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## Personal Characteristics of the Arabs Before Islam

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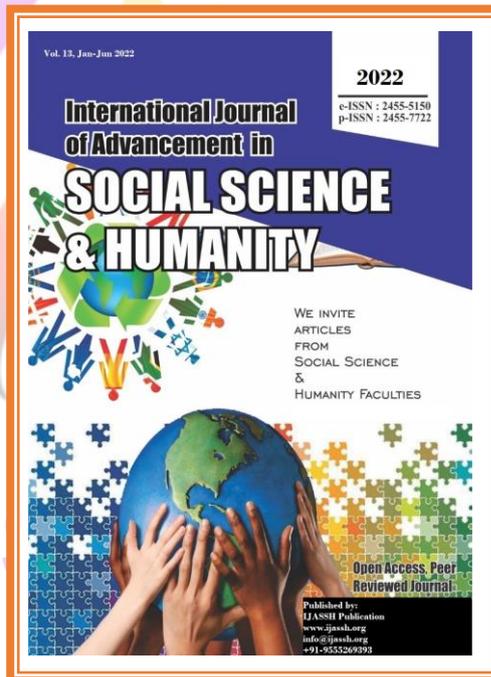
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## ABSTRACT

The traits and characteristics that distinguished the Pre-Islamic Arabia, only give the picture of the true characteristics of the ideal Arab individual as he should be. These features were stronger the closer we approached the era of prophecy, and weakened the farther we moved away from the era of prophecy. In order to know the personal characteristics of the Pre-Islamic Arabia, we have discussed in our current research “the historical origins of those qualities and characteristics that the Pre-Islamic Arabia, as well as the divisions and types of those characteristics, whether they were (psychological, moral, mental and physical), and the most important sub-indicators that Distinguished by our Arab ancestors before Islam.

**Keywords:** *Personal characteristics; Pre-Islamic Arabia.*

## INTRODUCTION

The features and characteristics that distinguished the Arabs before Islam, only give the picture of the true characteristics of the ideal Arab individual as he should be. This generation and the first generation have become role models for those who follow from our generations, Muslims in all times and places, even if they were not originally Muslims. However, these features were stronger the closer we approached the era of prophecy and weakened the farther we moved away from the era of prophecy. Because these features and characteristics that characterized our Arab ancestors before Islam have made our Islamic societies at their highest horizons.

These characteristics are what created this ideal period in the history of Islam, and just as it was they who facilitated the spread of the Islamic religion as a result of its proximity to its honorable teachings, so those characteristics and features that existed among Arabs before Islam were manifested to become one of the special phenomena that deserve to be recorded and historical attention. Pressure and those features that the Muslim community

included were the true balance of these for the spread of the Islamic religion, people loved them, worked on building them, and just as they studied them, and knew their impact on the Arab human being (1).

Several wrong ideas have spread among some people, that the Arab nation before Islam was one of the nations of inferior importance, or of those that did not possess any morals or benign qualities and features that enable the Arab individual to be proud of; Such ideas weaken the confidence of the Arabs in themselves and in their being one of the great nations that are not inferior to the rest of the nations (2).

It can be said that the Arabs in the past, i.e. before Islam, had high morals, which made them qualified to carry the final message and spread it all over the world, and if the Arabs did not have certain advantages, and the ability to civilize and develop, they would not have been able to reach the good morals they reached. However, Islam came to modify some of the negative qualities and morals that were present among the Arabs, and which were also present, and perhaps worse than those of other nations (3).

**RESEARCH QUESTION**

Before we begin to explain the personal characteristics of the pre-Islamic Arabs, the researcher aims to pose the following question:

Is the reason for using the word Jahiliyyah previously to refer to the Arabs before Islam, due to their backward minds?

In this part of the research, the researcher decided to delve into an important axis. Perhaps many of us, researchers or authors in the field of ancient history, neglected to address its causes, which is why the pre-Islamic Arabs were called the term “Jahiliyyah”?

Here, we had to mention the fact that has not been mentioned or explained to us as human beings today, Arabs first, and Muslims second, which is that this name was given by some Western authors and historians, who mixed their Jahiliyyah culture with the authentic Arab culture. They portrayed our great ancestors who were they have the greatness and beauty of character and ancient personal characteristics that they were backward, and that the solutions of Islam are what made them different people, and while they themselves know the opposite, and the evidence for this is that most Western countries still take them as role models, and even went further than that, as they studied the secret hidden behind these high and ancient personalities, whose climax continued to occupy a wide space from time to time among the most famous writers and authors in this world (4).

