



**NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

**COURSE CODE : ARA 281**

**COURSE TITLE: ARABIC LITERATURES I**



## ARA 281 ARABIC LITERATURES I

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## **INTRODUCTION**

ARA281 Arabic literature 1 is a two unit course available in the first semester of the Second year B. A. Degree programme. It serves as a foundation course and exposes you to the main issues in early Arabic literature starting from the pre-Islamic period to the end of the Rightly Guided Caliphs era usually marked by the assassination of Caliph Ali ibn Abī Tālib in 661 C.E.

## **WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THIS COURSE**

As you might have been quite aware, every language has its literature. The general aim of this course therefore is to expose you to the literature of the Arabs.

In your own culture, you have folklore, tribal songs and short expressions that are used for special meanings. You will also remember that there are stories you often hear from elderly ones about certain monuments you still see around. All these are aspects of the literature of your people. The Arabs too, have their own and this course is designed to introduce you to the earliest literary productions of the Arabs.

## **COURSE AIMS**

There are fourteen units in this course and each unit has clearly stated objectives which must be read before embarking upon studying it. Keep these objectives in mind as you go through the units. However, the overall aims of this course include:

- i. To introduce you to Arabic literature
- ii. To give you an insight into the life and culture of the Arabs.
- iii. To expose you to the thoughts of the early Arabs as portrayed in their poetry and prose works.
- iv. To prepare you for further studies in Arabic literature.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Based on the general aims stated earlier, there are some objectives for this course that are set out. Your success in this course depends on your meeting these objectives, because it is only then that we can say that you have achieved the aims of the course. Therefore on your successful completion of this course, you should be able to:

- a. Discuss the origin of the Arabs and their ancestral branches.
- b. Identify the features of Arabic, the language of the Arabs.
- c. Discuss the themes and styles of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry.
- d. Appreciate the different types of prose works of the pre-Islamic days.

- e. Give an account of the period to Islamic period pre-Islamic to Islamic period and the men of letters who witness it.
- f. Identify the features of early Islamic prose and poetry.
- g. Distinguish between pre-Islamic and early Islamic literature.
- h. Appreciate the orations of the prophet of Islam and his immediate successors
- i. Give an account of the key issue in pre-Islam and early Islamic literature among the Arabs.

## **WORKING THROUGH THIS COURSE**

There are fourteen study units in this course broken into three modules. They are not too bulky. You have to patiently work through these to benefit maximally from the course.

### **Course materials**

Major components of this course are:

1. Course Guide
2. Study Units
3. Textbooks
4. Assessments file
5. Presentation schedule.

### **Study Units**

The breakdown of the fourteen units is as follows:

#### **Module 1**

- |        |  |
|--------|--|
| Unit 1 | Arabia before Islam  |
| Unit 2 | Arabic - The Language of the Arabs                             |
| Unit 3 | Arabic Literature in the Pre-Islamic Period- meaning and scope |

#### **Module 2**

- |        |                                      |
|--------|--------------------------------------|
| Unit 1 | Pre-Islamic Poetry- Themes and Style |
| Unit 2 | Selected Poets of the Period         |
| Unit 3 | Pre-Islamic Prose                    |
| Unit 4 | Impact of Islam on Arabic Literature |

#### **Module 3**

- Unit 1        The Poetry of Early Islamic Period  
 Unit 2        The *Mukhadramūn* and their Works  
 Unit 3        Arabic Prose in the Early Islamic Period

#### **Module 4**

- Unit 1        Orations of Prophet Muhammad  
 Unit 2        Orations and Correspondence of Abu Bakr and Umar  
 Unit 3        Orations of ‘Uthmān and ‘Alī

**Conclusion:** Arabic Literature in the Pre-Islamic and early Islamic Period - A General Survey.

#### **Textbooks and References**

Each unit contains a list of references and further reading. You are fortunate that there is no dearth of materials on introduction to Arabic literature. Almost any book of Arabic literature will contain the key points necessary for an introductory course in literature like this. Try to get these materials. They are meant to deepen your knowledge of the course.

#### ***Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs)***

In this file, you will find all the details of the work you must submit to your tutor for marking. The marks obtained from these assignments will count towards the final mark you obtain for this course. Further information on assignments will be found in the assignment file itself.

#### ***Presentation Schedule***

The presentation schedule gives you the important dates for the completion of tutor-marked assignments and attending tutorials. Remember that you must submit your assignments by the due date. Guard against falling behind in your work.

#### **Final Examination and Grading**

At the end of the course, you will write a final examination which will constitute 70% of your final grade. In the examination which shall last for two hours, you will be requested to answer three questions out of at least five questions.

### Course Making Scheme

This table show how the actual course making is broken down.

Assessment	Marks
Assignments	Four assignments, best three marks of the four, counts at 30% of course marks.
Final examination	70% of overall course marks.
Total	100% of course marks

### How to Get the Most from This Course

In distance learning, the study units replace the university lecture. This is one of the great advantages of distance learning; you can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suits you best. Think of it as reading the lecture instead of listening to the lecturer. In the same way a lecturer might give you some reading to do, the study units tell you when to read, and which are your text materials or set books. Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit, and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Next to this is a set of learning objectives. These objectives let you know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. These learning objectives are meant to guide your study. The moment a unit is finished, you must go back and see whether you have achieved the objectives. If this is made a habit, then you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course. The same body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from your set books or from a reading section. The following is a practical strategy for working through the course. If you run into any trouble, telephone your tutor. Remember that your tutor's job is to help you. When you need assistance, do not hesitate to call and ask your tutor to prove it.

1. Read this course guide thoroughly, it is your first assignment.
2. Organize a study schedule. Design a 'Course overview' to guide you through the course. Know the time you are expected to spend on each unit and the assignments relating to the units. Important information, e.g. details of your tutorials, and the date of the first day of the semester is available from the study centre. You need to gather all the information in one place, such as diary or a



wall calendar. What ever method you choose to use, you should decide on and write in your own dates and schedule of work for each unit.

3. Once you have created your own study schedule, do every thing to stay faithful to it. The major reason that students fail is that they get behind with their course work. If you get into difficulty with your schedule, please, let your tutor know before it is too late for help.
4. Turn to unit 1, and read the introduction and the objectives for the unit.
5. Assemble the study materials. You will need your set books and the unit you are studying at the point in time.
6. Work through the unit. As you work through the unit, you will know what sources to consult for further information.
7. Keep in touch with your study centre. Up-to-date course information will be continuously available there.
8. Well before the relevant due date (about 4 weeks before due date), keep in mind that you will learn a lot by doing the assignment carefully. They have been designed to help you meet the objectives of the course and, therefore, will help you pass the examination. Submit all assignment not later than the due date.
9. Review the objectives for each study unit to confirm that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study materials or consult your tutor.
10. When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can start in the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you keep your self on schedule.
11. When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking, do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. Keep to your schedule. When the assignment is returned, pay particular attention to you\r tutor's comments, both on the tutor-marked assignment form and also the written comments on the ordinary assignment.
12. After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final; examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in the course Guide).

### **Tutors and Tutorials**

The dates, times and locations of these tutorials will be made available to you, together with the name, telephone number and the address of

your tutor. Each assignment will be marked by your tutor. Pay close attention to the comments your tutor might make on your assignments. Reach your tutor on or before the due date. Your tutorials are important; therefore try not to skip any. It is an opportunity to meet your tutor and your fellow students. It is also an opportunity to get the help of your tutor and discuss any difficulties encountered on your reading.

### **Summary**

This course introduces you to Arabic literature in both the pre-Islamic and Early Islamic periods in Arabia. It gives you an insight into the two periods, its themes and styles as well as the features of the prose works of the time.

We wish you a successful study.



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## MODULE 1

- Unit 1 Arabia before Islam
- Unit 2 Arabic- The Language of the Arabs
- Unit 3 Arabic Literature in the Pre-Islamic Period- meaning and scope

### UNIT 1 ARABIA BEFORE ISLAM

#### CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Who are the Arabs?
    - 3.2.1 The Pre-Islamic Arab environment.
    - 3.2.2. Social, Political and Religious lives of the Arabs
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading,

#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will learn about the origins of the Arabs whose literature we want to study. The literature of a people is a documentation of their thoughts, yearnings, aspirations and world - view. In order to understand their literature therefore, we must know the people, understand their nature and their environment. This will no doubt open for us the door of their hearts and we shall be able to peep into what makes them tick.

#### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the origin of the Arabs.
- Describe the geography of Arabia before Islam.
- Discuss the pre-Islamic Arab values
- Examine the different spheres of Arabs social, political and religious lives.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Who are the Arabs?

The Arabs belong to a race known as the Caucasian or the West Asians.

The popular term used for them and the people who share similar traits however is "SEMITE" or "SEMITIC". The "Semitic" people are said to have descended from Shem or Sam, the son of Noah.

The ancestral line of the Arabs is often traced through two lines of descent from Sam or Sham. The Northern Arabs' descent is traced from Adnan, a descendant of Ismā'īl (Ishmael), while Southern Arabs descent is traced back to Qahṭān who has been identified with Yoqtan (Joktan) the son of Abir (Eber). The other Semitic people are the Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Hebrews, the Phoenicians, the Arameans, the Abyssinians and the Serbians. Though the classification of these people into race of linguistic and cultural affinity is not wholly ethnologically appropriate, yet they are related in many ways.

The Old Testament appears to have been the basis of these assumptions that were later corroborated by some Muslim historians themselves. We can all still remember the story of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) and how he took his son Ismā'īl (Ishmael) and his mother Hajar (Hagar) to the plains of Arabia and left them there. The Jurhumites, the descendants of Qahṭān (Yoqtan) were said to have seen them there and resolved to settle beside them. Among them Ismā'īl grew up, learnt their language, their ways and married among them. These people that are the descendants of Qahṭān were called *al-'Arab al-Āribah* (The Arabizing Arabs) while the descendants of Ismā'īl were called *Al-'Arab al-Musta'ribah* (The Arabized Arabs). The Quraysh, the tribe of prophet Muhammed belonged to the class of arabized Arabs and they were the Northern Arabs.

#### SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

1. Who are the Semites and from whom did they descend?
2. The Arabs are said to have two ancestral lines. These ancestral lines are traced to whom and which part of Arabia belongs to them?
3. Who are the Jurhumites?



### 3.2.1 The Pre-Islamic Arab Environment

The huge land mass of what is known as the Arabian Peninsula covers an area of about 1,200 miles wide and 1,500 miles in length. It is situated in South West Asia consisting of a desert and a fertile land; the desert covers larger unit while the fertile line is smaller; the desert is sparsely populated while the fertile land has a lot of people living there. However, the desert too has several oases with vegetation and enough water at specific areas in its stretch. If you have ever visited the desert areas of Northern Nigeria, you will quickly understand what we are saying. Date palms, wheat and corn were grown in abundance in the desert areas while other kinds of fruit were grown in the fertile areas and areas close to the oases.

#### SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

1. Identify areas in Nigeria that look like the not too fertile areas of Arabian Peninsula.
2. Mention three crops that constituted staple food in the Arabian Peninsula.

### 3.2.2 Social, Political and Religious Life of the Arabs

The pre-Islam Arab social structure was of two kinds the desert social life and the social system of the city dwellers. The social life of the desert dwellers was not structured in a systematic manner. This is due to their nomadic nature. They drove their herds and flocks from place to place in search of water and grasses. This nomadic nature prevented an organized political structure. The loyalty of the individual was therefore to the tribe with which he roams the earth. The tribe was his world, his security, his strength and his pride. The harsh climatic conditions imposed upon him the virtues of generosity, perseverance, courage, chivalry and fortune.

As for the city dwellers, they were more stable and better organized. They built cities and civilizations that were well known. Among these were Yemen, Hīrah, Ghassān, Makkah, Yathrib and Ṭāif.

The pre-Islamic Arab society was a home to a number of religions while the polytheists were in the majority, Zoroastrianism was among the Tamīm tribe Judaism was among the tribes of Kindah and Banū Hārith, Christianity was among the tribes of Rabī ‘ah Ghassān and Qudā‘ah.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

An understanding of the culture of the pre-Islamic Arab society, its value system and way of life is very necessary for a proper understanding of the literary productions of the period and these literary productions on their own part are the most authentic records of the way of life of the Arabs of the time.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

We have, in this unit examined the origin of the Arabs, their environment, their value and their social system. In the following units, we shall be seeing how these reflect in the poetry and orations of the time.

#### **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Who are the Semitic people?
2. The pre-Islamic Arab society was a home to a number of religious persuasions, Discuss.

#### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

Nicholson R.A., *A Literary History of the Arabs*, Cambridge, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition.

Maqbūl, S.H. et al (1995), *Al-Adab wa 'n-Nuṣuṣ wa 'l-Balāghah*, bkl, Tripoli.

## UNIT 2 ARABIC - THE LANGUAGE OF THE ARABS

### CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Structure of the Arabic language
    - 3.2.1 Arabic Pronunciation
    - 3.2.2 Arabic language and the *Qur'ān*
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment.
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will learn about Arabic, the language of the Arabs. You will be able to appreciate the nature of the language and the family of Languages to which it belongs. You will also have an insight into the structure of the language and its pronunciation. Its relationship to the *Qur'ān* is also examined.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

After a thorough study of this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the nature of Arabic Language
- Have a proper grasp of the structure of Arabic Language
- Have a simple idea of the pronunciation of Arabic consonants.
- Understand the relationship between the *Qur'ān* and Arabic Language.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Structure of the Arabic Language

Arabic belongs to the family of Semitic Languages related to each other structurally, and they can be arranged chronologically in order of extant literature as follows:-Babylonian or Assyrian (3000 - 500 B.C).

1. Hebrew (from 1500 B.C).
2. South Arabic, otherwise Sabean or Himyarite (inscriptions from 800 B.C).
3. Aramaic (inscriptions from 700B.C).
4. Phoenician (inscriptions from 700 B.C).

5. Ethiopic (inscriptions from 350 A.D).
6. Arabic (From 500 A.D).

From the above, Arabic appears to be the youngest of the Semitic languages. It is closer to the original archetype from which all members of the Semitic language family are said to have been derived. It is divided into two principal dialects:-

1. South Arabic, spoken in Yemen including Himyarite, Minaen with the kindred dialects.
2. Northern Arabic spoken in Arabia generally, exclusive of Yemen.

The South Arabic had since died and the Arabic of the North has gained universal supremacy and it is what is now known as Arabic proper, which is the language of Arabic literature.

Any student, who has had no previous acquaintance with Semitic Languages, will be impressed by the difference between the Arabic structure and that of English or other indo-European languages, which he knows. Arabic is a synthetic or inflectional language. The syntactical relationship of nouns is indicated by case endings and that verbs are inflected by means of prefixes, infixes and suffixes to indicate the various persons, numbers, genders, derived forms, moods and tenses.

The most characteristic feature of the Arabic Language, however, is that, most of its words are built up from (or can be analyzed into) roots each of which consists of three radical letters. By using these radicals as a base and by varying the three vowels and adding prefixes, infixes and suffixes according to prescribed patterns, the actual words are produced.

Traditional Arabic grammarians recognize only three parts of speech: verbs, nouns and particles. The concept of verb in Arabic is very much what it is in English; but adjectives, adverbs, pronouns as well as noun proper are all classified as nouns while the Arabic concept of particles embraces conjunctions, prepositions and interjections. It is necessary to understand these preliminary information if we must have an effective study of Arabic Language and its literature.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Trace the origin and development of the Arabic Language

### 3.2.1 Arabic Pronunciation

The Arabic language has twenty - eight consonant sounds written from right to left.

There is vowel sounds that combine with the consonants to give a meaning to a simple description of the pronunciation of the consonants as follows:

- ء : The *hamzah* stands for the glottal stop produced by closing the vocal chords and then by suddenly separating them. This sound is frequently made in English at the beginning of a word with an initial vowel.
- ب ; *bā'* represents the same sound as does English b.
- ت : *tā'* represents almost the same sound as the English t.
- ث : *thā'* represents the same sound as unvoiced th of English "mouth" or "thing".
- ج : Jim represents almost the same sound as j in English "Jam". Its variant sound is a voiced correlative of sh.
- ح : *hā'* represents an unvoiced pharyngeal fricative formed further back without velar vibration. It is a loud whisper of ha.
- خ : *khā'* represents an unvoiced velar fricative. This sound is produced by forcing breath through the narrow space between the tongue and the k position in a way that the velum is agitated thereby producing a "scrape".
- د : *dāl* represents almost the same sound as the English d.
- ذ : *dhāl* represents the same sound as the voiced th of the English "this".
- ر : *rā'* represents the rolled "r" i.e. there is a rapid succession of taps by the tip of the tongue on the teeth ridge.
- ز : *zāy* represents the same sound as the English z..
- س : *sīn* represents the same sound as the English s.
- ش : *shīn* represents the same sound as doses the English combination "sh" in shall.

