



In the name of ALLAH, the BENEFICENT, the MERCIFUL

Noor-i-Islam

(INTERNATIONAL)

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"TABLEEGH"

TO KINGS AND EMPERORS

Ever since he started to receive his message, the Prophet (peace be upon him) emphasized the universal nature of the Islamic faith. He always stated to his people that his message was "to all mankind." At no stage of his life is any special importance given to the Arabs as a nation or a race, despite the fact that the Prophet grew up in a tribal society where narrow pride is one's lineage or tribal ancestry was common to all people. At no time did the Prophet think of himself as an Arab reformer whose task was to put his nation on right footing. He always emphasized that the message he conveyed to people was meant for everyone and for all ages. If the message of Islam had not gone in its early years beyond the borders of Arabia, it was because Islam was still fighting to consolidate its base in Madinah and to win

supremacy in Arabia. It was not likely that the Prophet should expand his call beyond Arabia, when his position in it was not yet secure.

In the early months of the seventh year of the Prophet's settlement in Madinah, the Arabian scene changed radically. First there was the peace treaty of Al-Hudaybiyah, which was signed in the last month of the preceding year and which, in effect, neutralized the Quraysh, the major Arabian power opposing Islam. Then Khaybar fell to the Muslims, thus ending the Jewish threat to the new call of Islam. Practical head of state that he was, the Prophet moved quickly to widen the horizon before his followers. He picked up a number of his companions who combined charming personality with intelligence and ability to handle difficult situations, and he sent them as envoys who carried his message to the rulers of neighboring countries, some of which were the superpowers of the day. Byzantium and Persia. It is important to follow the fortunes of those ambassadors in order to gauge the likely response to Islam worldwide. To find out which of them was successful in his mission also gives us an insight into how Islam molds the personality of a Muslim. We will begin with the one who received the best response.

Amr ibn Umayyah Al-Damri was the Prophet's envoy to Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) carrying a letter from the Prophet to its King, known by his title Negus. Abyssinia is in East Africa, overlooking the southwestern end of the Red Sea. It is very difficult to give any correct idea of what sort of borders it had at the time. Most probably, it included what forms present-day Eritrea with other parts of Ethiopia. Abyssinia was a fully independent country, and its capital was Axum. Its relations

with the Byzantine Empire were cordial, since both were Christian countries. In the middle of the third century Byzantine Emperor Justinian appointed a man called Julian as ambassador of Byzantium at the court of Abyssinia. Amr's trip to Abyssinia was not his first, nor was the letter he carried the Prophet's first letter to the Negus, who extended his hospitality and protection to the Muslims who sought refuge in his kingdom and had been living there for about 13 years.

There is some confusion in history books about the identity of the Negus to whom the Prophet sent his letter with Amr ibn Umayyah. Many of them tend to think that he was the same king who ruled throughout this period. This is quite possible, since he was a young man when he succeeded to the throne of Abyssinia, but there is a possibility that the Negus now addressed by the Prophet was different one. The Prophet had sent earlier to Negus requesting him to extend kind treatment to his followers, which he did. Now the Prophet called on Negus, as well as other kings and emperors of the world, to accept God's message. This took place prior to the conquest of Makkah. The Prophet's

letter to the Negus ran as follows:

“In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Beneficent. From Mohammed, Allah’s messenger, to the Negus, the king of Abyssinia. Peace be with you. I praise Allah, the only God, the King, the Praised One, the Peace, the One who controls everything. I bear witness that Jesus, son of Mary, was God’s spirit and His word given to Mary, the virgin, the chaste. She thus conceived Jesus, whom Allah created of His own spirit, as He created Adam with His own hand. I call on you to believe in God alone, and to associate no other deity with Him, and to continue to obey Him, and to follow me and to believe in what has been revealed to me. I am God’s Messenger and I call on you and on your subjects and soldiers to believe in God, the Almighty, I have thus conveyed my message and given good counsel. It is better for you to accept my good counsel. Peace be to those who follow right guidance.”

