

Chapter 61: The Events of the Eleventh Year of Migration

The Impostors And Apprehensions Of Rome

After the formalities regarding the appointment of the successor had been completed at Ghadir Khum, all the people who had come from Syria and Egypt to partake in the ceremonies of Haj took their leave of the Prophet at Juhfah and proceeded to their homes.

And the persons, who had come from Hazramaut and Yemen, also separated from the Haj caravan at this or an earlier point and left for their homes. However, the ten thousand persons who had come with the Prophet from Madina accompanied him back to Madina and reached there before the close of the tenth year of migration

The Prophet and the Muslims were happy that Islam had spread throughout Arabia, the rule of polytheism and idolatry had come to an end throughout the Hijaz and all impediments in the way of the spread of Islam had been removed.

The Muharram moon of the 11th year of migration was about to be sighted in Madina when two persons came there from Yamamah and brought a letter for the Prophet from Musaylimah, who later became known as Musaylimah Kazzab (viz. Musaylimah, the Liar).

One of the secretaries of the Prophet opened the letter and read it over to him. The letter showed that a man known as Musaylimah claimed to be a prophet in Yamamah. He claimed to be a partner of the Prophet in the prophethood and desired by means of the said letter to inform the Prophet about this.

The text of Musaylimah's letter has been preserved in the books of biography and Islamic history. The phraseology of the letter shows that the writer wants to imitate the manner of the Holy Qur'an. However, this imitation has made his letter so insipid, degraded and worthless that his other usual sentences are far better than it.

In his letter he wrote to the Prophet thus: "I have been made your partner in the matter of prophethood. Half of the land belongs to us and the other half belongs to Quraysh. However, Quraysh do not act justly".

When the Prophet came to know about the contents of the letter he turned to those, who had brought it and said: "If you had not been the ambassadors and messengers I would have ordered you to be put to death. When you had already embraced Islam and acknowledged my prophethood, why did you follow such a blockhead and give up the sacred religion of Islam? The Prophet called his secretary and dictated a brief but pithy and strong reply. Here is the text of the Prophet's letter:

"In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

This is a letter from Muhammad, the Prophet of Allah to Musaylimah, the Liar. Peace be upon the followers of guidance. The earth belongs to Allah and He gives it to those pious servants of His, whom He wishes. And the pious persons meet a good end.¹

A Short Biography Of Musaylimah

He was one of those persons, who came to Madina in the tenth year of migration and embraced Islam. However, after his return to his birthplace he himself claimed to be a prophet and some simple-minded and also some fanatical persons responded to his call. His popularity in Yamamah was not a manifestation of his real personality.

Some people had gathered round him knowing that he was a liar and their logic was this: "A liar of Yamamah is better than a truthful person of the Hijaz". This sentence was uttered by one of the supporters of Musaylimah when he asked him: "Does an angel descend on you?" He said: "Yes. Its name is Rahman". The man asked: "Is that angel in light or in darkness?"

Musaylimah replied: "In darkness". The man said "I testify that you are a liar. However, a liar of the Rabi'ah tribe of Yamamah is better than a truthful person of the Mazar tribe of the Hijaz" (By the truthful person of Mazar he meant the Prophet of Islam.)

It cannot be gain said that this man claimed to be a prophet and gathered some persons round him. However, it is not at all established that he planned to contend with the Holy Qur'an, and the sentences and verses which have been quoted in the historical texts as examples of his contention with the Qur'an cannot be the logic and wording of an eloquent person like Musaylimah, because his usual words and sentences carry great firmness and self-possession.

In view of this it may be said that whatever has been attributed to him is like the sentences which have been attributed to his contemporary Aswad bin Ka'b 'Unsi who claimed to be a prophet in Yemen simultaneously with Musaylimah² and it is not improbable that all these may be mere embellishments, in both the cases, resorted to with some specific motives.

