

The two families of Quraysh

The Prophet had said very correctly: “My followers will meet destruction at the hands of the youngsters of Quraysh”. These youngsters mentioned by the Prophet who were to create trouble and to conspire, were born at a place which served as a cradle for the shameless persons like Yazid son of Mu`awiya.

The Prophet could see that this party was waging war at one time to safeguard its chiefdom and authority, and was surrendering and making a show of Islam at another time to acquire chiefdom and authority. When he glanced at different parts and saw these people he said with much grief and anxiety: “My followers will meet destruction at the hands of the youngsters of Quraysh”.

The readers are requested to keep before their eyes the history of the Quraysh, which I am going to narrate, so that it may be possible to identify each of them.

The enmity between Bani Umayyah and Bani Hashim was very old. They were opposed to each other, before struggle for rulership and authority had cropped up between them and even before Islam had gained predominance.

Their enmity with each other was based on various reasons. In fact all the strong internal and external reasons for opposition had combined. Among them were included tribal party spirit, superiority complex, old grudge, desire for vengeance of the murder of kinsmen, political views, personal sentiments, difference in ways of life and manner of thinking etc. Bani Umayyah and Bani Hashim were the chiefs of Mecca and held high offices even during the age of ignorance. However, the chiefdom of Bani Hashim was spiritual ¹ whereas that enjoyed by Bani Umayyah was political and they were also tradesmen and possessed enormous wealth.

All the Muslim historians and European Orientalists agree that before the advent of Islam Bani Hashim were not habituated to cunning and deceit like the idolatrous priests. They did not deceive the simple-minded people on the pretext of their religious and spiritual leadership. They neither exploited others nor kept their personal benefit in view. They had faith in the Lord of the Ka`abah and sincerely believed in what had been permitted or disallowed by the Almighty God. According to their code helping the oppressed, sympathising with the helpless, warding off injustice, and meeting the needs of the indigent,

was compulsory. They were sincere in their belief. They did not deceive anyone and did not consider hypocrisy to be permissible. For example, it was possible that Abdul Muttalib, the grandfather of the Prophet and Ali might have slaughtered one of his sons in the path of God because he had firm faith in his Lord and had vowed that if his ten sons survived he would slaughter one of them for the sake of God on the threshold of the Ka`abah. He was not satisfied about the fulfilment of his vow until he was convinced in the light of his faith that killing his son would not be a means of pleasing God.

His faith was so firm and he was so keen to assist the poor and the needy that he concluded a pact with some families of Quraysh to achieve this end. (Bani Umayyah did not become signatories to this pact). One of the special conditions of this pact was that they would side with the oppressed person and make the oppressor restore his right, help one another in financial matters and restrain the powerful persons from molesting the weak. The incident which led to the conclusion of this pact was as follows:-

A Qurayshite purchased some articles from a person belonging to another place and promised to pay the price after a fixed time. He did not, however, make payment on the due date. He was confident that on account of his family dignity and the support of his kinsmen none would compel him to make payment. Furthermore, the person from whom he had purchased the articles was a non-Meccan and belonged to an ordinary family, and did not enjoy support from anyone. However, Bani Hashim decided to assist him. They made a mutual pact whereby they decided to realize the price of the articles purchased by the Qurayshite and to enforce justice. However, as this pact did not accord with the nature of Bani Umayyah they opposed it vehemently.

The religious and spiritual leadership inherited by Bani Hashim from their ancestors generation after generation, accorded with their nature. They had inherited pure disposition and nobleness from their ancestors. Every generation of theirs displayed the virtues inherited by it and Bani Hashim continued to maintain dignity and excellence till Almighty God appointed Muhammad to the prophetic mission and also created Ali son of Abu Talib as representatives of the morality and perfection of the Hashimite Family.

Have a look at the history of Bani Hashim (i.e. the descendants of Abu Talib) after the passing away of the Prophet, and you will find that, whether that history covers one hundred years or two hundred years or five hundred years, they have always been a specimen of the noble qualities and virtues. The manliness, bravery, piety and truthfulness which was possessed by their forefathers can also be observed in their sons and grandsons. History continued to turn its leaves, but whoever from amongst them came was a specimen of his forefathers.