Also, this naming (Jahiliyyah) made the ideas of many young generations, if not also in the minds of some intellectuals and writers, believe that the personal and

behavioral characteristics of our Arab ancestors before Islam were closer to animals than to humanity. These historians and writers set off to the West, it is also unfortunate that a few Arab and Muslim writers tend to degrade the ancient personalities that the Arabs had before Islam, as they considered that in their attempt to drop our view on those personalities, it is tantamount to (brushing the floor of the picture in black, not highlighting the role of the Islamic call in modifying their minds). The ignorant ones, and the more they slander and defame the personality of our ancient pre-Islamic Arab ancestors, the more Islam was according to their belief that it would have the credit for giving them culture, science, high morals, and their development at all levels) (5).

Therefore, this research came to provide another addition to anyone who thinks that the Arabs before Islam had their personal and behavioral characteristics closer to the behavior of animals, and that Islam is what made them human like other humans. It should be recognized for all that although Islam has a great merit for the development of mankind, yet another question arises: Who are the mankind who converted to Islam, were they not also non-Muslims?

Also it will be come to our conclusion from this question. That Islam, upon its arrival, taught man the right path in worship and faith, and defined some religious laws and teachings for him with a high methodology, and thus added to those high-ranking personalities another sophistication, so the Arab before Islam became called the believer person or individual, because his personality was characterized by faith, moral, cultural and intellectual perfection, this is what

distinguishes the Arab before and after Islam, and not due to ignorance of reason, as was described by some historians (6).

### AN INSIGHT INTO THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIA

When we are inclined to cast something from our view in an impartial manner towards the history of our Arab ancestors before Islam, we will clearly discover that they were not as portrayed by some writers and historians, and here Dr. With his famous saying: (What the Arab historians wrote about the history of the Arabs before Islam lacks investigation, scrutiny, and sifting, and most of what they mentioned as the history of this era are nothing but legends and stories of my people, and news taken from the People of the Book, especially the Jews, as well as things that the humble in Islam put for their own ends. necessitated by special effects)) (7). Accordingly, relying on their personalities and attributes to make them ignorant, it is a matter of the utmost detriment and danger. It suffices us to look around at man in the twenty-first century, to find that he still believes until now in matters that are considered among the most absurd matters (8).

If we wanted to return to the atmosphere of our Arab societies before Islam, we note that they differed in their view of personality and its definition, starting from the ancient man until the pre-Islamic times. Relative at times and from the change at other times, because man, by nature, cares about others of his own kind, so he looks at what appears on the faces of others of emotions and impressions, and what distinguishes their behavior and perceptions in different situations, and then

what a person does in the process of evaluating these emotions, impressions and behavior patterns, then he issues judgment on others. These three aspects can then be considered from the basic characteristics on which the science of personality study was established (9).

The personality traits of the Arabs before Islam were known, and the evidence for this is what the Arabs were famous for in terms of patience and rational thinking, far from recklessness and haste, before giving inaccurate judgments, the causes of which are nervousness and lack of care in finding an appropriate solution to difficult problems and situations, and the Arabs were old they describe the patient man as "courageous". After him, he possesses the abilities and capabilities of physical and emotional balance. They usually elect the heads of their clans who are distinguished by the characteristics of patience, discipline, forbearance, constancy, and emotionality, so count the people who are distinguished by strong personal traits, if they have two characteristics:

**First** - Physical patience: It is the physical ability of an individual to bear hardships.

**Second** - psychological patience: It is related to the value of virtue, and it is the praiseworthy type, which means that we bear the burdens of staying away from the desires of the soul (10).

The meanings of the emotional balance of the concept of patience and steadfastness differed, and the second, according to the difference of the abomination that overcame it. Patience and steadfastness in the face of calamity, and do not transcend the meaning of patience and the second itself, and they are opposed by anxiety,

panic, and sadness, and in the possibility of self-control and the second, and they are opposed by elevation and arrogance, and if it is in combat, it is called courage and it is opposed by cowardice, and if it is in the concealment of speech, it is called concealment, and its owner is called discreet, and if it is a reason for haste. It was called reverence and stability, and against it was frivolity and lightness (11). Attention to personality characteristics among the pre-Islamic Arabs became one of the lofty tasks, which rose with the advent of the true Islamic religion (12).

