

Chapter 5: ‘Ammar and Abu Jahl

‘Ammar Yasir was busy offering his prayers in his house when suddenly some one knocked at the door. The person who knocked at the door was a man of short stature with a flat nose and a darkish swarthy complexion.

‘Ammar's mother went to the door of the house, welcomed the visitor and said: "What a good thing it is that Abu Usama, the freed slave, son and friend of the Holy Prophet (S) has come to see us! He has brought blessings and bliss, and has perfumed our house with the fragrance of the breaths of Prophethood".

The mother of ‘Ammar was saying these words and was guiding Zayd bin Harith to the place of worship of ‘Ammar. She made the guest enter the house and kept standing till he sat down in a corner of the room. Then she began conversing with him so that ‘Ammar might, in the meantime, finish the Nafela (recommended prayers) of his noon prayers.

The weather was cool and the atmosphere was bright. As soon as ‘Ammar finished his prayers he ran towards Zayd and welcomed him and they embraced each other. ‘Ammar had not yet occupied his seat when Zayd began talking and said: 'O Abul Yaqzan! Do you feel inclined that we should go out and peep into the gatherings of Quraysh?"

‘Ammar said: "Why shouldn't we go to Darul Islam so that during the remaining time we may benefit from the words of the Holy Prophet (S) and offer afternoon prayers along with him?"

Zayd said: "I am just coming from Darul Islam and have good news for you from Abul Qasim (the Prophet). And now that I have come here I wish that we should go to the "House" and present ourselves before the Holy Prophet (S) after getting correct information about the meeting of Quraysh."

‘Ammar said: "Excellent indeed! What is the good news? Has anyone embraced Islam? What should I

say? I don't know why Allah is so patient with these people.”

Zayd said: "We received the news in Darul Islam that Abu 'Ammara delivered a blow to Abu Jahl in public so that the earth became coloured with his blood. He also warned him that if he maltreated the Prophet again, he would give the same treatment in return to him; and declared before Quraysh that from today he has embraced Islam.”

'Ammar, who was extremely happy on hearing this news, asked: "Has Hamza done so? By Allah I expected this very thing from the 'unique brave man of Arabia' and hoped that he would not tolerate the ignorance of Abu Jahl any longer. This malicious man has been inimical towards the Holy Prophet (S) for years and has taken liberties which render him liable to death punishment.”

Zayd said: "It is a matter of regret that these refractory persons still exercise authority over Makkah and the Prophet (S) doesn't permit that we should contend with them, because he has been ordered that as far as possible he should not go beyond the limits of peace and it is an undeniable fact that violence is not permissible in this religion except when it ensures peace. Otherwise the easiest thing possible would have been that one of us should have killed Abu Jahl and then might have been killed himself.”

'Ammar said; "Let us go to the House. Now that Hamza has embraced Islam and given a blow to Abu Jahl, our condition is different from the previous one. At present the fire of war is blazing. Very good! O Abu Usama! Tell me how Hamza hit Abu Jahl and where he hit him".

Zayd said; "According to our information when Hamza returned from hunting today a slave girl of Abdullah bin Jud'an saw him and reproached him for spending his time hunting in the mountains of Makkah while his nephew was treated with insolence. Hamza asked her as to who had insulted Muhammad. Thereupon she related to him the story of Abu Jahl having molested and insulted Muhammad and said; "Abu Jahl instigated some silly and unwise persons and they were rude and insolent to Muhammad.”

"As soon as Hamza became aware of this incident he went to the Ka'ba and performed 'tawaf' (circumambulation) as usual. After having performed 'tawaf' he went up to Abu Jahl who was sitting in the circle of Bani Makhzum and said to him: "Do you abuse Muhammad and that also when I am his follower and have embraced his religion?' Having said this he struck on his head a bow which he was holding in his hand.”

'Ammar asked: "Then what happened to him?' And what did Abu Jahl do then? Besides this please let me know what effect this action of Hamza had on the kinsfolk and relatives of Abu Jahl. Did they tolerate it or showed some reaction?"

Zayd said: "Some persons belonging to Bani Makhzum got infuriated against Hamza and stood up to take revenge on him but Abu Jahl acted wisely and asked them to resume their seats. It is evident that when the 'unique brave man of Arabia' rises against Abu Jahl and fights openly, he (Abu Jahl) is not in a position to do anything and must remain calm. Is he not aware that to resist Hamza or to fight against him would mean his (Abu Jahl's) annihilation? And it would also create differences among Quraysh which would become the cause of their destruction.