Amr ibn Umayyah, the Prophet's emissary, also talked to the Negus and he is reported to have said to him: "You are as kind to us as one of us, and we trust you as if we belong to your people. You have met all our good expectations and we feared nothing from you whatsoever. However, we find in your own words what supports our case. The Bible is our ultimate witness and fair arbiter. There can be no clearer evidence or stronger argument. If you do not submit to its word, then your attitude toward this Prophet is akin to the attitude of the Jews toward Jesus, son of Mary. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has sent his envoys to all people, but he has far greater hopes in your than in them. He has trusted you with what he has not been able to trust them with, for your history of good deeds. Moreover, a fine reward awaits you."

The Negus replied in these words: "I swear by God, he is the Prophet awaited by the people of past revelations. Moses has given news of the impending appearance of the prophet who rides a donkey in the same way as Jesus has given news of the impending arrival of a prophet who rides a camel."

Thus, the Negus declared his acceptance of the message of Mohammed (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and his belief in Islam. He also wrote to the Prophet: "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Beneficent. To Mohammed, God's Messenger, from Negus. Peace from God be to you, Prophet, along with God's mercy and blessings. I have received your letter, Messenger of God, and noted what you have said about Jesus. By the Lord of the Heavens and the Earth, Jesus, son of Mary,

is nothing more than what you have stated. I know the truth of what you have said to me, and I have extended hospitality to your cousin and his companions. I bear witness that you are God's Messenger who tells the truth. I pledge my allegiance to you, and I have pledged this

allegiance to your cousin and have become a Muslim. I submit myself to God, the Lord of all the Universe.”

This was the most favorable response the Prophet received to all his messages and letters to the kings and emperors of other countries. It meant that Islam acquired a solid base on the other side of the Red Sea, stretching well into Africa. Negus continued in power until his death two years later. When he died, in the ninth year of the Islamic calendar, the Prophet announced his death to the Muslims and offered the prayers for the deceased in absentia for his soul.

(we will continue this in the next edition)

a Question ?

Q: People in some Muslim countries address a person who has performed the pilgrimage as “HAJI”. An article recently in our country suggested that this un-Islamic. Could you please comment?

A: This title has no value in Islam. A person who has performed the pilgrimage has simply fulfilled a duty Allah requires of all Muslims. Thus, he is in the same position as one who has prayed or fasted in Ramadan. Do we give any title to the people who fast during the month of Ramadan or who pray everyday? We do not give any title to people who fulfill such duties. Why should we give such a title to the one who fulfills the duty of pilgrimage? In some Arab cultures and societies, still the title is used in addressing an elder person, out of respect for him in the community, and this is part of a local culture in some Arab communities, although it is preferable not to use it. The person who has performed the pilgrimage wants his action to remain between himself and Allah. It should not earn him any privilege among people.

"Uthman"

{ahmadi youth corner}

EARLY LIFE

Uthman (may Allah be pleased with him) was the third Caliph of Islam after the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Before joining the brotherhood of Islam, Uthman was known by his kunyah, Abu Amr; later as Abu Abd Allah. Dhu-l-nurain was the epithet of honour. His father was Affan and his mother Arwa. At the fifth place his ancestral pedigree joins that of the Holy Prophet. He belonged to the Bani Umayyah clan of the

Quraish. This was the clan, which, after the period of the early Caliphate, acquired possession of the empire of Islam and wielded the scepter of authority for about a century. Abu Sufyan, who had repeatedly led the Quraish and other tribes in war against the Prophet and at length embraced Islam at the fall of Makkah, was a prominent figure of this clan. Even before the advent of Islam, the Banu Umayyah enjoyed a position of distinction being entrusted with

the custody of the national flag of the Quraish. Uthman was six years younger than the Holy Prophet. From his childhood he was upright and honest. He had also learnt reading and writing. When he grew up, he took to trade and did a flourishing business. He enjoyed special esteem for his integrity and was on friendly terms with Abu Bakr.