### **THE STRENGTH OF PERSONALITY AMONG THE PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIA**

Most of the historical studies indicate that the secret of the interest of Arabs before Islam in building the strength of their personality is due to their adherence to the application of customs and traditions and keeping pace with them, which were prevalent among them at that time. Those customs and traditions have greatly affected the organization of their professional, family, and social lives. It had a moral authority that no one could give up, and it took the place of religion or societal law. When Islam came, it added to them some benign advantages, which cannot be denied, but the nature of evil, injustice, and corruption in perceptions and beliefs used to dominate and overwhelm that good in them, and they were in dire need of the light of revelation. The way to do that is through a variety of arguments, fatigue, and harm (13).

In the pre-Islamic period, its tribes had enjoyed most of the good qualities, which many people overlook, regardless of their mentalities and beliefs, whether at the

individual-personal level or at the collective-community level, and such qualities Islam came to confirm and establish in society because they were already present. But - unfortunately - many of these good qualities are not available now in our societies, just as the bad qualities that were prevalent among the Arabs before Islam, and which the Islamic religion came to fight and completely change, are now widely spread (14).

Before Islam, the Arabs were famous for symbols and flags who were endowed with many noble virtues of morals, which immortalized their memory, and made them an imprint attached to pride as a result of their taking by Western countries as an example for them, as he set most of them examples and wisdom, such as the character of Hatim al-Tai in generosity, and the qualities of Antara Ibn Shaddad in courage, even though they were worshipers who believed in trees and stones (15).

The evidence for the pre-Islamic Arabs' enjoyment of good characteristics and qualities is what was stated in the saying of our Noble Messenger (may Allah bless him and his family and grant them peace): "I was sent only to perfect good manners," and he did not say to teach you good manners. There is a difference between the two worlds, and this is a Muhammadan testimony to the honorable Arabs even before their Islam. Noble morals occupy the largest area of religion, in fact, all religion is created, and if creation is absent, religion is gone. So, ethics is the spirit of the human personality. If that spirit is true, the strong personality of the human being emerges, and then the nation lives with its diverse societies strong, and vice versa. If the soul is corrupted, the

human personality will permeate, and disease and suffering will befall it, and then the nation will deteriorate, with all the societies it contains until it becomes an easy morsel for the greedy, and an open target for the enemies, and that is why the Arabs before Islam were aware of this idea and worked hard to build their personalities so that they would not fall Hobby (16).

### **DISTINCTIVE PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIA**

Most of the historical sources indicated that in the era of the Arabs before Islam, features, and characteristics spread among its members, such as severity, strength, and ruggedness due to the nature of the harsh environment in which the Arab lived that time. The environment was characterized as an arid desert environment to the extent that it forced its owner to live and move with difficulty from one place to another. Wars also spread between Arab tribes for many reasons and circumstances, and the Arabs were distinguished by a deep belief in revenge (17).

Nevertheless, he was known for their strength, chivalry, generosity, bounty, and dignity. They used to seek help and security for the lost, even if for them they constituted enemies or opponents, and they were also known for forgiveness, but they stipulated that it be coupled with ability unless it was a weakness. Courage, chivalry, and strength were among the most important qualities that the Arab possessed, and the Arab was fond of practicing equestrianism, and he always sought to play the role of heroism and a sense of victory (18).

Through this research, the researcher will resort to listing some of the good qualities that we strayed from and some of their bad qualities that we took as an example to us among the Arabs before Islam, to realize that if we follow the religion as Muslims now, should we really preserve values that the Arabs knew as constants even before Islam?

Therefore, we can divide the most important personal characteristics that the Arab man had into three types of characteristics, which are:

- a. Psychological characteristics: We can mention some of them, and my agencies:
  1. Generosity and generosity: The Arabs were famous in the past for bounty, chivalry, and generosity, as mentioned in the many stories and tales. His generosity was also characterized by being unlimited, as it was characterized by helping the needy and the weak (19).

