

## Class 4: Week 14

### Pre-Islamic Arabia (Jahiliya)

**Task: Use the information below and your own information to create a poster about pre-Islamic Arabia**

- Jahiliya – ‘Age of ignorance’ referring to pre-Islamic Arabia. From the root word ‘jahil’, which means ‘ignorant’.
- Out of 12 months of the year, they agreed 4 of these months should have no wars.
- They were generous. The Arabs were generous and hospitable by nature. It was almost like a competition as to who could be the most generous. It was a sign of manliness.
- They never committed breach of trust. They considered violation of promise to be an unpardonable sin. It was a case of honour.
- They possessed great skill in horsemanship and archery.
- They considered fleeing from the enemy to be one of the worst things you could do.
- Everything was based around the farming and rearing of animals.
- Male dominated society with tribal structure – alliances between tribes was normal but these were just for the sake of it – **“such arrangements were fragile”** (Frederick Denny).
- Leaders were male and inheritance was also given to males only.
- Men could marry and divorce whenever they liked.
- Women were treated as little more than possessions of their fathers, brothers and husbands
- A savage custom of the Arabs was to bury their female infants alive. Even if an Arab did not wish to bury his daughter alive, he still had to uphold this ‘honourable’ tradition, being unable to resist social pressures. The Quran also mentions this:
- **“When the infant girl, buried alive, is asked for what crime she was slain?”** (Quran 81:8-9).
- **“When the birth of a girl was announced to one of them, his face grew dark and he apparently swallowed his anger. Because of the bad news he hid himself from his kinsmen and did not know whether he should keep the new-born with disgrace or bury her under dust? How ill they judge?”** (Quran 16:58-59)
- Drunkenness was a common vice of the Arabs. With drunkenness went their gambling. They were compulsive drinkers and compulsive gamblers.
- There were monotheists from the Abrahamic faiths. There is plenty of evidence that the Arabs encountered monotheistic religions such as Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism during trade. If they were not aware of these, the Quran would not have made sense to them later on when it was revealed as the Quran refers to them a lot.
- There were also people who did not have a religion but had monotheistic beliefs that were taught by Abraham – these are known as ‘Hanifs’ in the Quran.