- ص : *ṣād* represents an emphatic velarized correlative of *sin*. It is produced by placing the tip of the tongue in approximately the same position as for *sīn* and raising the back of the tongue toward the velum.
- ض : *ḍād* represents an emphatic velarized correlative of *dāl* formed in the same way as *sād* above.
- ط : *tā* represents an emphatic velarized correlative of *ta*.
- ظ : *zā* represents an emphatic velarized correlative of *dhāl*.
- ع : *‘ayn* is a pharyngeal fricative. This sound is not found in several other languages and is best mastered by drills with a native speaker or a specialist.
- غ : *ghayn* is a voiced velar fricative which is almost a voiced correlative of *khā’* except that it involves no velar scrape. It resembles much the sound made while gargling liquid.
- ف : *fā’* represents the same sound as the English *f*
- ق : *qāf* is a guttural "k" sound which is produced as a voiceless uvular stop.
- ك: *kāf* represents the same sound as in the English *k*.
- ل : *lām* is very much like the English *l*.
- م : *mām* represents the same sound as English *m*.
- ن : *nūn* represents the same sound as does the English *n*.
- هـ : *hā’* represents a deeper version of the English *h*,
- و : *wāw* represents the same sound as the English *w*.
- ي : *yā’* represents the same sound as the English *y*.

It should be observed that while some of the sounds of Arabic are common, it has others that are peculiar to it.

In the description of the pronunciation of the Arabic sounds, given above, certain technical terms have been used. As we progress in the other Arabic courses, we shall become familiar with these terms.

## SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Select a Nigerian language and examine the areas of similarity between its sounds and Arabic sounds.

### Arabic Language and the *Qur'ān*

The *Qur'ān* was revealed in the dialect of the Quraysh tribe and it was written in it. It contains the finest specimen of Arabic Language and its usage. It contains unique expressions that have, over the ages, confounded detractors and it was a realization of this fact that led to the concept of *I'jāz al- Qur'ān*, that is, the literary and linguistic inimitability of, the *Qur'ān*.

It is a known fact of history that the earliest works in grammar, philology and rhetoric's were motivated by a desire to preserve the *Qur'ān* from being corrupted. This need necessitated the collection of the Arabic literature productions of the Pre-Islamic era which would, other wise, have perished. During this period of collection and analysis, the Arabs had settled as conqueror in Syria and Persia and the purity of the classical diction must have surely been compromised if the *Qur'ān* had not been there as a unifying factor.

It is the *Qur'ān* that has continuously served as the reference point of safeguarding the purity of Arabic language. In all the conquered nations, Arabic language became the language of politics, commerce and education. Non -Arab Muslim subjects of a Muslim state recite portions of the *Qur'ān* during daily prayers, most of the formulas for supplication have also been documented in Arabic, and this has strengthened the language further.

## SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Examine the role of the *Qur'ān* in the preservation of Arabic Language.

### 4.0 CONCLUSION

The language whose literature we have set out to study in this course is, like Latin, a synthetic one rather than an analytic language like English. Its unique syntactic structure and phonetics make it a powerful vehicle for the literary enterprise.

### 5.0 SUMMARY

The Arabic language is divided into Northern and Southern Arabic. The Southern Arabic, now extinct, was spoken in Yemen and its environs

while the Northern Arabic has survived as the Arabic proper till today. It has a unique root system that makes derivations and coinage a rich and fulfilling experience. It has been enriched by the revelation of the *Qur'ān* in one of its dialects and this has given birth to the Arabic Linguistic sciences.

## **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Discuss the most characteristic features of Arabic Language.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

F. Ziadeh & R.B. Winder, (1957); *An Introduction to Modern Arabic*, Princeton, New Jersey.

R.A. Nicholson (1966), *A Literary History of Arabs*, Cambridge.



## UNIT 3 ARABIC LITERATURE IN THE PRE-ISLAMIC PERIOD-MEANING AND SCOPE

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 What is Adab?
    - 3.2.1 Classification of Arabic literary history
    - 3.2.2 Scope of Pre-Islamic Arabic literature
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading.

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will have the opportunity of learning about what constitutes literature and its manifestations among the Pre-Islamic Arabs. You will also learn about the various connotations of the word "adab" among the Arabs before it came to be used for literature.

Since, literature is always a mirror of a particular period; the historians of literature among the Arabs have also divided the various literary productions of the Arabs in accordance with the period of their production. This, you will also learn in this unit.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

After a thorough study of this unit, you will be able to:-

1. Define "*adab*" and its various connotations.
2. Discuss the classification of Arabic literary history into periods.
3. Discuss the scope of Arabic literature in the pre-Islamic period.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 What is *Adab*?

The word "adab" which is now used for literature did not mean literature in all ages. In this pre-Islamic Arabian verse

نحن في المشتاة ندعو الجفلى لن تر الأدب فينا ينتخر

it was used to denote a feast-maker to a feast. Hence the practice of bringing people together for a meal was seen as a praise-worthy act and the word "adab" also came to connote moral uprightness.

In the early Islamic period, the word "adab" was used to denote moral education. This is reflected in Prophet Muhammad's declaration:

أَدَّبَنِي رَبِّي فَأَحْسَنَ تَأْدِيبِي

My Lord has given me moral training and has perfected my morality.

During the Umayyad dynasty, the word assumed a slightly different meaning. It came to be used for the complete process of education be it moral, religious or secular. It was not until the Abbasid period that "adab" came to be used for the literary arts as we know it today and since then, it has continued to expand up till today.

## SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

"Adab" has not always meant "literature. Discuss.

### 3.2.1 Classification of Arabic Literary History

To ease the understanding of Arabic literature, the Arabic literary historians have divided the periods of Arabic literary activities into the following:

#### 1. العصر الجاهلي

*Al- 'Aṣr al-Jāhili-* The Pre-Islamic era or the *Jāhiliyyah* period.

The literature of this period, according to the earliest poetry that have come down to us, spans about one hundred and fifty years before the year of Prophet Muhammad's call to prophethood 610 c. e.

#### 2. عصر صدر الإسلام أو العصر الإسلامي

*'Aṣr Ṣadr al-Islām or Al- 'Aṣr al-Islāmī* or - The Islamic period This begins with the call in 610 c.e. and of the Rightly Guided Caliphs ending with the death of Ali in 661 c.e.

#### 3. العصر الأموي

*Al- 'Aṣr al- Umawī* — The Umayyad period

This period begins with the death of AH in 661 c.e. and the assumption of Mu<sup>c</sup>āwiya the title of caliph till the fall of the Umayyad Dynasty at the hands of the Abbasid agitators in 750 c.e. It covers a period of ninety-nine years.

#### 4. العصر العباسي

*Al- 'Aṣr al-Abbāsī-* **The Abbasid Dynasty**

This dynasty is one of the longest dynasties in the history of the Muslim world in the medieval period. Beginning from 750 C.E. it covers many centuries and ends with the Mongol invasion of the caliphate in 1258 c. e.

#### 5. عصر الإنحطاط

*'Aṣr al-Inhiṭāt* or **The Era of Decadence**

This period begins with the Mongol invasion in 1258 c.e. and ends with Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion of Egypt in 1798 c.e. Some literary historians prefer to call this period by the names Ottoman period, Mamlukites period e.t.c.

#### 6. العصر الحديث

*Al- 'Aṣr al-Hadīth* or **The Modern Period**

The modern period begins with the Napoleonic invasion of 1798 c.e. and continues till this day.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Enumerate the six periods of Arabic literary period and explain them.

#### **3.2.2 Scope of Pre-Islamic Arabic Literature**

The literature of pre-Islamic Arabia embraces two major arts - poetry and prose. However, by prose, we do not mean writing of whatever form. The prose of the period consists of orations, admonitions and proverbs of the literary arts. Poetry occupied a major position. It was a thing of pride among the Arabs for a clan to have a poet. He was seen as the defender of their honour and the proclaimer of their nobility. He was their voice, their shield and their elixir. This place of pride, given to the poet, places poetry above the other arts.

After poetry, oration comes next. The Arabs were blessed by gifted orators as they were blessed with gifted poets. These orators were often wise men, noble lords, or sorcerers whose speeches held their contemporaries spell-bound.

Akin to this are wise counsels and admonitions often given by a father to his child or children, or by a leader to his people. These orations and admonitions are often interwoven since most of the orations have admonitions as their major thrust. One major characteristic of the pre-Islamic oration is that they are often laden with proverbs, short wise sayings and occasional rhymed expressions.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Identify the scope of the pre-Islamic Arabic literature themes.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The social setting under which the literary enterprise flourished in the pre-Islamic days of Arabia no doubt encouraged spontaneity and sudden emotional reactions which makes poetry a ready vehicle for the expression of the authors experience; hence, the supremacy of poetry over other literary arts.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

Literature is a child of the environment and the period that produce it. It is in this light that the literary experience of the Arabs has been divided into periods. These periods and their socio-political situations reflect in the literary productions. Such was also the case with pre-Islamic Arabic literature; its poetry and orations mirror the social life of the time.

### **6.0 TUTOR - MARKED ASSIGNMENT:**

Literary historians have classified the literary enterprise of the Arabs into periods, mention and explain them.

Explain briefly and give examples of two literary arts known to the pre-Islamic Arabs.

### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

S. H. Maqbūl et al (1995); *al-Adab wa 'n-Nuṣūṣ wa 'l-balāghah*; bk. 1, Tripoli.

R.A. Nicholson (1960), *A Literary History of the Arabs*, Cambridge.

## MODULE 2

- Unit 1 Pre-Islamic Poetry- Themes and Style
- Unit 2 Selected Poets of the Period
- Unit 3 Pre-Islamic Prose
- Unit 4 Impact of Islam on Arabic Literature

### UNIT 1: PRE-ISLAMIC POETRY - THEMES AND STYLE

#### CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Themes of Pre-Islamic Poetry
    - 3.2.1 Style of Pre-Islamic Poetry
    - 3.2.2 The *Mu'allaqāt*.
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will learn about the idea and subject matters of pre-Islamic poetry. These are called the themes. You will also learn about what distinguish the pre-Islamic poetry from the poetry of other periods the main features of the poetry of the time. You will also have the opportunity of learning about the "star" poems of the time called "*Mu'allaqāt*."

#### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you will be able to

1. Outline and discuss the various themes of pre-Islamic poetry.
2. Describe the styles of pre-Islamic poetry.
3. Discuss the poets of the *Mu'allaqāt* fame.

#### 3.1 Themes of Pre-Islamic Poetry:

Of all nations, the Arabs have an exceptionally rich poetic prowess. The complexity of their environment, the severity of natures' demands on them and inherent richness of their language place them above all nations in the poetic enterprise.

The nature of desert life and the nomadic disposition of the desert dwellers impose the virtues of perseverance, generosity, chivalry and group solidarity on them and the result is a poetry in which the personality of the poet and his personal experience are shrewdly exhibited.

These factors and several others have encouraged the Arabs to incline towards a number of motivations that form the themes of their poetry, they are:

- 1) *Hamāsah* (lit. heroic): This theme is a direct offshoot of the deadly encounters occasioned by survival instincts and tribal rivalry among the pre-Islamic Arabs. When a poet sings victory songs or extols virtues such as bravery, forbearance and intrepidity, he is responding to feelings of *hamāsah*.
- 2) *Fakhr* - (self- praise): The virtues imposed on the Arabs by the nature of their environment are many. A poet often finds within himself the desire to boast of these virtues to reaffirm his nobility and the nobility of his clan. This is *fakhr*.
- 3) *Rithā*<sup>1</sup> — (elegy or dirge): This is the solemn song used to mourn the dead or to lament over a calamity. Most of the female poets of the pre-Islamic day have poems of elegiac significances. Anytime a dead person is praised and his death is considered a loss, we have *ritha*".
- 4) *Madh* - (panegyric): This theme is achieved when a poet notices certain virtues in an individual or a group of Individuals and sings about these virtues to praise them and to show, how captivated he is by these virtues
- 5) *Ghazal* - (erotic song): This is when a poet exhibits his affection for a woman in his poetry. He may, like Imru'u 'l-Qays, delve upon the physical features of the woman or like 'Antarah, delve upon the beauty in the nature of the woman with total refrain from the lewd physical descriptions of the former.
- 6) *Hijā'* - (satire): This is the product of the various conflicts that took place among the various Arab tribes. The pre-Islamic satire is not indecent and it is not clothed in the seemingly harsh expressions of the subsequent literary periods. The poet often censured a tribe by drawing attention to its weaknesses.
- 7) *Wasf* (description): The pre-Islamic poets have given very faithful descriptions of their environment, the climate, the encampments, the horses, camels and mules. They also described their skirmishes, their hunts and their battles.
- 8) *Hikmah* (wisdom): This theme is a result of their experience in life and the harsh climatic conditions to which they are subjected. The poets therefore produced very rich collections of wisdom-laden verses.

- 9) *I'tidhār* (apology): Though very scanty in the poetry of the pre-Islamic period, this theme often come into being when a poet has to apologize to someone whose wrath he has incurred.

These are the major themes of the pre-Islamic poetry. They are found in the other periods also but there are shifts in the areas of style and meaning.

### SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISES

Which of the themes of Arabic poetry in the pre-Islamic days is not found in the poetry of your own Language? *Rithā'* is a *madh* of the dead. Discuss.

#### 3.2.1 Style of Pre-Islamic Poetry

The pre-Islamic poetry often begins with a romantic opening in the form of yearning towards a beloved one or a place where the poet and the beloved used to meet. This is called "*Nasīb*".

Because of the nature of their environment, they are often forced into using strong expressions to depict the realities of their lives and experience. The language of pre-Islamic poetry is therefore predominantly the language of the desert and its magries.

One style, which seemed to have found favour with the poets of the period is the assembling of number themes in a single *qaṣidah* (i.e. ode). Similarly, several of the pre-Islamic poets adopted the narrative style in their poetry and this suits very well the multi-thematic structure of their poetry.

#### 3.2.2 The *Mu'allaqāt* (suspended or hanging odes)

The *Mu'allaqāt* are a group of odes that were celebrated by the pre-Islamic Arabs. They constituted the finest specimen of the poetry of the period. They are so called because, according to some people, the Arabs used to hang them at the Ka'bah for all pilgrims to see.

Another opinion about these poems is that they are called "*Mu'allaqāt*" because they are beautiful poems and they hang on longer in the minds of the people.

The latter view appears to be more reasonable because when the Muslim conquerors entered Makkah at 630 c.e, and cleared idols and other items, they did not see any poem hanging on the roof of the Ka'bah.

According to some authority the poets of the *Mu'allaqāt* are seven while according to others they are ten. They are:-

1. Imru'u 'l-Qays
2. Antarah ibn Shaddād al- 'Absī
3. Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulma al-Muznī
4. Ṭarafah ibn 'Abd al-Bakrī
5. Labīd ibn Rabī'ah al- 'Amrī
6. Al-Hārith ibn Hillizah al-Yashkurī
7. 'Amr ibn Kulthum al-Taghlabī

The following three are added by those who say they are ten:-

8. Al-A'sha Maymūn ibn Qays
9. Al-Nābighah al- Dhubyānī
10. Ubayd ibn al-Abras

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

The pre-Islamic poetry is, no doubt, one of best poetry of all times. Whatever the theme, the poets of the time faithfully painted for us the true picture of the time.

#### 5.0 SUMMARY

The subject matter of the poetry of the pre-Islamic Arab Society is called "*al-Aghrād*" (themes). These themes are about nine and the styles of their poetry are very similar. The *Mu'allaqāt* contain some of the best of pre-Islamic poetry.

#### 6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What in your opinion is the relationship between *Madh* and *Hijā*?
2. What is the *Mu'allaqāt*? And who are its authours?

#### 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Jamā'atun min al-asātidhah (1962); *Tārīkh al-Adab al- 'Arabī*, Dar-al Ma'ārif, Iraq.

S. H. Maqbūl et al (1995); *al-Adab wa 'n-Nuṣūṣ wa 'l-balāghah*; bk. 1, Tripoli.



## UNIT 2      SELECTED POETS OF THE PERIOD

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Imru'u '1-Qays
    - 3.2.1 Antarah ibn Shaddād al-‘Absī
    - 3.2.2 Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā al-Muznī
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor marked assignment
- 7.0 References/Further readings

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit you will learn about three outstanding poets of the pre-Islamic period. You will also have the opportunity of studying selections from their poetry.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

Having gone through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss Imru'ū `1-Qays and give excerpts from his poetry
- Appreciate the treatment of *Wasf*, *Fakhr*, and *Hikmah* in the poems of Imru'ū `1-Qays, <sup>°</sup>Antara and Zuhayr

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Imru`u `1-Qays

He was the son of Handaj ibn Juhur al-Kindī. He was the most popular of the pre-Islamic poets and their acclaimed leader. His father was a ruler and like most children of rulers, Imru'ū `1-Qays spent his early life in a carefree manner, reveling in wine, babbling and hunting spree; and spent the concluding parts of his life in seeking revenge against the murderers of his father, the Banū Asad. He sought the assistance of Caesar in raising an army to avenge his father's death but he did not succeed. He is reported to have been given a poisoned coat of mail, felt its effect and died. Imru'ū '1-Qays was the most outstanding poet in the pre-Islamic period and he was the first to explore some meanings which many of the pre-Islamic poets later exhibited in their poetry. Below is a description of the night in one of the poems of Imru'u '1-Qays.

