

Chapter 30: The Battle of Badr

The Battle of Badr is one of the greatest and most famous battles of Islam and those who participated in it enjoyed a special distinction amongst the Muslims. Whenever one or more mujahids of Badr participated in or gave evidence about any matter the people used to say: "So many Badris agree with us".

The word 'Badri' is used in the biographies of the companions of the Prophet for those persons who participated in the Battle of Badr and the reason for their importance will be known from the details of this event.

It has already been mentioned before that in the middle of Jamadiul Awwal of the second year of migration a report was received in Madina that a caravan was going from Makkah to Syria under the leadership of Abu Sufyan, and the Prophet went up to Zatul Ashirah to pursue the caravan and stayed there till the beginning of the following month, but could not lay hands on it. The time of the return of the caravans was almost certain, because in early autumn the caravans of Quraysh used to return from Syria to Makkah.

In all campaigns procurement of information is the first step towards victory. Unless the commander of an army is aware of the strength of the enemies, the point of their centralization and the morale of their soldiers, it is very likely that he may be defeated in the very first encounter.

One of the praiseworthy policies adopted by the Prophet in all the battles (the details of which will be given later) was that he used to collect information about the strength of the enemy and his location. And even till today the question of procurement of information enjoys great importance in global as well as local wars. According to Allamah Majlisi¹ the Prophet sent Adi (and according to the writer of 'Hayat-i Muhammad, as quoted by him from history books, he sent Talha bin 'Ubaydullah and Sa'id bin Zayd) for collecting information about the route and itinerary of the caravan, the number of its guards, and the nature of their merchandise. The information received was as under:

1. It is a big caravan and all Makkans have shares in its merchandise.

2. The leader of the caravan is Abu Sufyan and there are about forty persons who guard it.
3. The merchandise is loaded on one thousand camels and its value is about fifty thousand dinars.

As Quraysh had confiscated the property of Muslim Muhajirs residing in Madina, it was only appropriate that the Muslims should also confiscate their merchandise and if they persisted in withholding the property of the Muhajir Muslims on account of their enmity and obstinacy, the Muslims should, as a retaliatory measure, divide their merchandise amongst themselves as war booty.

Hence, the Prophet turned to his companions and said: "O people! It is the caravan of Quraysh. You can go out of Madina to take possession of the property of Quraysh. It is possible that your condition may improve".²

In the circumstances the Prophet left Madina with 313 men in the month of Ramadan of the second year of migration to confiscate the property of Quraysh encamped by the side of the well of Badr.

While going to Syria Abu Sufyan had realized that the Prophet was pursuing his caravan. He was, therefore, careful at the time of his return and enquired from other caravans whether Muhammad had occupied the trade routes. It was reported to him that the Prophet had left Madina along with his companions and might be pursuing the caravan of Quraysh.

Abu Sufyan refrained from proceeding further. He did not see any alternative except to inform Quraysh about the impending danger to the caravan. He, therefore, hired a swift camel-driver named Zamzam bin 'Amr Ghafari and gave him the following instructions:

"Go to Makkah and inform the valiant men of Quraysh and the owners of the merchandise to come out of Makkah to guard the caravan against the attack of the Muslims".

Zamzam hastened to Makkah. As ordered by Abu Sufyan he cut off the ears of his camel, pierced its nose and turned its saddle upside down and tore his shirt from the front as well as from the back side. He then stood up on his camel and cried: "O people! The camels which are carrying musk are in danger. Muhammad and his friends intend confiscating the merchandise. I am doubtful whether it will reach your hands. Help! Help!"³

The pitiable condition of the camel from whose ears and nose blood was trickling and the impression which Zamzam created by his continuous wailings and cries for help roused the Makkans and all their brave men and warriors got ready to go, with the exception of Abu Lahab, who did not participate in this battle, and hired As bin Hisham for four thousand dirhams to go and fight on his behalf.

Umayyah bin Khalaf, who was one of the chiefs of Quraysh, did not wish, for some reasons, to participate in this battle and had been told that Muhammad had said: "Umayyah shall be killed at the hands of Muslims". The leaders of the community felt that the absence of such an important person would certainly be harmful for their cause.

While Umayyah was sitting in Masjidul Haram with some other persons, two men, who had volunteered to fight against Muhammad, came and placed a tray and a collyrium-box before him and said: "O Umayyah! Now that you have declined to defend your land, wealth and trade, and have chosen to lead a secluded life like women instead of fighting on the war front, it is only proper that you should apply collyrium to your eyes like women and your name should be struck off the list of brave men".

This taunt had such a great effect on Umayyah that he immediately collected the provisions for his journey and proceeded along with Quraysh to safeguard the caravan.⁴

The Difficulty Faced By Quraysh

The time for departure was announced by special means. However, the chiefs of Quraysh were reminded of the fact that they had also a mortal enemy like the tribe of Bani Bakr, and it was quite possible that they might attack them from behind. The enmity of Bani Bakr with Quraysh was due to the bloodshed, the details of which have been given by Ibn Hisham.⁵

In the meantime Saraqah bin Malik, who was one of the elders of Bani Kananah (a sect of Bani Bakr) assured Quraysh that nothing of the sort would happen and they could leave Makkah without the least worry.

The Forces Of Truth And Falsehood Face Each Other

The forces of truth and falsehood faced each other for the first time in the Valley of Badr. The number of the army of truth did not exceed 313 whereas the army of falsehood was three times as big as that. The Muslims were not properly equipped.

Their means of transport consisted of about seventy camels and a few horses, while the enemy had come with full strength to knock down Islam. In spite of all this, however, truth was victorious and the enemy returned to Makkah after having sustained heavy losses.

The Prophet encamped in the northern passage of Badr at the foot of the mountain called, 'al-'Udwatud Dunya' and was waiting for the caravan to pass when a fresh report was received. It changed the thinking of the commanders of the Islamic army and opened a new chapter in their lives. It was reported to the Prophet that the people of Makkah, who had come out to protect the caravan, were centralized in the same environs and various tribes had participated in forming this army.

