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Chapter 33: The Events of the Third and Fourth Years of Migration

The political effects of the defeat suffered by the Muslims in the Battle of Uhud became crystal clear with its end. Although they displayed steadfastness before the victorious enemy and prevented his return (to Madina), but after the Uhud incident the internal and external movements to overthrow Islam increased.

The hypocrites and the Jews of Madina and the polytheists residing out of the city as well as the idolatrous tribes at distant places developed unusual courage and did not refrain from conspiring and collecting forces and weapons against Islam.

The Prophet silenced the internal movements with great skill, and suppressed, by sending forces, those external tribes which intended to attack Madina. In the meantime a report was received that the tribe of Bani Asad intended conquering Madina and killing the Muslims and looting their property.

The Prophet immediately sent a unit consisting of 150 persons under the command of Abu Salman to the centre of conspiracy. He ordered the commander to keep his object hidden, to travel by a deviated path and to take rest during daytime and travel at night. He acted on the instructions of the Prophet and, besieging the tribe of Bani Asad at night, nipped the plot in the bud and returned to Madina victorious with some war booty. This event took place in the 35th month of migration.

A Dexterously Drawn Plan To Kill The Missionaries

The Prophet frustrated the plans of the conspirators by dispatching military units, and attracted the impartial tribes to the teachings of Islam by sending missionary groups to the different tribes and the centres of populated areas.

Trained missionaries, who had memorized the Holy Qur'an as well as the commandments and traditions of the Prophet, were prepared heart and soul to convey the teachings of Islam to the residents of distant areas, in an elucidated and elegant manner, at the cost of their very lives.

By sending the military units and the missionary groups the Prophet discharged two great responsibilities attached to the lofty office of prophethood. In fact the purpose of dispatching the military units was to maintain peace and to eliminate insecurity and chaos so that the missionary group should perform, in an atmosphere of peace and freedom, its momentous responsibility which consisted of ruling over hearts and guiding the thoughts of the people.

However, some savage and mean tribes practiced deceit upon the missionary group, who constituted the spiritual force of Islam and who had no aim other than advancement of justice and freedom and eradicating infidelity and idolatry. They murdered them in a very tragic manner. We give below an account of what happened to some trained missionaries of Islam, whose number was six according to Ibn Hisham and ten according to Ibn Sa'id

Cruel Massacre Of The Missionaries Of Islam

A group consisting of the representatives of the tribes residing in the adjoining areas practiced deceit to diminish the strength of Islam and to take revenge. They came before the Prophet and said "O Prophet of Allah! Our hearts are inclined towards Islam and our environments are ready for its acceptance. It is necessary that you should depute some of your companions to go with us so that they may propagate Islam in our tribe and teach us the Holy Qur'an and inform us about things which have been made lawful or unlawful by Allah".¹

It was the duty of the Prophet to give a positive reply to this group, which consisted of representatives of big tribes, and the Muslims are under obligation to avail of such an opportunity at any cost. Hence the Prophet ordered a party to proceed to those areas under the leadership of Marsad, along with the representatives of the tribes.

This group, accompanied by the representatives of the tribes, left Madina and went out of the zone of authority of the Muslims and reached a place named Raji'. There the representatives of the tribes manifested their evil intentions and decided, with the help of the tribe named Huzayl, to arrest and kill the persons deputed by the Prophet.

While the Muslims had been encircled from all sides by armed groups they had no means of protecting themselves. They could not do without resorting to draw their swords. They, therefore, unsheathed their swords and got ready to defend themselves. Their enemies, however, swore that they had no other object except that they should arrest them so that they might deliver them alive to the authorities of Quraysh and get money in reward.

The Muslims looked towards one another and decided to fight. They, therefore, replied that they did not rely upon promises of the polytheists and the idolaters, and then resorted to arms and laid down their lives bravely in the path of propagation and defence of Islam. However, three persons named Zayd bin Dasinah, Khubayb Adiy and Tarah sheathed their swords and surrendered. While they were on their way

Tarah regretted and felt ashamed of having surrendered.

He, therefore, managed to release his hand from the chain, took the sword in his hand and attacked the enemies. The enemies retreated and made him yield by flinging stones at him. They stoned him so much that he fell down on the ground and succumbed to his injuries. He was buried at the same place.