The reason for holding this view is that the Holy Qur'an possesses such an unusual greatness and eloquence that nobody can pick up courage to think of contending with it and every Arab knew clearly that it was humanly impossible to imitate.

After the demise of the Prophet campaign against the apostates was the first action of the Islamic Caliphate. Hence, the zone of Musaylimah's influence was besieged by the forces of Islam.

When the siege was tightened and the eventual defeat of this pretender became evident some of his simple-minded friends said to him: "What has happened to the occult help and support which you had promised us? Musaylimah replied: "There is no news about occult law and help. It was a false promise which I gave you. However, it is incumbent upon you to defend your honour and greatness".

However, defence of honour and greatness was of little avail! Musaylimah and a group of his friends were killed within the precincts of a garden and the false prophethood met the end it deserved.

The very sentence translated above shows that he was an eloquent speaker and it also shows that he is not at all the speaker of those insipid sentences, which history has attributed to him, as specimens of his contention with the Holy Qur'an.

Apprehension Of Rome

Although the appearance of such impostors to prophethood in different parts of Arabia constituted a danger for Islamic unity, the Prophet was more worried about the Romans, who held Syria and Palestine as a part of their colonies, because he knew that the able and competent Governors of Yamamah and Yemen would be able to deal with the impostors to prophethood.

Hence, Aswad Unsi, the second impostor during the time of the Prophet was killed, as a result of the measures adopted by the Governor of Yemen, only one day before the Prophet breathed his last.

The Prophet was sure that the powerful Rulers of Rome, who were watching the ever increasing influence of the Islamic Government, would be disturbed as Christianity has been losing its influence in Arabia and Islam having obliged some Christians to pay tribute to the Islamic Government. He had been apprehending very seriously the danger from the side of Romans for quite some time.

It was for this very reason that in the eighth year of Migration he sent an army to the territory of the Romans under the command of Ja'far bin Abi Talib, Zayd bin Harith and Abdullah Rawaha, and in this encounter all the three commanders were killed and the army of Islam returned to Madina, as a result of the management of Khalid, without achieving victory.

When the news of the intended attack upon the Hijaz by Romans spread in Madina in 9 A.H. the Prophet proceeded to Tabuk personally at the head of 30,000 strong army and, returned to Madina without fighting and without encountering the enemy.

In view of all this the Prophet apprehended very serious danger and for this reason he organized, after return to Madina, an army consisting of the Muhajirs and the Ansar, which included distinguished persons like Abu Bakr, Umar, Abi 'Ubaydah, Sa'd Waqqas etc. In fact he ordered that all those Muhajirs who had migrated to Madina earlier than others should participate in this battle.³

In order to arouse the religious sentiments of the Muslim warriors the Prophet fastened a standard for Usamah with his own hands⁴ and gave him the following instructions:

"Fight in the name of Allah and in His path. Fight against the enemies of Allah. Attack the people of Unba⁵ early in the morning and cover this distance so quickly that you and your soldiers should arrive at that place before the news of your march reaches there".

Usamah gave the standard to Buraydah and fixed Jurf⁶ to be his camping-place so that the Muslim soldiers might arrive there in groups and then all might depart at a fixed time.

The Prophet had two things in view while he selected a young man to be the head of the army and placed the elders from amongst the Muhajirs and the Ansar under his command; firstly he wanted to compensate Usamah for the calamity which had befallen him on account of his having lost his father in the Battle of Muthah and to exalt his personality; secondly he wished to revive the law of distribution of work and position on the basis of personality and ability, and wanted to make it clear that public offices and situations demand nothing except ability and skill and have nothing to do with age, so that capable young men might prepare themselves for important public responsibilities and should know that in Islam status and office have a direct link with ability and skill and not with years and age.

Islam is strict discipline in accordance with the Divine teachings; and a real Muslim is he, who submits before Allah's orders like a soldier on the battlefield, and accepts those orders sincerely—whether they result in his benefit or in his loss, and whether they are according to his wishes or against them.

Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, defines the reality of Islam in a brief but very pithy sentence. He says: Islam is nothing except submission to its orders".⁷

Some persons resort to discrimination in the matter of rules and regulations of Islam, and whenever they find them to be opposed to their personal wishes, they at once raise objections and try to find some pretext to divest themselves of their obligations. These people lack Islamic discipline, and do not possess the real spirit of submission, which is the basis and root of Islam.

The commandership of the young man, Usamah bin Zayd, whose age did not then exceed twenty years,⁸ is a clear proof of what we have said above, because his status annoyed a number of the companions, who were much older than he. They began to sneer and object and utter words which showed lack of military discipline and absence of the spirit of submission to the orders of the Supreme Commander of Islam (i.e. the Prophet).

Their main objection was that the Prophet had appointed a young man as the commander of senior companions.⁹ They were, however, not aware of the greater interests involved in the matter as explained by us in the foregoing lines, they assessed it in accordance with their limited wisdom and personal interests.

Notwithstanding the fact that they felt clearly that the Prophet was endeavouring to mobilize this army, some mysterious hands were delaying its departure from the camping-place at Jurf and were plotting evil designs.

The next day after the Prophet fastened the standard of war for Usamah, he fell sick with high fever and headache. This ailment continued for some days and eventually resulted in his tragic demise.

The Prophet became aware, during his illness, that the movement of the army from the camping-place was being obstructed, and some persons were sneering at the commandership of Usamah. This annoyed him immensely and with a towel on his shoulder and a piece of cloth tied to his head, he went into the mosque so that he might speak to the Muslims from near and warn them with regard to the violation of his orders.

While he had high temperature, he mounted the pulpit and, after glorifying the Almighty Allah, spoke thus: "Yes, O people! I am very sad on account of delay in the departure of the army. It appears that the commandership of Usamah has been disliked by some of you, and you have started raising objections.

However, your objections and disobedience is nothing new. Previously you criticized the commandership of Usamah's father Zayd. I swear by Allah that he was fit for this office and his son is also fit for it. He is dear to me. O people! Be good to him, and, also, recommend to others that they should be good to him. He is one of your good ones".

The Prophet finished his sermon at this juncture, dismounted from the pulpit and went into bed with a high fever and a heavy body. He repeatedly recommended to the senior companions, who came to enquire after his health "Make Usamah's army move".¹⁰ And at times he said: "Equip Usamah's army" or "Send Usamah's army".

The Prophet was so keen for the departure of Usamah's army that while he was bed-ridden on account of illness, asked his companions to equip Usamah's army for departure, he also cursed those, who wished to separate themselves from the army and to stay on in Madina.¹¹

These recommendations led to the elders from amongst the Muhajirs and the Ansar coming to see the Prophet to bid him farewell and then willy nilly leave Madina to join the army of Usamah at the camping-place of Jurf.

During the two or three days when Usamah was busy arranging the preliminaries of the march, news about the serious condition of the Prophet were reaching from Madina and weakened the determination

of the people to depart, until, on Monday the commander of the army came to bid farewell to the Prophet and noticed some improvement in him.

The Prophet asked him to proceed to his destination as early as possible. He returned to the camping-place and issued orders for the march of the army. The army had not yet left Jurf (the camping-place) when news reached from Madina that the Prophet was on the brink of the grave.

Some persons, who had delayed the departure of the army for sixteen days on different excuses, made the serious condition of the Prophet a pretext and returned to Madina, and others also followed suit. Thus one of the earnest desires of the Prophet could not be fulfilled during his lifetime on account of the indiscipline of some of the officers of the army.¹²

A Lame Excuse

It is not possible to explain away such a mistake on the part of some of those companions who later held the reins of the Caliphate and assumed the title of the Caliph of the Prophet! Some scholars of Ahl Sunnat have endeavoured to explain away their disobedience in various ways. For the perusal of their unfounded apologies, refer to the books entitled al-Muraji'at¹³ and al-Nass wal Ijtihad.¹⁴

Seeking Forgiveness For Those Buried In Baqi

Some of the biographers have stated thus: "On the day the Prophet's temperature became very high and he was confined to bed, he went to the graveyard of Baqi at midnight, accompanied by his servant Abi Muwayhabah¹⁵ to seek forgiveness for those buried there.