CONVERSION TO ISLAM

When the Holy Prophet proclaimed his mission, Uthman was thirty-four years of age. Abu Bakr was the first man to carry to him the message of Islam. One day Uthman and Talhah ibn Ubaid Allah came to the Prophet, who explained to them the teachings of Islam and recited a passage from the Qur'an. He told them of the obligations that Islam imposed as also of the high place to which it wanted to uplift man. Both embraced Islam. This took place before the Prophet had repaired to the house of Arqam. On this occasion Uthman related a personal experience. "I have just come back from Syria," he said. "On the way at one place we were feeling somewhat drowsy when there came a voice: 'Wake up, ye sleeping ones, Ahmad has appeared in Makkah'. On our arrival back here we came to know about the mission."

The clan of Banu Umayyah to which Uthman belonged was the only clan among the Quraish, which was opposed to the Banu Hashim, the clan of which the Prophet came. For this reason the leading men of this clan such as 'Aqbah ibn Mu'ait and Abu Sufyan were among the bitterest foes of the Prophet. Uthman, however, was not in the least influenced by these considerations and when Truth dawned on him he did not hesitate to accept it. When his uncle Hakam came to know about his conversion, he had Uthman tied down with a rope and said that until he had renounced the new faith, he would never be released. To this Uthman replied that he would never forsake Islam, come what might.

EMIGRATION TO ABYSSINIA

Uthman had not been very long in the fold of Islam when Abu Lahab made his son, Utbah, divorce the Prophet's daughter, Ruqayyah. Thereupon the Holy Prophet gave her in marriage to Uthman. When the persecutions of Muslims exceeded all bounds and the Prophet counseled them to immigrate to Abyssinia, Uthman along with Ruqayyah was one of the first batches of emigrants. After remaining there for a number of years, he returned to Makkah, from where he again emigrated to Madinah with the rest of the companions.

{this is a page from a wonderful book "THE EARLY CALIPHATE" written by the great scholar of this century "Maulana Mohammed Ali" watch for the next edition for continuation of this part of our history, UTHMAN}

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“OMENS”

People often associate certain things, or events, or signs with good or bad omen. These differ from one culture to another. In old Arabian culture, when a person went out on some business, he tried to determine whether his task would be successful. He usually looked for any bird he might see. If the bird flew to the right, he considered this to be a good omen and he continued with his task. If the bird flew left, he thought that was a bad omen and he would not continue with whatever he had embarked upon. In fact, this was so entrenched in their culture that the Arabic name for sensing bad omen is derived from the word Tair, which means bird. It is used even when the object, action or event that causes bad omen has nothing to do with birds. Apparently this was not limited to Arabs. Even in other cultures, people looked to birds for sensing what may come about. The English word “auspice” is defined in an Oxford Dictionary as “an observation of birds for omens”.

Needless to say, all this is forbidden in Islam. It is contrary to the very concept that knowledge of the future is the preserve of God alone. It is also against the principle of putting our trust in God. Therefore the Prophet (PBUH) denounces the very idea of bad omen, describing it as a form of associating partners with God. He says: “(Believing in) bad omen is a form of idolatry. It may occur to anyone of us, but God clears it away when we rely totally on Him.” (related by Al-Bukhari in Al-Adab Al-Mufrad, Al-Tirmidhi and Abu Dawood).

This Hadith is very clear in its import. It describes bad omen as a form of idolatry, or polytheism, but it recognizes that thoughts of such nature may be quick to our minds, and points out the way to get rid of them. The first sentence is very definitive. That it was associated in old Arabian society

with the direction a bird flies is indicative of its absurdity. How could a bird know future events? What has the direction of its flight signify in human language? How could it relate its knowledge to the actions of human beings, or to the people around? If the bird were to know all that, it would be much superior to man in knowledge, when not even the people who attached their omen to its direction of flight could have credited it with that.

