

Chapter 3: Condition of Makkah

After Yasir and Sumayya were married, Allah blessed them with a son, whom they named ‘Ammar.

‘Ammar was passing his days of boyhood and was gradually growing up in advance of his years. The manner of the growth and development of this boy was such that it might be said that he was not allowing the passage of time to transfer him from one stage to the next one and to change him from one form to another.

The boy reached the stage of manhood and when he stepped into the twentieth year of his age the signs of dignity and righteousness could be observed in him and he became well known for his good behaviour towards his parents as well as other people. The people were pleased with him and he also overlooked the bad behaviour of others.

‘Ammar spent his entire time in silence. He was always reflecting and did not pay any heed to things which were alluring for the elders and slaves of Makkah.

‘Ammar avoided the pomp and pelf in which the wealthy persons of that time had fallen and had nothing to do with them.

The superficial observers, who saw ‘Ammar silent, thought that his silence was that of a weak and helpless stranger, who was spending his days under the protection of a benevolent host, and was enjoying comfort and favours and, therefore, avoided interference with the affairs of the people and did not converse with them. However, those who had better contacts with him knew that this silence had a much deeper root, because he as well as other thoughtful, clear-sighted and noble minded persons had become very pessimistic on account of idol worship and vain and futile beliefs and old and rotten customs of the Arabs, but could not criticize them on account of fear for their lives. This was especially the case with a shelter less person like ‘Ammar, whose stay in Makkah was due to his father having become an ally of Abu Huzayfa and his entire strength was limited to this that he was leading his life

under the protection of the chief of Bani Makhzum. He and others were, therefore, obliged, in spite of all their sentiments, to keep their mouths shut.

Notwithstanding this, however, whenever 'Ammar broke his silence he severely criticized the evil deeds and unbecoming conduct of most of the aristocrats of Makkah who were immersed in corruption and prodigality and did not think of anything other than sensuality and profiteering; he said either to himself or to his father: "I am afraid that the evil deeds and corrupt conduct of these greedy and voluptuous persons, who are doing injustice to themselves as well as to the inhabitants of this city, may become the cause of the comfort and tranquillity of this city being converted into perplexity and fear and the blessings available to the citizens being replaced by calamity and affliction."

One day 'Ammar said to his father: "Are these mad men not afraid of the consequences of their indecent heresies? Do they not fear that others may snatch this House (Ka'ba) and the ruler ship of this region from them, or discontinue their connections and trade with them, and consequently they may die of hunger and helplessness?" He also said: "I have never seen any people more senseless and foolish than these. This foolishness and impudence of theirs will destroy their lives and take away their comfort and tranquillity from them. These unwise aristocrats and elders do not know the dreadful consequences of their evil conduct and do not keep in view that their master ship and comfortable life is owing to their being the servants of the Ka'ba. And when people who come for the pilgrimage of this House observe their evil deeds and ugly manners, they will certainly deprive them of this sacred House. Then these ignorant and oblivious aristocrats must die in extreme affliction. I have never seen such foolish people as these, who are creating misfortunes for themselves".

Yasir said: "My son! You have transgressed the limits and are saying things which are beyond your age and position. Has anybody else taught you these things or you are saying them of yourself? "

'Ammar replied: "None has said to me anything on the subject. On the other hand it is my farsighted eye which can see the consequences even now, and it is my hearing ear which can hear the cries of the outburst and rebellion of the oppressed people of Makkah".

His father Yasir said: "My son! I also know what you know. And you and I are not the only persons who are grieved on account of this state of affairs but I know many slaves and allies of Quraysh and even persons belonging to noble families who think as you do. However, it's expedient that in the present circumstances you should not say anything on the subject, because otherwise your death is certain. And you should also know that whatever you say will not be of much consequence because this House has a Master, Who protects it and will keep every harm and detriment away from it. My son! You were not in the world on "the Day of the Elephant". I was a boy at that time and am one of those persons who saw that incident with their own eyes, and I still remember the wonderful things about that day like others.

I saw that Abdul Muttalib bin Hashim, the chief of Quraysh was instructing the people not to leave Makkah. Till that day neither Abdul Muttalib nor other members of the tribe of Quraysh had ever to face such a large and organized army.

I could see that Abdul Muttalib was not at all worried. He was consoling and comforting others and was assuring them that Makkah would be victorious without any fighting or bloodshed. And I do not hide the fact that, like all others, I was hopeless and was doubtful that the promises made by Abdul Muttalib would come to be true.