The Arabs before Islam acquired the trait of generosity due to their tendency to give to others, one of the best and noblest traits that they boast about. The French historian (Cornelis Van Arendonk) emphasized (1987) when referring to the hospitality of the Arabs by saying: (The Arab before Islam used to show pride Always in his tribe from other tribes with the generosity of hospitality, which is characterized by providing a lot of food to the stranger and the needy, as well as slaughtering camels for them. Saad was asked a question that was directed to him which states: "Have you met someone more generous

than you”, as Qais answered with approval, as giving is not worthy of praise if one has many blessings, but praise, distinction, and praise are those who were given of the few blessings that he has, as The honorable Arab man was described as honorable, as well as what was reported on the authority of Hassan bin Sahl, who said when he heard someone say, “There is no good in extravagance,” by replying to him when he said, “There is no extravagance in good.” Just as the Holy Qur’an generously thanked the Arabs in the pre-Islamic era when Allah Almighty said Allah Almighty: “they feed the poor, orphan, and captive with food for His love.”) (20).

2. Fulfilling promises and not violating them, no matter what the cost: It is a noble and noble character, and Islam came with its determination and confirmation. The Almighty said: {And those who fulfill their covenant when they make a covenant, and are patient in adversity and adversity, and in times of hardship, those who are truthful and those who are truthful} (Al-Baqarah 17:21).

Fulfilling the covenant was considered one of the characteristics of the pre-Islamic Arab knight, which was accompanied by the qualities; Generosity, bounty, forbearance, jealousy, courage, and chivalry, when the Arab talks about these traits, we find that he mentions them all, and they are the same as what came and acknowledged having them in Islam, and among

those qualities that should also be displayed is the trait of loyalty and keeping the secret of others (22).

3. Patience and endurance: Before Islam, the Arabs had an amazing ability to withstand many adversities and patience over severe calamities, and perhaps they acquired these qualities from the dry desert nature of their dwelling, which was little planting and water. They were not affected by the heat or the cold, nor by the roughness of the road, nor by the long distances, nor by severe hunger, nor by deadly thirst. One of them used to walk the days contented with dates with which to establish his crucifixion, and drops of water with which to moisten his liver (23).

Among the most famous of what was said about patience and endurance, is that poetic verse of Al-Shanfari Al-Azdi, when he said:

if I extended my hands to provisions,

I would not hasten them,  
as the greedy people would hasten (24).

- b. Congenital characteristics: We can mention some of them, as follows:

1. Honesty: The authentic Arab, even before the pre-Islamic era, was keen on honesty so that he would not be said among the Arabs that he was a liar, and no matter what the matter cost him, our Noble Messenger (may Allah bless him and his family) was famous for honesty. Before his honorable mission, he was nicknamed (The Truthful, the

Trustworthy), and when Allah Almighty sent him as a mercy to the world, he became more attached to this virtue, and everyone testified to him of that. The Truth, Glory be to Him, says: “And when the believers saw the parties, they said this is what Allah and His Messenger promised us, and Allah and His Messenger spoke the truth, and it only increased them in faith and submission.” (25).

This is evidence that the Arabs before Islam have always had a good reputation, and they strive to preserve it because it represents their true identity, and just as they do not want to offend this good identity in anything (26).

The best example of honesty is what the wife of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) was famous for. It came from Ibn Hisham, the author of the famous work “The Biography of the Prophet”: “Khadija al-Kubra (peace be upon her) possessed noble lineage, high honor, wealth and money, and the most eager women of Quraysh to preserve honesty and adherence to moral principles, chastity, and human dignity, for she was the one who rose to the top of honor and glory. Al-Dhahabi, who is the pioneer of men’s science among the common people, says: Khadija, the lady of the women of Paradise, the wise woman of Quraish, from the tribe of Asad, of great destiny, of religion, chivalry, and honor, one of the women of Paradise and one of the women who rose to the top of perfection (27).

2. Respecting the neighborhood: (Al-Shammari et al., 2014) mentioned that the Arab human being before Islam had several sacred traditions and customs, among which was respect for the neighborhood, which was one of the most important distinctive moral features for them. In the Arabian Peninsula, they seek refuge and say this: (We seek refuge in the dearest of this valley from the rebellion of the jinn and their miscreants, that is, we seek refuge in him and seek refuge) (28).

