

## The Changing Faces of Abu Sufyan

Before we begin to consider the nature of Abu Sufyan's character we must go back a few years to a time before the birth of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) and become familiar with the grand-parents of these two men. 'Abd Manaf was one of the grand-parents of both the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and Abu Sufyan.

It was into 'Abd Manaf's home that the baby twins were born, the toe of one of the twins was attached to the forehead of the other. The two twins were taken to a soothsayer to see what he thought of the matter. After seeing them the soothsayer said that if the twins were separated from each other, strife and bloodshed would reign between their off-spring for as long as this world existed.

As it was obvious that they would encounter enormous difficulties thus joined to each other it was decided that they should be separated. One of them was given the name Hashim and the other 'Abdu 'sh-Shams. It is said that the toe of Hashim was attached to the forehead of 'Abdu 'sh-Shams. Later, 'Abdu 'sh-Shams who had no children of his own — adopted — a butcher's apprentice called Umayyah and gave him all rights of inheritance.

It was at this point that the two forces of truth and falsehood were set, the one opposed to the other: on the one side stood Hashim, who was a peaceable man, fond of his friends and always entertaining guests and on the other, Umayyah who, because his true parents were not known, was a spiteful, malicious and ill-mannered man. (We have already explained that he was not the true son of 'Abdu 'sh-Shams and that it is not known who his father or mother were; it is said that he came originally from the west.)

At that time 'Abd Manaf was responsible for guarding and taking care of the Ka'bah of Mecca. After him the responsibility was handed over to his son Hashim whose devotion and hard-working nature made him more suitable than anyone else. Umayyah the adopted son of 'Abdu 'sh-Shams, who, through his adoption was like a cousin to Hashim became jealous.

The fire of jealousy burned so fiercely in the heart of Umayyah that it drove him crazy with anger; his jealousy was no different from that of Cain for Abel. Umayyah, this son of unknown parentage, by

trickery and deceit used every opportunity to draw together a group of persons around him in an attempt to destroy or undermine the social and political influence of Hashim. Umayyah schemed and plotted, caused disorder and chaos in people's hitherto peaceful lives.

Hashim, however, a fine good-natured man, from whose family the Messenger (s.a.w.a.) was to appear, cordially invited Umayyah to come and exchange views with each other. Hashim advised and requested the latter to give up his evil actions. These gentle words of advice had no effect on the stony-hearted Umayyah and he continued as before his interference into other's affairs. Hashim, seeing that this selfish, black-hearted man would not cease his savage behaviour was obliged to buy his peace with money and goods; thus he gave him several camels together with quantity of foodstuffs and succeeded in relieving the people of his evil actions for a few days. Umayyah, however, began to cause trouble again, openly acted in a bad manner and defiantly challenged Hashim.

The confrontation between truth and falsehood became so bitter that the difference between the two men broke into open strife and battle and the courts of justice were obliged to intervene. The two men appeared in court in order to settle their differences; the judge began the proceedings; after a thorough investigation into the matter and after taking counsel he decided that Hashim was in the right.

Umayyah was ordered to return everything he had received from Hashim and to be exiled to Sham (now Syria). Umayyah went to Sham but he did not remain idle; even from his place of exile, he began interfering in other's affairs, plotted and schemed, and instigated the idol-worshippers against Hashim.

Unfortunately, this good generous man Hashim died at an early age leaving behind him a son called Shaybah who was living with his mother in another house. Hashim, also had another brother whose name was Muttalib; this brother, like Hashim himself, was very well-mannered generous man. The responsibility for guarding the Ka'bah was entrusted to him. Muttalib invited his nephew Shaybah from Medina and brought him up with loving care; it is for this reason that he is called 'Abdul-Muttalib, that is servant or slave of Muttalib.

But let us return to Umayyah. Umayyah had many sons, who were all similar to Umayyah himself in their intentions and behaviour. Moreover all the qualities of Umayyah were manifest to the utmost degree in the figure of one particular son whose name was Harb. Thus it was that the two forces, one satanic the other merciful, were again opposed to each other.

Harb at the instigation of Abu Sufyan made plans to kill 'Abdul-Muttalib; fortunately, however he was unsuccessful in his attempt and had to flee. The conflict between them continued in this way for a time until God gave 'Abdul-Muttalib several fine and worthy sons; one of them was Abdullah who was to have as a son the noble Prophet (s.a.w.a.). The two opposed parties and the two forces of truth and falsehood continued thereby to confront each other: on the one side Abu Sufyan and on the other side the noble Prophet Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.).

Abu Sufyan's deceit and hypocrisy, his bad language and vile behaviour was notorious amongst the

people of the Hijaz. His evil actions and bad qualities were just like those of Hind, the "liver-eater" (who ate the liver of Hamzah, the uncle of the holy Prophet), who knew no bounds of modesty or decency, whether with her own people or with strangers. His sister, Umm Jamil played an important role in hindering or tormenting Muhammad (s.a.w.a.).

