

The meaning of Mu'āwiyah

Question: What is the meaning of Hadrat Mu'āwiyah radiyallāhu 'anhu? Some people give a bad meaning to this name. What is the reality in this regard?

Answer: The word Mu'āwiyah is derived from مَوَى and عِيَاه and it has several meanings: (1) the barking of a dog, (2) to be inclining, merciful, affectionate, (3) to help, to assist, (4) stars, (5) stages of the moon, (6) an old she-camel.

The word Mu'āwiyah has good meanings as well, e.g. affectionate, merciful, a helper, stars, stages of the moon. The bad meanings are not meant because if they were, Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam would have certainly advised him to change his name. He did not ask him to change it. Instead, he left it as it is. It is the name of a very senior Sahābī. Thus, it is certainly used in a good meaning.

If it is taken to mean “the barking of a dog” then it would mean that the excellent qualities and virtues of Hadrat Mu’āwiyah radiyallāhu ‘anhu will continue glittering in this world, and those who deny his virtues will continue barking like dogs. Bear in mind that Hadrat ‘Alī radiyallāhu ‘anhu never denied his virtues. Rather, he only had political differences with him.

Lisān al-‘Arab [explains the meaning of this word as follows]:

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Misbāh al-Lughāt has the following:

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He inclined towards him, he was kind to him. The she camel showed affection to its young one. Allāh softened his heart.

We learn from the above that this word has another meaning, viz. to be inclined, to be merciful, to be kind, to be soft. Thus, the word Mu'āwiyah would mean: a kind person, a merciful person, and soft-hearted person.

[illegible]

From the above Hadīth we learn that the word Mu'āwiyah means: a helper, an assistant.

To sum up, the word Mu'āwiyah has good meanings, e.g. a kind person, a merciful person, a helper, stars. Allāh ta'ālā knows best.