As (Ibn Hisham) mentioned in his book (The Prophet’s Biography of Ibn Hisham) by saying, “The Arabs before Islam used to offer the principle of protection and tranquility to those who sought it, and not to guard it regardless of the circumstances and conditions. They used to say, in a show of pride and praise: So-and-so is immune to the neighbor, the protector of the spoilers, yet they were unjustly extravagant in protecting the neighbor, exceeding the limits of justice and benevolence, and casting this honorable attribute into the labyrinth of abuse and aggression! (29).

3. Chastity: The Arabs were very jealous of women from other peoples, and they were very keen to preserve them, their honor and their honor, to the extent that the Arabs before Islam reached their jealousy to the death of girls so that they would not be disgraced when these girls reached the age of (30).

The Arab before Islam also possessed several characteristics, which constitute the moral characteristics of his chastity model, including:

- a. Valor and chivalry that refuses to him except to support the oppressed and relief the desperate.
- b. Helping widows and women in general, and helping the needy.
- c. Respect the sanctuary and the sacred months, even if they have a history of evil.
- d. Prohibition of marriage to mothers and daughters.
- e. Wash them from impurity.
- f.Keep rinsing and inhaling.
- g. Brushing the teeth, cleaning one's hair, trimming the nails, and plucking the armpits.
- h. Circumcision of children. Pumice for girls.
- i.The thief's right hand cut them off.
- j.Hajj and Umrah (31).

The best example of pre-Islamic historical figures who were famous for their chastity is what was known about Abu Talib (may Allah be pleased with him), the uncle of the Messenger (may Allah bless him and his family) and the father of Imam Ali (peace be upon him). Allah is upon him). Also, Abu Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) inherited his father's qualities of dream, existence, and wisdom; He believed

in Allah Almighty, forbade the worship of idols, permitted what Allah Almighty permitted and prohibited what He prohibited, and fulfilled the vows, the performer of truth, the guide of the fearful, forbidden oppression, alcohol, and major sins, and forbade female infanticide and prevented people from going around the house naked, despite his lack of money, Allah clothed him He was exalted in prestige and dignity, and he was the ruler of Quraysh, its master, and its reference in calamities.

c. Mental and physical characteristics: We can mention some of them, as follows:

1. Courage: The Arabs were characterized by courage, and they blamed each other for fleeing from battles, and considered it a mark of shame on the Arab person.

This trait is a trait imposed by their desert and tribal life, so it is an inherited trait, not an innate trait. As the Arabs became not afraid of death except by threatening them with the sword only, as the importance of courage in the pre-Islamic era is very great, so (Al-Samuel bin Adia) wrote about this, when he said:

And none of us, Syed Hanaf Anfeh, died

do not look from where he was dead

Our swords are drooping at the edge of the doe

it is not on anything other than the doe shedding (34).

Among the types of courage, the knights competed with each other to support women, orphans, widows and the weak. Where no one failed others when the oppressed sought the help of them, and their pivotal rule on which they walked was “protecting the neighbor, whether he is innocent or a sinner,” and among the most famous Arab knights at that time were (Antarah bin Shaddad, Otaiba bin Al-Harith, Khalid bin Jaafar bin Kilab Al-Amiri, Qais bin Maad bin Yakrib, Amer bin Al-Tufail, Amr bin Kulthum) as the traits and characteristics of courage and nobleness were planted in them (35).

The best example of courage before Islam is what came about the courage of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) when he was young, for Abu Talib used to “gather his son and the sons of his brothers, then order them to fight. A child is wrestling with his older brothers and their young, and his cousins' elders and their young ones, and he kills them, so his father says: “Ali appeared, so he called him Dhuhair.” When he grew up, he (peace be upon him) would wrestle with the tough man, hanging with the mighty by his hand, pulling him and killing him. Perhaps he caught his stomach and lifted him in the air. Perhaps he catches up with the running horse, shocks him, and turns him on his heels. And he used to take a stone from the top of the mountains, and carry it with his hands apart, then put it among the people, so that a man, two men, and three could not move it, until Abu Jahl said about him: It is similar to

all people as if fire throws people with sparks, beware of it, for one day it will appear in the Bedouins and urban areas” (36).

2. The eloquence of the tongue: One of the most important characteristics that distinguished the Arabs in the past was the eloquence of the tongue and rhetoric. Most of them held meetings in the squares and markets, and these meetings are known as literary councils. The Kaaba is only an example of this inherent characteristic (37).