The grand leader of Muslims saw himself on the crossroads. He and his companions had come out of Madina to confiscate the merchandise and were not in a position, whether from the point of view of numbers or that of military equipments, to confront a big Makkan army, and now if they had returned from the way they had come, they would have lost the glory which they had earned by means of manoeuvres and military demonstrations.

As it was very much likely that the enemy might continue his advance and attack the centre of Islam (Madina), the Prophet considered it expedient not to retreat but to put up a good fight with the available strength up to the last moment.

The point worth consideration was that the majority of the soldiers consisted of the Ansar and there were only seventy four Muhajirs amongst them and the agreement which the Ansar had made with the Prophet at 'Aqabah was a defence pact and not a war pact.

In other words, they had agreed to defend his person in Madina like their own kith and kin but had not undertaken to go with him out of Madina and wage war against the enemy. Now the question was as to what the commander of the entire force should do. He, therefore, saw no alternative but to consult his companions about engaging in the battle and to solve the problem in the light of their views.

War Consultations

The Prophet stood up and said: "What is your view in the matter? "

Abu Bakr stood up first and said: "The chiefs and warlike men of Quraysh have joined this army. Quraysh have not at all expressed faith in a religion and have not fallen from the zenith of glory to the abyss of degradation. Furthermore, we have not come out of Madina fully prepared".⁶ (He meant to say that it was not appropriate to fight, and they should return to Madina).

The Prophet said: "Sit down".

Then Umar rose and repeated what Abu Bakr had said. The Prophet asked him also to sit down.

Thereafter Miqdad stood up and said: "O Prophet of Allah! Our hearts are with you and you should act according to the orders given to you by Allah. By Allah! We shall not tell you what Bani Israel told Musa.

When Musa asked them to perform jihad they said to him: 'O Musa! You and your Lord should go and perform jihad and we shall sit here'. We, however, tell you quite the reverse of it and say: Perform jihad under the auspices of the blessings of Allah and we are also with you and shall fight".

The Prophet was very much pleased to hear Miqdad's words and prayed for him.

Concealment Of Facts

Although bias and concealment of facts and fanaticism are improper for all writers, they are all the more unbecoming to a historian. History is a mirror in which the faces of the people can be seen clearly. For the benefit of future generations, therefore, a historian should steer clear of all fanaticism.⁷

Ibn Hisham,⁸ Miqrizi⁹ and Tabari¹⁰ have mentioned the war consultations of the Prophet and have also reproduced the texts of the replies of Sa'd Ma'az and Miqdad in their history books, but have avoided

quoting the detailed replies of Abu Bakr and Umar. They have said briefly that these two persons stood up and expressed their views and said good things. Now, one can very well ask these champions of history that if the views expressed by 'Shaykhayn' (Abu Bakr and Umar) were good why they have refrained from quoting their text.

However, their replies were the same as mentioned above, and if the aforesaid historians have concealed facts, others have reproduced their text.¹¹ And as you can very well observe they did not say good things. Their words indicate that fear had over-taken them and they considered Quraysh to be so much honoured and powerful that they (Abu Bakr and Umar) could not even think that they (Quraysh) could be defeated.

The adverse effect of their speeches on the feelings of the Prophet can very well be realized from the fragments of history, which Tabari has reproduced on the same page, because as you can observe 'Shaykhayn' were the first persons who opened their lips and Miqdad and Sa'd Ma'az expressed their views afterwards.

Tabari quotes Abdullah bin Mas'ud as having said: "On the day of Badr I wished that I had been in the position of Miqdad, because he started speaking and said: "We are not at all like Bani Israel (children of Israel) so that we may say that you and your Allah may go and fight and we shall sit here..... at a time when the face of the Prophet was flushed with anger.

Then he said these words (and provided means for the pleasure and happiness of the Prophet), and I wished that I had enjoyed that position". Now, was the anger of the Prophet due to anything other than the words of despair uttered by Abu Bakr and Umar and their insistence on returning to Madina?¹²

No doubt it was a consultative meeting and everyone had a right to express his views before the supreme commander. However, it was proved that the views expressed by Miqdad were nearer to reality than those expressed by 'Shaykhayn'.

The views which were expressed had an individual aspect. However, the main object of holding consultations was to find out the viewpoint of the Ansar. Until and unless they co-operated, it was not possible to take a final decision. Hence, the Prophet repeated his words to find out the views of the Ansar and said: "Make your views known to me".

Sa'd bin Ma'az Ansari stood up and said: "Do you mean us?" The Prophet replied in the affirmative. Thereupon Sa'd said: "O Prophet of Allah! We have faith in you and testified that your religion is a true one, and we have promised and agreed that we will obey you and stick to all the decisions taken by you.

We swear by the Almighty Allah Who has appointed you to the prophetic mission that if you go into the sea (i.e. the Red Sea) we shall follow suit and none of us shall lag behind in following you. We are not at all afraid to face the enemy. It is possible that we may render services and make sacrifices in this regard which may brighten your eyes. In obedience to the command of Allah you may send us to any place you

consider fit".

The words of Sa'd made the Prophet extremely happy and the inauspicious shadow of despair disappeared in the face of invigorative rays of hope, steadfastness, patience and forbearance in the path of the target.

The words of Sa'd were so exciting that the Prophet gave immediate orders to move and said: "Move and I give you good tidings that you will either come across the caravan and confiscate the goods or you will fight against the forces which have come to help the caravan. I can now see the defeat of Quraysh and find that they have suffered heavy losses".