وليل كموج البحر أرخى سدوله علي بأنواع الهموم ليبتلى  
فقلت له لما تمطى بصلبه وأردف أعجازا ونأء بكلكل  
ألا أيها الليل الطويل ألا انجلي بصبح وما الإصباح منك بأمثل  
فيا لك من ليل كأن نجومه بكل مغار الفتل شدت بيذ بل

And the night like the oceans surge extend its covers above me with different types of travails to try me,

And I said unto it as it staggers along (like a carmel) pushing its back dragging its base with its chest protruded.

O protracted night will you not pave way for the morn? Alas! the morning itself is not better than you.

How amazing are you, o night! It is as if your stars are shackled to mount yadhbul (hence they give no light).

### **Explanation:**

The poet, Imru'ū `1-Qays, in these lines, describes the night and his travails during it. He likens the night and its gradual extension of darkness to the surge of an ocean; and due to his worries during the night it appears that the night has come to try his patience and perseverance. He then goes ahead to describe the movement of the dark streaks of the night in the cloud. He likens its slowness to the rising of a camel from its sitting position and its staggering stance which is too slow for him.

Though he knows that the night has not increased in length, his suffering during this night makes him address the night as a long or protracted night asking it to leave the scene for the morning but he is quick to fall into despair saying that the morning it self cannot be better.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Who was Imru'ū `1-Qays ? Give and appreciate four lines from his poems.

#### **3.2.1 'Antarah ibn Shaddād al-'Absī**

He is 'Antara bn Shaddād ibn 'Umar ibn Mu'awiyah al-'Absī. His father was one of the noble of an Abyssinian maid called "Zabībah".

He grew up as a servant rearing the flock of his father. According to the custom of the Arabs, the child of a maid is not accepted as a full member of a man's progeny until he has distinguished him self with an

act of valour. 'Antara thus grew up and became a skilled fighter. He did not allow his status as a slave to deter him from the art of warriors.

One day, a group of assailants attacked the Banū 'Abs clan and carted away the several camels and young ladies belonging to them. 'Antara refrained from fighting.

And his father urged him fight on °Antara! And he replied: 'a slave does not know how to fight he only knows how to rear and milk cows' °Antara jumped into the fray and a bloody encounter ensued from which he emerged victorious having successfully rescued the stolen camels and girls.

From then, °Antara became free, he took part in many battle encounters from which he emerged victorious, and his exploits achieved for him a proverbial fame as a symbol of courage and chivalry.

Because of his heroic status, his poems contain a lot offakhr (self praise). Below is one of his poems in this regard

هلا سألت القوم يابنة مالك \* إن كنت جاهلة بما لم تعلمي  
 يخبرك من شهد الواقعة أنني \* أغشى الوغى وأعفّ عند المغنم  
 أثنى علىّ بما علمت فيّ أنني \* سمح مخالفتي إذا لم أظلمي  
 فإذا ظلمت فإنّ ظلمي باسل \* مرّ مذاقته كطعم العلقم

Will you not ask the people o daughter of Malik!  
 If indeed you are ignorant of what you appear not to know.

Those who witnessed the battle encounter will tell you that I am severe in battle but I exercise restraint during the sharing of booty.

Praise me for whatever virtue you know surely I am. Easy to disagree with if I am not wronged.

But if I am wronged such will be terrible; its taste is bitter like the 'alqam leaf.

### Explanation:

In the above verses, the poet addresses a young lady in whose love he was enthralled. He does not use the conventional style of wooing a woman Rather, he alludes to the virtues, which the Arab society

cherished, and how he translates them into action. He displays valour on the battlefield and unlike the other warriors who often fight battles because of the spoils of war, he restrains himself, because he fight for honours and glory and not for material benefits, he goes ahead to talk about his personal disposition and says that he is an easygoing person as long as nobody has wronged him and that if he is wronged it has terrible consequences for those who have wronged him.

### 3.2.1 Zuhayr ibn Abī Salmā

Zuhayr was born into the family of Rablah ibn Riyāh ibn Qurrah ibn al-Hārith from Muzaina clan.

His father, Rabī'ah died early and Zuhayr was brought up by his rich maternal uncle called Bashamah ibn al-Ghadīr. He thus had the opportunity of growing up in a wealthy home.

Zuhayr did not visit kings and rulers like Nābighah and A'shā but he lived a life of ease. He had a good relationship with the two nobles of Banū Murrah, Haram ibn Sinān and al-Hārith ibn 'Auf, whom he eulogized and both of whom showered him with gifts. He was a gifted poet who inherited poetry from his fore bearers - his father Rabi'ah was a poet, his uncle, Bashāmah was a poet; his sisters, Salmā and Khansā were poetesses and his sons, Bujayr and Ka'b were poets.

Zuhayr was a stickler for poetic excellence. It is reported that whenever he composed a poem, he would not make it public until after a year during which it must have been thoroughly edited and revised. His poems are therefore known as "*Hawliyyāt*" that is "yearly odes". The poetry of Zuhayr is characterized mainly by true and well-deserved praise and word of wisdom. Below are verses from one of his wisdom-laden poems:-

ثمانين حولاً لا أيا لك يسأم	**	سمنت تكاليف الحياة ومن يعيش
واكثني عن علم ما في غد عم	**	وأعلم ما في اليوم والأمس قبله
وإن الفتى بعد السفاهة يحلم	**	رأيت سفاه الشيخ لا حلم بعده
يضرس بأنياب ويوطأ بمنسم	**	ومن لا يصانع في أمور كثيرة
على قومه يستغن عنه ويذمم	**	ومن يك ذا فضل فيبخل بفضله

I am fed up with the vicissitudes of life. Surely he who has lived for eighty years will no doubt be fed up.

- Of today I am aware, and of yesterday that preceded it but of tomorrow, I am totally unaware,
- I see that the foolishness of an old man is incurable but the youth can still become wise after his own foolishness.
- Whoever does not do good to people in several ways, will be bitten by canine teeth and smitten with clubs.
- Whoever is blessed with wealth but is miserly towards his people shall be liquored and reproached.

### **Explanation:**

In the above verses, Zuhayr reflects on living as an experience person. He therefore expresses despair at the ups and downs of life. He concludes that he is fed up with life and indeed he should be, since anybody who has lived as long as eight decades must no doubt be fed up.

He then goes on to stress that the knowledge of the future is hidden from mortals and that man can only know his past and present. This wisdom according to him is very necessary for him as an old man who is fully aware that the foolishness of an old man is almost incurable since human experience ought to have made him wise. As for the youth, there is hope that with experience, he would acquire wisdom.

Zuhayr goes further to stress the importance of generosity and he maintains that anyone who is miserly can only have himself to blame because he would be the target of ridicule and attacks.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Who was Zuhayr ibn Abī Salmā? Give a literary appraisal of the few verses of his poem you have learnt.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

A reflection on the poetry of the pre-Islamic period shows that the pre-Islamic society might have been devoid of divine teaching or a thorough appreciation of spiritual truths, it was definitely not devoid of lofty ideals and values.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

Imru'ū `l - Qays, 'Antarah and Zuhayr were among the poets of the pre-Islamic Arab society. While Imru'ū `l-Qays and 'Antara were well-

known for their heroic songs and self-praise, Zuhayr was famous for his wisdom-laden verses.

## 6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Write in details on any of the following *Jāhiliyyah* Arabian poets: Imru' al-Qays, 'Antara ibn Shaddād, Zuhayr ibn Abī Salmā.
2. سئمت تكاليف الحياة ومن يعيش ثمانين حولاً لا أبالك يسأم
  - i. Give the next four verses of this literary piece,
  - ii. Translate the piece into idiomatic English,
  - iii. Write a short biography of the author,
  - iv. Write a brief appraisal of the piece.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Hasan al-Mahallī (1989), *Al-Adab wa n-Nuṣūṣ lighayr al-Nāṭiqīn bi 'l-'Arabiyyah*, Riyādh, KSA.

Maqbūl et al (1995), *Al-Adab wa n-Nuṣūṣ wa 'l-balāghah*, bk. 1, Tripoli.

Abdul-Aziz Fayṣal (1987), *Al-Adab al-'Arabī watārīkhuh; Wizāratu 'l-Ta 'līm al-'āli*, K.S.A.

## UNIT 3 PRE-ISLAMIC PROSE

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Pre-Islamic Prose
    - 3.2.1 Orations of the Pre-Islamic Arab Society
    - 3.2.2 Proverbs
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will learn about the second division of Arabic literature called a 'n-nathr" loosely translated as prose, the first being a 'sh-shi'r viz. poetry. While poetry is restricted by rhymes and metres, prose is characterized by a free flowing style which is unrestrictive and which represents the day to day human expressions.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the dimensions of pre-Islamic prose
- Discuss the orators and orations of the period
- Discuss the Arabic proverbs and its usage.

### 3.1 Pre-Islamic Prose

The prose of the pre-Islamic era is divided into seven kinds; namely *al-khiṭābah* (oration) *al-amthāl* (proverbs) *al-hikam* (wise sayings) *al-waṣāyā* (admonitions) *al-munāfarah* (call to arm / verbal feuds) *al-qīṣaṣ* (stories) and *saj'u l-kuhhān* (sorcerer's incantation). Of all these, the most popular are orations and proverbs. Oration, in particular, is of the greatest importance because it is the tool of the man of nobility and the sages. It often contains strains of the other kinds of pre-Islamic prose. A typical oration may include proverbs, wise sayings, admonitions and elements of stories. It is therefore in this light that some historians of literature would prefer to divide the pre-Islamic prose into orations and proverbs alone because the other divisions can be integrated into them.

The pre-Islamic society respected the orator and his popularity gave him a place of pride. Despite the popularity and precedence of poetry, the orator had a position of honour. This is because the poets of the period often made a living out of poetry whereas the orator only employs his art either to defend a cause, argue a case, give a warning or extol the virtues of his clan or tribe. Moreover, most of the orators were leaders among their people.

There were several orators in the pre-Islamic period and prominent among them were Hāshim ibn 'Abd Manāf, 'Abdu `l-Muṭṭalib, his son, Zuhayr ibn Janāb, Quṣṣ ibn Sāidah al -Ayādī, Qays ibn Khārijah ibn Sinān, Aktham ibn Sayfi, Hām ibn Mas'ud al-Shaybānī, Hājib ibn Zurārah, al-Hārith ibn ' Abbād al-Bakrī and Amāmah bint Hārith.

### 3.2.1 Orations of the Pre-Islamic Society

Most of the pre-Islamic orations contain short sentences in rhythmic patterns. However, there are instances where beauty of the oration is not affected. Below are examples of the pre-Islamic orationsi-

#### (1) *Quṣṣ ibn Sāidah's Speech at Ukāz Fair*

His full name was Quṣṣ ibn Sāidah ibn ' Amr from the clan of Ayād. He was one of the wise men of the pre-Islamic society. He was also one of the *Hanīfs* who still upheld the religion of Prophet Ibrahim. He is reported to have made it a habit of warning his people of the consequences of their actions. He died twenty three years before Prophet Muhammad 's call to prophethood. The prophet himself used to listen to his speeches at the Ukāz fair when he was still a teenager and had not received the Divine call. The excerpt below is the most popular oration of Quṣṣ:-

أيها الناس ، اسمعوا وعوا، من عاش مات، ومن مات فات، وكل ما  
هوأت آت، ليل داج، ونهار ساج، وسماء ذات أبراج، ونجوم تزهـر ،  
وبحار

تزخر، وجبال مرساة، وأرض مدحاة وأنهار مجراة، إن في السماء  
لخبر وإن في الأرض لعبرة. ما بال الناس يذهبون فلا يرجعون؟ أرضوا

بالإقامة

فأقاموا ، أم تركوا فناموا؟ يا معشر الأيادي! أين ثمود وعاد؟ وأين  
اللاباء والأجداد؟ وأين الفراعنة الشداد؟

في الذاهبين الأوليـ \* ن من القرون لنا بصائر  
لما رأيت موارد \* للموت ليس لها مصادر  
ورأيت قومي نحوها \* يمضي الأكابر والأصاغر  
لا يرجع الماضي إلـ \* ي ولا من الباقيـ غابر  
أيقنت أني لا محالـ \* ة حيث صار القوم صائر



Translation:

O people, hear and understand! Whoever lives must die, and he who dies is lost. All that is destined to come will come - dark night, serene daylight, a heaven with stars, stars shining, oceans raging, mountains firm-rooted, earth well spread, rivers flowing.

In the heavens is information; on the earth are signs; why is it that people go and they do not come back? Are they pleased with the life beyond and decided to stay? Or they were left behind and they slept off?

O people of Ayād! Where are the people of Thamūd and ʿĀd? Where are our fathers and grand fathers? Where are the great Pharaohs? (He then sang a poem):-

In those early people who have gone  
There are signs for us,  
When I saw the pools of death  
That gushes forth from no source,  
I saw my people going towards it,  
Young and old  
He who has gone did not come back  
And those remaining behind will not stay back forever,  
I became certain that I also  
Will go where my people have gone.

### (1) Hām ibn Mas'ūd's Speech at the Dhū Qār encounter

He is Hām ibn Mas'ud al-Shaybāni, the leader of the tribes of Bakr in its battles against the Persians. The Chosroes of Persian had wanted to arrest Nu'mān ibn Mundhir, the leader of Hīrah. But Nu'mān and his family sought asylum with the clan of Shaybān. After a while, the Chosroes was able to kill Nu'mān and he appointed Iyās ibn Qabīṣah al-Tāī as head and the entire clans of Banū Bakr revolted against the new leader. The Chosroes therefore decided to send a great army against them; and with Hām at the head Banu Bakr met the Persian army at the valley of Dhū Qār. There, he delivered this short speech to urge his people to die for honour. He said:-

يا معشر بكر! هالك معذور خير من ناج فرور. إن الحذر لا ينجي  
من القدر وإن الصبر من سباب الظفر. المنية ولا الدنيا. استقبال الموت  
خير من استدباره. الطعن في ثغور النحور أكرم منه من في الإعجاز  
الظهور. يا آل بكر! قاتلوا فما للمنايا من بدّ.

Translation

O company of Banū Bakr! He who is killed can be excused; he is better than he who is saved by running away from the battlefield; caution cannot avert destiny. Surely, perseverance is one of the causes of victory. Death is better than dishonour. Facing death is better than turning our backs to it. To receive a blow at the throat is nobler than to receive it at the back.

**O people of Bakr!** Fight for there is no escape from death.

### SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What are the basic features of pre-Islamic orations as you can see from the two excerpts given?

#### 3. 2.2 *Al-Amthāl* - [Proverbs]

Proverbs are sayings that are commonly used in speeches and orations because of this similarity and relevance to present situations. They are products of human experience and they often have stories to back them up. They are used for their rhetorical significance because their use makes the teaching of precepts easy.

The pre-Islamic proverb reflects the experience and the environment of pre-Islamic Arabs. It is a mirror of their life and the summary of their thoughts. Several proverbs of the pre-Islamic periods are traceable to their sources through the orators who relate them while several others are anonymous. Among those who were well known for relating the pre-Islamic proverbs are:-

- (1) **Aktham ibn Sayfī**
- (2) 'Amir ibn al-Dharb al-'Adwanī
- (3) Damrah ibn Damrah al-Nakhsha'ī
- (4) Al-Mutalammis, the poet.

Among the proverbs of the pre-Islamic Arabs are the following:-

- (1) بلغ السيل الزبى

The flood has reached the trench

This proverb is used to depict a situation that has gone out of hand.

- (2) لا يطاع لقصير أمر

A short man is not obeyed.

This proverb is used when an insignificant person brings forth a good opinion but is rejected.

(3) **إِنَّ أَخَاكَ مِنْ وَاسَاكَ**

Your brother is he who supports you in hand.

This is used to describe a sincere friend.

(4) **رَبَّ أَخٍ لَكَ لَمْ تَلِدْهُ أُمَّكَ**

Many a brother of yours is not your mother's offspring. (same as above)

(5) **أَيُّ الرَّجَالِ الْمَهْدَبِ**

Who then is the Gentleman (lit. who among men is well-brought up?)

This is used to depict a respectable person who is found wanting.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Bring five proverbs of pre-Islamic Arabia and explain their meaning.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Prose among the Arabs is not limited to orations and proverbs. These are only the features of the pre-Islamic literature. Other periods of Arabic literatures parade a highly developed prose as we shall encounter as we go deeper in our study.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

The pre-Islamic prose is of different kinds but all these classifications can be accommodated under Orations (Khitabah) and Proverbs (amthal). The orations of the pre-Islamic society contain a lot of themes and these represent the other classifications of the prose of the period. The proverbs of the period mirror the experience and life of the Arabs and they are often traceable to specific narrators though several others are anonymous.