The eloquence of the tongue is one of the qualities that the Arabs have enjoyed since ancient times. It clarifies the meaning, and increases the value and beauty of the pronunciation, and Al-Jahiz has combined the value of eloquence in his saying: (There is no speech on earth that is more pleasant, or more elegant, or more pleasant to hear, or more in contact with sound minds, than listening to the hadith of sane, eloquent bedouins and eloquent scholars). . Eloquence is an important characteristic for Arabs, and it has two faces: organic represented in fluency of the tongue, clarity of pronunciation at the speaker, communicative achieved in eloquence, and understanding between the speaker and the listener (38).

3. Physiognomy: The Arab man before Islam was famous for the skill of physiognomy, and it was considered the science of psychology that searches, investigates, and links the characteristics and features of the

man and his facial features. The situation reached in the old Arabic to know the tribe to which a person belongs and knows his different qualities, whether cowardice, courage, miserliness, or generosity (39).

## CONCLUSION

In this type of historical subject, we tried to clarify the main personal characteristics of the pre-Islamic Arab man, in addition to clarifying the result and future expectations of the destruction of these characteristics we have reached in our current era as Arabs and Muslims, and therefore; We have found that it is very necessary to pay attention to writing this research with a high degree of accuracy, focus and health in order to show the history of our great ancestors, which God planted in them the beautiful and good manners, which was reflected in their unique personalities. Therefore, this excerpt from the fragrant historical biography has results and expressions that we may highlight to the reader in the following points:

1. The Arab man before Islam was characterized by his beautiful morals and personal qualities that were not cultivated by any of the other peoples, because the Arab tribes worked on rooting them and establishing them in them until they were distinguished from other societies.
2. The features and characteristics that distinguished the Arabs before Islam, only give the picture of the true characteristics of the ideal Arab individual as he should be.
3. Several wrong ideas have spread among some people, that the Arab nation before Islam was one of the nations of inferior importance, or of those that did not possess any morals, or benign qualities and traits that enable the Arab individual to be proud of; Such ideas weaken the Arabs' confidence in themselves and in their being one of the great nations that are not inferior to the rest of the nations.
4. This naming (Jahiliyyah) made the ideas of many young generations, if not also in the minds of some intellectuals and writers, to believe that the personal and behavioral characteristics of our Arab ancestors before Islam were closer to animals than to humanity. These historians and writers set out in the West, and it is also unfortunate that a few Arab and Muslim writers tended to the idea of degrading the ancient personalities that the Arabs had before Islam.
5. That Islam, upon its arrival, taught man the right path in worship and faith, and defined some religious laws and teachings for him with a high methodology, and thus added to those high-ranking personalities another sophistication, so the Arab before Islam became called the believer person or individual, because his personality was characterized by faith, moral, cultural and intellectual perfection.
6. What Arab historians wrote about the history of the Arabs before Islam lacks investigation, scrutiny and screening, and that most of what

they mentioned as the history of this era is nothing but legends and stories of my people, and news taken from the People of the Book, especially the Jews, as well as things that the humble in Islam put in place for purposes necessitated by special influences.

7. The personality traits of the Arabs before Islam were known, and the evidence for this is what the Arabs were famous for from the traits of patience and rational thinking, far from recklessness and haste, before the reluctance to present inaccurate judgments, the causes of which are nervousness and lack of care in finding an appropriate solution to problems and difficult situations, and the Arabs were old The patient man is described as "courageous", after whom he possesses the abilities and capabilities of physical and emotional balance.
8. Most of the historical studies indicate that the secret of the interest of Arabs before Islam in building the strength of their personality, is due to their adherence to the application of customs and traditions and keeping pace with them, which were prevalent with them at that time, and these customs and traditions greatly affected the organization of their professional, family and social lives, as they had a moral influence that could not be No one would abandon it, and it would take the place of religion or communal law.
9. The authentic Arab, even before the pre-Islamic era, was keen on honesty so that he would not be said among

the Arabs that he was a liar, no matter what the matter cost him. Our Noble Messenger (may Allah bless him and his family) was famous for his honesty, and before his honorable mission, he was nicknamed (The Truthful, the Trustworthy).

10. The Arabs were characterized by courage, and they blamed each other for fleeing the battles, and considered it a mark of shame on the Arab person, and this imprint does not go away with the passing of days, and the man among them wished to die in the midst of battles, to flee from the battlefields.

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