

Intellectual Decadence

Besides this atmosphere of horror, another feature of this era was intellectual decadence of the people throughout the Islamic world. This intellectual depravity stemmed from the neglect of the religious teachings during the preceding two decades.

Since the religious teachings, exegesis of the holy Quran, and traditions of the Prophet (S) had been strictly forbidden between 40 and 60 H., the pillars of the people's faith had been weakened seriously. When we study the conditions of those days among the lines of the books and traditions, this issue becomes quite transparent.

Of course, the clerics, religious scholars, exegetes, transmitters of tradition, and pious people were there, but the public was inflicted with faithlessness, indolence and weakness. The situation had so aggravated that even some staff of the Caliphate system dared to question the issue of Prophethood!

A mean, dirty stooge of the Umayyad, Khalid ibn Abdullah Qasri has been quoted as saying: "Caliphate is superior to the Prophethood." In order to support his argument, he gave the following reason: "When you appoint someone as your representative in your family, is he closer to you, or someone whom you send as a messenger to take a message for you?"

"Apparently," he argued, "the one whom you appoint as your representative in your home." "Hence," he would conclude, "the Caliph of God [he would not say the Caliph of the Prophet] is superior to the messenger of God!"

This statement was made by Khalid ibn Qasri; probably others subscribed to his viewpoint. I have noticed that in the poems composed during the Umayyad and Abbasside eras, from Abdul Malik onward, the concept of Khalifatullah (the caliph or representative of God) has been so frequently repeated that one forgets that the Caliph was the Caliph of the Prophet as well.

This trend continued until the Abbasside era. This concept was used in a poem of Bashir ibn Bard who satirized Ya'qub ibn Dawud and Mansur: "O people, your caliphate has been destroyed; try to find the Caliph of God between wood and skin."^{[1](#)}

Even when he wanted to satirize the Caliph, he would say the Caliph of God! The renowned poets of this period, like Jarir, Farazdaq, Nasib and others, used to call the ruler, "the Caliph of God" in the eulogies they composed in the praise of the caliph! This example demonstrates the feebleness of people's faith in the foundations of religion.

The people's morality was not in a good shape either. When I was studying a book of Aghani Abu-I-Faraj, I came across a fact, that is, from 80s H. until five or six decades later, the greatest singers, musicians, and revelers came from Medina or Mecca. Whenever the Caliph in Damascus felt like organizing a party, renowned singers and entertainers would be sent to him from Medina. Moreover, the worst satirists and vulgar poets were raised in Mecca and Medina.

The site of the Divine Revelation and the birthplace of Islam had been turned into a center of licentiousness and corruption. It is necessary to have knowledge of these facts about Mecca and Medina. Unfortunately, there is no information about these issues in the lives of caliphs in the existing history books.

There was a poet in Mecca, Umar ibn Abi Rabi'a, who, despite having attained the apogee of poetic mastery, was extremely frank and unabashed in his poems. His account and that of some other poets constitute a shameful chapter in the tragic history of this period. Even Tawaaf (circumambulation around holy Ka'bah), pelting stones at the Satanic Pillars (Ramy al-Jamarat) and other holy sites were subject to their corruption and licentiousness. One of his couplets in the book "Mughni" is as follows:

"When I was pelting stones at Satan in Rami al-Jamarat Site, suddenly I saw her neck, chest and her hands on which she had applied henna. I was so attracted to her that I do not know whether I pelted seven stones or eight."

This couplet explains the prevailing conditions of the era. An eyewitness narrates his observations in Medina after the death of Umar Ibn Abi Rabi'a: when Umar Ibn Abi Rabi'a passed away, a public mourning was announced on his death and the people were weeping in the streets of Medina(!) In every corner, the youth would express sorrow on his death. I saw a sweeper who was weeping while proceeding her way until she reached a group of the youth. They asked her: why are you crying? She said, because of the loss of this man(!)

One of them said: Do not worry, there is another poet in Mecca, namely, Harith Ibn Khalid Makhzumi, who composes similar poems to those of Umar Ibn Abi Rabi'a. He recited one of his poems. Upon hearing his poem, the sweeper wiped out her tears, saying: thanks be to Allah Who has not left His sanctuary vacant!

This reflects the ethical condition of the people in Medina. There are several accounts of the parties held not only by the high and low classes, but also by the masses in Medina. People like Ash'ab, a greedy, miserable, beggar, who is at the same time a poet and a clown, the ordinary people, sons of luminaries of Quraish, and even the descendents of the Bani Hashem – I would not mention their names – including

men and women were among these very people who were deeply involved in licentiousness.

Harith ibn Khalid, the Emir of Mecca, had a soft corner for Ayisha b. Talha. One day Ayesha was performing circumambulation around the House of God. It was the time of "Azan" or "Call to Prayers". She passed a message to the emir, requesting the postponement of the Call to Prayers in order to complete her circumambulation. Harith complied with her request, but she was criticized by the people who castigated him for postponing the Call to Prayers to appease a women. He replied: Swear by God, even if her circumambulation had prolonged until the morning prayers, I would have stopped the Call to Prayers (!)

[1.](#) Al-Aghani, Vol. 3, P. 243

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