## **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

- (1) Mention the various types of prose in the pre-Islamic era. Illustrate them as much as possible.
- (2) Who was Qaṣṣu ibn Ḥ'idah? Write his oration and its appraisal showing among other things how it resembles a sermon.

- (3) For each of the proverbs given, bring a local proverb used to portray the same ideas.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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## UNIT 4: IMPACT OF ISLAM ON ARABIC LITERATURE

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Impact of Islam on Arabic literature
    - 3.2.1 The *Qur'ān* and its Impact on Arabic Language and Literature.
    - 3.2.2 The Prophetic Tradition as a Literary Piece.
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading.

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

You will learn in this unit about the advent of Islam and how it affected literature. You will also learn about the impact of the *Qur'ān* and the documented utterances of Prophet Muhammad (*Hadīth*) on the Arabic literary activities.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss how Islam impacted on Arabic literary arts.
- Appreciate the extent to which the *Qur'ān* and the Hadith have influenced the Arab men of letters.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Impact of Islam on Arabic Literature

The advent of Islam brought the Arabs face to face with an ideology that is at variance with many of their cherished ideals. Since, literature, in its prose and poetic forms, mirrors life, the change in beliefs and the new orientation that accompanied it no doubt had a lot of influence on literature and men of letters.

The message of Islam is a pragmatic one, which re-affirmed some ancient Arabian practices and totally condemned some others. Its claim to universality would naturally discourage tribalism, tribal pride and inter-tribal feuds for which the Arabs were well known. Similarly, its insistence on decent speech discouraged indiscriminate use of satires

while the seriousness of the message and the task of building a community of true believers discouraged making a living out of poetry through praise-saying or lampooning of opponents.

It is also worthy of mention that since the new message needed to be interpreted and simplified for people, the use of oration became more prominent. The revelation of the *Qur'ān* and the prophetic expositions also introduced new words into the Arabic Language and softened up the expressions of the language.

In the light of the above, it can be said that while Islam expanded the Arabic literary arts in one way, it also reduced the scope of some literary genres in another way. Islam thus added the writing of epistles to the literary activities of the time while at the same time, satires and self-praise suffered a set back.

### SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Explain briefly how the advent of Islam influenced Arabic literature.

#### 3.2.1 The *Qur'ān* and its impact on Arabic Language and Literature

Prior to the revelation of the *Qur'ān*, the Arabs had always prided themselves for the beauty of their language and their mastery of its usage.

The *Qur'ān* thus came in a language purer than any they had known and a style which is loftier and nobler than the best of their compositions. It is neither poetry nor prose. It brought into existence a distinct style unmatched in the history of Languages, It also challenged the Arabs to produce its like if they could. The *Qur'ān* declares:-

قُلْ لَّيْنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ  
وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا {الإسراء/88}

Say (O Muhammad) if mankind and jinn gathered together to produce the like of this *Qur'ān*, they would not be able to produce the like thereof, even though they should help one another, Q.17:88.

This challenge remains unanswered till this day. In another portion of the *Qur'ān*, the challenge is reiterated in a different manner. It goes thus:-

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّمَّنْ لَمِثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ  
مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ {البقرة/23} فَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَأْتُوا  
النَّارَ الَّتِي وَفُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ

‘If you are in doubt as to what We have sent down to Our servant, then produce a chapter like it, and call upon your witnesses beside Allah if indeed you are truthful;.

But if you do it not - and never shall you do-it then guard against the fire, whose fuel is men and stones which is prepared for disbelievers. *Q.* 2:23-24.

The artistic and semantic beauty of the *Qur'ān* and its inimitability had been a subject of discourse from the early part of the prophet's mission till today. An interesting meeting was held by the Makkan nobles in the early days of Islam. These nobles had just listened to the newly revealed *Qur'ānic* verses and they decided to express their impression of the new message. At their head on that day was al-Walīd ibn Mughīrah. One of them said, after listening to the *Qur'ān*. He is a clairvoyant (that is, Prophet Muhammad). Al-Walīd replied: No, these are not the mimes and chants of a clairvoyant". Another person said: He is a poet; and Al-Walīd said:- he is not a poet, for we know poetry and its various forms and styles", One of them said: he is a sorcerer, and al-Walīd replied; we know the sorcerer and their sorcery. This is not their incantations and spells: They then chorused: what do we call it then? Al-Walīd replied:

“By God, his speech has a natural sweetness, its roots have multiple dimensions and its units have inherent semantic freshness.

The best that can be said is that he is a sorcerer whose sorcery has caused division between a man and his parents, brothers, sisters, wife and entire kith and kin". With this, they all departed.

This beauty of the *Qur'ān* brought about a revolution in Arabic literature. The pre-Islamic preference for strange and obscure expressions was replaced by a craze for simple and sweet diction.

The excellent similes and metaphors in the *Qur'ān* opened the eyes of the Arabs to the inherent depth of the meaning of their language.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Mention two other verses of the *Qur'ān* that contain challenges to those who doubt its authenticity.

Analyse the reaction of the leaders of Quraysh to the revelation of the *Qur'ān*,

### 3.2.2 The Prophetic Traditions as a Literary Piece

The prophetic traditions, otherwise known as "*Hadīth*" represent the recorded utterances and deeds of Prophet Muhammad.

Any statement, which is universally acclaimed to have been a direct utterance of the Prophet, had been found to be unmatched and unequalled among speeches of mortals.

The Prophet had a unique style which conveys a lot of messages in very few and unambiguous words. Occasionally, he employs the use of rhymed prose and in several of his sayings; he adopts the free conversational styles. His choice of word cannot be improved upon. His style suits perfectly the content of the message and a general coherence and rhetoric ingenuity permeates his speeches.

Obviously captivated by the above style of the prophet, Abu Bakr once said unto him:-

I have roamed the Arab desert and city tribes, and I have seen none to match your oratory prowess. Where did you learn the art of word-smithing?

The Prophet replied:

"My Lord has trained me and has perfected my training".

In another narration, he is reported to have said that he was born among the Quraysh who were well known for their mastery of Arabic usage and that he grew up among the Banū Sa'd who were the custodians of pure diction.

A careful reflection on the corpus of *Hadīth* shows that men of letters will find it a reference material for language usage after the *Qur'ān*. If one studies the pre-Islamic poetry and compares it with the early Islamic period, one would see the large concentration of Islamic expressions and images in the latter as a result of the impact of the *Qur'ān* and Hadith.

#### SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Give an appraisal of the Prophetic Tradition as a literary piece.

### 4.0 CONCLUSION

The advent of Islam brought in its wake, a moral, social and spiritual evolution. The revelation of the *Qur'ān* and its exposition by the Prophet



in the *Hadīth* served as raw materials for the orators adapt its diction, style and imageries to achieve rhetoric perfection of their works.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

The revelation of the *Qur'ān* and the utterances of the Prophet contributed in no small measure to the Arabic literature of the early Islamic period. The Islamic moral teachings also eliminated indecency, assaults on individual and communal honour, and puts in its stead decent and lofty speeches.

## 6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. Give a brief appraisal of the *Qur'ān* as a literary piece.
2. Discuss what is meant by inimitability of the *Qur'ān*!

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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## MODULE 3

- Unit 1 The Poetry of Early Islamic Period
- Unit 2 The *Mukhadramūn* and their Works
- Unit 3 Arabic Prose in the Early Islamic Period

### UNIT 1 THE POETRY OF EARLY ISLAMIC PERIOD

#### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Arabic Poetry in the Early Islamic Period
    - 3.2.1 Themes and Styles in the Early Islamic Poetry
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will learn about the poetry of the early Islamic period. The period begins from 610 C. E. when the Prophet received the call and ends with the assassination of Alī ibn Abū Tālib, the fourth Successor of the Prophet in 661 C.E. The poets of the period were mainly the "*Mukhadramūn*" i.e. those who witnessed both the *Jāhiliyyah* and early Islam periods. Basically, the *Mukhadramūn* poets sang poetry in the pre-Islamic period and continued after the advent of Islam, despite the new creed and change in orientation.

#### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the state of poetry during the early Islamic Period.
- Discuss the themes of the poetry of the period.
- Understand the difference between the poetry of the pre- and the early Islamic period

#### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

##### 3.1 Arabic Poetry in the Early Islamic Period

The advent of Islam and its announcement by Prophet Mohammad attracted a lot of reactions from the people of Makkah. Their poets made

a sport out of taunting and censuring the Prophet and his small company. Since there was no poet among those who embraced Islamic in Makkah, the attacks were not replied.

The migration of the Prophet to Madinah in 622 C.E. witnessed the coming into Islam of a number of poets who had composed poems in the pre-Islamic days like Hassān ibn Thābit, Ka'b ibn Mālik, 'Abdullah ibn Rawāhah, Labīd ibn Rabī'ah al-<sup>c</sup>Amrī and Ka'b ibn Zuhayr. These people were able to effectively defend Islam and the Muslims against the onslaught of poetic attacks from Makkan poets like <sup>c</sup>Abdullah ibn al-Zabārah, Darār ibn al Khattāb and Abu Sufyān ibn al-Hārith.

Generally, poetry did not thrive as it did in the pre-Islamic period. There were no patrons who would pay poets for singing their praises. The focus had shifted from the individual to communal good. Similarly, the new task of building a state of believers did not allow for pleasure hunts and paying visits to taverns both of whom were raw materials for poetry in the pre-Islamic period. The poems that were popular therefore were the poetry of defense or reply to Makkan satires against the Prophet. The prominent subjects for such poetry were eulogy, satire, self-praise and elegy.

### 3.2.1 Themes and styles of early Islamic poetry

In the early Islamic period, only four themes seemed to have dominated the literary productions of the early Muslims. These themes were *madh* (panegyric), *hijā'* (satire), *fakhr*, *hamāsah* (heroic) and *rithā'* (elegy or dirge). Below is a brief examination of each:-

#### (1) *Madh*:

After the *hijrah* of the Prophet from Makkah to Madinah, poets like Hassān ibn Thābit, Abdullah ibn Rawahah and Ka'b ibn Mālik embraced Islam and took it upon themselves to defend Islam and the Prophet against the attacks of the Quraysh poets. The main thrust of the “*madh*” of the period is different from its thrust in the pre-Islamic days. A poet of the pre-Islamic period eulogized solely to gain material benefits from the subject of encomium. A poet of the early Islamic period on the other hand eulogized to show the superiority of Islam, its prophet and its ideals.

Similarly, the pre-Islamic poet praised his subject with virtues such as bravery and generosity while the early Islamic poetry parades praise songs that emphasized religious guidance and spiritual matters. The various poets who praised the Prophet did not talk about personal virtues like bravery, chivalry, generosity or patience. They all praised him for

bringing guidance that revolutionized their conscience. One of the most popular panegyrics on the Prophet is "bānat Su'ād" of Ka'b ibn Zuhayr. In a line therein, he says:

إنّ الرّسول لنور يستضاء به \* مهتد من سيوف الله مسلول

Surely, the Messenger of Allah is a light, which illuminates;  
indeed, he is drawn Indian steel among the swords of Allah.

A'n-Nābighah al-Ja'cī also reflects a similar inclination when he says:

أتيت رسول الله إذ جاء بالهدى \* ويتلو كتاباً كالمجرّة نيراً

I came to the messenger of Allah who has come  
with guidance, and who recites a book which is  
as bright as the galaxy.

**Exercise:** Discuss the content and style of madh theme in the Arabic poetry of the early Islamic period.

## (2) *Hijā'* (satire)

Fire of satires was kindled between the Quraysh poets of Makkah and the early Madinan Muslim poets. While the Makkan poets boasted of their heathen ways, the Madinan poets censured them for unmanly acts like running away from battle encounters. They also evolved new meanings through sarcastic reference to their idolatrous practices. The satires composed by these early Muslim poets however excluded dirty or vile allusions which the satires of others periods later assumed.

Lamponing al-Hārith ibn Hishām for escaping from the battle of Badr, and leaving behind his brother Abu Jahl to be killed, Hassan ibn Thābit sang:

إن كنت كاذبة الذي حدّثتني \* فنجوت منجى الحارث بن هشام  
ترك الأحبة أن يقاتل دونهم \* ونجا براس طمرة ولجام

### Translation

(It is shameless) if you lie in what you have told me;  
and you found an escape route like Harith ibn Hishām;  
Who left his beloved ones unprotected,  
And escaped with a fiery steed fully bridled.

In a similar manner, Hassān also castigated al-Hārith ibn 'Awf ibn Abu Hārithah when his tribe acted treacherously towards a Muslim neighbour of their, He says

يا حار من يغدر بذمة جاره \* منكم فإنّ محمّدا لم يغدر

إن تغدروا فالغدر منكم شيمة \* والغدر ينبت فى أصول السخبر

### Translation

O Hārith, whoever among you acts with treachery towards his neighbour, then know that Muhammad was not treacherous. If you are treacherous, it is not a strange thing, at least, treachery is your well known attribute, it spouts forth from the roots of Sakhbar.

Generally speaking, the *hijā'* (satire) of the early Islamic period was mild. It contains simple reproaches and taunts often achieved through praising the Prophet with such qualities which the Makkan leaders lacked thereby establishing the Prophet's superiority. After the conquest of Makkah, the fire of *hijā'* was abated and the Muslim rulers, the Caliphs forbade poets from satirizing other people and thus, people's honour and dignity were preserved.

### SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Discuss the characteristics of *hijā'* (satire) poems during the early Islamic period.

#### (3) *Hamāsah* (heroic poems):

Heroic songs were a constant companion to the message of Islam from its earliest days. There was the need to strengthen the spirits of the Muslim warriors and Islamic workers who were exposed to a lot of hazards. The poets of the time saw this need and rose to the occasion so that cowardice can be completely expelled from the hearts of the believers.

One of the most celebrated poets of the time, Ka'b ibn Mālik, composed a lot of poems glorifying the achievements of the Muslims during battles, documenting in verse the actual battle experience and encouraging the warriors to patiently bear the sufferings of the war, that victory is always their lot. In one of such poems, he says:

قضيٰنا من تهامة كل ريب \* وخيبر ثمأجمعنا السيوف  
نخيرها ولو نطقت لقات \* قواطعهن: دوسا أو ثقيفا  
فلست لحاصن إن لم تروها \* بساحة داركم منا أوفيا  
فنتزع العروش ببطن وج \* ونترك داركم منا خلوفا  
ونردى اللات والعزى وودا \* ونسليها القلاند والشنوفا

### Translation

From Tihāmah we removed all doubts,

Also from Khaybar and we gathered our swords in unity.  
 We chose it and if the migratory birds could talk,  
 they would say: include also Daws and Thaqif  
 I have no score to settle with a chase woman  
 if she is not seen in your courtyard as an intimate pal.

And we seized the grapevine pouches in the valley of wajj,  
 And we left your abode as a place devoid of men.  
 We shall destroy Lāt, Uzzā and wadd, And we shall make  
 necklace and pendant for them with the edge of our swords.

The above poem by Ka'b ibn Mālik parades a lot of images familiar only to the desert dwellers. He boasts that the victory as a whole and that these two areas have only been chosen for the sake of brevity. If the migratory birds of the areas could talk, they would have added other areas which have not been mentioned. A damsel who does not belong to these tribes of disbelievers is not affected, only those who belong therein shall feel the impact of our victory. The grapevine feels the impact of our victory. The grapevine pouches from which wine is distilled were all seized and the entire areas were left with no men since they had either died in battles or are held captives. The idols of these people shall be wiped out by our swords.

Apart from Ka'b ibn Mālik, poets like Abdullah ibn Rawāhah and Abu Tufayl, 'Amr ibn Wā'ilah also composed on the "*hamāsah*" theme.

**Exercise:** Give five verses from Ka'b ibn Mālik's *hamāsah*.

Translate them, give their content analysis and appraisal.

(4) **Rithā'** (elegy):

Mourning the death of beloved ones was quite known to the Arabs since the *Jāhiliyyah* days. The Arabic literature of the period has a large store of poems of elegiac significance. The advent of Islam did not eradicate this; it only changed its direction. It forbade the lamentations and wailing of the *Jāhiliyyah* period which often appears as if one is rebuking Allah for taking the lives of the dead. It encourages pious reflections on the good qualities of the departed soul and lofty wishes for them.

In the light of the above, the art of Islamic elegy contains supplications, reflections and pious reflections. After the Prophet's death, several poets mourned him with lots of poems. Significant among them was Hassan ibn Thābit. In one of his many elegies, he says:

كنت السواد لناظري \* فعمى علي الناظر

ما شاء بعدك فليمت \* فعليك كنت أحاذر

You were the ball of my eye,  
But the eye is sightless now.  
Whoever likes may die after you,  
It was your death I feared before.