The Muslim army proceeded under the command of the Prophet and encamped near the wells of Badr. 13

Procurement Of Information About The Enemy

The modern military principles and war tactics have undergone great changes as compared with the past. The importance of acquiring information about the conditions of the enemy and knowledge of his military secrets, and war strategy and the force which he brings in the field is still there. Even now this matter has much to do with the winning and losing of battles.

No doubt this subject has now assumed an educational aspect and classes and schools have been set up for teaching the principles of espionage. The heads of eastern and western blocs now consider a major part of their success to lie in the expansion of their spying organizations so that they may become aware of the war plans of the enemy before the commencement of hostilities and may frustrate them.

The forces of Islam took their position at a place which accorded with the principles of camouflage, and every such movement as could result in the divulgence of secrets was stopped. Different parties started collecting information about Quraysh as well as about their caravan. The information was collected from different sources in the following ways:

1. First of all the Prophet himself set out, accompanied by a brave soldier, and met the head of a tribe and said to him: "What information do you have about Muhammad and his friends?" He said in reply: "It has been reported to me that Muhammad and his companions left Madina on such and such day.

If the reporter be a truthful person he (i.e. the Prophet and his companions) should now be at such and such place (he mentioned the place where the Muslim troops had encamped). I have also been informed that Quraysh moved out of Makkah on such and such day. If this report be true they must be at such and such place by now (he mentioned exactly the same place where Quraysh were centralized).

2. A patrol party which included Zubayr, Awam and Sa'd Abi Waqqas went to the well of Badr under the command of Ali to obtain more information. This was a rendezvous where news were exchanged. Near

the well the said party met two slaves of Quraysh along with a camel which carried water.

They intercepted both of them and brought them before the Prophet. After interrogating them it was known that one of the slaves belonged to 'Bani Hajjaj' and the other to 'Bani As' and they had been commissioned to supply water to Quraysh.

The Prophet said to them: "Where are Quraysh?" They replied that they were on the other side of the mountain which was situated in the desert. Then he asked them about their numbers, and they replied that they did not know it for certain.

He asked: "How many camels do they slaughter every day?" They replied that they slaughtered ten camels on one day and nine on the other. The Prophet then remarked that their number was between nine and ten hundred. Thereafter he enquired from them about the chiefs of Quraysh.

They replied that 'Utbah bin Rabiyyah, Shaybah bin Rabiyyah, Abul Bakhtari bin Hisham, Abu Jahl bin Hisham, Hakim bin Hizam, Umayyah bin Khalaf etc. were amongst them. The Prophet turned to his companions and said:

"The city of Makkah has thrown out the pieces of its heart (i.e. its dearest children)".¹⁴

Thereafter he ordered that the two persons should be held captives so that investigations might continue.

3. Two persons were deputed to the village of Badr to collect information about the caravan. They dismounted by the side of a mound which was situated near the well and pretended that they were thirsty and had come to drink water. By chance they saw two women by the side of the well conversing with each other.

One of them said to the other: "Why don't you pay my debt? Don't you know that I too am in need". The other said in reply: "The caravan will be arriving tomorrow or day after tomorrow. I shall work for the caravan and then repay your debt". Majdi bin 'Amr who happened to be there confirmed what the debtor had said and then set them apart.

The two riders were very happy to hear this news. Observing the rules of camouflage they came to the Supreme Commander of the forces of Islam and informed him of what they had heard.

Now that the Prophet had received complete information about the arrival of the caravan and the position of Quraysh, it became necessary for him to turn to the preliminaries of his job.

The Caravan Of Abu Sufyan Flees

Abu Sufyan, the leader of the caravan, who had been attacked by a party of the Muslims at the time of his outward journey, knew well that at the time of return he would certainly be attacked by them again.

Hence, when he reached the zone of influence of Islam he stopped the caravan at a certain point and went to the village of Badr to collect information.

There he met Majdi bin 'Amr and asked him whether he had seen in that area any persons about whom he might have been suspicious. He replied: "I have not seen anything which might have aroused my suspicion. I saw only two camel-riders. They made their camels sit on the mound, came down, drank water and then went away".

Abu Sufyan ascended the mound, broke some pieces of the dung of the camels and finding date-stones in them realized that the persons concerned belonged to Madina. He, therefore, changed the course of the caravan and, covering two stages of the journey at a time, took it out of the zone of influence of Islam.

He also appointed a man to go and inform Quraysh that the caravan had been saved from attack by the Muslims and they should, therefore, return to Makkah and leave it to the Arabs to settle the affairs with Muhammad.

Muslims Become Aware Of The Escape Of The Caravan

The news of the escape of the caravan circulated amongst the Muslims. Those who had greedily kept an eye on the merchandise were very much disturbed by this development. Allah revealed the following verse to strengthen their hearts:

Allah has promised to grant your victory over one of the two bands, but you wished to fight the one that was unarmed. He sought to fulfil His promise and to annihilate the unbelievers, so that truth should triumph and falsehood be uprooted, though the wrongdoers wished otherwise.

(Surah al-Anfal 8:7)

Difference Of Opinion Amongst Quraysh

When Abu Sufyan succeeded in taking away his caravan safely by adopting a route other than that of Badr, he immediately sent a messenger to the people who had come to the rescue of the caravan to inform them about the safety of the caravan and to tell them to return the way they had come, because the real object of mobilization was to protect the caravan and it had been achieved.

When the representative of Abu Sufyan conveyed his message to the chiefs of Quraysh a strange split appeared amongst them.

The people belonging to the tribes of Bani Zohrah and Akhnas Shariq with their allies returned the way they had come. They said: "Our object was to protect the large merchandise of Bani Zohrah and that object has been achieved". Talib bin Abu Talib who had been compelled by Quraysh to leave Makkah also returned after a verbal dispute during which it was said to him:

"The hearts of you Hashimites are with Muhammad".

As opposed to the suggestion of Abu Sufyan, Abu Jahl insisted that they should go to the region of Badr, stay there for three days, kill camels, drink wine and hear the minstrel girls sing so that their valour might reach the ears of the Arabs and they should have a high regard for them for ever.

