

Our Interconnected Future

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"Weep O eye for the people's leader, be generous with thy tears, If they run dry then pour out blood"

Above is part of the poem written by Hassan bin Thabit while mourning Mutim bin Adiy. Mutim bin Adiy played a significant role in support of the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) and the nascent Muslim community of Makka, notwithstanding the fact that he remained a non-Muslim until his death.

Banu Hashim, the family to which the Prophet belonged, faced a social boycott at the instigation of the leaders of the Quraysh. The Prophet's uncle, Abu Talib, was fearful, due to the bad press of the times, lest one day a mob may attack his nephew and the few Muslim converts. He decided to take Banu Hashim to a valley where they remained for about three years. Nobody was allowed to sell food or to have business transactions of any kind with them. A number of old and young children died of hunger and disease during this period. Such utmost cruelty and injustice, where nobody was allowed even to take small amount of food for the children in the valley was opposed by people of dignity and decency and one of them was Mutim bin Adiy. He opposed consistently the sanctions. He worked towards getting recanted the decree of sanctions which hung on the walls of the Ka'bah. He gained enough support from few decent Qurayshi leaders and eventually he publicly tore down the decree.

Mutim bin Adiy made another significant contribution, which stands out as one of the rare examples of courage and fortitude. In view of the growing hostility of Quraysh, especially after Abu Talib's death, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) went to Ta'if. He hoped that he will be able to convince leaders of the influential Thaqif family. The Prophet met them and mentioned his reasons for visiting them; that he is a Prophet and has an excellent message to the people of their town. They listened to him but soon they began to ridicule him and rejected his message and encouraged hooligans to deride him which they did wherever the Prophet went. On the streets of Ta'if, history records of a bleeding Prophet saying: "O God, to You I complain of my weakness, little resources and lowliness before men. O Most Merciful, You art the Lord of the weak, You are my Lord... I take refuge in the light of your countenance by which the darkness is illumined... It is for You to be satisfied until You art well pleased. There is no

power and no might save in You". He forgave his enemies and hoped one day Thaqif and their children will accept his message.

He returned to Makka. But according to the tradition of the time he had to "renew" his "stay" in Makka and it was only possible if an influential family head could provide the support. The Prophet approached heads of a number of families through a mediator seeking support before he could be allowed to enter Makka. All of them turned down, except Mutim bin Adiy. He collected his weapons from his home, asked his sons and nephews to accompany him, escorted Prophet into Makka and into the Haram (Grand Mosque), Prophet's staunch enemy Abu Jahal asked Mutim: "Are you giving protection or following him?"

"Giving protection of course", he said.

This important event has a great significance in our times, especially for the Muslims living in Britain. Our relationship with the wider community needs reassessment. The tendency of perceiving all non-Muslims inherently "antagonistic" to Islam and "perpetually" conspiring against Muslims needs rethinking. There are good souls and fine people beyond our community.

Our community is one among many, and this is not by accident but by the design of God. Differences of communities would be there until the end of our existence. What we need is to connect with others on the basis of our humanity, our human family, promoting the commonly known goods (ma'ruf) and demoting the commonly known evils (munkar) in human society. In Britain today, Muslims are sharing classrooms, hospital wards, work place and even cemeteries with non-Muslims. Despite all this sharing, the Muslim discourse today is about "us", "our needs", "our demand", it is about "our exclusivity". **We have not been able to see the society around us as "our society". We have our shared humanity and shared "morality" such as humility, truthfulness, justice for the poor and the needy. Our future is intrinsically connected with fellow human beings.**

But this hardly reflected in our organisational programmes and individual priorities. A change of perception is necessary and it is only possible if Muslim individuals and organisations have the will and idea where non-Muslims play a constructive role along with Muslims. Once we move in this direction with a clear conscience and a sincere heart, perhaps our presence will be seen as an asset, not a liability. And perhaps we will find around us many Mutim bin Adiy and Abu Talib in these difficult times.

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