

Chapter 8: Dawn of Islam in Medina

Islam had reached Madina before the Holy Prophet's migration to that city, because the leaders of Aws and Khazraj who were the distinguished personalities of these two tribes, and the Yemenite supporters of the Prophet (S) had started propagating Islam on their return to Madina after taking the oath of allegiance to the Prophet (S) at 'Aqaba.

The life of the Prophet (S) in this city was quite different from that in Makkah. In Makkah he lived in the capacity of a missionary and the enmity and obstinacy of Quraysh did not allow that his message should go beyond the stage of an invitation which was confined to promises and threats and giving good tidings and warning about bad consequences. However, when he arrived in the city of Madina his invitation assumed a different shape, because here he performed the role of a founder and a lawgiver, and had been relieved to some extent of the process of invitation and propagation, He started the process of regulation, construction, administration, and foundation of legislation, The things assumed this shape especially after the Muslims had migrated from Makkah and joined the Prophet (S) in Madina.

Later the persons, who had migrated to Ethiopia, also came over to this city, and now onerous duties and responsibilities regarding establishment devolved upon the Prophet. These people who gathered round the Holy Prophet (S) in this land of peace were recognized to be the nucleus of the new Islamic State and took the central authority in their hands. The houses of the Muslim residents of Madina, who came to be known as Ansar, were filled with the Muhajirs (immigrants). The kind-hearted Ansar did not grudge the presence of these guests and accorded them a cordial welcome with great enthusiasm.

As all these Muhajirs who were continuously pouring into Madina, had not come for a temporary stay but had decided to live in this city permanently. As they preferred their new homeland to the old one their arrival was a problem which required tackling,

The difficulty was to be solved in such a way that the guests should live a free life in this city having due regard for the freedom of the hosts, and that everyone must discharge his own responsibility.

For this reason the Holy Prophet (S) started settlement and commenced with the construction of houses and buildings to be occupied by his migrating companions. Before the foundation of any building was laid the Prophet (S) ordered the construction of a masjid i.e. the house of Allah. From amongst the Muhajirs 'Ammar was for some time a guest of Mubashshir bin Abdul Munzir till the Prophet (S) thought of another house for him. He himself worked with 'Ammar in constructing the new house for him.

In those days there existed amongst the Muslims a group of persons in whose minds the spirit of Islam had not penetrated and it might be said that whatever they said about Islam with their tongues did not come from their hearts. In other words they were the persons who had embraced Islam on account of covetousness, as they imagined that it would be beneficial for them to do so, and by that means they would acquire wealth and status!

On the whole the number of these persons was not small and they were not weak and helpless. It is evident that the Prophet of Allah was also not oblivious of this state of affairs,

Almighty Allah had specially revealed some chapters of the Holy Qur'an including Surah al-Tawba, Surah al-Munafiqun and Surah al-Ahzab about these persons.

The Holy Prophet (S) was not unaware of their hypocrisy; rather he excused and forgave them; and on the basis of peacefulness, on which the entire programme of Islam rested, he allowed them the same rights and privileges that were granted to the true believers. He accepted such persons as Muslims in accordance with the general rule and the sacred verse of the Qur'an which says:

You should not tell anyone who greets you that he is not a Muslim (Surah al Nisa, 4:94).

This was not withstanding the fact that the faith of these persons was shaky and they entertained doubts in their hearts regarding the limits and laws prescribed by Islam.

In such an atmosphere 'Ammar was reckoned to be one of the chosen believers and distinguished persons possessing faith and piety. He was one of those persons who had suffered severe persecution and torture in Makkah being a companion of the Holy Prophet, and had since become free from such torments, arrived in the peaceful land of Madina. Not withstanding this he did not slacken the campaign and strife which he had started in the very beginning for the defence of Islam and there was no diminishing in the zeal and enthusiasm of his faith.

The only difference which had taken place was that his resistance against all those tortures, which formerly possessed the form of a negative campaign, had now assumed the shape of a positive campaign in the peaceful atmosphere of Madina, and he sincerely performed functions for the strengthening of Islam, which it was not possible for other Muslims to undertake.