The fascinating words of Abu Jahl made Quraysh wait at that place and halt at an elevated point in the desert behind a mound. Heavy rain made movement difficult for them and kept them from proceeding further.

However, rain did not have any bad effect on the slope of the desert (al-'Udwatud Dunya) where the Prophet had encamped. The Muslims, therefore, moved, as ordered by the Prophet, and occupied a place by the wells of Badr.

Badr is a vast region. Its southern side is high (al-'Udwatul Qaswa and the northern area is low and sloping (al-'Udwatud Dunya). Water was available in this desert in large quantities from the wells which had been dug and it had always been the halting place for the caravans.

Hubab bin Manzar, who was one of the experienced soldiers said to the Prophet: "Have you alighted here in accordance with the command of Allah, or because you have considered this place to be fit for fighting a battle?"

The Prophet said: "No specific order has been revealed in this regard and if you have a more appropriate place in view you may mention it so that I may change the place if the exigencies of war make it necessary. Hubab said: It is expedient that we should occupy the place by the side of the water which is nearest to the enemy. We should build a tank there so that water may be available regularly for men and animals".

The Prophet appreciated the viewpoint of Hubab and ordered the army to move. This incident shows clearly that the Prophet attached extraordinary importance to consultations and respected the views of the people in public matters.¹⁵

"Arish" Or Tower Of Command

Sa'd M'az said to the Prophet: "We propose to set up for you a shelter on a high mound from where the entire battlefield will come into view. It will be looked after by the guards, and the orders of the Supreme Commander will be communicated from there to the subordinate commanders.

Over and above all these things if the Muslim army is successful in this battle, well and good, and in case their men are defeated and killed, you may reach Madina by means of swift camels accompanied by the guards of the Tower of Command after employing some delaying tactics, which may stop the enemy from making an advance.

There are many Muslims there who are not aware of our present condition and if they come to know about the situation they will give you full support and will act till the last moments of their lives according to the agreement which they have made with you".

The Prophet prayed for Sa'd Ma'az and ordered the construction of a shelter on the mound, which should overlook the field, and the seat of command should be transferred there.

Examining The Question Of Setting Up A Shelter

The construction of the shelter for the Prophet and its guarding by Sa'd Ma'az and a group of the Ansar is an event which has been quoted by Tabari from Ibn Ishaq, and others have followed him.¹⁶ For certain reasons, however, the story is somewhat doubtful.

Firstly such an action has a bad effect on the morale of the soldiers. A commander who makes plans for his own safety and is not anxious about the safety of his soldiers cannot command and control their minds.

Secondly such a thing does not conform to the good tidings which the Prophet had given to his companions on the basis of Divine revelation. Before coming face to face with Quraysh he had spoken to the Muslims in these terms:

Allah has promised to grant you victory over one of the two bands (the caravan and those who had come to defend it), but you wished to fight the one that was unarmed. He sought to fulfil His promise and to annihilate the believers, so that truth should triumph and falsehood be uprooted, though the wrongdoers wished otherwise. (Surah al-Anfal, 8:7)

When, according to Tabari, a shelter was being set up for the Prophet the caravan had escaped and there were left only those people, who had come from Makkah to defend it. And, according to the above-mentioned positive promise, they (the Muslims) were sure that the victory was theirs.

In the circumstances any talk about the defeat of the Muslims and setting up of a shelter for the Prophet and stationing swift camels near the shelter would have been out of place. Ibn Sa'd quotes thus from Umar bin Khattab.¹⁷ When the verse:

Their army would be routed and put to flight, (Surah al-Qamar, 54:45)

was revealed, I said to myself: "Which is the army whose decisive defeat has been predicted in this verse?" Then I saw on the day of Badr that the Prophet had put on the coat-of-mail and was reciting this verse with great vehemence. At that moment I understood that this army was going to be defeated and annihilated".

Keeping this fact in view can it be imagined that the Prophet and his companions could think of their own

defeat and flight?

Thirdly, the character of the Prophet, whose posture in the battlefield was described by Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, does not at all conform to this technique. He says about the Prophet: "Every time when fighting became intense we took refuge with the Prophet. None of us was nearer to the enemy than he".¹⁸

Can it be imagined that a person, whose first disciple describes him in these terms, should adopt the path of personal security and flight in the very first battle fought by the Muslims?

We think that the setting up of the shade was only to provide the Prophet with a place higher than the battlefield so that he might have a full view of the battle, and from there he could give accurate instructions to his army.

Movement Of Quraysh

On the 17th of Ramadan of the second year of migration Quraysh descended, early in the morning, from behind the sandy mound into the desert of Badr. When the Holy Prophet saw them he raised his face to the sky and said: "O Allah! Quraysh are up, with pride and arrogance, to fight against You and to deny Your Prophet! Send the aid which You have promised me and destroy them today! "

Consultations By Quraysh

The forces of Quraysh were centralized at a certain point in Badr, but they were not aware of the strength of the Muslims. They dispatched 'Umayr bin Wahab, who was a brave man and an expert in assessing the strength of the armies to find out the number of Muhammad's companions.

Riding his horse he went round the encampment of the army of Islam and reported on his return that they were about three hundred. He said, however, that he would take another round and see whether there were any others lying in ambush and also whether or not there was any reinforcement.

He roamed about the desert in all directions and then brought very alarming news. He said: "Muslims don't have any ambush or shelter. However, I have seen some camels which are bringing the news of death for you from Madina".