A report by Ikrimah, a learned scholar of the generation that followed the Prophet’s (PBUH) companions, mentions that Ikrimah was attending his teacher, Abdullah ibn Abbas, the Prophet’s cousin and learned companion, when a bird passed by and made some sound. A man in attendance said, “Good! Good!” Ibn Abbas said to him: “This bird has neither good nor evil to offer.”

Yet people often experience some thoughts of bad omen when they hear something or see an event or an action taking place. Should this happen, a believer must not entertain such thoughts for long. He should be quick to place his trust in God and rely on Him in all situations. When a believer does so, all thoughts of bad omen are dispelled because a believer knows that whatever befalls us comes from God. When we place our trust in Him, He is sure to enable us to overcome difficulties and to reward us for our patience when we meet adversity. In this respect, we may recall the Hadith in which the Prophet wonders at a believer’s lot: “I wonder at a believer’s affairs, as they all end up into what is good. This applies to none other than believers. If something good comes his way, he expresses his gratitude to God, and it will be good for him; and if he experience an adversity, he remains patient, and that will again be good for him.”

So, we have to differentiate between a temporary thought which we try to dispel by placing our trust in God, and giving in to bad omen. In the later case, people change their plans, restrict their movement and do different things to avoid what they think bodes ill for them. This is the sort of things the Prophet warns against. The first type is often unavoidable. A man called Muawiyah ibn Hakam said to the Prophet: “I have only recently abandoned ignorant beliefs, and now God has favored us with Islam. Some of our people visit fortune-tellers.” The Prophet (PBUH) said: “Do not visit them.” The man added: “And some of us associate bad omen with certain things.” The Prophet replied: “This is something that people may occasionally entertain. Let them not be deterred from their purpose.” (related by Muslim)

This Hadith clearly distinguishes temporary pessimistic thoughts from giving in to bad omen. The distinction is at its clearest when one goes ahead with whatever one is planning or what one is about to do, disregarding all negative thoughts and relying totally on God, and, on the other hand, giving in to such thoughts, changing one’s plans and purpose.

All this concerns bad omen; but ehh what about good omen? There is clear distinction between the two, as appears in the following Hadith in which Abu Hurayrah quotes the Prophet as saying: “Do not entertain bad omen. The best of it is the good one.” Asked which is the good one, the Prophet answered: “A good word any of your may hear.” (related by Al-Bukhari and Ahmad).

In this Hadith, the Prophet gives a clear order that finding bad omen in any sign is unacceptable in Islam. In fact it is forbidden, unless one tries to dispel its effects by placing his trust in God. Next the Prophet speaks about good omen as being

the best. The comparative here is not between two good things with one being better than the other, because there is nothing good in allowing bad omen to dictate our course of action. The comparative is merely in what we feel when something causes us to be optimistic or pessimistic about something we are embarking upon.

Besides, the Prophet explains that people normally find good omen in a good word they hear. It is not a sign by a bird or some other animal or an inanimate object. A good word may affect a person because it expresses some favorable feeling, or describes a positive situation. It is in human nature that we like fine expressions, beautiful scenes, peaceful surroundings, even when nothing of it belongs to us. Similarly, words that speak of a good thing happening to us soon are bound to have a good effect on us. We note here that such words may be without foundation, but the fact that they give us a sense of optimism is beneficial, provided that we attribute all future events to God’s will.

To give an example, a mother says to her daughter on the morning she is taking her exams, “I feel in my heart that you will do well.” The daughter says *‘InshaAllah’*, and feels optimistic and approaches her exam in good spirit. There is nothing wrong with that, as long as the daughter does not attribute her fine results to her mother’s words or feelings. Another Hadith that illustrates the meaning further is reported by Anas who quotes the Prophet as saying: **“Do not cause disease transmission, and do not entertain bad omen. But I like hopeful optimism based on a good word.”** (related by Al-Bukhari and Muslim).