the news of Islam started to spread in Medina.

In 12th year of Prophethood, 12 more pilgrims met Holy Prophet (PBUH) at Aqaba, in Mina valley during Hajj. They entered the fold of Islam and pledged to Prophet (PBUH) that they would preach the message of faith in Medina. They also pledged that they will not worship anyone except Allah and that they will not commit robbery or adultery. They further promised that they would not kill their newborn daughters, not utter slander and would not disobey Prophet (PBUH) in any way. After the pledge was take, Prophet (PBUH) said:

“HE WHO CARRIES IT OUT, ALLAH WILL REWARD HIM AND WHO NEGLECTS ANYTHING AND IS AFFLICTED IN THIS WORLD; IT MAY PROVE REDEMPTION FOR HIM IN HEREAFTER.”

This was known as the First pledge of Aqaba. After the pledge was taken, a teacher was sent to Medina, Musab bin Umair (R.A). he was sent to teach the people, the doctrines of Islam, give them practical guidance. He was also instructed to preach to other tribes in the area of propagation of Islam.

Because of it, in 13th year of Prophethood a large deputation met Holy Prophet (PBUH) at Aqaba. It included 70 men and 2 women. Among them, many of them were leaders and chiefs of Medinah. They were already Muslims but came to pledge in the same place, where the first pledge had taken place, at Aqaba. They showed the desire of taking Prophet (PBUH) along them. Upon hearing this, Prophet’s (PBUH) uncle, Abbas (R.A), warned them that they could only take Prophet (PBUH) along with them if they could defend him against his enemies and do not surrender in any case or better leave Prophet (PBUH) in Makka. As he is already well defended and respected in her; by his followers. Other companions of Prophet (PBUH) also stressed on the dangers of inviting him to Medina without as such security measures against Makkans.

Despite the argument, the pilgrims were not deterred. The terms of pledges included that Prophet (PBUH) would be listened and obeyed in every circumstance and Prophet (PBUH) also warned them to be prepared for living a life in plenty and as well as scarcity. They must enjoin good and forbid evil and will fear the censure of none but Allah. It also included Prophet (PBUH) must be defended in any case when he would seek for their help. Furthermore, the Medinites also made some offers which included to take Prophet (PBUH) along with them, now or later as their leader of Medina. They would always protect Prophet (PBUH) and would never leave him. The new converts were even ready to fight Makkans but Prophet (PBUH) denied this idea.

Thus the Prophet allowed Muslims to migrate to Yathrib which led to the Makkans plotting his assassination. Allah informed him of their plot and thus he too migrated.