Then he added: "I have seen a group of men who have no other asylum than their own swords. Until each one of them has killed one man of yours they will not be killed. And in case they kill from amongst you as many as they are themselves what will be the use of life? Take your final decision".¹⁹

Waqidi and Allamah Majlisi have quoted another sentence as well i.e. "Don't you see that they are silent and don't speak even a word and their faces tell what their intentions are and they are moving their tongues in their mouths like deadly serpents?"²⁰

Difference Of Opinion Amongst Quraysh

The words of the brave soldier created an uproar amongst Quraysh. The entire army of the enemy became panicky. Hakim bin Huzam went to 'Utbah and said: "O 'Utbah! You are the chief of Quraysh. Quraysh had come out of Makkah to safeguard their merchandise. This object has been achieved and there is no other matter left except the blood-money of Hazrami and the price of the property which was plundered by the Muslims some time ago. You should pay his blood-money yourself and refrain from fighting with Muhammad".

The words of Hakim had a strong effect on 'Utbah. He got up and made a very impressive speech before the people and said: "O people! You should leave it to the Arabs to settle the affairs with Muhammad. If Arabs succeed in overthrowing his religion and pulling down the foundation of his strength we too shall be happy on that account. And if Muhammad succeeds we shall not meet any harm from him, because we shall be keeping away from fighting with him in spite of our being at the zenith of our strength. It would, therefore, be better if we return the way we have come".

Hakim communicated the views of 'Utbah to Abu Jahl and saw that he was busy wearing his coat-of-mail, Abu Jahl was very much annoyed to learn about the speech of 'Utbah and sent a man to 'Amir Hazrami, the brother of 'Amr Hazrami, with this message: "Your ally (i.e. 'Utbah) is stopping people from realizing the blood-money of your brother. You can see the blood of your brother with your own eyes. Get up and remind Quraysh of the pact which they made with your brother and sing mournful verses for him.

Abu 'Amir got up, stripped off his head-covering and said imploringly: "Alas! O 'Amr!"

The wailings and lamentations of Abu 'Amar roused the sense of honour of Quraysh and made them decide to fight. They thus ignored the views of 'Utbah regarding withdrawal from the scene. However, the same 'Utbah, who had recommended withdrawal, was influenced by the transient sentiments of his companions. He rose at once, put on his military uniform and got ready for the battle.

Some times man loses his wisdom on account of the influence of sentiments and baseless passions, and fails to brighten his life. The man who was of peaceful disposition and had invited others to live and let live became so sentimental that he was the first to lay himself out to fight.

The Reason Which Made The Battle Unavoidable

Aswad Makhzumi was a hot-tempered person. When he saw the tank of water which had been constructed by the Muslims he swore that he would do one of these three things: either he would drink water from the tank, or demolish it or be killed. He came out of the ranks of unbelievers and met the brave commander of Islam, Hamzah, near the tank. Fighting ensued between them.

Hamzah gave a blow on his foot and it was severed from his leg. He, therefore, fell down by the side of the tank, with his leg bleeding. In order to act according to his oath he reached the bank of the tank to drink water. Hamzah gave him another blow and he was killed.

This incident made fighting unavoidable, because nothing is more instrumental in rousing the sentiments of a crowd than bloodshed. Some persons whose hearts were burning with grudge and rancour were keen to find an excuse to fight and now that this was the best excuse for them, they considered themselves under the obligation to fight.

Single Combats

It was an old custom of the Arabs that in the beginning of a battle single combats were resorted to, and later general fighting began.

After Aswad Makhzumi had been killed, three famous warriors of Quraysh came out of their ranks and challenged for a fight. They were two brothers 'Utbah and Shaybah, sons of Rabiyyah, and Walid bin 'Utbah and all of them were fully armed. They roared and ran their horses in the field and called their opponents to fight.

Three brave men from amongst the Ansars named 'Awf, Ma'uz and Abdullah Rawahah came out of the ranks of the Muslims. 'Utbah, however, realized that they were from Madina and said to them: "We have nothing to do with you".

Then a man (from amongst Quraysh) shouted: "O Muhammad! Send our equals to fight with us!" The Prophet turned his face to 'Ubaydah, Hamzah and Ali and said: "Get up". The three brave men covered their heads and faces and of they went to the battlefield. All the three persons introduced themselves. 'Utbah accepted all of them for a combat and said: "Yes, you are our equals".

Some say that in this combat each warrior fought with his rival of the same age. Ali, who was the youngest of them met Walid (maternal uncle of Mu'awiyah), the middle-aged amongst the Muslims (Hamzah) faced 'Utbah (maternal grandfather of Mu'awiyah) and Ubaydah, who was the oldest amongst the Muslim combatants fought with Shaybah, who was oldest from the other side.

Ibn Hisham, however, says that the opponent of Hamzah was Shaybah and that of Ubaydah was Utbah. Now let us see which of the two views is correct. By assessing these views, the real position becomes clear:

1. Historians write that Ali and Hamzah killed their opponents in the very first moment and then hurried to help 'Ubaydah and killed his adversary as well.²¹
2. In a letter written by Ali, the Commander of the Faithful to Mu'awiyah he reminds him in these words: "The sword with which I finished off your maternal grandfather ('Utbah, father of Mu'awiyah's mother,

Hind) and your maternal uncle (Walid bin 'Utbah) and your brother (Hanzala) is still with me (i.e I still possess the same strength)¹.²²

This letter clearly shows that Ali had a hand in the killing of the maternal grandfather of Mu'awiyah, and then we also know that Hamzah and Ali killed their opponents instantly.

If the opponent of Hamzah had been 'Utbah (grandfather of Mu'awiyah) Ali could not say: "O Mu'awiyah! Your grandfather ('Utbah) lost his life on account of the blows of my sword". Hence it cannot be gain said that the adversary of Hamzah was Shaybah and that of 'Ubaydah was 'Utbah and after killing their own opponents Hamzah and Ali went towards 'Utbah and killed him with the blows of their swords.

General Attack Begins

As a consequence of the warriors of Quraysh being killed general attack started, and Quraysh began attacking in groups. The Prophet ordered that the Muslims should refrain from attacking and should prevent the advance of the enemy by means of archery.