Anyhow there is no doubt about the fact that with the declaration of war by Hamza the hands of Islam are now free and its arms have gained strength. The polytheists have been overawed by this action and acknowledge this one blow to be as good as one thousand blows. It is now time that we should go and find out what impression this act has made on the people. I am sure that this act must have made a deep impression on them and the news must have become a topic of conversation.

I think all the people of Makkah have been shocked by this news and consider this unprecedented event to be very important. As regards the Muslims I imagine that they treat this incident to be very significant for the victory of Islam and have become confident that all the dignity of polytheism has been smashed. And in their own turn the polytheists also consider it to be their defeat at the hands of the Muslims which has confirmed the victory of the Muslims. At the same time I think that both the Muslims and the polytheists agree that this event is a prelude to the strife which has started between the two parties, and two groups.

I swear by Allah that I don't know why these silly persons fail to acknowledge the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet (S) and to express faith in him when Allah has not created anyone who may be more good-natured, kinder and more beneficial to mankind than Muhammad. And I once again swear by Allah that He has not created anyone more becoming and more worthy for guidance towards truth than Muhammad. In case, therefore, these people come to their senses and make their intellect the arbiters and arrive in the world in which we have arrived, they will live comfortably in all respects."

While 'Ammar was holding the hand of Zayd and both of them were going to the 'House' he said to Zayd: "O Abu Usama! May Allah grant you a happy future! Have you any doubt about the intelligence, insight and good under Standing of the elders of Quraysh? By Allah, I don't consider their intelligence and understanding to be inferior to my own and am also sure that the standard of their comprehension is not lower than ours. They perceive the same things in Muhammad which we perceive and recognize him in the same manner in which we do.

They know that he doesn't utter even a word of his own desire and also know that he has been truly appointed by Allah. Furthermore, they are well aware that he removes differences between the black and the white, and similarly the barriers between the rich and the poor, and annuls the limits fixed by the people between the employers and the employees. In his eyes all human beings are equal like the teeth of a comb. All are the descendants of Prophet Adam and Adam was created from clay. None enjoys

superiority over others except on account of piety and no individual is preferable to another except by dint of good deeds, decency and competence.

Abu Jahl and I are like each other, and Bilal and the son of Khalaf, too, are equal to each other, and similarly you and Hamza are peers of each other. All of us are equals and brothers of one another. There is no master and no slave. It is truth which is the master of all and it is truth which elevates one and brings down another according to its own measures and standards! The measures and standards of truth are not based on wealth, inheritance or old and rotten traditions.

They also know what we know and perhaps they know and understand it more and better than you or I. However, a point is involved in it that they fight against the values and concepts of that which you and I believe in and not against the person of Muhammad. If Muhammad confirms and guarantees their privileges and formally recognizes the principle of slavery and serfdom, which is respectable in their eyes and supports their despotism and selfishness, so that they may suck the blood of the people, you should rest assured that not even two persons from amongst them will disagree about the personality of Muhammad and his appointment to the Prophetic mission.

I know that they are traders and their trade is not only confined to carrying merchandise to Syria and Yemen but they also carry one commodity elsewhere and bring back another here. Rather their trade consists of the worship of their gods and they have made this act the means of their business!

I have realized it clearly that actually they have no love or regard for Hobal and other idols which are introduced as enjoying the rank of 'daughters'. On the contrary they jeer and mock at them. The only factor which is at work is that they have made these idols the means of their fraud and deceit. In this manner they befool the masses and preserve and safeguard their own interest and master ship under the protection of the worship of these idols and override the wishes of the people. If at one time it so happens that the presence of these futile and worthless effigies come in conflict with their own selfishness and egotism you will see that they will trample on them.

The fact is that in the guise of the worship of the idols these people worship themselves and their defence of the idols is actually their own defence. I remember that one day Abu Jahl was punishing one of his slaves and was beating him severely. I heard with my own ears that the helpless slave was swearing by Hobal that he was guiltless, and in the meantime requested him in the name of the same idol to spare him. Do you know what reply Abu Jahl gave to him? Abu Jahl said to the helpless slave: "O fool! What is Hobal? Is it anything but an inauspicious slave like you with a broken hand which was purchased by 'Amr bin Lahi, the chief of Khuza'a tribe, from Balqa in Syria and brought and installed here, so that you and the people like you may worship it and treat it to be a god?1