Notwithstanding all this ‘Ammar continued his mission, untainted by hypocrisy and far removed from hue and cry. His silence used to be a long one associated with reflection and insight and he did not speak except when necessary. Whenever he broke his silence he sought Allah's refuge from mischief. It might be said that he was always expecting mischief.

Of course he had tasted the flavour of hardships in advance, and had perceived that a group of hypocrites, who lived among the Muslims, were offended, because Islam had given freedom to persons like ‘Ammar, and had even given them superiority over many others and had elevated their position, established equality between all Muslims, removed discriminations and differences, obliterated bias, and established brotherhood between black and white and master and slave.

‘Ammar was very much worried on this account and as and when he broke his silence he said for the fear of the future mischief which lay in ambush for the Muslims: "I seek Allah's refuge from mischief."

One morning the Prophet (S) passed along a piece of land which belonged to the orphans of Amr Najjiri, and in which camels were made to rest. He purchased this tract from their guardian, Mu‘az bin‘Afra ' for a handsome price so as to build on it a masjid as well as houses for indigent Muhajirs.

At the time of the construction of this building, the Holy Prophet (S) also rolled up his sleeves like other Muslims and began doing work. This Islamic equality was a silent invitation for all the Muslims to show that every one of them should participate in the work without any sense of pride or egotism. The Muslims who observed the conduct of the Prophet (S) said: "If we sit while the Prophet (S) works, our act will be the cause of our perversion."

This was the melody which the Muslims recited in reply to the action of the Prophet. And while reciting this melody they busied themselves in the constructional work. They carried bricks and mud, rose up the trunks of date palm trees and placed them on the walls. They covered the roof of the building in this manner and remained busy in work with great enthusiasm and fervour. Usually every Muslim worker carried one brick but ‘Ammar carried two and moved with great agility.

When all the Muslims took part in the work the first melody was replaced by a new one. It was said that the new melody had been composed by ‘Ali. ‘Ammar repeated this melody. The Holy Prophet (S) who was working behind him made the bricks and uttered the last part of the melody.

From within his house, which overlooked the masjid, ‘Uthman bin Affan heard this melody and also looked in. As soon as dust and soil of the walls which had been pulled down settled on his hair he turned back his face, cleansed his nose with his dress, and stepped back. Later he came into the masjid and began doing his work.

‘Ammar began reciting the same melody again and said: "Those who construct a masjid while sitting or standing, and make efforts in the performance of this job, are not equal to those who are seen to be turning away from dust."

‘Uthman could hear the Holy Prophet (S) repeating the verse, and was grieved to realize that the intention behind reciting this melody was to criticize him, As, however, the Prophet (S) was repeating the verse at the back of ‘Ammar and was handing over the bricks to him, he (‘Uthman) could not say anything to him (‘Ammar), Nevertheless, as soon as he (‘Uthman) got an opportunity he turned to ‘Ammar and said: "O son of Sumayya! Today I could hear what you were saying. By Allah, I was going to strike this stick on your head. You slave!"

The Prophet (S) became aware of this. He was annoyed and said: "What do they want from ‘Ammar? ‘Ammar invites them to Paradise and they invite ‘Ammar to Hell. Of course, ‘Ammar is like a skin which lies between my two eyes and protects them. ‘Ammar is like a skin of my nose. If these words reach the ears of ‘Uthman and he does not cooperate with ‘Ammar, you should get aloof from him." This tradition shows how dear ‘Ammar was to the Prophet (S).

One day ‘Ammar did not participate in the work on account of some dissatisfaction and complaint which he had. It was then said that ‘Ammar had an attack of fever and had died. As soon as the Holy Prophet (S) heard this remark of the hypocrites he threw on the ground the brick which he was holding in his hand and said: "Alas, O son of Sumayya! A rebellious group will kill you!"

On the following day when ‘Ammar turned up to work the Holy Prophet (S) welcomed him with great kindness and love. On account of the great longing which he had to see ‘Ammar he drew his hand on ‘Ammar's head and said: "Rebellious and oppressive people will kill you!"

From that day onwards the hypocrites stung him continuously and discussed his death and the Prophet's remark that he would be killed by a rebellious group was commonly talked about. Thereafter this remark had a great effect on the thinking of ‘Ammar just as he had experienced many such important things regarding Islam.

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