Then he came down from the Tower of Command and arranged the lines of his soldiers with a stick. At that moment Sawad bin Ghazbah was standing somewhat forward as compared with the line. The Prophet hit the stick on his belly and said: "Don't stand ahead of other soldiers".²³ Sawad then said: "This blow given to me was unjustified and I want to take revenge".

The Prophet pulled up his shirt immediately and said: "Avenge yourself on me". And then all the soldiers saw that Sawad kissed the chest of the Prophet and put his arm round his neck and said: "I wished to kiss your chest during the last moments of my life."

Then the Prophet returned to the seat of command and with his heart overflowing with faith, turned his face to the Almighty and said: "O Lord! If this group is annihilated today, none else will worship you on the face of the earth."²⁴

The particulars of the general attack have been recorded to some extent in the history of Islam. It is, however, certain that as and when the Prophet came down from the seat of command he encouraged the Muslims to fight in the path of Allah and to attack the enemy.

Once he came suddenly and said to the Muslims with a loud voice: "I swear by Allah who controls Muhammad's soul that whoever fights steadfastly today and his fighting is for Allah's sake and is killed shall be sent by Allah to Paradise".

The words of the Supreme Commander were so effective that some Muslims removed their coats-of-mail from their bodies and began fighting so that they might achieve martyrdom as early as possible. 'Umayr Hamam asked the Prophet: "How much distance is there between me and Paradise?" The Prophet replied: "Fighting with the chiefs of blasphemy". He threw away a few palm-dates which he had

in his hand and began fighting.

Then the Prophet picked up some dust and, throwing it towards Quraysh, said: "May your faces be metamorphosed!"²⁵ Thereafter he gave orders for general attack.

The signs of victory of the Muslims began to appear soon. The enemies were stricken with terror and began to flee. The Muslims, who were fighting with the help of their faith, and knew that both killing and being killed were blessings of Allah, were perfectly undaunted and nothing stopped their advance.

Regard For Rights

Regard for the rights of two groups of persons was necessary. Some of them were those who had meted out good treatment to the Muslims in Makkah and had supported them, for example Abil Bakhtari, who had rendered great services to the Muslims by bringing to an end their economic blockade.

The others were those persons who had come out of Makkah under compulsion and were actually the supporters of Islam and of the Prophet, for example, most of Bani Hisham, like Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet etc.

As the Prophet of Islam was the Messenger of blessings and peace, he gave strict orders that the blood of these two groups should not be shed.

Umayyah Bin Khalaf Is Killed

Umayyah bin Khalaf and his son were captured through Abdur Rahman bin 'Awf. As mutual friendship existed between Umayyah and Abdur Rahman, the latter wished to take him and his son out of the battlefield alive so that they might be taken prisoners.

Bilal, the Ethiopian, was a slave of Umayyah in the past. As Bilal had embraced Islam while he was a slave, Umayyah used to torture him severely. In order to make him abjure Islam he used to make him lie on hot sand during the summer season and placed a big stone on his chest. Even in that condition Bilal used to say: '*Ahad! Ahad!*' (Allah is One. Allah is One). The Ethiopian slave suffered a good deal until a Muslim purchased him and set him free.

In the Battle of Badr Bilal's eyes fell on Umayyah and he realized that Abdur Rahman wanted to favour him. He, therefore, cried aloud: "O friends of Allah! Umayyah is one of the chiefs of unbelievers. He should not be allowed to live". The Muslims encircled Umayyah from all sides and put him and his son to death.

The Prophet had ordered that Abil Bakhtari, who had helped Bani Hashim in the days of economic blockade, should not be killed.²⁶ It so happened that a man named 'Majzar' captured him and was trying to bring him before the Prophet alive, but he, too, was killed.

Amount Of Casualties And Losses

In this battle fourteen men from amongst the Muslims were killed. As regards Quraysh seventy of them were killed and seventy others were captured. Those captured included their chiefs named Nazar Harith, 'Uqbah Mu'it, Abu Ghurrah, Suhayl 'Amr, Abbas and Abul As.²⁷

The martyrs of Badr were buried in a corner of the battlefield. Their graves still exist and devoted Muslims visit them to offer their respects.

Later the Prophet ordered that the dead bodies of Quraysh might be collected and thrown in a well. When the body of 'Utbah was being brought to the well the eyes of his son (Abu Huzayfah) fell on it and he turned pale.

The Prophet observed this and said: "Has any doubt crossed your mind?" He replied: "No, but I imagined that my father possessed wisdom, learning and patience and thought that these qualities might guide him to Islam. However, I have now realized that whatever I had been thinking was wrong".

Then the Prophet went by the side of the well. He uttered the names of everyone of the chiefs of unbelievers and said: "O 'Utbah! O Shaybah! O Umayyah! O Abu Jah! Did you find what your god had promised you to be correct? I have found that which my Allah had promised to be correct and firm".

The companions of the Prophet said: "Are you speaking to the dead bodies?" He replied: "They are hearing my words but are not able to give any reply".²⁸

After The Battle Of Badr

Many Muslim historians believe that in the Battle of Badr single combats and collective attacks continued till midday and the battle came to an end after noontide, when Quraysh fled and some of them were captured. After burying the martyrs the Prophet performed afternoon prayers at that place and came out of the desert of Badr before sunset.

Now the Prophet was faced for the first time with differences between his companions over the division of war booty, and every group claimed that it enjoyed precedence over others.

Those who guarded the Tower of Command of the Supreme Commander claimed that they had protected the life of the Prophet and nothing could be more important than this. Those who had collected war booty claimed precedence over others. And those who had pursued the enemy till the last moment and had made the collection of war booty possible considered themselves to be more deserving than others.

There is nothing more harmful for an army than that the disputes should arise amongst the individuals. In order to curb material desires and suppress all hue and cry, the Prophet entrusted the entire booty to

Abdullah Ka'b and appointed some persons to help him in its transport and safe custody until a solution of the problem was found.