Some historians believe that on the day the Prophet felt unwell he caught the hand of Ali and proceeded to the graveyard of Baqi along with a group of persons, who were following them, and said to those accompanying him: "I have been ordered by Allah to seek forgiveness for the people of Baqi".

When he set his foot in the graveyard he greeted those buried there, and spoke thus: "I send my greetings to you, who are buried under earth. May the condition in which you are, be happy and wholesome for you. Disturbances have appeared like the parts of a dark night and are united with one another". Then he sought forgiveness for the people of Baqi.

Thereafter he turned to Ali and said: "The key of the treasures of the world and prolonged life in it has been presented to me and I have been given a choice between them and meeting Allah and entry into Paradise but I have preferred meeting Allah and entry into Paradise. (As quoted by the narrators of Tabaqat etc. he turned his face to Abi Muwayhabah)

"The Archangel Jibreel used to present the Qur'an to me once every year, but this year he has presented it to me twice. There can be no reason for this except that the time of my departure has drawn near".¹⁶

The people, who see this world with material eyes only, and do not consider the aim of creation to be anything beyond matter and its manifestations, may perhaps entertain doubts in this regard and may say to themselves: "How can one contact the souls and converse with them and how can one become aware of the time of one's own death?"

However, the people, who have disavowed materialism and believe in the existence of a soul independent of the elemental body, do not at all deny contact with the souls and consider it to be something possible and real. 17723

A Prophet, who is connected with the world of revelation and other worlds independent of matter, and who is free from mistakes, can certainly give information regarding Allah's will about his death.

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1. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. II, pp. 600-601.
 2. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. I, page 599.
 3. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. II, page 642 and al-Nass wal Ijtihad (page 12) by Sharafuddin 'Amili.
 4. According to the historical sources of Ahl sunnat the standard was fastened on the 26th of Safar and as, according to them, the death of the Prophet took place on the 12th of Rabiul Awwal; hence all the events which the readers will peruse are likely to have taken place during a period of sixteen days. However, as the Shi'ah scholars, following the descendants of the Prophet consider the date of his death to be 28th Safar, it would be necessary that these events should have taken place some days earlier than 28th Safar.
 5. It is a strip of land in the region of Balqa in Syria and is situated between 'Asqalan and Ramlah near Muta'.
 6. It is an extensive place three miles away from Madina towards the side of Syria.
 7. Nahjul Balaghah, Kalimat-i Qisar, (saying No. 125).
 8. Some of the biographers like Halabi have mentioned his age to be 17 and according to some others he was 18. However, all are agreed that his age at that time did not exceed 20.
 9. Tabaqat-i Ibn Said, vol. II, page 120.
 10. Tabaqat-i Ibn Sa'd, vol. II, page 190.
 11. al-Milal wan Nahl by Shahrastani, Fourth Preface page 29 and Sharh-i Nahjul Balaghah by Ibn Abil Hadid, vol. II, page 20.
 12. Tabaqat, vol. II, page 190.
 13. al-Muraji'at, pages 310 - 311.
 14. al-Nass wal Ijtihad, pp. 15 - 19.
 15. Some say that he was accompanied by Abu Rafe' or by Burayrah, the servant of A'isha (Tabaqat, vol. II, page 204).
 16. Tabaqat, vol. II, page 204 and Bihar, vol. XXII, page 466.
 17. However, as has also been stated in discussions relating to contact with the souls, it is not proper to listen to every claimant.

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