The same Abu Jahl was punishing another slave one day. The poor slave uttered the names of the two

idols called 'Asaf' and 'Na'ila' and requested him in their names.²

Do you know what reply Abu Jahl gave to the helpless slave? He said: "Shut up, you fool! Are these two idols not the metamorphosed forms of an adulterer and an adulteress? Do you wish to put into my brain the absurdities which have taken their place in yours? Do you want me to believe in the things which we have declared to be sacred for you and people like you, and then take an oath in their names? You should know that these gods are a sort of undiscerning and brainless slave girls of ours, and we ourselves have introduced them to be great and placed them over your heads, so that you may thereby recognize our value and worth, and pay similar respect to us. You are not only my slave but the slave of my slave girl as well. And the system and order which governs us is that just as you humiliate yourself before my slave girl and worship her, you should primarily worship me.

If this idol disobeys my orders I shall whip it as I whip you. We have introduced this system and enforced this law as a corrective measure for you. Be off from my presence. If you remind me of such things again I shall take out your soul from your impure body.

Abu Usama! You should know that the symbol and sign of these stubborn people or in other words the perfect manifestation of these devils is Abu Jahl. He and others neither have any faith in these idols nor have any personal grudge against Muhammad. On the contrary it is their selves and souls which are personified in the shapes of these idols and the people also surround these idols without knowing or assessing the real position. And these fleshy idols frighten away the people of Muhammad and his religion of justice, equity and equality!

It is for this reason that they attack him. And so long as they don't give up the habit of self worship, and don't prefer the equity and justice, which Muhammad is endeavouring to establish, they will always remain oppressed, and deprived of their rights.

It is also an undeniable fact that they will not get out this darkness and ignorance, unless we, with Allah's help, deliver them from this turbidity and perversion."

'Ammar's remarks ended here and the two friends jointly entered the masjid. At this moment the gatherings of Quraysh were in an agitated and disturbed condition. Abu Jahl's blood which had been shed on the ground had assumed various forms and had become the talk of the town. The various forms of this incident consisted of humiliation and disgrace coupled with the right of revenge on the part of Quraysh who exercised prudence and care, and on the other side it was connected with resolution and amazement.

With all the contradictions which this condition carried it was like a volcano which might erupt any moment. Abu Jahl, from whose head and face blood was flowing, was accusing Hamza of

highhandedness, oppression and violence, and his refraining from contention and retaliation showed how intelligent and forbearing he was. He had assumed the image of a person who had been wronged and pretended that his supporters would rectify the wrong which had been done to him and would settle his accounts with Hamza.

When the elders of Quraysh who had gathered round Abu Jahl saw ‘Ammar, they broke the silence. The breaking of silence by them meant the eruption of the volcano. At this moment Abu Jahl said to his associates in a loud voice: "Do you know anyone more despicable and more humble than the man who is coming towards us? Ask him whether he has brought Zayd with him to help me, or whether Zayd has selected him from amongst the slaves of Bani Makhzum and brought him so that he may deal me another blow. I swear by god that I never saw such a state of affairs in Makkah. Neither this earth is the earth of Makkah, nor is this sky the sky of Makkah."

The slaves of Abu Jahl ran towards ‘Ammar with the intention of taking him to Abu Jahl. Zayd asked Abu Jahl's slaves: "What does Abu Jahl want from Abul Yaqzin? Tell Abu Jahl that ‘Ammar was busy and cannot attend him. He will come when he is free."

One of the slaves said to Zayd: "You shouldn't interfere with Abu Jahl contacting his ally. Don't you know? That ‘Ammar is an ally of the tribe of Makhzum? I am afraid if you interfere with the connections between ‘Ammar and Abu Jahl you will meet the same fate which Abu Jahl met an hour ago."

Zayd said: "Woe to you! How ignorant you are! Don't you know that all of us (i.e. Muslims) form one unit, and our smallest person is supported by all? All of us are responsible for the act of the smallest person and are as good as one hand. I order you to leave ‘Ammar alone and return to your master."

The slave of Abu Jahl said to Zayd: "Have you come to create trouble? I swear by Lat and Uzza (names of the two idols of the polytheists) that if you don't go away you will see with your own eyes what happens to you, and even your master will not be able to defend you. Leave ‘Ammar to himself, so that he may go to the ally of his family. It is sufficient for Bani Hashim that they have made the head of Abul Hakam bleed."