Now you should also keep this thing in mind that the sons of Abdul Muttalib are interested in the sanctity of the House and the peace of the city and even the smallest amongst their children can suppress these fools and prove their mistakes and stupidity. In the circumstances you should leave this task to them or to one of them so that they may explain and clarify the matter and openly spread this thinking among the people. And as and when they take steps in this behalf there will be none in Makkah who may be in a position to oppose them!

I must also tell you that if they take a decision in this behalf and rise to correct these fools, the purposes which both of us have in view will be achieved. And, in any case, if one of them takes steps in this behalf he will face no molestation, whether his action involves pains and hardship or not, because the descendants of Abdul Muttalib are obeyed and respected by the people. However, persons like you and me possess neither authority nor influence. Hence, at present it is necessary for us to be patient and forbearing, because if we take any action these misguided persons will peel our skins like those of the sheep and none will come to our help.

O my son! Over and above these things I must also tell you that it will be very good that they may remove our skins provided this is beneficial to the people, and equity and justice is established. In that case our blood will not be wasted; rather it will fetch more blood money. In case, however, we speak about it now among the people we shall not gain anything except insult and ridicule, and even if we do something we will be rewarded only by rebuke, reproach and taunts.

My son! Don't you know that in the current system and the present regime discussion about the public matters is the monopoly of the powerful oppressors and wealthy persons, and is restricted to the class of chiefs, leaders and aristocrats, and interference in such matters by the deprived and helpless allies like us is not permissible.

In the end I have to advise you to have faith in the Lord of this House and also to repose confidence in those few persons, who belong to the family of Hashim, because they are the best persons in this land, and a bright future await them".

‘Ammar said: "I don't disobey your orders and I find that Bani Hashim believe in different deities and have a commendable way of life, and other Quraysh have neither equalled them so far nor will be their peers in future.

The God of Abdul Muttalib is not a forged and useless god. He is the God whose help is sought by all His slaves and He also helps them. You must remember what I told you about "Abraha" and his army. Small birds by the Command of Allah annihilated his big army which was mounted on elephants. All these are the signs of Allah.

The god of other people whom they have manufactured themselves is a god which is senseless, deaf and dumb and cannot even take care of himself. However, the God of Abdul Muttalib is so great that it is necessary to show humility before Him and not that He should be picked up with one's hand and moved from place to place". ‘Ammar further said: "When I say as to why they don't indicate Him, I don't mean that they should locate his place or should transfer him from place to place. What I mean is this: "Why don't they proclaim the Greatness, Strength and other Attributes of their Lord before the people?"

Yasir said: "My son! Every work has an appropriate time and every step should be taken in a proper and favourable atmosphere. At present, when these superstitious beliefs, ugly habits, futile customs and meaningless traditions rule the Hijaz, it is not possible to invite the people openly to monotheism and supposing that such an invitation is extended to them, it will certainly not produce any fruitful result.

I am aware that in order to promote his object Abdul Muttalib has personally taken some useful and moral elementary steps. And how is it possible for one who believes in Allah, the Great Lord to undertake reformation unless he delivers the people from the burden of ridiculous stories, enslavement to the ugly and indecent habit of egotism and the magic of superstitions and other unwholesome and futile traditions to which they have become habituated?

You yourself know that these corrupt thinking and mental contaminations have entwined their roots in such a way that it is not possible to eradicate them soon, and they can be got rid of only gradually. And it may be hoped that Abdul Muttalib will be able to achieve his object at the appropriate time by means of the decent regulations and traditions which he has introduced with the name of 'Hanifa'. Its principles are based on the religion of his forefather Prophet Ibrahim and that he will be able to take more effective steps later.

Furthermore, besides carrying out religious reformation by means of a revolutionary action he also resorted to welfare work in another form by digging the well of Zamzam in order to provide more water to the people.

Of course, Abdul Muttalib destroyed the respect of the idols by preventing the slaughtering of camels

before two idols named 'Asafa' and 'Nai'la' and also became victorious over the superstitions and vain and futile traditions. He also located and dug the well of Zamzam and placed abundant water at the disposal of the people and was recognized to be an example of endeavour and action on this account as well.

In any case all these actions became the cause of the creation of a breach in the strong wall of traditions and superstitions which had surrounded the people of the Hijaz for many years.

Abdul Muttalib abolished many superstitions; one after the other, during the campaign initiated by him and commenced the reformation with his relatives, kinsmen and friends. Now you should rest assured that as soon as he finds an opportunity he will clear and level the path which he has opened.”

‘Ammar said: "O father! Why does Allah not help Abdul Muttalib and why does He not send an army for his assistance just as he had sent one day the birds to destroy the army of Abraha? And why does He act like a creditor who lends money to a debtor in instalments and not in a lump sum?"

