**KHABBAAB IBN AL-ARAT**
A Master in the Art of Self-Sacrifice

A group of the Quraish hastened to Khabbaab's house to take the swords they had asked him to make. Khabbaab was a sword maker who sold his wares to the people of Makkah or sent them to its market.

It was not like Khabbaab to leave his house and work; therefore, the Quraish sat there and waited for his return. After a long time, Khabbaab arrived. His face was bright with questions, and his eyes were filled with graceful tears. He immediately greeted his guests and sat down. They asked him in a hurry, ''Khabbaab, did you finish making our swords?! There were no more tears in his eyes. Instead, his eyes were filled with bright delight. He spoke as if to himself, "It makes me wonder!"

His clients asked him, `What makes you wonder? We ask you about our swords. Did you finish them?!'

Khabbaab gazed at them as if he were hypnotized. Then he asked them, "Did you see him? Did you hear him?" They looked at one another in astonishment. Then one of them asked slyly, "Did you see him Khabbaab?" Khabbaab asked, "Whom do you mean?" turning the tables on him. The man answered, irritatedly, "I mean the same person that you mean!"

Khabbaab answered after he had exhibited his invulnerability to their attempts to wrest information from him. He wanted to prove to them that if he were to confess his faith before them, he would announce it in publicand would not be duped or led on. He would announce his Islam because he saw and embraced what was right.

He was still suspended in his ecstasy and spiritual upliftment when he answered, "Yes, I did see and hear him. As a matter of fact, I have seen him enveloped and illuminated by truth."

Suddenly, the Quraishi clients began to realize what he meant; therefore one of them shouted, "Who are you talking about, you slave of Umm `Ammaar?" Khabbaab answered with saintly quietude, "Who else but the brother Arab. Who else of your people is enveloped and illuminated by truth?"

Another shouted and jumped in terror, "Do you mean Muhammad? "Khabbaab nodded in satisfaction and said, "Yes, he is the Messenger of Allah to us, to bring us out of the darkness of disbelief into the light of belief."

No sooner had he finished these words than he fell unconscious. The only thing he remembered was waking up after long hours to find his clients gone and his body full of bleeding bruises and wounds! Nevertheless, his wideeyes encompassed his surroundings as if the place was too narrow for his penetrating stare. Despite the pain, he rose and went into the open, limpinghis way out of his house, leaning on the wall.

His noble eyes embarked on a long, perpetual journey roaming about the horizon. He was not searching for the familiar dimensions of people, but ratherfor the missing dimension. Indeed, his eyes traveled in search of the missing dimension in his life, in Makkah, and in the life of people everywhere and at all times. He wondered if what he had heard from the Prophet on that day was the light that leads to the missing dimension in the life of all people.

Khabbaab was wrapped in sublime contemplation and deep thought. Then he went home to treat his wounds and prepare himself for a new round of torture and pain.

From that day, Khabbaab occupied a foremost place among the oppressed and tortured who, not with standing their poverty and weakness, rose against the Quraish's haughtiness, tyranny, and madness. He was high in rank among those believers who were devoted to the standard of Islam that fluttered on the boundless horizon. It sounded the end of the era of paganism and despotism to announce the dawn of a new world, the sovereign of which is Allah, Who is worshipped alone by people who obey Him and do righteous deeds sincerely for His sake, and not to show off or set up rivals with Him in worship. Moreover, it announced the glad tidings of the emergence of the weak and oppressed people who would stand up as one man under the standard of Islam and would stand on equal terms with those who used and abused them in the past. Khabbaab withstood the consequences that ensued after embracing Islam with an outstanding courage that was becoming of a pioneer of Islam.Ash-Sha'biy narrated,

"Khabbaab withstood all the horrors that the polytheists exposed him too.They went so far as to place burning stones onto his naked back until his flesh came off." Indeed, Khabbaab had his share of horrible torture, yet his resistance and patience were extraordinary. For instance, the polytheists of the Quraish turned all the iron they could find in Khabbaab's place - which he had used to make swords - into fetters and chains. They put them under the fire until they blazed, then chained his body, hands, and legs with them.

One day, Khabbaab went with some of his oppressed brethren to the Prophet (PBUH) and said, "O Messenger of Allah, please ask Allah to bestow his victory and safety on us." This was an expression of hope in Allah's safety rather than of faint-heartedness and feebleness.

Now, let us hear the story as told by Khabbaab himself: One day, we went to the Prophet and found him laying his head on a garment in the shade of the Ka'bah, so we said to him, "O Messenger of Allah, we hope that you will ask Allah to bestow His victory and safety on us." Instantly, the Prophet sat up, and his face reddened as he said, "Not a long time ago, men like you who believed in Allah used to be dragged into a ditch where they were sawed from the head downwards, yet this didn't make them turn back from their religion. They also used to comb them with iron combs that split their flesh and bones, yet they didn't turn their backs on their religion. Believe me, Allah will put an end to all your sufferings and grant you victory so much so that one day, a man will travel from San'aa' to Hadramawt and fear no one but Allah and the wolf, lest it should devour his sheep. But you have no patience."

As soon as Khabbaab and his comrades heard these words, they seemed to have reached the apex of certainty and determination. Therefore, they decided to show Allah and the Prophet (PBUH) nothing but will, patience, and self-sacrifice. Khabbaab then walked patiently yet decidedly into the dungeons of hell.

The Quraish were maddened by his steadfastness and endurance; therefore, they decided to seek the help of his former slave mistress, Umm Ammaar, who became Khabbaab's principal torturer. For instance, she used to place burning iron on Khabbaab's head, yet Khabbaab deliberately controlled himself soas to deprive his torturer of the joy of hearing him moan. One day, the Prophet (PBUH) saw his head burned and blackened by the hot iron. His heart was full of sympathy and anguish, but there was nothing that he could do at that time but to supplicate Allah to our forth patience on him and strengthen his faith. Thus the Prophet (PBUH) raised his hands and supplicated,"Allah, make Khabbaab victorious over the disbelieving people."