If this family had not been virtuous and noble by nature it would not have become a specimen of piety and purity, because in those times egotism, selfishness, flattery and ambitiousness were so rampant that all were morally degraded and these vices were very common among them.

It is much easier to go down into an abyss as compared with ascending or standing firm at one's place.

However, notwithstanding the fact that the atmosphere was unfavourable and corruption was prevalent everywhere Bani Hashim were not affected by these things and their noble qualities and virtues remained intact.

However, Bani Umayyah were quite the reverse of this. During the age of ignorance they were traders and politicians; and it is evident that whoever is engaged in trade and politics possesses wealth and authority and endeavours to continue to possess these things and make them remain within his family. No intelligent person can deny the reality that when a person is engaged in trade and his near ones are also tradesmen he can do anything which serves his interests. He can at least defraud his customers, hoard wealth, indulge in deception, and dilly-dally in the performance of his duties.

Bani Umayyah chose these things for themselves as they accorded with their nature. It was just as Bani Hashim chose purity of nature, honesty and chastity for themselves as they accorded with their nature and disposition. Bani Umayyah were addicted to these abominable acts, because they had been engaged in their habits for long and they had become their second nature. They did not assist the oppressed because this did not bring them any profit and in fact entailed great expenditure. They did not join the said pact (which condemned the oppressors) because this meant involving themselves in trouble.

Umayyah, the ancestor of Bani Umayyah was not as noble-minded and chaste as Hashim so he could not desist from molesting gentle women. When a dispute took place between Abdul Muttalib, the grandfather of Ali and Harb son of Umayyah, the grandfather of Mu`awiya, they referred the matter to Nafeel bin Adi. Nafeel decided the matter in favour of Abdul Muttalib and praised him. Addressing Harb he also recited a verse wherein he drew a complete picture of Umayyah and Hashim. The verse is as follows: "Your father was an adulterer and his father was chaste. He (Abdul Muttalib) compelled the army of Abraha to go back from Mecca".

In this verse Nafeel referred to the event of Abraha who, mounted on an elephant and accompanied by a large army, had come to demolish the Ka`abah. He also denounced the vices of Umayyah, the father of Harb and the ancestor of Bani Umayyah, who had earned an ill fame in the matter of women. Once, owing to this evil habit of his, he escaped death. He outraged the modesty of a woman belonging to the tribe of Zohra. The people of that tribe attacked him with swords but the injury sustained by him was not very effective. Many surprising stories have been narrated about his voluptuousness.

When Muhammad, the distinguished son of the Hashimite Family was appointed to the prophetic mission he met opposition from most of the people. However, foremost among his opponents was Abu Sufyan, who was at that time the chief of the Umayyah Family. He instigated all the polytheists against him. He was the central figure in all the conspiracies and the mobilization of forces against the Prophet. It was he who invented different kinds of torture for the Prophet and his companions and supporters.

If Abu Sufyan's opposition to the Prophet had been on account of religious faith and if he had done all

that he could defend his old principles and beliefs, there could be some justification for it, because when one sincerely believes in something, whether it be right or wrong, he is justified in defending his belief. However, that was not the case with Abu Sufyan. He never considered himself justified in opposing the Prophet nor did he make any such claim with his tongue. His opposition to the Prophet was not on account of any religious sentiments. What he really wanted was that the predominance and authority of Bani Umayyah should not be affected – the same predominance and authority which was based on monopolizing trade, profiteering, personal interests and enslaving the weak. He decided to oppose the Prophet when he saw that the power and authority of his family which had already been weakened and become shaky was going to be destroyed by the Prophet.

On account of his profiteering nature, which it will be right to call Umayyad nature, Abu Sufyan did not believe in Islam sincerely even after he had embraced it. He always weighed it in the scale of wealth and power and thought that Islam was nothing except that authority had been transferred from Bani Umayyah to Bani Hashim. He could not appreciate the character of the Prophet and his companions and the sacrifices made by them, and had never even thought of the human values for the promotion of which the Prophet had come in this world.