Yasir replied: "My son! I cannot give an exact answer to this question at present. However, I know that the God of Abdul Muttalib, while possessing immense power, is Independent, Kind and Beneficent, and it is immaterial for Him whether people worship Him or not, whether they be believers or unbelievers and whether they be lucky or unlucky. He only desires happiness and welfare of the people and He does not provide it to them by force. Hence, it is the duty of the people to distinguish between the path and the pit.

The God of Abdul Muttalib is not only kind to His friends, but is also considerate to His enemies, because He treats the believers as well as the unbelievers to be His slaves. He is not jealous and narrow-minded like us.

My son! At present all the inhabitants of the world, excepting a few who can be counted on fingers, are unbelievers. In the circumstances if He wishes to destroy, on account of His wrath, this majority which is almost the total, what will be the use of the laws and regulations?

My son! The God of Abdul Muttalib distinguished between the right and the wrong path to the people and then leaves them free to choose the way they like. If they choose the path of prosperity they will make themselves happy and if they tread the path of adversity the harm will accrue to them and the God of Abdul Muttalib will not gain anything or sustain any loss".

‘Ammar said: "Father! What a deep impression your words make on my heart! I give place to these eloquent words in my heart like wholesome water! My father! You are not a human being but an angel who is planting its beautiful plumage on me, so that I may fly to the celestial world. Now I have to ask you only one question'.

Yasir said: "I shall give you a reply if I can".

'Ammar said: "I admit that Bani Hashim are noble, magnanimous, honourable and intelligent. However, Bani Makhzum, too, are your allies. Then why is it that you accord more respect to the people of Bani Hashim?"

Yasir replied: "If we bring in sentiments and bias then what you say will be quite true. However, I always keep facts and reality in view and don't attach any importance to bias and sentiments. It is true that difference exists between these two groups and the same difference exists between the God of Abdul Muttalib and their gods.

My son! If you also wish to differ from me about this reality I shall leave you, and the greatest service which I can render to you is that I should advise you to associate with me in this belief".

This conversation which took place between the father and the son was one of the topics which these two persons used to discuss in the morning. In those days the mornings of the Qurayshites commenced with feasting and drinking, because usually they sat in the morning in a corner in the form of a group and engaged themselves in storytelling and amusements. However, at times Yasir absented himself from the gatherings of Bani Makhzum and instead of participating in their conversation became busy in talking with his son whose words almost enchanted him, and discussed matters with him and gave him instruction.

By dint of the knowledge, experience and wisdom which he had acquired in Yemen, Yasir possessed the capability to become the teacher of his son.

In any case the above conversation between the father and the son is a specimen of the morning talks which they had with each other.

On that very day a cry was heard from Mount Abu Qubays which interrupted the conversation between the father and the son. This cry was heard by all, but had a special impact on this father and son, so much so that their bodies¹ began to tremble.

The crier was saying with great enthusiasm and forces to seek justice: "O people of Makkah! Is it possible that you may come to the help of a person whose merchandise, has been seized? The oppressed person is one who is away from his tribe and kinsfolk and is presently in the city of Makkah, alone in the state of ehram (ritual act at the time of pilgrimage) and the dust which had settled on his ehram (dress) has not yet been removed from his garments.

Can you support such a person? O Children of Fahr!¹ (i.e. O brave men of the family of Bani Hashim!) who are moving between the Stone of Isma'il and the Black Stone! Is there anyone amongst you who may take back the property of a person in ehram who has come to Makkah to perform Umra pilgrimage, from such and such person belonging to the family of Bani Sahm who has taken the merchandise and hidden himself without having made payment, or should the owner of the property lose all hope ? "

'Ammar said: "Father! Have you seen that, as pointed out by me, the folly of these people has become evident? And do you hear that cry of complaint and injustice is echoing from the mountain?"

Yasir said: "Dear son! I have no doubt that the period of your boyhood has given the good tidings of your intelligence and insight. However, you should keep in mind the advice which I gave you in the beginning of our conversation. Now get up, go and find out what the matter is. Who has raised the voice of complaint? And also ascertain whether a favourable reply has been given by the people of Makkah to the painful cry of the complainant".

When 'Ammar returned he said to his father: "Whatever you told me previously about the merit and worthiness of Bani Hashim was correct. The complainant who raised his voice was a man from Zubayd who had brought some valuable merchandise to this city. Abu Amr al'As wa'il al Sahmi purchased some merchandise from him and took it to his house but did not pay the price and hid himself in his house.

