

Chapter – 22

Bilal Habashi

(581 - 641 AD)

Bilal is his name and Abu 'Abdullah is his Kunniya. Father's name is Rabah and mother's name is Humamah. Originally he was Habashi, means belonged to Ethiopia. He was born in Makkah. His body was weak, black and tall. The head hairs were very dense and smooth. However, they became mostly white in the latter part of his age. He was a less talkative person. From his childhood to the adolescence, he remained a slave of a barbarian chief of the Bani Jumuh tribe named Umaiya bin Khalaf.

He was one of the seven السابقون الاولون (*the first and foremost in faith*) who responded to the invitation of Tawheed (*one God*). For this matter, considering as a crime, his master punished him severely. He used to hang him on the hot sand and beat him. The boys of the neighborhood used to pull him putting a rope around his neck. Abu Jahl used to lie him down over the gravels and put a stone on his top, and when these gravels become hot by the heat of the sun, he used to ask him "Bilal! Would you still not turn away from the God of Mohammed?" The awesomely faithful person would still say الله احد . الله احد (*God is one, God is one*). One day Abu Bakr Siddique saw him in this situation and he could not ignore it and he immediately bought and released him from his slavery. It was Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddique who presented him first in front of the Noble Prophet.

Bilal's voice was very sweet and enchanting. Therefore, when the Madinah Mosque was completely built and the five-time prayers were arranged, he was appointed as Muezzin (*the caller for prayer*). Thus, he had the honor of being the first Muezzin of Islam.

He mostly lived with the Noble Prophet. He also participated in various battles. In Badr, Umaiya bin Khalaf (*his former master*) was killed by his own sword.

On the conquest of Makkah when everyone reached the Ka'bah, the Noble Prophet ordered: "Bilal! Raise on the roof of Ka'bah and call for prayer". Thus, the Holy Haram of Makkah, which was built by the first architect of Islam Ibrahim, once again resonated with the beautiful voice of an Ethiopian slave for the Oneness of God.

Almost all of the Companions respected Bilal for the privilege he had for taking the initiative to accept Islam, and for being most of his time spent with the Noble Prophet. Once in the Caliphate of 'Umar, a group of prominent men from Makkah reached to meet 'Umar. Bilal was also with them. Hazrat 'Umar first called in Bilal. This thing was felt unpleasantly by some persons. On this, Akramah bin Abi Jahl said: "*The caller had earlier called with one voice but we heard that voice late. Hence, these people still have the right of preference.*"

Hazrat Bilal , who lived in the darkness of ignorance for 20 years and he who lived in a state of oppression, recognized immediately when faced with the truth and stayed on it with full force, is a psychologically revolutionary achievement. No doubt this is nothing less than a miracle. Not only that, but also his determination for the steadfastness he had shown is a historical event of his character. Bilal's personality is truly a model of virtue for all.

A Tribute of Allamah Iqbal

لیکن بلالؓ، وہ حبشی زادہ حقیر فطرت تھی جس کی نورِ نبوت سے مستنیر

{But Bilal , who was the son of Ethiopia was by nature shining with the glory of the Noble Prophet}

جس کا میں ازل سے ہوا سینہ بلالؓ محکوم اس صدا کے ہیں شاہنشہ و فقیر

{The chest of Bilal was perpetually faithful, so those who are influenced by this voice are among royals as well as poor}

ہوتا ہے جس سے اسود و احمر میں اختلاط کرتی ہے جو غریب کو ہم پہلوئے امیر

{The thing that conflicts between black and white and makes poor closer to rich}

ہے تازہ آج تک وہ نوائے جگر گداز صدیوں سے سن رہا ہے جسے گوشِ ہر خنجر

{To this day, that heart touching voice is being listened by ears since centuries.}

اقبالؒ اس کے عشق کا یہ فیض عام ہوا رومی فنا ہوا، حبشیؓ کو دوام ہے

{Iqbal! Whose love is giving such open benevolence that Roomi is no more but the Ethiopian is everlasting}

On the day the Noble Prophet left this world all were mournful. People wanted Bilal to give special Azan before the burial. on the insistence of people, Bilal started the call but as soon as he reached to " اَشْهَدُ اَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا " , his throat grieved so intensely that he could not proceed further.

A few days later, with the permission from Abu Bakr, he left for Syria where he spent the rest of his life. Near the time of his departure from this world he was contented. At that time he used to say: "Soon I will be able to meet my beloved, Muhammad Mustafa Peace be upon him".