When at the time of the conquest of Mecca he saw a large army consisting of the devotees of the Prophet he said to Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet: “O Abul Fazal! Your nephew has acquired a very great kingdom”. He uttered these words because he could not even imagine the sublime objects and the spiritual teachings for which the Prophet had come. It was those very sublime objects and spiritual teachings which Bani Hashim had understood very well and in propagating them they even sacrificed their lives.

After the conquest of Mecca the Family of Abu Sufyan did embrace Islam but it was a very bitter pill for them to swallow. In the eyes of Abu Sufyan and his wife Hind, Islam meant their own humiliation. For a long time after embracing Islam Abu Sufyan continued considering the predominance of this religion as his personal defeat. He did not consider the success of Islam to be the result of its being a true faith. He thought that it was due to the weakness of his own people.

One day he glanced at the Prophet in the masjid like a perplexed man and said within himself: “O that I could know on what account Muhammad has gained victory over me”. The Prophet perceived the meaning of Abu Sufyan's look. He touched his shoulder with his hand and said: “O Abu Sufyan! It has been on account of God that I have gained victory over you”.

The Prophet tried to console Abu Sufyan before the conquest of Mecca as well as thereafter. Before the conquest of Mecca he married his daughter Umm Habibah, and after Mecca was conquered he declared his house to be a place of refuge by saying that whoever entered his house would remain unmolested. The Prophet placed his name at the top of *'muallefatul-qulub'* (those persons who were given a larger share of the booty as compared with other Muslims, so that they might be consoled and the hatred which they entertained in their hearts for Islam might vanish) and granted him many concessions.

In spite of all this the Muslims did not rely upon him. They were careful in dealing with him and refrained from associating with him. Abu Sufyan was worried on this account and wished that the Muslims might have a soft corner for him and his family in their hearts. He, therefore, requested the Prophet to appoint Mu`awiya as his scribe. When the Prophet breathed his last and differences arose about the caliphate between the Muhajirs and the Ansar and later between the Muhajirs themselves, Abu Sufyan considered it a good opportunity to exploit these differences and acquire the chiefship of Quraysh himself. He thought that after this achievement it would not be difficult for him to become the head of the entire Muslim nation. He, therefore, approached Abbas and Ali instigating them to oppose the caliph by assuring them of his own support. He said: "O Ali and O Abbas! How has the caliphate been assumed by a family (i.e. the Family of Abu Bakr) which is the meanest as well as small in number? I swear by God that if I so desire I can fill the streets of Madina with horsemen and foot-soldiers".

Abu Sufyan had not realized that he was talking to that Ali who would not be reluctant to give away the entire world to comply with one true order, and who was not unaware of the fact that his (i.e. Abu Sufyan's) annoyance was not on account of Bani Hashim having been deprived of the caliphate, because if it had remained with Bani Hashim he would have been annoyed all the more, and might have made his family, his tribe, and the entire world, against them.

Ali reproached Abu Sufyan and said to him! "O Abu Sufyan! The believers are the well-wishers of one another and as regards the hypocrites they are deceitful and insincere, although their houses are adjoined and their bodies are connected with one another".

Abu Sufyan belonged to the aristocratic class – the class which considers itself to be superior to others and the common people to be its slaves. He looked at Islam from this point of view. According to him the prophet's invitation to Islam was only a means of attaining to authority and power. According to him there was no difference between the principles and fundamentals of Islam and the idols, and both of them were sources of profit. He considered the principles of Islam to be a source of income for the founders of that religion in the same way in which the idols were the source of income for the idolatrous priests. He could not think on any line except that the people were to obey their elders and chiefs – whether they be the priests of the Ka`abah or the dignitaries of Islam.

According to Abu Sufyan the only difference between Islam and idolatry was that Islam was more profitable and in it there was a greater possibility of the people belonging to the lower class submitting to the nobility and the aristocratic class. In case, however, the common people were not submissive to the aristocrats in Islam this system, according to him, was worthless and deserved to be replaced by a more useful and profitable one.