Similarly, he says:

بطيبة رسم للنبي ومعهده \* منير وقد تعفو الرسوم وتهمد

At Madina were impressions and memorable places of the Prophet, which gave light, but the impressions been effaced by his death. In yet another poem, he prays:

يا ربّ فاجمعنا معاً ونبينا \* في جنة تتلى عيون الحسد  
صلى الإله ومن يحفّ بعرشه \* والطيبون على المبارك أحمد

O our Lord! Join us with our Prophet in the garden  
of bliss thereby confounding the envious ones.  
May the peace and blessings of God and His Angels  
who surround the throne and righteous assembly be  
upon Ahmad, the blessed one.

Examples of such elegies abound during the early Islamic period. In fact, all the Caliphs were mourned by various poets with beautiful verses and these are found scattered in books of Arabic literature.

## SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

The advent of Islam did not eradicate elegy theme in the Arabic poetry of the early Islamic period; it only changes it." Discuss.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

The poetry of early Islamic period continued in some respects, the trend begun during the pre-Islamic era but introduced new approaches and modifies existing ones.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

New expressions came into being through the revelation of the *Qur'ān* and the Prophetic translations. Of all the themes of *Jāhiliyyah* poetry, four were prominent during the Islamic period and they are *madh̄*, *hamāsah*, *hijā'* and *rithā'*.

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**6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. The revelation of the *Qur'ān* and the advent of Islam brought about a change in the literary climate of the early Islamic period, Discuss.
2. Discuss the themes of Arabic poetry in the early Islamic period.

**7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

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## UNIT 2 THE *MUKHAḌRAMŪN* AND THEIR WORKS

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
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    - 3.2.2 Nābighah al-Jaʿdī
- 4.0 Conclusion
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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will learn about some poets who witnessed both the *Jāhiliyyah* and Islam eras called *Mukhaḍramūn*. They had started their literary careers before the advent of Islam and they continued afterwards. Some of them embraced Islam in Madinah while some embraced it after the conquest of Makkah. Prominent among them are Hassan ibn Thābit, Kaʿb ibn Mālik, Kaʿb ibn Zuhayr, ‘Abdullah ibn Rawāhah, al-Khansā’, Nābighah al-Jaʿdī and several others.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Define the term *Mukhaḍramūn* and those to whom it applies.
- Mention the names of the popular *Mukhaḍramūn* poets.
- Discuss the life and works of at least three of the leading *Mukhaḍramūn* poets.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Hassān ibn Thābit and his poetry

His full name is Hassān ibn Thābit ibn al-Mundhir. He hailed from the Banū Najār clan of the Khazraj tribe. He was born in Yathrib eight years before the birth of Prophet Muhammad. His mother's name was al-Farīʿah bint Khālid ibn Qays al-Khazrajiyyah.

Hassān was a celebrated poet of the pre-Islamic period. He had a flourishing career during the conflicts between the Khazraj tribe and the

Aws. With the migration of the Prophet to Yathrib (Madinah), Hassān embraced Islam and became the first Muslim poet. He thus became the voice of Islam against the verbal onslaughts of the Quraysh poets of the time. He lived a long life, six decades of which was spent in the *Jāhiliyyah* and another six decades after accepting Islam. He died during the reign of Mu'āwiyah in 54 A.H.

### His Poetry

As stated earlier, Hassān ibn Thābit lived six decades in the pre-Islamic period. During this period, he was known as the poet laureate of the Khazraj tribe. He composed poems on many of the *Jāhiliyyah* themes of which were *madh* (panegyric) *fakhr* (self-praise) *hijā'* (satire) and *ghazal* (erotic poetry).

His panegyrics were addressed at various patrons among the Ghassanids and the Mundhir while his satires were directed at the Aws tribe, the detractors of Khazraj, his tribe. However, with the advent of Islam and his acceptance of the creed, the thrust of his poetry changed to reflect the Islamic spirit. The verbose language of the *Jāhiliyyah* period gave way for the simple and subtle expressions of the Islamic era. His language became tempered by the *Qur'ānic* diction and clarity and a vehicle for conveying the Islamic creed. In one of his poems, he sang:

رسول الذي فوق السموات من عل	**	شهدت بإذن الله أن محمدًا
يقوم بدين الله فيهم فيعدل	**	وإن أبا الاحقاف ماذ يعدلونه
له عمل في دينه منقبَل	**	وإن أبا يحيى ويحيى كلاهما
رسول أتى من عند ذي العرش مُرسَل	**	وإن الذي عادى اليهود ابن مريم

### Translation

I bear witness by Allah's leave, that Muhammad is a messenger  
from above the seven heavens.

And that Prophet Hud justly stood by the religion of Allah when they  
taunted him.

And also that Yahyā's father (Zakariyā) and Yahyā himself were at the  
forefront in the service of religion.

And that the son of Mary whom the Jews attacked was a messenger  
from the Lord of the throne.

Apart from declarations like this, Hassān was more popular  
for his panegyrics on the Prophet of Islam. In one such, he says:

أغرّ عليه للنبوّة خاتم \* \* من الله مشهود يلوح يشهد  
 وضمّ إليه اسم النبي إلى اسمه \* \* إذا قال في الخمس المؤذن أشهد  
 وشقّ له من اسمه ليجلّه \* \* فذو العرش محمود وهذا محمد  
 نبي أتبعه يأس وفترة \* \* من الرسل والأوثان في الأرض تعبد  
 فأمسي سراجاً مستنيراً وهادياً \* \* يلوح كما لاح الصقيل المهدّد  
 وأنذرنا ناراً وبشّر جنة \* \* وعلمنا الإسلام فالله نحمد

Translation

Noble is he, on him is a seal of prophethood from Allah,  
 A witnessed One who also bears witness.  
 And God aligned the Prophet's name to His own;  
 When the *Mu'adhin* says during the call to prayer "*Ashhadu*" (Ibear witness). To glorify him, God gave him a share in His name;  
 Thus the Lord of the throne is Mahmūd (The Praiseworthy) and this is Muhammad (The praised one).  
 A Prophet that came to us after despair and a long silence of divine messages; and idols came to be worshipped on earth.  
 He therefore became an illuminating Lamp and a guide; who shines as an Indian blade glitters.  
 He warned us of a hell fire and gave glad tidings of a paradise, He taught us Islam and Allah alone we praise.

The above verses show how the new creed totally took over the creativity of Hassān ibn Thābit and propelled it. Hassān's poetry, however, are adjudged by literary critics to be more apt and representative of the Arabian ideals during the *Jāhiliyyah* period than it was in the Islamic period.

## SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Who was Hassān ibn Thābit? Say something about his poetry.

### 3.2.1. Ka'b ibn Zuhayr and His Poetry

He was Ka'b ibn Zuhayr ibn Abī Salmā al-Māzinī. His mother belonged to the clan of Abdullah ibn Ghatfān. Despite the fact that his father was from Maznah, he grew up among his mother's kinsmen with his father and his brother Bujayr. He hailed from a family of poets. His father Zuhayr was one of the celebrated poets of the *Jāhiliyyah* period. His grand father Rabi'ah ibn Rayāh was a poet. His brother Bujayr was a poet. His son 'Uqbah was a poet. His paternal aunt Salmā was a poetess, and his second paternal aunt, al-Khansā' was also a poetess. Poetry was therefore natural to him.

It is reported that he and his brother Bujayr were grazing their sheep one day in one of the outskirts of Madinah when Bujayr asked him to wait

with the sheep while he went to see the man called Muhammad whose stories they had heard in order to ascertain how true his claims were.

Ka'b waited for Bujayr but he did not return. He later got to know that Bujayr had embraced Islam and he sent to him a poem in which he rebuked him severely and cast aspersion on the Prophet of Islam.

This conduct of Ka'b made the companion to swear that they would kill him if he was caught. His brother, Bujayr then wrote a letter to him inviting him to Islam and letting him know how compassionate the Prophet was.

On hearing this, Ka'b covered his face with a turban leaving only the eyes and came into the Prophet's mosque. He found him in the middle of his Companions and there, he professed Islam and came into the fold.

The Prophet asked him who he was and he replied that he was Ka'b ibn Zuhayr and he recited his most popular panegyric in which he apologized to the Prophet and eulogized him. He says:

وقال كل خليل كنت آمله	**	لا ألهيتك إني عنك مشغول
فقلت خلّو سبيلي لا أبا لكم	**	فكل ما قدر الرّحمان مفعول
كل ابن أنثى وإن طالت سلامته	**	يوما على آلة حدياء محمول
أنبت أن رسول الله أوعدني	**	والعفو عند رسول الله مأمول
وقد أتيت رسول الله معتذرا	**	والعذر عند رسول الله مقبول
مهلا هداك الذي أعطاك نافلة ال	**	قرآن فيها مواعظ وتفصيل
لا تأخذني بأقوال الوشاة ولم	**	أذنب ولو كثرت في الأقاويل
إني الرسول لنور يستضاء به	**	مهد من سيوف الله مسلول

#### Translation

And every friend in whom I have hope said:  
Away with you! I am indeed too busy for you.

And I said: leave me alone, I care no more for you.  
Everything decreed by Allah will come to pass.

Everyone born of a woman, even if he lives long,  
Will one day be carried on a bier as a corpse.  
I was informed that the messenger of Allah has threatened to kill me;  
and I know that pardon can always be expected from Allah's Apostle.

I have come to Allah's messenger with apology; and apology is always granted by Allah's Apostle.

Take it easy, may you always be guided by Him who has given you the *Qur'ān* in which there are admonitions and detailed expositions.

Seize me not because of the speech of rumour-mongers;  
I did not err even if slanders are attributed to me.

Surely, the messenger of Allah is a light that gives illumination;  
an Indian steel among the drawn swords of Allah.

Apart from the above, Ka<sup>c</sup>b ibn Zuhayr wrote on a number of themes which include *hikam* (wisdom) *ghazal* (erotic theme) and *hijā'* (satire).

### SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Who was Ka 'b ibn Zuhayr? Write eight verses from his popular Mantle Ode. Translate it and comment fully on it.

#### 3.2.2. A'n -Nābighah al-Ja'dī

His full name was Abdullah ibn Qays from the tribe of Banū Ja<sup>c</sup>dah. He was bom in al-Falaj in the Southern part of Najd. As a youth, he witnessed the various battles fought by his people and he was already a full adult when he started composing poetry.

In the ninth Year of the *Hijrah*, he came with a delegation of his tribe to the Prophet and embraced Islam. He lived long after the Prophet and witness the conquest of Persia. He also fought on the side of Ali at the battle of Siffin.

Below is an extract from poem he recited in the Prophet's presence when he came with the delegation of his tribe:

ويتلو كتابا كالمجرّة نَيِّرا	**	اتيت رسول الله إذ جاء بالهدى
سهيلاً إذا ما لاح ثمّنت غوراً	**	وجاهدت حتى ما أحسنَ ومن معي
وكنّت من النار المخوفة احذرا	**	أقيم على التقوى وأرضي بقعلها
إذا التقينا أن تحيد وتنتفرا	**	وأنا لقوم ما تعود خيلنا
وإنا لنرجو فوق ذلك مظهرا	**	بلغنا السماء مجدنا وجدودنا
بوادر تحمي صفوه أن يكذرا	**	ولا خير في حلم إذا لم تكن له
حليم إذا ما أورد الأمر أصدرنا	**	ولا خير في جهل إذا لم تكن له

#### Translation

I came to the messenger of Allah since he came with guidance;

and he recites a book that illuminates like the galaxy.

I strived with those with him and we felt not the time the stars disappeared. I stand on piety and uphold it, and I fear the hell fire which is horrifying.

We are a people whose horses are not used to retreating or running away from a battle. Our glory reached the skies, so also the glory of our ancestors.

And we surely hope for a better deal in paradise. There is no good in patience if it has no control that prevents its purity from contamination. There is no good in anger if there is no patient man to manage its affairs.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

The poetry of the *Mukhaḍramūn* represents the impact of a new world order on the thoughts and psyche of people. There is a distinct shift in the contents of their literary productions before their acceptance of Islam and after it. The change in creed influenced the choice of language, the imageries and the meanings of the poetry of the time.

#### 5.0 SUMMARY

Hassān ibn Thābit, Kaʿb ibn Zuhayr and Nābighah al-Jaʿdī represented the dimensions of *Mukhaḍramūn* activities. Their poetry reflects the various expressions that came with the advent of Islam. It marked a distinct departure from the style of the pre-Islamic era.

#### 6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. Who are the *Mukhaḍramūn*! Discuss three of them briefly.
2. Hassān ibn Thābit was the poet laureate of the Khazraj tribe and the court poet of Muhammad. Discuss.
3. Write a short biography of Kaʿb ibn Zuhayr. Say something about his place in Arabic poetry.

#### 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

- Jamāʿatun min al-asātidhah (1962); *Tārīkh al-Adab al-ʿArabī*, Dar-al Maʿārif, Iraq.
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## UNIT 3 ARABIC PROSE IN THE EARLY ISLAMIC PERIOD

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Early Islamic Arabic Prose
    - 3.1.1 Orations
    - 3.1.2 Divisions of the *Qur'ān*
    - 3.1.3 The Content of the *Qur'ān*
    - 3.1.4 The style of the *Qur'ān*
    - 3.1.5 Impact of the *Qur'ān*
  - 3.2 Documentation of Charters
  - 3.3 Writing of Epistles
  - 3.4 Orations
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will learn about the Arabic prose during the early Islamic period. You will understand the major difference between the Arabic prose of the *Jāhiliyya* period and the Islamic period. You will also learn about the types of prose that existed during the period.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the dimensions of Arabic prose in the early Islamic period.
- Understand the *Qur'ān* as a divine literary piece.
- Highlight epistles and treaties as other types of prose that existed during the period.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Early Islamic Arabic Prose

The prose works of the *Jāhiliyyah* period was limited to Orations, admonitions, proverbs and wise sayings and verbal feuds. With the

advent of Islam, new dimensions were introduced. These included the *Qur'ān* revelation, writing of epistles, signing of treaties and documentation of treaties.

### 3.1.1 The *Qur'ān*:

The *Qur'ān* was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad piece-meal, as the occasion warranted and from about the year 612. C.E., until the year 634 C.E.

The revelations began with the first five verses of *Sūratu'l- 'Alaq*

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ {العلق/1} خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ {العلق/2} اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ  
{العلق/3} الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ {العلق/4} عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

and ended, according to the soundest of the opinions, with the following divine passage in *Sūratu 'l-Baqarah*:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَذَرُوا مَا بَقِيَ مِنَ الرِّبَا إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ {البقرة/278} فَإِن لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا فَأْذَنُوا بِحَرْبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَإِن تُبْتِمْ فَلَكُمْ رُءُوسُ أَمْوَالِكُمْ لَا تَظْلُمُونَ وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ {البقرة/279} وَإِن كَانَ ذُو عُسْرَةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ مَيْسَرَةٍ وَأَن تَصَدَّقُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ {البقرة/280} وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ تُوَفَّى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ {البقرة/281}

As the Prophet received the messages he recited them to those present among his Companions. The revealed portions were mostly committed to memory or recorded in palm leaves, leathers, shoulder blades and other objects.

After the demise of the Prophet and as some Memorizers of the revelations fell as martyrs in the battle fought against the Apostles, Umar ibn al-Khattab, suggested the compilation of the holy scripture to the then caliph, Abu Bakr Siddiq. The caliph consented and assigned the task to Zayd ibn Thābit, the Prophet's Scribe. Zayd ibn Thābit accomplished the task and handed over the compiled copy to the Caliph Abu Bakr who kept it in his custody and later deposited with Umar ibn Khattāb when he was about to die. Umar later kept it in the custody of his daughter and a widow of the Prophet when he too was about to die.

During the caliphate of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān the *Qur'ān* Memorizers spread all over the capital cities of the conquered territories each of them having portions of the *Qur'ān* in his possession. As reports of differences in the recitation of the revelation reached the Caliph Uthman from the garrisons he constituted a committee with Zayd ibn Thabit as Scribe to reproduce the copy in the custody of Hafsa. Other members were Abdullah ibn Zubayr, Sa 'īd ibn Āṣ, Abdu 'r -Rahmān ibn al-Hārith



ibn Hishām. They were given the instruction that if they differed with Zayd in anything they should resort to the language of Quraysh because the revelation was in their language.

The committee thus reproduced four copies and submitted them to Uthmān. These were sent to Makkah, Baṣrah, Kūfah and Shām. Two were retained in Madinah, one in the custody of the caliph and the other for the people. He then ordered the burning of all other copies. Thus, the *Qur'ān* in circulation today is usually referred to as Uthmanic Edition.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Trace briefly the history of the Holy *Qur'ān* until the emergence of the Uthmanic edition in circulation through the ages.