She was the wife of Abu Jahl and is mentioned by God in the Qur'an (surah 111, ayah 4) as the bearer of fuel for the fire. In fact, all the family of Umayyah (Hamamah, Rabi'ah, Hind, Abu Sufyan, Mu'awiyah and their grandparents) are mentioned by the name of 'the cursed tree' in the Qur'an (surah, 14, ayah 14).

From his early youth, Abu Sufyan shunned no means in order to achieve his political and criminal aims; he took the infamous daughter of Umayyah, Hind as a wife to further his own designs and it was together with this woman that he confronted Islam and the radiant figure of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.).

Abu Sufyan believed that if his parents were unable, as a result of their struggle, to vest control of the Ka'bah from the family of Hashim then he himself should undertake this task. Abu Sufyan saw himself as the guardian of the dictatorial regime of the Quraysh and as the upholder of the traditional age of jahiliyyah (pre-Islamic period of ignorance). To this end he began his un-godly action against the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.), urging others to do the same.

Furthermore, he persuaded them to make fun of the noble Master, Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) and engage in open conflict with him. He even went so far as to plot the death of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.).

By studying the history of that age we will discover that Abu Sufyan was the ring-leader, responsible for all the battles undertaken against the Prophet; he even swore never to sleep with his wives until he had killed Muhammad (s.a.w.a.).

Finally the situation became so bad that the tribe of Hashim, under the guidance of their own leader, Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) was forced to leave Mecca and take residence in the valley of Shi'b Abi Talib.

The nobles and important men of Mecca from all the different families drew together as a result of this. They held many meetings, finally deciding on the following plan of actions against Muhammad and his followers:

- 1) To effect an economic blockade: no foodstuffs and other basic necessities would be allowed to reach them.
- 2) All trade would be stopped and marriage to any of them would not be permitted.
- 3) Torture and harassment of them would be encouraged.

Other measures were also decided upon. Following these decisions all roads leading to their encampments were closed and anyone caught dealing with them was subject to deprivation and torture.

It was during this period that the holy Prophet began to equip and prepare his forces for war (in the valley of Shi'b Abi Talib and in other places). He trained the strongest, most fiercest and most god-fearing amongst them in the skills of war.

For three years, the noble Prophet and his faithful supporters remained in these valleys, cut off socially and economically.

Finally, however the powerful leaders of Mecca grew tired of this situation and decided to lift the blockade. Deliverance of Hashim's tribe and the Prophet himself from this unfortunate situation gave the supporters of Islam an opportunity to consolidate their forces and allowed the god-fearing slaves and servants of the usurers and powerful men of Mecca to come out and join them.

As a result of the resistance of the holy Prophet against the forces of Shaytan (Satan) the Abu Sufyans and pharaonic men of Mecca were left help-less; they gained nothing from their evil, inhuman policies.

Their trade and industry had been disrupted and the source of their riches was in danger. In order to destroy the root of the problem of usury, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) ordered his followers, who were suffering at the hands of the Meccans to make hijrah (emigrate) from Mecca to Medina. By this mean they were delivered of the evils of these blood-sucking leeches.

The Quraysh had not remained idle; they held a series of meetings and in one of them the kuffar (unbelievers) leaders made the following proposals:

1. To set fire to the house of the Prophet.
2. To exile him to a far-off town and keep him under guard.
3. To imprison him without food and force him to do hard labour.
4. To torture him.
5. To kill him by means of a hired-killer.

All of these proposals were rejected; it was then that one of the evil-minded men present made the following strange suggestion: One man should be chosen from each tribe and together, sword in hand we should strike the Prophet's head and cut him to pieces under the cover of darkness. By taking this path of action we would be free of his trouble-some action, would destroy all trace of him and no one person in particular could be held responsible. Shouts of approval were to be heard from everyone and this devilish scheme was unanimously accepted. Before carrying out this plan, however, they began to harass and torture the faithful supporters of the holy Prophet.

Among those who especially suffered this campaign of harassment and torture at the hands of these vicious men we may cite the names of Bilal, the Abyssinian 'Ammar ibn Yasir and his mother and father.

They were stripped naked and thrown onto the scorching sands of Arabia; children and youths from among the ignorant kuffar were persuaded to use every means to molest them.

The father and mother of 'Ammar ibn Yasir were martyred (shahid) under the effects of the torture, Bilal, the Abyssinian, 'Ammar and other supporters of the Prophet fell ill after the torture and lay for a long time in their houses, bed – ridden while recovering. Despite this torture and harassment neither the holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), nor those who believed in his prophethood gave up the task of calling the people to Islam. The latter loved the Messenger of Allah and Islam so passionately that 'iman (faith and trust in Allah) shone like a light in their hearts and they did not feel the pain of the torture.

Gradually the number of the Prophet's supporters increased and brave Muslims revolutionaries appeared from amongst the people, especially from the class of slaves, servants and workers. The fire of their determination ignited the hearts of both the town and the village tribes and began to under–mine and destroy the rule of the powerful, criminal nobles of Mecca.

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