Allah brought it about a few days later. Retaliation be fell Umm `Ammaar as if destiny meant it as an ultimatum to the rest of the torturers. She suffered a peculiar, acute rabies attack that made her, according to historians, bark like dogs. At that time, she was told that the only cure for her ordeal was to cauterize her head. Finally, her stubborn head burned day and night with burning iron.

All in all, the Quraish fought faith with torture, while the believers fought torture with self-sacrifice.
Khabbaab was one of those whom Allah had chosen to take their place among the masters of self-denial and sacrifice.

Not only had Khabbaab (May Allah be pleased wih him) devoted his time to the service of the new religion, but also to worshiping, praying, and instucting. He used to visit his brothers who hid their Islam in dread of the Quraish's tyranny and despotism. There, he used to read the Qur'aan and instruct them. He was, truly, a genius in studying every surah and verse in the Qur'aan. Even `Abd Allah Ibn Mas'uud, whom the Prophet praised by saying, "He who wants to read the Qur'aan in exactly the same way it descended on me, should imitate lbn Umm `Abd", considered Khabbaab as a reference to all that concerns the Qur'aan, whether as a text or a textbook.

Khabbaab was the one who was teaching the Qur'aan to Faatimah Bint Al-Khattaab and her husband Sa'iid Ion Zaid, when `Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab thrust his way right into their house with unsheathed sword so as to settle his account with Islam and the Prophet (PBUII). Allah willed that as soon as `Umar heard the verse in the scroll being recited in a slow and pleasant voice by Khabbaab, he cried out, "Tell me where Muhammad is!" when Khabbaab heard `Umar's words, he came out of his hiding place and said, "`Umar, by Allah, I do hope that Allah chose you to fulfil the Prophet's supplication. For yesterday, I heard the Prophet say, `Allah, please support Islam with whom You love best, either Abi Al-Hakam Ibn Hishaam or `Umar Ibn Al- Khabbaab."' `Umar repeated his question, "Where is Muhammad now?" Khabbaab answered, "At As-Safaa in Daar Al-Arqam Ibn Abi Arqam." At that very moment, `Umar ascended towards his great fortune and blessed destiny.

Khabbaab witnessed all the battles and wars side by side with the Prophet. He treasured his faith and certainty throughout his life.

When the Muslim treasury (Bait Al-Maal) overflowed with money during the caliphates of `Umar and `Uthmaan (May Allah be pleased with them both),Khabbaab had a large salary as one of the fore most Muslim Muhaajiruun.

This abundant income enabled Khabbaab to build himself a house in Kufa. He used to put his money where all his friends, visitors, and those in need could find it. Nevertheless, whenever the Prophet (PBUH) and the Companions who sacrificed their lives for Allah and met Him before the Muslims became victorious and wealthy were mentioned, his eyes filled with tears and he became sleepless.

Listen to him talking to his brothers who came to visit him on his death bed. They said, "Be content, Abu `Abd Allah; you will meet your brothers tomorrow." His eyes flowed with tears as he answered, "I am not crying out of fear of death, but you reminded me of the brothers who left this life without enjoying any of its splendor or luxury, yet we have lived on until we have sucked in its splendor and wealth to the extent that we placed this wealth on the sand," and he pointed to his newly-built humble house. Then he pointed to the place where he kept his money and exclaimed, `By Allah, I have never refused to give it to anyone who asked me for it, as if the strings were his." Then he looked upon his shroud and said weeping, "Look, this is my shroud." He considered it extravagant and luxurious. He then said, "Yet Hamzah the Prophet's uncle, on the day of his martyrdom had nothing to be used for a shroud but a torn garment which if placed on his head, would show his feet, and if placed on his feet, would show his head."

Khabbaab died in A.H. 37 . The swordmaker in paganism died. The master of self-denial and sacrifice in Islam died. He was one of the group of believers in whose defense the Qur'aan descended on the Prophet when the elite ofthe Quraish pleaded with the Prophet to assign a day for them and another for the poor Muslims like Khabbaab, Suhaib and Bilaal. However, the great Qur'aan embraced those men of Allah to honor and glorify, and these verses descended on the noble Prophet: "And turn not away those who invoke their Lord, morning and afternoon, seeking His Face. You are accountable for them in nothing, and they are accountable for you in nothing, that you may turn them away and thus become of the Zalimun (unjust). Thus We have tried some of them with others, that they might say: "Is it these (poor believers) that Allah has favoured from amongst us?" Does not Allah know best those who are grateful? When those who believe in our Ayat (verses) come to you, say:"Salamun `Alaikum" (peace be on you); your Lord has written Mercy for Himself"(6 : 52).

Thus, whenever the Prophet saw them after the descent of these verses, he took special care to honor them, so much so that he spread out his garment so that they would sit on it next to him and patted them on their shoulders saying, "I welcome you whom Allah enjoined me to favor.

It was indeed a tragic loss when one of the pious, noble, and legitimate sons of revelation and the generation of sacrifice died.

All in all, perhaps the best farewell to Khabbaab was the words of Imam `Aliy (May Allah be pleased with him) when he was on his way back from siffiin and saw a recently dug moist grave and asked about the deceased.

They answered, `It is Khabbaab's grave." Then he contemplated in reverence and sorrow, "O Allah, bestow Your mercy on Khabbaab, for You know that he was a true Muslim, an obedient Muhaajir and a determined mujaahid who strove hard in the cause of Allah."