#### **3.1.2 Divisions of the *Qur'ān***

The *Qur'ān* is divided into chapters called '*suwar*'. The *suwar* in turn are divided into verses called *ayahs*. Ninety-three of the *surahs* were revealed in Makkah and are known as *makkiyyāt* -while twenty-two were revealed in Madinah and are known as *madaniyyāt*. In arrangement, the length of the chapters appears to be taken into consideration. The long chapters come first while the short ones come last except *Sūratu 'l-Fātihah*, which is the opening chapter despite the fact that it is a short one. The *Qur'ān* is further divided into thirty parts each of which is called *Juz-'u*. Each *Juz-'u* is further divided into two parts called *hizb*. As a result of this last division we have sixty *hizbs*. The Holy Scripture contains other divisions.

#### **3.1.3 The Content of the *Qur'ān***

In the Makkan *Suwar*, the *Qur'ānic* addresses were directed to idolaters. It invites them to desist from idol worship for the worship of Allah; and to believe in the Messenger and the revealed book. It points to the greatness of the Creator; invites the people to reflect over the wonders of the creation such as the man, the sun, the moon, the stars, the wind, the night and the day. It emphasizes there is reward and punishment in the hereafter. Stories of the people of past Messengers and Prophets and the result of their righteousness or devilishness are narrated.

The Holy Scripture pointed out the foolishness in the views of the Quraysh leaders. It replied and threatened those who argued with the Prophet or mocked him. It derides their idols and shows that they cannot benefit their worshipers nor harm any body.

It extensively portrays Paradise and the perpetual enjoyment therein for the believers and also painted the horrible picture of hell fire and the severe punishment therein for the unbelievers.

In the Madinan *Suwar* it addresses a community believing in God, His Messenger and the revealed Book. It teaches divine law and mode of worship and imposes fasting, *zakāt* and *hajj*. It explains the lawful and the prohibited; promulgates law for marriage, divorce and inheritance; dress code for women and Jihad.

In Madinah, there were Jews who were indicting the Prophet and struggling against his mission; and those who were inviting weak-believers to apostasy. The *Qur'ān* tries to dissuade such Jews by reminding them of the divine favour on the Israelites, their forefathers. It threatens them with punishment for their disbelief and invites them to belief in his message.

The hypocrites were also there, harbouring disbelief and pretending to be Muslims. They were spreading rumour about wars been fought by the Muslims and damping morals of the believers. The Prophet was dissatisfied by their behaviour; thus the *Qur'ān* discussed them, warned and threatened them.

When a retreat or weakness, or breach of agreement was noticed among the Muslims, it calls them to harmony, criticizes them for accepting defeat, encourages them to fight and reminds them that dying in the cause of Allah ensures forgiveness and assures divine mercy.

The Christian resistance of the Prophetic mission was not noticeable in Madina. So, the *Qur'an* was more lenient with them than the Jews.

## SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Discuss the divisions and subject - matter of the *Qur'ān*.

### 3.1.4. The style of the *Qur'ān*

The *Qur'ān* stands as the highest ideal of Arabic eloquence, power of speech, brevity of expression and harmony of sounds, words and meaning. It is characterized with tenderness and simplicity. It is far from strange and unfamiliar vocabulary and full of melodious phrases. The Arabs first thought it to be poetry until

وَمَا عَلَّمْنَاهُ الشُّعْرَ وَمَا يَنْبَغِي لَهُ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ وَقُرْآنٌ مُبِينٌ

(Q. 36:69) was revealed to reply them. It sometimes sounds like poetic metres and present quality of rhyme prose without artificiality, exaggeration or hyperbole.

The Qur'ānic style usually conforms to its content in power and simplicity. On issues such as promise and threat, its verses are short; there is repetition of words to drive home the points being made or by way of emphasis; it is also full of rhyming phrases and ringing tone. These in most cases are in the Makkan period short chapters such as *Suratu 'l-Qari'ah*:

القارعة . ما القارعة . وما أدراك ما القارعة . يوم يكون الناس كالفراس المبثوث . وتكون الجبال كالعهن المنفوش . فأما من تقلت موازيه . فهو في عيشة راضية . وأما من خفت موازيه . فأمة هاوية . وما أدراك ما هية . نار حامية .

In non-sentimental issues, the verses are long, rhymes are minimal, the ringing tones are light. These are in the Madinan period chapters most especially in legal verses, and those that do not relate to wars, promise and threat. For example, while commanding fasting in *Suratu 'l-Baqarah* it says:

يا أيها الذين آمنوا كتب عليكم الصيام كما كتب على الذين من قبلكم لعلكم تتقون . أياماً معيودات فمن كان منكم مريضاً أو على سفر فعدة من أيام أخر وعلى الذين يطيقونه فدية طعام مسكين فمن تطوع خيراً فهو خير له وأن تصوموا خير لكم إن كنتم تعلمون . شهر رمضان الذي أنزل فيه القرآن هدى للناس وبينات من الهدى والفرقان  
فمن شهد منكم الشهر فليصمه ومن كان مريضاً أو على سفر فعدة من أيام أخر يريد الله بكم اليسر ولا يريد بكم العسر ولتكملوا العدة ولتكبروا الله على ما هداكم ولعلكم تشكرون

### SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Examine the uniqueness of the *Qur'ānic* style briefly.

#### 3.1.5 Impact of the *Qur'ān*

The *Qur'ān* has great impact on Arabic language. It refines expressions, united the various dialects and spreads the language East and West with the spread of Islam. Its eloquence is so fascinating that multitude of people had to commit it to memory and derive joy in its recitation liturgically and for other purposes. Its style influenced Arab men of letters in other ways. Their vocabularies become mild; and so also their meaning. These impacts are glaring in both their poetical and prose compositions most especially in Oration.

Other impact on language is that the Arabic grammar was founded for its service, to guard against corruption in its recitation; Also, the science of Arabic rhetoric was formulated in search of the secret behind its inimitability. The *Jāhiliyyah* and early Islam Arabic poems were also collected to assist in explaining *Qur'ānic* passages.

But for the *Qur'ān* the Arabic language would have been obliterated with the Tatar and Turkish invasion and the collapse of the power of the

Abbasids. But Arabic language stood firm in the face of the conquerors and invaders defending its classical language. They dared not touch it with any evil when they embraced Islam; and it became language of religion, correspondence and chancellery. The spread of dialects did not have any adverse effect on it; so also the vernacular of non Arabs. So Arabic language is highly indebted to its literature and the *Qur'ān* is its life.

#### SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Give a brief account of the impact of the *Qur'ān* on Arabic Language.

### 3.2 Documentation of Charters

One of the most important prose works in the the are of documentation of charters was the Treaty of Hudaibiyya which goes as follows:

بِاسْمِكَ اللَّهُمَّ ، هَذَا مَا صَالِحَ عَلَيْهِ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ وَ سَهِيلُ بْنُ عَمْرٍو .  
 اصْطَبَحَا عَلَى وَضْعِ الْحَرْبِ عَنِ النَّاسِ عَشْرَ سَنِينَ ، يَأْمَنُ فِيهَا النَّاسُ .  
 وَيَكْفَى بَعْضُهُمْ عَنِ بَعْضٍ .  
 عَلَى أَنَّهُ مِنْ أَتَى مُحَمَّدًا مِنْ قُرَيْشٍ بِغَيْرِ إِذْنٍ وَلِيَّهِ رَدَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ .  
 وَمَنْ جَاءَ قُرَيْشًا مِمَّنْ مَعَ مُحَمَّدٍ مِنْ قُرَيْشٍ لَنْ يَرُدُّهُ إِلَيْهِ .  
 وَأَنْ بَيْنَنَا عَيْبَةٌ مَكْفُوفَةٌ وَلَا إِسْلَالٌ وَلَا إِغْلَالٌ .  
 وَأَنَّهُ مَنْ أَحَبَّ أَنْ يَدْخُلَ فِي عَقْدِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَهْدِهِ دَخَلَ فِيهِ .  
 وَمَنْ أَحَبَّ أَنْ يَدْخُلَ فِي عَقْدِهِمْ دَخَلَ فِيهِ .  
 وَأَنْتَ تَرْجِعُ عَنَّا عَامَكَ هَذَا فَلَا تَدْخُلُ عَلَيْهَا مَكَّةُ ،  
 فَإِذَا كَانَ مِنْ عَامٍ قَابِلٍ خَرَجْنَا عَنْكَ فَدَخَلْتَهَا بِأَصْحَابِكَ .  
 فَأَقَمْتَ بِهَا ثَلَاثًا مَعَكَ سِلَاحَ الرَّاكِبِ ،  
 السَّيُوفِ فِي الْقَرْبِ لَا تَدْخُلُهَا بِغَيْرِ هَذَا .

#### Translation

In your name O God. This is the peace agreement between Muhammad Son of Abdullah and Suhay I bn Amr.

They both agreed on cessation of our war on the people during which there will be security for all and no hostilities.

And that whoever decamps to Muhammad's side without the permission of his guardian will be returned and whoever decamps from Muhammad's side to the Makkah side will not be returned.

And that there shall be no mutual conflicts, no secret attacks and no treachery and betrayal.

And that whoever wants to enter into alliance with Muhammad could do so and whoever wants to enter into alliance with the Makkahs could do so.

And that you (Muhammad) would return this year without entering Makkah but next year, we shall leave the precincts of the Ka 'ba for you and your companions can enter Makka for three days and you shall only be armed with Swords undrawn. You cannot enter with anything else.

The Hudaibiyyah document was jointly dictated by the Prophet and Suhayl. An example of an important Treaty dictated solely by the Prophet is the Madinan Charter.

### 3.3 Writing of Epistles

The writing of letters and epistles was a dimension that assumed a position of eminence in Arabic literature during the early Islamic period. Below is an example of a letter dictated solely by the Prophet:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
 من محمد رسول الله إلى هرقل عظيم الروم.  
 سلام على من اتبع الهدى،  
 وبعد،  
 فإني أدعوك بدعاية الإسلام ، أسلم تسلم ،  
 سلم يوئك الله أجرك مرتين ،  
 فإن توليت فإثما عليك إثم الأريستين.  
 قل يا أهل الكتاب تعالوا إلى كلمة سواء بيننا وبينكم ألا نعبد إلا الله ولا نشرك به شيئاً  
 ولا يتخذ بعضنا بعضاً أرباباً من دون الله فإن تولوا فقولوا أشهدوا بأنا مسلمون

#### Translation

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious Most Merciful.  
 From Muhammad, the messenger of Allah, to Heraclius, Roman victory.  
 Peace be unto he who follows guidance.  
 I hereby invite you to Islam. Accept Islam, you shall be saved.  
 Accept Islam and Allah will give you double reward, and if you turn your back upon it, you shall bear the burden of the sins of those under you.  
 O people of the book! Come to a statement that is common to both of us that we worship none except Allah and that we associate no partners with him and that none among us will take some of us as lords beside Allah. If you they turn their backs, say: bear witness that we are Muslim.

In the above letter to Heraclius the Prophet was brief and direct to the point. There are no embellishments but the style is powerful and clear.

#### SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

Examine the place of documentation of Charters and writing of Epistles in the Arabic prose of the early Islamic period.

### 3.4 Orations

One of the greatest gifts of the Creator to man is the power of speech. It gives man the ability to express his needs and his desires in a unique way. In all of the great civilizations, speech has been accorded a place of pride. Man has in most cases governed other men with his oratory prowess. With speech, the fire of war had been kindled; with speech, great bloodshed had been averted; with speech, seeds of love had been sown and with speech, feelings of hate and resentment had been aroused. Benjamin Disrael was indeed right when he said: "with speech, we govern men".

The *Qur'ān* refers to this peculiar gift of God to man when it declares

"خلق الإنسان علمه البيان"

He created man, He taught him the modes of expression". Q55, v3-4.

The Arabs attached great importance to their language and their mode of expression. They see in eloquence the claim of superiority which is absent among other people. According to P.K. Hitti, "the Arabians created or developed no great art of their own. Their artistic nature found expression through one medium only: speech. By virtue of its peculiar structure, Arabic lent itself admirably to a terse, trenchant, epigrammatic manner of speech".

In the pre-Islamic days, oratory was considered a great gift, though lower in rank to poetry. According to Jahiz, the position of orator later exceeded that of the poet. When poets started taking rewards and gifts for the panegyrics they sang oratory attained primacy because it was not seen as a means of livelihood but as a tool in the hands of great men, leaders sages and warriors.

Among the Arabs, people like Quss ibn Sā'idah al-Ayādī, 'Adī ibn Zayd al-<sup>°</sup>Abādī, Khuwaylid ibn <sup>°</sup>Amr al-Ghaṭfānī, al- 'Ushāra ibn Jābir, Ka<sup>°</sup>b ibn Luwayy, al-Aktham ibn Sayfī, and Dhu'l-Isba<sup>°</sup>a al-<sup>°</sup>Adwānī distinguished themselves with their oratory prowess before the advent of Islam.

With the advent of Islam and the need to spread and teach the new creed, oratory gained position of eminence over poetry. Most of the companions of the Prophet who had to serve as emissaries or Imams had to give speeches at several occasions. In addition, the institutionalization of Jum<sup>°</sup>ah and Eid prayers also gave impetus to the development of oration in the early Islamic period. Similarly, at the beginning of battles, speeches were delivered to instill courage in the hearts of the soldiers and

even during battles, appraisals of situation were done at night and the commander had to make speeches.

Oration was a popular art in the pre-Islamic era and when the message of Islam came the need arose to utilize oration as a means of communication. The Prophet in particular was himself well known to be a gifted orator before the advent of Islam.

Oration played a major role in the dissemination of the Islamic message. Unlike the *Jāhilliyya* period when poetry had the greatest hold on peoples' hearts, it was oration that swayed the minds of people during the early Islamic period.

The style of oration of the period differs greatly from the *Jāhilliyya* period. While the *Jāhilliyya* oration depended largely on Saj' (rhymed prose) to exert its influence, the Islamic orator employed simplicity of diction, clarity of meaning and subtlety of images to make impact.

As for the Companions of the Prophet, there were several accomplished orators among who were the rightly guided successors, Abu Bakr, Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Alī.

Also outstanding were Companions like Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd, 'Amr ibn al- 'Āṣ and Mu'āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 6**

Oration took a new dimension in the Arabic prose in the early Islamic period. Justify this claim.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The prose of the Islamic period drew its major impulse from the *Qur'ānic* message and prophetic utterances. It was to serve as a springboard for inter developments of prose styles in the subsequent periods of Arab history.

Apart from documentation of Charters and writing of Epistles other forms of prose that existed in the *Jāhiliyyah* period existed also in these early Islamic and subsequent periods. Additions were made to prose works with no subtraction or elimination of any of the existing types.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The prose of the early Islamic period included all the prose types that existed during the *Jāhiliyyah* period. It added writing of letters and epistles to it. The prose language and diction of the period derived

impetus from the *Qur'ān* and are distinct from those that existed in the Jahilliyya period.

## **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Mention the types of prose works of the early Islamic period.
2. What is the major difference between the Orations of the *Jāhiliyyah* period and the orations of the early Islamic period?

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

Maqbūl, S.H. et al (1995), *Al-Adab wa 'n-Nuṣuṣ wa 'l-Balāghah*, bkl, Tripoli.  
Jamā'atun min al-asātidhah (1962); *Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī*, Dar-al Ma'ārif, Iraq.



**MODULE 4**

Unit 1	Orations of Prophet Muhammad
Unit 2	Orations and Correspondence of Abu Bakr and ‘Umar
Unit 3	Orations of ‘Uthmān and ‘Alī
Unit 4	A Concluding Survey

**UNIT 1 ORATIONS OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD****CONTENTS**

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Main Content
3.1	Early Prophetic Orations
3.1.1	First Oration at Madinah
3.1.2	Oration in Conflict Resolution
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor - marked Assignments
7.0	References/Further Readings

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In this unit, you will learn various Orations of Prophet Muhammad. You will also learn the style of his orations and its dimensions.

**2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the importance of orations to the Arabs
- Appreciate the significance of orations in Islam
- Discuss the orations of Prophet Muhammad with examples

**3.0 MAIN CONTENT****3.1 Early Prophetic Orations**

The typical oration of the early Islamic period was simple and free from far fetched metaphors, similes or over sworn ideas, The sentences were short, rich and pregnant with noble meanings. This simple and direct style is clearly observable in the orations of Prophet Muhammad. He was the most eloquent speaker of his time. He had the unique opportunity of having been taught by God Himself. He is also favoured by worldly opportunities too. This is because among the Arabs, two

tribe particularly distinguished themselves in oratory prowess and they were the Quraysh and the Hawāzin tribes. The Prophet belonged to the tribe of Quraysh and passed his early childhood among the Banū Sa‘d (a branch of the Hawāzin tribe. He thus combined temporal training with spiritual nurturing.