‘Ammar feared lest the situation should worsen and Zayd should have to face trouble for his sake. He, therefore, said to Zayd: "O Abu Usama! Leave me alone so that I may go with this man, and you need not worry."

Furthermore, it is necessary that we should not do anything which may be contrary to the views of the Holy Prophet. In the meantime it will be better if you go to the Prophet (S) and inform him of the situation."

Zayd said: "I shall not leave you alone in any circumstances. I am afraid these people may harm you, and if I leave you alone I fear Allah."

‘Ammar said: "I am afraid that your remaining here may become the cause of disturbance and trouble and the position is that we are not aware of the views of the Prophet (S) with regard to such a situation. Apart from it, if you meet any harm it will be as good as their having harmed Bani Hashim and in that case fighting will become inevitable. And if they treat me with insolence it will be like their having been insolent to Abu Huzayfa and this news will reach the ears of Abu Huzayfa only when it has reached the ears of all others who are dead and gone. Go, my dear, and don't worry. I am a match for this man."

Although Zayd did not agree with ‘Ammar, the latter accompanied the slaves of Abu Jahl and went to Abu Jahl.

On having approached the gathering he said to Abu Jahl: "Has Abul Hakam any business with his ally?"

Abu Jahl said: "And it is you O son of Sumayya!"

‘Ammar said: "Are there many women like Sumayya in the tribe of Makhzum?" O Abul Hakam! Sumayya was a slave girl who became free. Then Allah favoured her and blessed her with a greater freedom under the auspices of Islam .What freedom can be greater than getting rid of the captivity of infidelity and idol worship! In the circumstances the abusive language used by you towards me is praise for me!"

Abu Jahl: "Woe to you..."

‘Ammar broke in upon Abu Jahl and said: "Of course it was a curse to me, when I was a polytheist and an infidel and worshipped others than Allah".

Abu Jahl: "Sakhar spoke the truth when he said that when I would rise from sleep one day and regain my consciousness I would see, as a result of Muhammad's miracle, a master superior to all masters! I seek refuge from this silence of yours! How much we have been deceived by your silence! Very well! O refugee slave! I shall give you what you deserve! Wait for some time! I excuse you to a certain extent .However, if this presumptuousness continues you should keep yourself ready to face the devils."

‘Ammar: "Do you enjoy the position to excuse me? O Abul Hakam! May Allah correct you!"

Abu Jahl: "Is there any thing which prevents me from excusing you and forgiving you?"

‘Ammar: "The thing which prevents you from doing so is that you are an idol worshipper! To excuse and to forgive is the right of a Muslim because people are immune from his hands and tongue; and their

faith, property and honour is safe. However, as you are not a Muslim you don't enjoy this position. You can be severe with me and you can order your slaves to beat me. However, this action of yours will be a cruel and despicable action, and not that you will be just and forgiving. Allah alone is sufficient for us.”

Abu Jahl: “Don't you see that my face has been besmeared with blood and how much blood from my head has fallen on the earth?”

‘Ammar: “Yes. I can see it.”

Abu Jahl: “Do you know who has shed this blood and who has disgraced me?”

‘Ammar: “It is possible that I may not be unaware of it.”

Abu Jahl: “In that case why have you associated with a slave of Bani Hashim when they have risen against me and resorted to fighting?”

‘Ammar: “That slave of Bani Hashim is a man who is my brother in faith and has had no share in the dispute with you.”

Abu Jahl: “If the position had been the reverse of it and if I had brought that calamity on the head of Hamza as he has brought on mine, would it have been possible that Zayd should have been your associate and companion? And could he like for his master the treatment which you like for your master?”

‘Ammar: “If Hamza had been a polytheist and you had been a Muslim I would certainly have done the same thing.”

Abu Jahl: “However, I have not been cruel and unjust to Hamza and have not even spoken harshly to him, but, as you know, I have been patient and have resisted his oppression and transgression.”

‘Ammar: “You have put the Prophet (S) to great trouble, abused his religion, and have obstructed the way of truth, and even now you are, acting as an obstacle in the path of Allah.”

Abu Jahl: “But hasn't Muhammad abused our faith and religion and called us silly people?”

‘Ammar: “The objective of Abul Qasim (the Prophet) is that he should deliver you from the superstitions of which you are aware and bring you out of darkness, which, as you yourself know, is very intense. If you accompany me tonight to Muhammad, you will find how grateful you should be to Hamza, who has taken this action only in the name of Allah and for the sake of the Prophethood of Muhammad. O Abul

Hakam! What I consider to be the right course for you is that you should embrace Islam and become one of its pioneers. In that event your dignity and position will remain intact and all those like ‘Ammar will be obedient to you and will hold you in great respect. I hope you will become a Muslim and acquire such precedence in Islam as may not be ignored by Allah and His Prophet.”