The man from Zubayd demanded the price of the property but the purchaser declined to pay it and also failed to return the property although the owner agreed to its being returned. At last the owner of the property sought refuge with the family of Bani Sahm and requested them to help him but instead of helping him they maltreated him, and turned him away. Then he contacted the groups of Quraysh and sought their assistance but they also failed to help him. He was, therefore, compelled to go at the top of the mountain and seek the help of all the people of Makkah with a loud voice for the restoration of his right".

'Ammar added: "I made my best efforts to find out to what effect this cry for justice had in this sacred sanctuary and the land of peace and tranquillity, and I learnt it for certain that besides a few persons who enjoy the distinction of possessing dignity and faith, his beseeching didn't make any impression on other groups.

Yasir said: "Perhaps by those 'few persons' you mean the assembly of Zubayr bin Abdul Muttalib".

'Ammar said: "Yes, father! How well you have identified them! The oppressed person went from one door to another to seek some supporters who might put an end to this anarchy. And it is possible that this much oppressed complainant may prove to be the revolutionary person and the appointed hour may have arrived".

Yasir said: "I don't think so. However, it is possible that this event may be one of the factors of revolution and the harbinger of reformation. Why are you in so much hurry? Every happening has its particular time".

The efforts of Zubayr were fruitful, because a group of persons belonging to the families of Bani Hashim, Bani Asad, Bani Zohra and Bani Taym gathered in the house of Abdullah bin Jud 'an Taymi and "the Truthful and Honest one" (the Prophet) also joined them, and all of them swore that they would support the oppressed person and take back his right. They also undertook to ensure that there after all persons in Makkah whether kinsmen or strangers and whether freemen or slaves should remain immune from molestation and none should oppress them. Zubayr gave the name of 'Hilful Fuzul' (the covenant of brave persons) to his party.

The first result of the activity of this party was the vindication of the right of the oppressed 'Zubaydi' from the Pharaoh of Bani Sahn.

'Ammar came to his father once again and related another incident to him in these words: "Today a tradesman belonging to the tribe of Biriq came to the bazaar and purchased some commodity from Abi bin Khalaf. As you are aware Abi is an ill-humoured and deceitful person. For this reason this transaction also resulted in conflict and contention. The Barqi tradesman, therefore, approached the party named 'Hilful Fuzul'.

Zubayr said to the Barqi tradesman: "Go and tell Abi that you have complained to us and, in case he fails to pay what is due to you, come back and let us know, so that we may take necessary steps in the matter".

The Barqi tradesman informed Abi about the matter and he paid his right to him without any delay.

On another day 'Ammar related a new incident to his father and said: "A tradesman belonging to the tribe of Khathma'i came to Makkah accompanied by his daughter named 'Qatool' who was a very beautiful girl and perhaps the most beautiful girl of her time.

As soon as Nabiyya bin Hajjaj caught sight of the girl, he lost his heart to her and abducted her. In spite of his best efforts the father of the girl could not rescue her from the clutches of this nasty man. Consequently he began exploring ways and means to recover his daughter, and sought help from everyone but without any result. At last he approached 'Hilful Fuzul'.

His contact with 'Hilful Fuzul' became the cause of the deliverance of his daughter, because Zubayr, accompanied by some other brave men who were the members of the covenant went to Nabiyya along

with the father of the girl and brought her out of his house. This shameless person said to them: "Let her be with me tonight only". However, they replied: 'May Allah blacken your face! How impudent and shameless you are! Give up the girl and surrender her to her father at once otherwise.'

Nabiyya, who had been overawed by the brave persons of the covenant, reluctantly surrendered the girl to her father, and thus the stain of shame was washed off the Makkans.

Yasir told his son: "Before 'Hilful Fuzul' i.e. before the formation of the association of these brave persons Abdul Muttalib used to solve such problems in this manner: One day Harb bin Umayya sent some men to kill an unprotected wealthy person. The wealthy man was killed and Harb appropriated his property. However, when the news reached Abdul Muttalib and the heirs of the murdered person complained to him he, in the capacity of the chief and leader of Quraysh, took back the property from Harb and made it over to the heirs of the deceased. He also realized blood money from Harb in the shape of one hundred camels".

'Ammar brought such news for his father every day, notwithstanding the fact that Yasir had heard and was hearing much such news, neither 'Ammar was tired of bringing the news to his father, nor did his father get tired of hearing them.

As and when Yasir heard such news from 'Ammar he encouraged him, added new points for his instructor and urged him to have reformative objects in mind. Incidentally, however, he advised him not to disclose these matters and not to speak about them everywhere.

At the end of every story 'Ammar used to say to his father: "O father! I feel very happy on account of your correct knowledge and information about Bani Hashim being keen to introduce reforms as well as about their chastity and nobleness. How well you have recognized this honourable family".

1. Fahr was the tenth ancestor of the Holy Prophet.

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