The two other prisoners were, however, handed over to the official authorities of Quraysh and against them two prisoners who belonged to the tribe which had arrested the Muslims, were set free.

Safwan Umayyah, whose father was killed in the Battle of Badr, purchased Zayd so as to take revenge of his father. It was decided that Zayd should be hanged in the presence of a big gathering. The gallows was set up at Tan'im.² Quraysh and their friends gathered at that spot on a particular day.

The condemned person was standing by the side of the gallows and only a few minutes of his life were left, when Abu Sufyan, who was the Pharaoh of Makkah and whose hand worked behind the curtain in all these events turned to Zayd and said: "I put you on oath to tell me in the name of the Lord in whom you believe whether you wish that Muhammad may be killed in your place and you may be set free and may return home". Zayd replied bravely: "I don't wish that even a thorn may prick the foot of the Prophet, although I may be set free in lieu thereof".

Zayd's reply had a great effect on Abu Sufyan. He wondered at the extraordinary devotion of the companions of the Prophet and said: "During my entire life I have not seen such devoted and self-sacrificing friends of anyone as those of Muhammad".

Immediately after that Zayd was hanged on the gallows and his soul departed to the other world. He sacrificed his life for the sake of Islam.

The second person namely Khubayb was kept under detention for some time. The Council at Makkah then decided that he too should be hanged at Tan'im.³ Arrangements were made to set up the gallows. While standing by the side of the gallows Khubayb sought permission from the official authorities to offer two rak'ats (units) of prayers. The permission having been granted he offered two rak'ats of prayers with perfect brevity.

Then he turned to the chiefs of Quraysh and said: "If it had not been the fact that you might have thought that I was afraid of death I would have offered more prayers⁴ and would have prolonged ruku' and sujud (kneeling and prostration) of the prayers." Then he raised his face to heavens and said: "O Allah! We performed the duty which was entrusted to us by the Prophet".

Order was given and Khubayb was hanged to death. While on the gallows he said: "O Allah! You can see that there is not even one friend around me who could convey my salam to the Prophet. O Lord! You may kindly convey my salam to him". It would appear that the religious sentiments of this godly person upset Abu 'Uqbah. He rose and killed him by giving a blow on his body.

Ibn Hisham⁵ has quoted that Khubayb recited some couplets before he breathed his last on the gallows: "By Allah! If I die as a Muslim I am not worried about the region in which I am buried. This tragic death of mine is in the path of Allah and if He wishes he can make this martyrdom auspicious for my dismembered limbs".

This heart-rending event deeply moved the Prophet and also overwhelmed all the Muslims with grief. Hassan bin Thabit, the great poet of the Muslims, recited doleful verses which have been quoted by Ibn Hisham in his Seerah.

The Prophet feared that this incident might be repeated and the missionary force, which was trained after taking great pains, might, in this way, sustain an irreparable blow. He also feared that this sacred force, which was superior even to the mujahids who fought on the war-front, might fall prey to the evil designs of the enemies of Islam.

The dead body of Khubayb remained on the gallows for a long period and a group of persons kept a watch on it. Eventually however, as ordered by the Prophet two brave Muslims went at night and buried it.⁶

Tragedy Of Bi'r Ma'unah

The third year of migration, with all its bitter and instructive events, came to an end and the fourth year started with the sighting of Muharram moon. In the month of Safar of the same year Abu Bara'a came to Madina and the Prophet invited him to embrace Islam. To this he did not agree, but he also did not seek aloofness. He said to the Prophet: "If you send a strong missionary force to the people of Najd it may be hoped that they will embrace Islam as they are much inclined to it". The Prophet replied: "I am afraid of the deceit and enmity of the people of Najd. I apprehend that the tragedy of Raji', which resulted in a number of learned and missionary persons being killed may be repeated". Abu Bara'a said: "The force to be deputed by you will be under my protection and I guarantee that I will protect them from every harm".