The speeches of the Prophet cover a wide range of subjects. This is because the Prophet spoke on several occasions whenever the need arose. His speeches were generally short and pithy. The first speech of the Prophet, according to some historians was delivered when the Prophet ascended the ṣaḥā hill and summoned the Quraysh to assemble. It went thus:

«أرأيتم، لو أخبرتكم أن خيلاً يسفح هذا الجبل تريد أن تعبر عليكم، أكنتم مصدقي؟ قالوا: نعم، أنت عندنا غير مثهم وما جرينا عليك إلا صدقاً.  
قال: إنما مثلي ومثلكم كمثّل رجل رأى العدو فأنطلق يربأ أهله فخشي أن يسبقوه فجعل يهتف يا صباحاه فبني نذير لكم بين يدي عذاب شديد.  
يا بني عبد المطلب، يا بني عبد المناف، يا بني زهرة (حتى عدد الأقباض من قريش، إن الله أمرني أن أنذر عشيرتكم الأقربين»، وإني لا أملك لكم من الدنيا منفعة ولا من الآخرة نصيباً إلا أن تقولوا: لا إله إلا الله».

### Translation

"What do you think? If I inform you that a cavalry is at the foot of this hill and it wants to make a raid upon you, •will you believe me?"

They replied: Yes, you have never been accused of any flaw among us and we never heard anything from you but truth. He said, verily, the similitude of my situation with you is like that of a man who saw the enemy approaching, so he proceeded to warn his people, but he feared that the enemy would reach them before him. Therefore, he began to shout: beware of morning raid! Surely, I am a Warner unto you in the presence of a severe chastisement.

O children of Abdul Muttalib, O children of Abd Manāf, O children of the Zuhrah (till he counted the branches of the Quraysh). Verily, Allah has commanded me to warn my near relatives. And verily, I possess for you neither benefit of this word nor any lot in the hereafter unless you say "There is not god but Allah".

### 3.1.1 First Oration at Madinah

The Hijrah of the Prophet took place in 622 c.e. He undertook the journey with his bosom friend, Abu-Bakr from Makkah to Madinah. One of the first assignments in Madinah was to build a mosque since it

would serve as the converging point for all matters, spiritual and temporal.

Below is the text of the first oration of the Prophet in the mosque of Madinah, on Friday, I.A.H.

حمد الله وأثنى بما هو أهله ثم قال: أما بعد، أيها الناس، قدموا لأنفسكم، واعلمن  
والله ليصعقن أحدكم ثم ليدعن غنمه ليس لها راع- ثم ليقولن ل:ه ربّه وليس له  
ترجمان ولا حاجب يحجبه دونه، ألم يأتكم رسولي فينقك؟ وأثنتك مالا وأفضلت عليك  
فما قدمت لنفسك.  
فلينظرن يمينا وشمالا، فلا يرى شيئا ثم لينظرن قدماه فلا يرى غير جهنم فمن استطاع  
أن يتقي بوجهه من النار ولو بشق تمرّة فليفعل ومن لم يجد فبكلمة طيبة، فإن بها  
تجزى الحسنّة عشر أمثالها إلى سبعمئة ضعف والسلام عليكم وعلى رسول الله  
ورحمة الله وبركاته.

#### Translation

(The Prophet) praised Allah and thanked Him according to what is due to Him; then he said: Now, to proceed, O people, make provisions for yourselves in advance. You should know that, by Allah, everyone of you will, indeed be in a state of consciousness, then he will leave his cattle without a shepherd. Then his Lord will say to him- while there will be neither dragoman at hand nor any shelter to hide him. Did my Apostle not approach you and deliver my message to you? I bestowed wealth and favour upon you. What provision did you then make for yourself?

So, he will certainly look to the right and to the left but he will find nothing. Then he will glance to his front but he will see only hell-fire.

Therefore, he who is able to save his face from fire, though by means of a bit of date should do so; and he who cannot afford it, should use the means of good word. For, the good action will be rewarded and increased from ten to seven hundred times. Peace be upon you and upon the Apostle of Allah, and the mercy of Allah and His blessings".

### 3.1.2 His Oration in Conflict Resolution

The leadership position occupied by the Prophet made him a compulsory arbiter and judge over cases. It also made him the target of suspicion and insinuations. In such cases, good oration, shrewdly packaged had proved effective in removing feelings of resentment and rancour. Below is a typical example of and exercise in conflict resolution. It was delivered in the month of Dhu'l Qa°dah, 8 A.M. when

the Ansar got angry that all the booties got from the battle of Hunayn were distributed to the Quraysh and other Arab tribes. When the Prophet got to know that they were angry, he delivered the following speech.

”يا معشر الأنصار، ما قالة بلغتني عنكم وجدة وجدتموها على في قلوبكم؟ ألم أجدكم ضللا فهداكم الله بي؟ وكنتم أعداء متفرقين فألفكم الله بي؟ وعالة فأغناكم الله بي؟ كلما قال شيئا، قالوا: الله ورسوله: المن والفضل. قال: ما يمنعكم أن تجيبوا رسول الله يا معشر الأنصار؟ قالوا: بماذا نجيبك يا رسول الله – الله ورسوله المن والفضل؟ قال: أما والله لو شئتم لقتلتم فلصدقتم ولصدقتم: أتيتنا مكذبا فصدقناك ومخذولا فنصرناك وطريدا فأويناك وعائلا فأسيناك. أوجدتم على – يا معشر الأنصار – في أنفسكم في لعاعة من الدنيا تألفت بها قوما ليسلموا ووكلتكم إلى إسلامكم؟ فإني أعطى رجلا حديثي عهد بكفر أتألفهم. أما ترضون يا معشر الأنصار، أن يذهب الناس بالشاة والبعير وتذهبون برسول الله إلى رحالكم؟ فوالله لما تنقلبون به خير مما ينقلبون به. لولا الهجرة لكنت من الأنصار. ولو سلك الناس واديا وشعبا وسلكت الأنصار واديا وشعبا لسلكت وادي الأنصار وشعبها. اللهم ارحم الأنصار وأبناء الأنصار وأبناء أبناء الأنصار.

#### Translation

"O tribe of Anṣār, what is the talk that has reached me from you? what is this bitterness that you feel is your hearts against me? Have I not found you going astray and Allah guided you through me? Disunited enemies; then Allah united you through me? and needy; then Allah made you rich through me? Whenever he asked something, they replied:

Allah and His apostle are most bountiful and graceful! He said: what prevents you from replying to the Apostle of Allah, O Anṣār? They said: what should we reply, A Apostle of Allah, while all bounty and grace belong to Allah and His apostle!

He (the Prophet) said: But, by Allah, if you like, you may say -and you would be saying the truth and be justified: you came to us as someone rejected but we believed in you, helpless, but we helped you, driven out, but we sheltered you; and a pauper and we were munificent to you!

Have you got angry with me, O tribe of Ansar for a trifle worldly thing by which I court a people to stick to Islam while I rely upon your Islam? For I give some men, who were recently associated with infidelity, in order to mend their minds.

Are you not pleased, o tribe of Anṣār that the people go with ewes and camels while you go back to your dwellings with the Apostle of Allah?

By Allah, that with which you return is better than that with which they return.

Had there was no emigration, I would have been one of the Anṣār. If the people were to follow through a valley and a passage, and the Ansar too, followed a valley and a passage, I would surely follow the valley and passage of the Ansar.

O Allah, have mercy on the Anṣār, and the children of the Anṣār, and the children of the Anṣār and the rand children of the Anṣār.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

We can observe from the orations of Prophet Muhammad that there are no complex figurative expressions. His statements are simple, direct and powerful. This is the dominant style of Orations by the Orators of the early Islamic period.

#### 5.0 SUMMARY

We have examined so far in this unit, the importance of oration to the early Muslims and the factors that aided its growth. We have also examined three orations of Prophet Muhammad, carefully selected because of their importance and strategic relevance - his first oration ever in Makkah, his first oration in Madinah and one of his orations in conflict resolution.

#### 6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. Attempt a literary appraisal of some orations of the Prophet Muhammad.
2. Discuss the major elements of the oration of the Prophet after the battle of Hunayn and how it qualifies as a speech for Conflict resolution

#### 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

- Jamā'atun min al-asātidhah (1962); *Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī*, Dar-al Ma'ārif, Iraq.
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## **UNIT 2      ORATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE OF ABU BAKR AND ‘MAR**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main content
  - 3.1 Orations of Abu Bakr
    - 3.1.1 Orations of ‘mar
    - 3.1.2 Letters and Epistles
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the unit, you will learn about the orations of the first two successors of Prophet Muhammad. Abu Bakr and ‘Umar. Similarly, history has documented for us some letters written by them. We shall examine one of such letters and its contents.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the orations of Abu Bakr and its styles.
- Appreciate the style of ‘Umar in his speeches and writings

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Orations of Abu Bakr**

Abu Bakr was the first adult to embrace Islam. He was a personal friend of the Prophet. His total trust and confidence in the Prophet's sincerity, coupled with his own honest motives assisted him in quickly recognizing the truth in the prophet's message.

During the Prophet's miraculous nocturnal journey to Jerusalem in a single night (al-Isrā'), Abu Bakr was the first to accept the Prophet's claim as true and this earned him the title al-Ṣiddīq (He whose truthfulness is not in doubt). Abu Bakr was particularly respected by the early Muslims for his knowledge of the genealogy of the Arabs and their history. Anytime there was a poetic duel between Hassan ibn Thābit and the Arab poets who boasted of their tribal achievements in the presence

of the Prophet, it was Abu Bakr that supplied him the background of such trial and he would then bring out their weakness in his poetry.

The death of the Prophet and the nature of his mission imposed upon the leaders of the Muslims the task of giving speeches. Similarly, Friday service offered opportunities of addressing congregations. As a result, the caliphs, their representatives the governors of provinces, and army commanders, all had to give speeches at different occasions.

Abu Bakr was a man of simple disposition and this reflects significantly in his orations. His primary concern was that Muslim should not deviate an inch from the teachings of Muhammad. His orations are beautified by clarity of diction, vision and meaning. The spirit of Islam and a passion for the young faith permeate all of his orations.

On the day of his appointment as caliph, he addressed the people thus:

أيها الناس، إني قد وثبتت عليكم ولست بخيركم، فإن رأيتموني على حق فأعينوني وإن رأيتموني على باطل فسدوني. اطيعوني ما اطعت الله فيكم وإن عصته فلا طاعة لي عليكم. إلا إن أقواكم عندي الضعيف حتى أخذ الحق له، وأضعفكم عندي القوي حتى أخذ الحق منه.

### Translation

O people I have been appointed your leader and I am not the best among you. If you see me on the right course, assist me in it. And if you see me treading a wrong path, correct me. Obey me as long as I obey Allah in my dealings with you. If I disobey Him, then it is not obligatory that you should obey me. Surely, the strongest man among you is the weak one until I secure his rights for him, and the weakest man is the one you consider to be strong until I take from him the right of others.

The above oration of Abu Bakr presents to us the picture of a man whose only concern is to carry out the will of his creators. His humility and simplicity are very apparent.

In another oration, the passion of Abu Bakr for the general welfare of the Muslims became manifest. Some Muslims of his time had slackened in the task of enjoining what is good and forbidding what is bad. They tried to convince themselves that as long as they were rightly guided, the disbelief of the non-Muslims could not affect them adversely. Abu Bakr felt bad about this and gave the following speech:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ مَنْ ضَلَّ إِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ .....

(Q5:105)

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، إِنَّكُمْ تَقْرَوْنَ هَذِهِ الْآيَةَ وَتَضَعُونَهَا فِي غَيْرِ مَوْضِعِهَا، فَإِنِّي سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ (صَلَّمَ) يَقُولُ: إِنْ قَوْمًا إِذَا رَأَوْا الْمُنْكَرَ وَلَمْ يَغَيِّرُوهُ، أَوْشَكَ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُعْصِمَهُمْ بِعِقَابِهِ.

### Translation

O ye -who believe be mindful of yourselves, he who has gone astray cannot harm you as long as you are rightly guided.....

O people, surely you all read this verse and you misinterpret its contents. I have indeed heard the messenger of Allah saying: surely, when a people see evil being perpetrated and they do not bring about a change, Allah may well nigh embrace all of them with His punishment.

### SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Discuss the main lessons contained in the orations of Abu Bakr when he became the caliph.

#### 3.1.1 Oration of ‘Umar

‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb was one of the early Muslims. He used to be an enemy of the Prophet and the Muslim and he was feared by all, since he was well known among the Arabs as a strong and courageous man.

His conversion to Islam served as a turning point in the history of Islam because it was only then that people could pray in the public. The Prophet gave him the title of al-Fārūq (he who separates between the truth and falsehood thereby bring about a change).

After the death of Abu Bakr as the first caliph of the Prophet, ‘Umar was appointed, and he ruled the Muslim world for ten years during which the teachings of Islam spread to different part of the worlds.

Umar was a strict person. He was firm and resolved in all matters and these qualities assisted him in his administration. He was the leader who gave a structure to the Islamic state in line with the teachings of the Prophet. His administrative genius is still admired by all.

‘Umar gave several speeches during his time and these are all characterized by simplicity and clarity; though in the meaning, one can still feel the firmness of the speaker. In one of such speeches, he said:



أيها الناس، ان من قرأ القرآن انما يريد به الله وما عنده. الا وإنه قد خيل إلى ان أقواما يقرأون القرآن يريدون به ما عند الناس، الا فأريدوا الله بقراءتكم وأريدوه بأعمالكم فإنما كنا نعرفكم إذ الوحي ينزل وإذا النبي (صلعم) بين أظهرنا.

فقد رفع الوحي وذهب النبي (صلعم) فإنما اعرفكم بما اقول لكم: ألا فمن أظهرنا خيرا ظننا به خيرا وأثينا به عليه ومن أظهر لنا شرا ظننا به شرا وأبغضناه عليه. اقدعوا هذه النفوس عن شهواتها، فإنها طلعة وإنكم إلا تقدعوا تنزع بكم إلى شر غاية. إن هذا الحق ثقيل مرئ وإن الباطل خفيف وبرئ وترك الخطيئة خير من معالجة التوبة ورب نظرة زرعت شهوة وشهوة ساعة أورثت حزنا طويلا.

### Translation

O people, there was a time when I used to think that any one who recited the *Qur'ān* did so because of Allah and what is with Allah. But it has now appeared to me that some people read the *Qur'ān* and they desire with what is in people's hands. Verily, desire Allah with your recitation, and desire Him with your deeds. We knew you when the revelation was coming down and when the Prophet was in our midst. Now, the revelation has ceased and the Prophet has gone and now I know you as I have described you. Whoever shows good to us, we shall praise him for it and whoever shows evil to us, we shall think evil of him and despise him for it.

Prevent these souls from low desire. Surely, they (the soul) are greedy. If you donot prevent them, they shall take you to an evil goal. This truth is surely heavy but meritorious and falsehood is light but has evil repercussions. To abstain from sin is better than the purgation of repentance. Many a causal look has planted the seed of low desire and the passion of one hour can harvest the grief of a long period.

### 3.1.2 Letters and Epistles

The demand of state administration necessitated the interchange of correspondence between the Caliphs and their governors as well as their subjects.

Below is an example of a letter written by 'Umar ibn K̄h̄aṭṭo Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī when he appointed him the governor of a province:-

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
من عبد الله عمر بن الخطاب أمير المؤمنين أبي عبد الله بن قيس: سلام عليك.  
اما بعد: فإن القضاء فريضة محكمة وسنة متبعة، فافهم إذا ادلى اليك فإنه لاينفع تكلم بحق لا نفاذ له. أس  
بين الناس في وجهك وعدلك ومجلسك حتى لايطمع شريف في حيفك ولا ييأس ضعيف من عدلك.

البينة على من ادعى واليمين على من انكر، والصلح جائز بين المسلمين الا صلحا أحل حراما أو حرم  
حلالا.

قضيته بالأمس-فراجعت فيه عقلك وهديت لرشدك ان ترجع إلى الحق, فإن الحق قديم ومراجعة الحق خير من التمادي في الباطل. الفهم الفهم, فيما تلجج في صدرك مما ليس في كتاب ولا سنة ثم أعرف الأشباه والأمثال, وقس الامور عند ذلك وأعد إلى أشبهها بالحق واجعل لمن ادعى حقا غائبا او بيّنة امدا ينتهي اليه. فإن احضر بيّنة أخذت له بحقه وإلا استحللت عليه القضية فإنه أنفى للشك وأجلى للعمى.

المسلون عدول بعضهم على بعض إلا مجلودا في حد أو مجربا عليه شهادة زور أو ظنينا في ولاء أو نسب فإن الله تولى منكم السرانر ودرأ بالإيمان والبيّنات.

### Translation

"From the servant of Allah, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, commander of the faithful to Abdullah ibn Qays (Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī).  
Peace be unto you.

Verily, rulership is a fixed obligatory and an established practice.

Understand this when it is given to you. Surely, it is fruitless to talk about the truth without executing it. Give equal opportunity to people in your presence, in your justice and in your assembly so that the highly placed may not hope that you would be unjust in his favour and that the lowly person may not despair your justice.

Proof is mandatory on the claimant and swearing is mandatory on him who denied. Reconciliation is good except such a one that legalizes illegality or condemns a legal act.

Let not a judgment you have given previously and after reconsideration, you are guided to a better position, prevent you from returning to the truth. Surely, the truth has deep roots, and revisiting a truth is better than persisting in falsehood.