Abu Jahl turned towards Abu Sufyan and said: "I haven't so far seen an obstinate and shameless person like him. Woe to this man! O Abu Hanzala! I wish that people had recognized him.”

Then he addressed ‘Ammar saying: "Woe be to you O son of Sumayya! Are you not an ally of Bani Makhzum? Do you not fight against those who fight against them, and do you not make peace with those who make peace with them?"

‘Ammar: “In order to manifest my sincerity and faithfulness as an ally I don't have any suggestion better than that you should follow Muhammad. I swear by Him, in whose control my life is, that so far I have had no better opportunity than this that I should advise you, as a well wisher, as I am advising you today.”

Abu Jahl: “If I accompany you tonight will you intercede with Muhammad for me?”

‘Ammar: “O Abul Hakam! Don't ridicule me. Don't persist in sinfulness and abandon the pride which has overpowered you. Muhammad is a blessed Prophet and a Messenger of peace. He guides everyone, who seeks blessings, and conveys Divine Commandments to all such persons without suggesting any obligation on them. I have often heard him praying for your guidance and welfare. In the circumstances you should also be attached to him in the same manner in which he is interested in you. Come and be just, so that you may enjoy a high rank among us. In that event you will rest on the principles of truth and will no longer be the leader of ignorance and will shun obstinacy and rebellion. O Abul Hakam! I am not telling you a lie when I say that your ignorance, rebellion and obstinacy will soon collapse. In case, therefore, you are desirous of becoming a leader and a master, you should give up contention and obstinacy. I also reaffirm the covenant made with your uncle and stipulate for the same alliance with you, I swear by Allah that distinction and leadership are in the hands of the Holy Prophet (S) and there is no distance between you and a place of distinction except that you should become a Muslim. “

Abu Jahl: “O fool! Are you now bent upon apologizing on my behalf? Who will blame me if I strip your skin off your body like that of a sheep? Your existence is one of the evil acts of Muhammad who has made your tongue operate with such strange magic and you have become so presumptuous?”

‘Ammar: “Where was this valour, which you are displaying now, at the time when Abu ‘Ammara struck the bow on your head? Of course, you then feared the power of the brave man of Arabia' and the lionhearted Children of Abdul Muttalib, but you are safe from ‘Ammar and Yasir, the strangers and

refugees, and don't have to fear them. If your intellect had worked properly, the humiliation and disgrace which you suffered at the hands of Hamza would not have permitted you to feign such bravery before 'Ammar. It is sufficient for you and the law which you obey that you should disinherit your uncle and be buried by the side of his grave.”

Abu Jahl said to his slaves: "Get hold of this fool and flog him. It is possible that he may change his views when he is flogged.”

Of course, at the moment when 'Ammar was being flogged, the Almighty Allah blessed and dignified his soul in Darul Islam the place where the Holy Prophet (S) was staying; and the following verse was revealed regarding him and Abu Jahl:

Can the condition of a man, who was dead and whom We brought to life and provided him with light, so that he can walk among the people, be similar to that of a person who lives in darkness and cannot step out of it?(Surah al-An'am, 6: 122)

Ibn Abbas says: "In this verse the man referred to, as having been provided with light, is 'Ammar and the one living in darkness is 'Amr bin Hisham viz. Abu Jahl".

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1. Amr bin Lahi was the chief of Khuza'a tribe, who wrested authority from the tribe of Jarham and assumed the custodianship of the 'House', and brought the idol named Hobal from Syria to Makkah. Then he introduced idol worship and treated the safe custody of this idol to be the means of the continuance of his own rule. He was a shameless tyrant who lived for a long time and destroyed the creed called 'Hanifiya' (i.e. the religion of Prophet Ibrahim). After him the government fell in the hands of Qusayy. Hobal, the big idol, had the figure of an old dignified man with a long beard and was made of carnelian. Its right hand had been amputated but Quraysh provided it with a hand made of gold
 2. The scholars of mythology believe that these two idols were originally a man and a woman of the tribe of Jarham who found their way into the Kaaba and were metamorphosed later, during the period of 'Amr bin Lahi, and assumed the shape of idol.
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