Forty learned Muslims who had memorized the Holy Qur'an and various religious tenets of Islam left for Najd under the leadership of Munzir and encamped by the side of Bi'r Ma'unah. The Prophet wrote a letter (consisting of invitation to the religion of Islam) to one of the chiefs of Najd named 'Amir. Not only that 'Amir did not read the letter but he also put its bearer to death. He also sought assistance from the adjoining tribes, and the area where the missionary force had encamped was encircled by his men.

The persons forming the missionary force of Islam were not only senior and proficient missionaries but they were also considered to be brave and war-like persons. They, therefore, thought it a shame for themselves to surrender. Hence, they took up arms and all of them, except one, met martyrdom after giving a tough fight. The only survivor was Ka'b bin Zayd who reached Madina with a wounded body and gave information about what had happened.⁷

These two tragic events were the evil results of the defeat sustained by the Muslims at Uhud, which encouraged the adjoining tribes to resort to their killing.

Partial Behaviour Of The Orientalists

The orientalist, who make capital of a scratch on the face of an idolater and cast aspersions on Islam and the Muslims to prove that Islam was spread with the force of sword, close their lips with regard to these two tragic events and do not utter even a word about them.

Where in the world learned and sacred people are put to sword? If Islam has flourished under the shadow of sword what for did these missionary groups sacrifice their lives?

These two events possess certain vital and instructive points. The strength of faith, self-sacrifice, valour and moral heroism of these great souls is the ground on which the fate of the Muslims is based. It deserves their admiration and should serve as an example for them.

A True Believer Is Never Stung From The Same Hole Twice

The tragic events of Raji' and Bi'r Ma'unah which culminated in the murder of the missionary force of Islam grieved the Muslims very much. At this juncture most of the readers may be automatically inclined to ask as to why the Prophet resorted to this action. When he had bitter experience of the first event (Raji') why did he send forty persons to Bi'r Ma'unah? Had not the Prophet himself said: "A true believer is never stung from the same hole twice?"

Reply to this question becomes clear when we refer to the texts of history, because the safety of the second group had been guaranteed by Abu Bara'a 'Amir bin Malik bin Ja'far who was the chief of the tribe of Bani 'Amir, and a tribe never acted against the intentions of its chief. Furthermore, in order to give more assurance, he himself decided to remain in Madina till the return of the missionary party.

The plan drawn out by the Prophet was correct and capable of yielding results. The fact is that the members of the Muslim missionary party were not killed at the hands of the tribesmen of Abu Bara'a. No doubt his nephew viz.

'Amir bin Tufayl instigated the tribe of Abu Bara'a against the missionary party but none of them listened to him and all of them said: "Your uncle has guaranteed their safety". Eventually 'Amir bin Tufayl obtained help from other tribes like Salim and Zakwan and killed the members of the missionary party of Islam.

When the Muslim missionary party proceeded to the region of Abu Bara'a they selected two persons from amongst themselves named 'Amr bin Umayyah and Harith bin Simmah⁸ so that they might take the camels for grazing and look after them. These two persons were performing the duty entrusted to them and were not aware of the fate of their companions. Suddenly 'Amir bin Tufayl fell upon them. As a result

of this Harith bin Simmah was killed, whereas 'Amr bin Umayyah escaped.

While on his way back to Madina 'Amr bin Umayyah came across two men and felt sure that they belonged to the tribes whose members had killed the missionary party of Islam. He, therefore, killed both of them while they were asleep and then returned to Madina.

'Amr had made a wrong conclusion. Those persons belonged to the tribe of Abu Bara'a (Bani 'Amir tribe) who respected the blood of the Muslim missionaries because of the respect which they had for their own chief.

This incident also added to the grief of the Prophet and he decided to pay the blood money for the two men.

1. Mughazi-i Waqidi, vol. I, page 354.

2. 'Tan'im' is a point which is considered to be the beginning of 'Haram' and the end of 'Hil' and ehram is worn at that spot For Umra-i Mufradah'.

3. Waqidi says that both the captives were hanged on the same day. (Mughazi, vol. I, page 358).

4. Mughazi Waqidi, vol. I, page 359.

5. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. II, page 170.

6. Safinatul Bihar, vol. I, page 382.

7. Mughazi-i Waqidi, vol. I, pp. 349-364.

8. As quoted by Ibn Hisham in his Seerah, vol. II, page 186, it was Munzir bin Muhammad.

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