The rules of equity and justice demanded that the entire army should have shared the booty, because all had worked and shouldered responsibility and none of the individuals could achieve anything unless others were also active. While he was on the way, the Prophet divided the booty equally. As regards the Muslims who had been martyred he separated their shares and delivered them to their successors.

The action of the Prophet (dividing the war booty equally) annoyed Sa'd Waqqas, who said to the Prophet: "Do you consider me, who am one of the noble men of Bani Zohrah, at par with these water-carriers and gardeners of Yathrib?"

The Prophet was very much grieved to hear these words and said: "My object in this battle has been to support the weak against the strong and I have been appointed to the prophetic mission to uproot all imaginary discriminations and privileges and to replace them by equality in the rights of men".

As explained in the Qur'anic verses relating to khums:

One fifth of war booty belongs to Allah, His Prophet, the hindered, the orphans, the needy and those who need money while on a journey. (Surah al-Anfal, 8:41).

However, on this occasion, the Prophet distributed khums also amongst the army. It is possible that the verse relating to khums had not been revealed yet or the Prophet, exercising the authority vested in him, refrained from taking khums to increase the shares of the mujahids.

Two Captives Were Killed Enroute

At one of the halting places the captives were made to appear before the Prophet. Out of them Nazar bin Harith, who was one of the sworn enemies of the Muslims, was executed in the strait of 'Safra' and 'Uqbah bin Abi Mu't was killed under the Prophet's orders in 'Irquz Zabiyyah.²⁹

Now the question arises as to why, in spite of the fact that the orders of Islam about the prisoners of war are that they are the slaves of the Muslims and the mujahids, and may be sold in the bazaar at reasonable prices, the Prophet agreed to the execution of these two persons, and how he took such a decision, when he had already said to the Muslims about the captives of Badr: "Be good to the captives".³⁰

Abu Aziz, the standard-bearer of Quraysh in the Battle of Badr, says: 'From the day the Prophet made recommendation for us we became so honourable before the Muslims that they did not touch food until we had been fed first'.

In the circumstances the execution of these two captives was ordered for the sake of general welfare of

the Muslims and not as an act of vengeance, because these two persons were the chiefs of unbelievers and were the plotters against Islam and the instigators of the tribes. Possibly the Prophet was sure that if they were set at large they would once again indulge in such dangerous activities.

Men Dispatched By The Prophet To Madina

Abdullah Rawahah and Zayd Harithah were deputed by the Prophet to reach Madina as soon as possible and to convey good news to the Muslims that Islam had been victorious and the leaders of the unbelievers like 'Utbah, Shaybah, Abu Jahl, Zam'ah, Abul Bakhtari, Umayyah, Nabiyya, Manbah etc. had been killed.

They arrived at the time when the Muslims were returning after burying the daughter of the Prophet, who was the wife of Uthman, and the joy of victory in the war was thus mingled with grief on account of her death.

At the same time the polytheists and the Jews were very much perturbed and unnerved, because they never expected that the Muslims would be blessed with such a victory. They, therefore, endeavoured to make the people believe that the news was false. However, the fact was proved beyond any doubt by the arrival of the army of Islam along with the captives of Quraysh.

Makkans Come To Know About Their Chiefs Being Killed

Haysaman Khaza'i was the first to reach Makkah to inform the people of the bloody events at Badr as well as of their chiefs being killed in the battle. Abu Rafe', who was the slave of Abbas in those days and later became a companion of the Prophet as well as of the Commander of the Faithful, says:

"In those days Islam had illuminated the house of Abbas. He, his wife Ummul Fazal, and myself had embraced Islam, but had kept our faith concealed for fear of the people. When the news of the death of the enemies of Islam at Badr spread we were extremely happy.

However, Quraysh and their supporters were very much grieved and disturbed. Abu Lahab who had not participated in this battle and had sent someone else in his own place was sitting by the well of Zamzam. Suddenly people brought the news that Abu Sufyan Harth had arrived. Abu Lahab said: "Tell him to see me as early as possible".

He came, sat by the side of Abu Lahab, and gave a detailed account of the happenings at Badr. Agitation and fear struck Abu Lahab's heart like lightening. After burning in high fever for seven days he died of some mysterious disease.

The story of the participation in the Battle of Badr of the Prophet's uncle Abbas (who was one of the persons who were captured by the Muslims) is one of the problems of history. How can it be that he insisted upon the people of Madina, at the time of the agreement of 'Aqabah, to support the Prophet and

he is reported to have participated in this battle.

The solution of this problem lies in what his slave Rafe' says. He says that he was one of the persons who, like his brother Abu Talib, believed in the Oneness of Allah and the Prophethood of his nephew, but concealed his faith, keeping in view the exigencies of the time, so that he might assist his nephew and keep him informed of the nefarious plots of Quraysh, just as he had done at the time of the Battle of Uhud.

The spreading of the news of the death of seventy persons from amongst the dear ones of Quraysh caused harassment in many families and made them sad and gloomy.³¹

Wailings And Elegizing Prohibited

In order to keep Quraysh in a state of anger and indignation and to ensure that the people should be always ready to avenge the blood of their warriors Abu Sufyan gave orders that nobody had a right to weep or wail nor should a poet recite mournful verses because these things diminish the sense of revenge and occasion taunts by the enemies.

To incite resentment among the people he also declared that he would not lie with any woman until and unless he had taken revenge upon the Muslims for the blood of those who were killed in Badr.

Aswad Muttalib felt strong indignation on account of losing three of his sons. Suddenly he heard the wailings of a woman. He was pleased and thought that crying for those killed had been allowed. He sent some one to verify his suspicion.