Make sure you understand a case on which you are confused, (before giving judgment) such cases the decision of which is expressly given in the *Qur'ān* and the Prophetic practice, then know the similarities and the figurative aspect of it. Weigh the affair then and resort to the one that has the closest semblance to the truth.

And grant respite to anyone who makes a claim in absentia or offers an explanation for a period. If he presents valid evidence, uphold the truth for him, otherwise decide the case against him for that dispels doubt more and removes obscurity better.

The Muslims can give testimony in favour of one another except one who has been punished with a prescribed punishment in the *Qur'ān* or a habitual giver of false witness on someone accused of making false

claim of ownership or lineage. Surely Allah alones monitors your secrets and implores you to avoid ambiguity with faith and clear explanation."

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Highlight the administrative guidelines contained in Umars letter to Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The orations and correspondence of Abu Bakr and ‘Umar typify the feature of early Islamic prose. The governing spirit is the Islamic ideals and this reflects in the languages and meanings portrayed.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

Abu Bakr and ‘Umar were the immediate successors of Prophet Muhammad respectively. Both were gifted orators and their orations were characterized by clarity of language and meaning.

## **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

- Discuss the orations of Abu Bakr and its style.
- Appreciate the style of Umar in his speeches and wrings.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

Umar Faruq, (1969) *Tārīkh al-Adab al- 'Arabī*, Dar al-'ilm lil-malāyīn, Beirut,

Jamā'atun min al-asātidhah (1962); *Tārīkh al-Adab al- 'Arabī*, Dar-al Ma'ārif, Iraq.

## UNIT 3 ORATIONS OF UTHMAN AND ALI

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Orations of ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān
    - 3.1.1 Orations of ‘Ali ibn Abī Tālib
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will learn about the orations of the third and fourth successors of Prophet Muhammad and the circumstances surrounding their delivery. You will also have an opportunity to study the styles of their presentation.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the orations of ‘Uthmān and its style.
- Analyze the oration of ‘Alī and the political climate of his time and how it reflects in his oration.

### 3.1 ORATIONS OF UTHMAN IBN 'AFFAN

After the death of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab the Second Khalifah of Prophet Muhammad the Muslim community appointed ‘Uthmān ibn 'Affān, one of the closest Companions of the Prophet as the third Caliph. ‘Uthmān was known in early Islamic history as a symbol of generosity and leniency. He had the unique opportunity of marrying two of the Prophet's daughters when one died, he married the other, hence the title "Dhū Nūrayn" i.e, "possessor of two lights".

‘Uthmān ruled as the caliph for twelve years during which the Muslim empire expanded well. However, his meekness and leniency was exploited by hypocrites and politicians and he was accused of nepotism and favouritism by a section of the people. This eventually led to a crisis of multiple dimensions from which the Muslim community never got out till this day.

‘Uthmān was assassinated in his house while reciting the Qur’ān by an irate mob mobilized by the hypocrites. During his time, he had the opportunity of giving speeches at different occasions and in all of these speeches, his tenderness, piety and simplicity reflect even in the choice of words. Below is the Oration he delivered when he was appointed the Khalifah:

أما بعد، فإني قد حُمّلت وقد قبلت، ألا وإني متبع، ولست بمبتدع، ألا وإنّ لكم علىّ بعد  
 كتاب الله عزّ وجلّ وسنة نبيّه (صلعم) ثلاثاً:  
 اتباع من كان قبلي فيما اجتمعتم عليه وسننتم.  
 وسن سنة أهل الخير فيما لم تسنوا على الملأ.  
 والكف عنكم إلا فيما استوجبتم .  
 ألا وإنّ الدنيا خضرة قد شهيت إلى الناس ومال إليها كثير منهم، فلا تركنوا إلى الدنيا  
 ولا تنفقوا بها، فإنها ليست بثقة، واعلموا أنّها غير تاركة إلا من تركها.

### Translation

"(After the usual invocations) Now, to proceed, I have been given a burden to carry and I have accepted it.

Verily, I shall follow the precepts and I will not be a bad innovator.

Verily, three things shall be binding upon me apart from the book of Allah, *al-Qur’ān* and the practice of His Apostle, and they are:

- Following the footsteps of my predecessors in what you have all agree upon and are accustomed to;
- Following the practice of virtuous people where there is no precedent.
- Abstaining from punishing you except in cases where it becomes compulsory.

Verily, this world is fertile and it has become attractive to people and many have inclined towards it. Incline not too much to the world, and trust it not for it is not trust-worthy, and you should know that it leaves nobody alone except he who leaves it alone".

### SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Discuss the orations of ‘Uthmān and its style.

### 3.2.1 Orations of ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib

After the assassination of ‘Uthmān, the Muslim society fell into disarray.

The ringleaders in the crisis themselves knew the implications of having a community without a leader. They looked around and there was none but ‘Alī who could be approached. Though reluctant at first, he had no choice than to accept the mantle of leadership then, otherwise, the society would collapse. His six years of reign was full of crisis fuelled by opportunists and pretenders who claimed to be avenging the death of ‘Uthmān.

‘Alī is regarded as the greatest orator of the Arabs apart from the Prophet himself. His orations cover a wide range of subjects and some snippets of poetry have also been attributed to him. Below is one of the orations he delivered during this period of crisis. Sufyān al-Ghāmīdī, one of the generals of Mu‘awiya's army had invaded the city of al-Anbār which was loyal to ‘Alī. They killed the governor of the city, Hasan ibn Hasan al-Bakrī and molested the women and took away their ornaments. When ‘Alī heard this, he boiled with rage and delivered this historic oration in the presence of the people of Kūfah. He said:

“أما بعد، فإن الجهاد باب من أبواب الجنة، فتحه الله لخاصة أوليائه، وهو لباس التقوى، ودرع الله الحصينة، وجنته الوثيقة. فمن تركه رغبة عنه ألبسه الله ثوب الذل، وشمله البلاء، وديت بالصغار والقماء، وضرب على قلبه بالأسداد وأدبل الحق منه بتضييع الجهاد وسيم الخسف ومنع النصف.  
ألا وإني قد دعوتكم إلى قتال هؤلاء القوم ليلا ونهارا، وسرا وإعلانا، وقلت لكم اغزوهم قبل أن يغزوكم فوالله ما غزى قوم قط في عقر دارهم إلا ذلوا، فتواكلتم وتحادلتهم حتى شنت عليكم الغارات، وملكت عليكم الأوطان.

هذا أخو غامد قد وردت خيله الأنبار وقد قتل حسان بن حسان البكري، وأزال حيلكم عن معاقلها. ولقد بلغني أن الرجل منهم كان يدخل على المرأة المسلمية والأخرى معاهدة فينزع حجلها وقلبها وقلاندها ورعاثها ما تمنع منه إلا بالاسرجاع والاسترحام ثم انصرفوا وإفرين وما نال رجلا منهم كلم، ولا أزيق لهم دم. فلو أن أمرا مسلما مات من بعد هذا أسفا ما كان به ملوما بل كان به عندي جديرا.  
فيا عجباً والله يميت القلب ويجلب الهم اجتماع هؤلاء على باطلهم وفشلكم معن حركم، فقبحا لكم وترحا حين صرتم غرضا يرمي، يغار عليكم ولا تغفرون ولا تغفرون ويعصي الله وترضون.

فإذا أمرتكم بالسيف إليهم في أيام الصيف قُلتم هذه حمارة القيظ، أمهلنا ينسلخ عنا الحر، وإذا أمرتكم بالسيف إليهم في الشتاء قُلتم هذه صبارة القر، أمهلنا ينسلخ عنا البرد. كل هذا فرارا من الحر والقر، فأنتم والله من السيف أقر.”

"Now to proceed, Surely, Jihad is one of the gates of heaven. Allah opens it especially for His friends and it is the garment of piety and Allah's strong armour, and His trusted protector. Whoever leaves it by turning away from it, Allah will make him wear the garment of disgrace.

Calamity will embrace him and he would be humiliated with wretchedness and dishonour and a seal would be set over his heart. The truth would be his companion and justice would be his companion and justice would desert him.

Verily, I have invited you to fight against these people day and night, secretly and in public. I said to you: fight them before they fight you. By Allah, no people would be fought within their own dwellings without being humiliated and you would revel in mutual disgrace and dishonour until the attacks overwhelm you and other people rule over you.

Here was al-Ghāmidī whose cavalry has invades al-Anbār and he has killed Hasan ibn Hasan al-Bakrī and has stolen your horses from their stables. I was informed that their men entered upon Muslim and non-Muslim women alike and snatched their trinkets, bracelets, necklaces and ornaments and the only barriers they encountered were wailing and lamentation and they turned back having gained all loots, and not a single person among them had any injury, and none of their blood was spilled. If a Muslim were to die in such a situation, he would deserve it and none should be blamed for it. It is murderous, what a surprise! And disheartening that these people are gathered on falsehood and yet they disgraced you despite your adherence to the truth. Woe betides you and shame on you that have become a centre of target. You are attacked and you cannot fight back, you are waged war against and you could not retaliate. Allah is disobeyed and you are pleased.

Whenever you dislike to fight them in the days of summer, you say this is the period of excessive heat, wait until the heat is gone. When I asked you to fight them during winter, you say this is the period of excessive cold, wait until the cold abated. All these avoidance of heat and cold; By Allah, your attempt at avoiding the sword is greater (than your so called heat and cold)".

From the above, it is glaring that 'Alī was a powerful orator. His speech is heavily punctuated with rhetorical devices that can urge men into action. It is however true that apart from such revolutionary speeches; 'Alī also delivered speeches that were not fiery in nature. The tempo of his oration is determined by the subject matter. 'Alī's speeches are collected in the book called "*Nahj al- balāghah*" i.e. the Peak of Rhetorics.

## SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Analyze the oration of ‘Alī and the political climate of his time and how it reflects in his oration.

### 4.0 CONCLUSION

We can see from the speeches of the successors of the Prophet that situation plays a major role in determining the dimensions of their orations. When others spoke during the period of peace, the language was soft and when ‘Alī spoke during the time of war, the language was strong.

### 5.0 SUMMARY

We have studied in this unit the orations of ‘Uthmān and ‘Alī and the situations under which they were delivered. We have also learnt that the situation determines the tempo of the Oration.

### 6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

- Bring out the main thrust of Uthmān's speech when he became the Caliph. ‘Alī has accused the people of Kufa of cowardice. Which expressions in the oration suggest this?

### 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Abdul-Azīz Fayṣal (1987), *Al-Adab al- ‘Arabī watārīkhuh*; Wizāratu ‘l-Ta ‘līm al-‘ālī, K.S.A.

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## UNIT 4 A CONCLUDING SURVEY

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Arabic Literature in the Pre-Islamic Period
    - 3.1.1 Arabic Literature in the Early Islamic Period
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall attempt to bring together all the salient points of the subject we have been studying in the last thirteen units. As you know, the subject covers Arabic literature from the Pre-Islamic days till the assassination of ‘Ali ibn Abī Tālib in 661 C.E.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the main features of Arabic Literature in the *Jāhiliyyah*
- Identify the new dimensions introduced into the Arabic literature in the early Islamic period.

### 3.1 Arabic Literature in the Pre-Islamic Periods

The literary heritage of the Pre-Islamic Arabs comprises of two forms - poetry and prose. Of the two, poetry occupied the more important position. The poet was a kind of an enigma among the Pre-Islamic Arabs. Whenever a poet appeared within a clan or tribe, the people would rejoice and celebrate their good fortune. This is because the poet was the voice of the people, the defender of their honour, the proclaimed of their glories and the custodian of their secrets.

The poetry of the pre-Islamic days of the Arabs thrived upon certain themes. These themes were the topics concerning which a poem was sung. They included *madh* (Panegyric) *hijā’* (Satire) *fakhr* (Self-Praise) *ghazal* (Romance) and several other sub-themes.

The structure of the poetry of the period is that a poet would begin his poem with a romantic opening, which was referred to as the *nasīb*. He

would then go to address the themes he intended. The practice of treating only one theme in an Ode was unknown to the Pre-Islamic Arabs. A poem could therefore contain several themes with simple transitional devices to mark one from the other.

The most outstanding among the Pre-Islamic poets are said to be the writers of the *Mu'allaqāt*. These poems were believed to be the finest specimen of Pre-Islamic poetry. Some historians of literature claim that they were hanged at the Ka'bah for people to see, hence the name *Mu'allaqāt* while others are of the opinion that because of their artistic beauty, they memorized them therefore, they were called *Mu'allaqāt*. (the hanging or suspended Odes).

The latter view appeals more to reason because nobody seemed to have seen them and apart from that, during the conquest of Makkah when the Ka'bah was cleansed by the Muslims, there exists no record of them seeing any poem hanging in the Ka'bah.

According to some literary historians, the *Mu'allaqāt* are seven, while others reckon them to be ten. For those who consider them seven, the poets of the *Mu'allaqāt* are:-

1. Imru'u `l-Qays
2. 'Antara ibn Shaddād
3. Zuhayr ibn Abī Salmā
4. Tarafah ibn al-'Abd
5. Labīd ibn Rabī'ah
6. 'Amr ibn al-Aktham
7. Al - Hārith ibn Hillizah al-Yashkurī

Those who count them to be ten add the following to the list:

8. A'n-Nnābighah al-Dhubaynī
9. Al-A'ṣhā Qays
10. 'Ubayd ibn al-Abras

Apart from poetry, the Pre-Islamic Literature also had prosaic literary productions. The prose works of the period consisted of orations, proverbs and wise sayings, admonition and incantation of sorceress.

The dominant style of Pre-Islamic oration is to employ the use of rhymed prose (*saj'*) and short pithy statements. The tribal heads, sages and emissaries to foreign courts were often the most common users of these arts. Among them were, Ka' b ibn Luwayy, al-Aktham ibn Ṣayf and a host of others.

Among the poets, some made a living out of poetry and some did not. Orations and other prose forms were however not commercialized. This state continued in this manner till the year of the call, 610 C.E. which marked the end of *Jāhilliyyah* period and the beginning of the Islamic period.

### 3.1.1 Arabic Literature in the Early Islamic Period

The advent of Islam brought in its wake a revolution in the lives and thoughts of the Arabs. This change in orientation affected the literary productions. The *Qur'ān* and the various Prophetic admonitions introduced new dimensions into the literary activities of the period.

Generally, speaking, poetry did not thrive as it did in the Pre-Islamic period. The new religion frowned at many of the habits which would have served as raw materials for literary productions. Furthermore, the opportunities of searching for patrons to praise for a fee were no longer available nor the case of a patron employing a poet to satirize his enemies.

The old heathen ways that nourished tribal or individual honour gave way for the honour and dignity of the entire Muslim nation. Poetry therefore became restricted to good and noble themes and all subjects that are not wholesome are discarded.

It must be observed that with this limitation on the scope of poetry, orations and other prose forms gained ascendancy. The dissemination of the new creed and its teachings took the vehicle of speeches and sermons. In addition, writing, which was restricted to commercial activities before the advent of Islam, also rose to a position of preeminence. Several *Qur'ānic* admonitions on the use of pen and the necessity of reading also strengthened the urge to learn how to read and write. In fact, the Prophet himself had demonstrated this by asking the Makkan captives who were literate to ransom themselves by teaching a Muslim each out to read and write.

The poetry of the early Islamic period benefited from the advent of Islam in many ways. New expressions were born with the revelation of the *Qur'ān* and the verbose and difficult diction of the *Jāhilliyyah* period was discarded. The poets of the time are referred to as the *Mukhaḍramūn* i.e those who witnessed *Jāhilliyyah* and Islam. The leading verse - smiths of the time were Hassān ibn Thābit,, Ka'b ibn Zuhayr Abdullah ibn Rawāhah, Labīd ibn Rabi'ah, al-Khansā, al-Nābighah al-Ja'dī and a host of others.

Similarly, the leading orators of the time included the Prophet himself, his four rightly guided successors, military commanders and governors of provinces. Of all these apart from the Prophet, 'Ali ibn Abī Tālib appeared to have been the most outstanding.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

Having had a general look at the literature of the pre-Islamic and the early Islamic periods, we can safely assert that the latter is a continuation and modification of the former. The advent of Islam only brought about changes in diction, shift in vision and modifications in mission of the men of letters of the preceding period.

#### 5.0 SUMMARY

We have learnt in this unit that poetry held a place of pride among the pre-Islamic Arabs and that while oration was a respected art, poetry was more popular. We have also learnt that the *Mu'allaqāt* (i.e suspended odes) occupied a position of pre-eminence among the poetry of the time.

Similarly, we have learnt that after the advent of Islam, oration gained ascendancy and many of the leaders of the time had to develop their oratory prowess because the new creed imposed upon them situations where oration must be employed.

#### 6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Differentiate between the Arabic poetry of the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods.
2. Discuss the new dimensions introduced into Arabic prose by the advent of Islam.

#### 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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