When after Abu Bakr and Umar the caliphate was assumed by Uthman who was an Umayyad, Abu Sufyan thought that the power and authority which belonged to Bani Umayyah previously had returned to them. The grudge and rancour which he had in his heart for Hamzah made him go to his grave. He kicked the grave of Hamzah with his foot and said; "O Hamzah! Rise and see that the rulership for which

we had been fighting with each other has once again returned to our family”. The bitterness and animosity which this sentence contains is self-evident. This is how he expressed his sentiments.

So long as the caliphate remained with Abu Bakr and Umar, Bani Umayyah could not disclose what was hidden in their hearts and the plan according to which they had made a show of the embracement of Islam viz. that as soon as they got an opportunity they would convert the Islamic government into a kingdom. They got this opportunity when Uthman attained to the caliphate.

Nobody can believe that Bani Umayyah were aware of the true concept of caliphate. According to their viewpoint there was no difference between caliphate and kingship and they could not visualize the good points of Islamic caliphate. Their faith in Islam was extremely superficial and they had embraced it reluctantly. Their party-spirit of the age of ignorance instigated them to readopt the ways and practices of that age. They could not forget that the prophet did not belong to their family but was a member of Bani Hashim and they had always been inimical to that family. They were, therefore, looking for an opportunity to grab the rulership.

The caliphate of Uthman opened the way for the fulfilment of their desires. As soon as he became caliph all the Umayyads gathered round him and secluded him from the public. None could, therefore, see him and acquaint him with his problems. The Islamic government now became the Umayyad government. Only Bani Umayyah could benefit from it. It was only Bani Umayyah and their friends who could aspire to become governors and to hold other key posts.

Marwan son of Hakam headed them. He was the first person who instigated the Muslims against the Muslims and incited the people to rise against the caliph. He was the first person who declared that kingship was better than caliphate, and only Bani Umayyah were entitled to become kings. He compelled Uthman to dismiss the governors who were holding offices since the days of Abu Bakr and Umar and to replace them by the Umayyads. Wealth and sovereignty became the exclusive property of Bani Umayyah. None else could hope to benefit from it or to hold property and position.

We shall mention in the next chapter how vicious and ill-natured Marwan was, what malpractices he committed when he was in power, and how many innocent persons he slaughtered to satisfy his personal desires. It was the same Marwan bin Hakam who had suggested to the governor of Madina to kill Imam Husayn and had reproached him for not complying with his wishes when he (the governor) failed to take that heinous step.

Marwan coveted power, sovereignty and luxuries, just as his ancestors had coveted them during the age of ignorance, and was keen that even if he did not possess authority himself it should remain with any other Umayyad, but should not go out of their family. The methods which he adopted to acquire authority and rulership go to show that he did not possess even one quality which might create least love for him in the hearts of the people.

1. Shamsu'l Ulema Shibli No`mani writes thus in the twelfth volume of his book entitled Seerat al-Nabi. “He had vowed that

if he saw his ten sons fully grown up he would slaughter one of them in the path of God. The Almighty God granted this wish of his. He then brought all his sons in the Ka`abah and asked the worshipper to draw lots. It so happened that the lot fell upon Abdullah. He then proceeded along with Abdullah to the place of sacrifice. Abdullah's sisters who were present began to cry and suggested that ten camels might be sacrificed instead of Abdullah.

Abdul Muttalib asked the worshipper to draw lots to find out whether the lot fell on Abdullah or on the camels. By chance the lot fell on Abdullah. Abdul Muttalib increased the number of the camels to twenty but the lot again fell on Abdullah. He continued to increase the number of the camels and the lot fell on them only when their number reached one hundred.

Abdul Muttalib then slaughtered one hundred camels and the life of Abdullah was saved. Historians say that Abdul Muttalib was not satisfied even when the lot fell on the camels and said: "I swear by God that I shall not agree (to one hundred camels being slaughtered instead of Abdullah) unless the lots are drawn thrice and every time they fall on the camels". This was done and Abdul Muttalib was satisfied only when the lot fell on the camels thrice.

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