However, the result of investigation was not the same as he had wished, because the woman was crying as she had lost her camel and weeping for a lost camel was not prohibited according to the orders of Abu Sufyan. Aswad felt this very much and composed verses. The translation of two of them is given below:

"Is she crying for her lost camel and does she keep awake during nights for having lost it? No. It is not proper at this moment that she should cry for her camel. Rather it is necessary that she should weep for those who have been killed and with whose death joy, honour and glory have also been lost".³²

Final Decision About The Captives

According to the Islamic law the prisoners of war become slaves of the Muslims and everyone of them is required to work according to his capacity. Educated persons are employed on educating others and industrialists impart instruction in the field of industry. These slaves cannot become free in any case unless they are first purchased by someone, and this had been the practice of the Prophet and of the Muslims during the battles fought and the conquests made by them.

As regards this battle (i.e. Badr), however, it was declared that educated persons could become free if they taught ten boys how to read and write. Others could also purchase their freedom by paying an amount ranging from one thousand dirhams to four thousand dirhams. As regards the poor persons they could be set free without payment of any ransom.

This news caused a thrill in Makkah amongst the relatives of the captives and they sent ransom money to Madina to get them released. When Suhayl 'Amr was set free on payment of ransom, one of the companions of the Prophet requested for permission to pull out his front teeth, so that he could not be able thereafter to speak against Islam. The Prophet did not grant permission to do that and said that it amounted to 'mutilation' which is not permissible in Islam.

Abil As, the son-in-law of the Prophet and husband of his daughter Zaynab, was a respectable tradesman of Makkah. He had married Zaynab during the Age of Ignorance and did not embrace Islam after the appointment of the Prophet to the prophetic mission. He also participated in the Battle of Badr and was taken prisoner. At that time his wife, Zaynab, was in Makkah.

To get her husband released she sent to Madina a necklace which was given to her by her mother Khadijah at the time of her marriage. The Prophet chanced to see the necklace sent by his daughter. He wept and was reminded of the great sacrifices made by Khadijah for the cause of Islam and the enormous wealth spent by her for the advancement of the Divine religion.

To ensure respect for public property he turned to his companions and said: "This necklace is your property and you have full right over it. If you are agreeable it may be returned and Abil As may be set free without realizing any ransom". His companions accepted his suggestion.

Statement Of Ibn Abil Hadid

He says: "I mentioned the incident of Zaynab's necklace before my teacher Abu Ja'far Basri 'Alavi and he confirmed it, but added: "Was it not appropriate that the caliphs should have consoled Fatimah by returning Fadak to her, even if it be supposed that it belonged to the Muslims?" I said: "According to a tradition the Prophets don't leave behind any inheritance and as such Fadak belonged to the Muslims.

In the circumstances how could the property of the Muslims be given to the daughter of the Prophet?" The teacher said: "Did not the necklace, which Zaynab sent for the release of Abil As, belong to the Muslims?"

Abil Hadid says: "I said that the Prophet was the lawgiver and possessed authority in all matters, whereas the caliphs possessed no such authority". The teacher said: "I don't say that the caliphs should have taken Fadak forcibly from the Muslims and given it to Fatimah. What I say is that the ruler of the time didn't consult the Muslims regarding the return of Fadak.

Why did he not stand up like the Prophet and say: 'O people! Fatimah is the daughter of your Prophet.

She desires that the garden of Fadak should be under her control as it used to be during the lifetime of the Prophet. Do you agree that Fadak be returned to her?'

Ibn Abil Hadid writes in the end: "I could say nothing in reply to the eloquent remarks of the teacher and only said this much in his support: 'Abul Hasan Abdul Jabbar has also criticized the caliphs in this behalf and says that though their action was according to law, no regard was shown to the respect and position, to which Zahrah was entitled".³³

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1. Biharul Anwar, vol. XIX, page 217.
 2. Mughazi-i Waqidi, vol. I, page 20.
 3. Tarikh-i Kamil, vol. II, page 81.
 4. Tarikh-i Tabari, vol. II, page 138 and Tarikh-i Kamil, vol. II, page 82.
 5. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. II, pp. 248 – 249.
 6. Mughazi-i Waqidi, vol. I, page 48.
 7. Tarikhi Kamil, vol. II, page 82.
 8. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham vol. I, page 615.
 9. al-Imta'ul Asma', page 74.
 10. Tarikh-i Tabari. vol. II, page 140.
 11. Mughazi-i Waqidi, vol. I, page 248; Seerah-i Halabi, vol. II, page 160 and Biharul Anwar, vol. XIX, page 217.
 12. Tarikh-i Tabari, vol. II, page 140.
 13. Mughazi-i Waqidi, vol. I, page 48; Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. I, page 615.
 14. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. I, page 617.
 15. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. I, p. 620 and Tarikh-i Tabari, vol. II, p. 144.
 16. Tarikh-i Tabari, vol. II, p. 145 and Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. I, p. 620.
 17. Tabaqat, vol. II, page 25.
 18. Nahjul Balaghah, Kalimat-i Qisar, page 214.
 19. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. I, page 622.
 20. Mughazi, vol. I, page 62 and Biharul Anwar, vol. II, page 234.
 21. Tarikh-i Tabari, vol. II, p. 148 and Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. I, p. 625.
 22. Nahjul Balaghah, letters, 28 and 46.
 23. Tarikh-i Ibn Hisham, vol. I, page 626.
 24. Tarikh-i Tabari, vol. II, page 149.
 25. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. I, page 628.
 26. Tabaqat-i Ibn Sa'd, vol. II, page 23.
 27. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. II, pp. 206–207; Mughazi, vol. I, pp. 137–138.
 28. Mughazi-i Waqidi, vol. I, page 117.
 29. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. II, page 645.
 30. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. I, page 645.
 31. Fahrist-i Najashi, page 5.
 32. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. I, page 648.
 33. Sharh-i Nahjul Balaghah by Ibn Abil Hadid, vol. XIV, page 191.