

Chapter 18: Rusty Weapons

The ruling forces of idolatry were in a state of readiness throughout the Arabian Peninsula. Quraysh had organized their ranks to campaign against the worship of Allah the One. At the early stages they wished to make the Prophet abandon his mission by alluring him and offering him wealth and authority, but were faced with his well-known reply: "By Allah! Even if you place the sun on my right hand and the moon on my left hand (i.e. give me authority over the entire world) I shall not abandon this mission". Then they started threatening, humiliating and persecuting his friends and were never tired of harming and torturing them.

However, the heroism and steadfastness of his sincere friends made them succeed in this ordeal also, so much so that they purchased their perseverance in the path of Islam by abandoning their homes, and endeavoured to spread this sacred religion by migrating to Ethiopia. However, the operations of the ruling forces of idolatry to uproot the sapling of Islam had not yet ended. Rather they now sought to use a sharper weapon.

This weapon was that of anti-Muhammad propaganda. Evidently torture and oppression could prevent from adopting Islam, only those persons, who were residing in Makkah. It could not be effective in respect of those who came to Makkah in groups during the sacred months, to perform the pilgrimage of the House of Allah.

The pilgrims contacted the Prophet in an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity and even if they did not embrace his religion they at least became shaky about their own creed (idol-worship). And when they left Makkah after a few days and returned to their homes, they carried the name of the Prophet and the story of the new religion to all the corners of Arabia. And this in itself was considered to be a severe blow to the rule of idolatry, and was a wonderful factor leading to the expansion of Islam.

The elders of Quraysh, therefore, put another destructive programme into practice and wished to withhold by this means the expansion of the Prophet's religion and thus to cut off his contacts with the Arab society.

Undue Calumnies

The character of man can be understood best from under the veil of the abuses and calumnies of his enemy. In order to misguide the people the enemy always endeavours to make such accusations against his opponent as are palatable to the society to the extent of even one per thousand so that by spreading falsehoods and baseless things he may, as far as possible, diminish his honour and position.

A wise enemy endeavours to impute such things to his opponent as are believed by some particular persons or are at least doubted by them. He does not, however, circulate about his opponent those things, which do not at all apply to him and have no bearing on his well-known and obvious mentality and deeds, because otherwise he would achieve results contrary to those desired by him.

As such a proficient historian can study the real countenance of the other party from behind the falsehoods and calumnies and can learn about his social success and mentality even from behind the control tower of the enemy.

It is so because a shamelessly fearless enemy does not avoid publishing a false charge which is to his advantage and derives maximum benefit from the sharp weapon of propaganda to the extent his thinking, intelligence and knowledge of the situation permit him. If, therefore, he does not associate anything undue with the other party it is because that person is free from every such weakness and the society is not, therefore, prepared to accept that stuff.

The history of Islam shows that although Quraysh entertained unusual enmity and rancour against the Prophet and were keen to pull down the newly-built edifice of Islam at all costs and to diminish the personality and position of its founder, they could not make full use of this weapon (i.e. calumny). They wondered what to say when the property of some of their own people was lying at his house (i.e. as trust) and his forty years' noble life had proved him to be an honest man.

Could they possibly accuse him of sensuality? But how could they bring this word on their tongue? He began his manhood with a comparatively old woman and was still spending his days with her when Quraysh met to organize propaganda against him! They then reflected as to what they should say so that it might apply to him and at least one per cent of the people might accept it to be probably true.

The elders of Darun Nadwah were puzzled as to how they should use this weapon against him. They, therefore, decided to place the matter before one of the sages of Quraysh and to implement his advice. An assembly was formed.

Walid turned to Quraysh and said: "The Haj season is near and during these days people come to this city in large numbers to perform various obligations and ceremonies attached to Haj. Muhammad will make use of the opportunity afforded by the freedom available during these days and will propagate his religion. It will be better if Quraysh express their final view about him and his new religion. Hence, all

should communicate only one opinion to the Arabs, because diversity of opinions will make their words ineffective".

Having said this the sage of Arabia thought over the matter and said: "What should we say?" One of them suggested: "We should say that he is a soothsayer". Walid did not like this suggestion and said: "What Muhammad says is not like the words of the soothsayers".

Another person proposed that they should call him insane. This proposal was also rejected by Walid, who said: "No signs of insanity are found in him". After much discussion they decided unanimously thus: "We should say that he is a magician, because his way of saying things is magical and the proof of this is that by means of his Qur'an he has created dissension amongst the Makkans, whose harmonious relations were proverbial, and has destroyed their unity.¹

While commenting on Surah al-Muddaththir the exegetes have given another version of this matter. They say: "When Walid heard some verses of Surah al-Fussilat from the Holy Prophet, he was spell bound and it made his hair stand on end. He left for his house and did not come out again. Quraysh began ridiculing him and said that Walid had become a follower of the religion of Muhammad. They went to his house collectively and enquired from him about the reality of Muhammad's Qur'an.

Whenever anyone of those present made a suggestion on the above lines he rejected it. Eventually he expressed the view that they should call the Holy Prophet a magician, on account of the discord which he had created between them, and should say that he has a magical way of saying things!

The exegetes believe that the verses (11–26) of Surah al-Muddaththir commencing with

"Leave to Me the man, whom I have created alone, up to "I shall make him suffer the torment of Hell,"

have been revealed about Walid ibn Mughayrah.²

Persistence in Attributing Insanity

It is an admitted fact of history that from his early manhood the Prophet was known for his uprightness and truthfulness, and even his enemies bent down their heads involuntarily before his high qualities. One of his outstanding attributes was that the people called him truthful and honest, so much so that the idol-worshippers used to deposit their belongings with him till ten years after the general invitation.

As the invitation of the Prophet was very unpleasant and indigestible for his enemies, their only effort was that they should turn away the people from him by means of words which could completely contaminate their minds. As they knew that attributing falsehood and calumny to the Prophet would not impress the minds of the artless and simple idolaters they were compelled to deny his invitation by saying that the source of his views and thoughts was insanity which was incompatible with the qualities

of piety and righteousness. They made many evil designs and practiced cunning and deceit in propagating this hypocritical imputation.

On account of acute hypocrisy they pretended to be quite honest while making this imputation and expressed the matter in ambiguous terms and said:

"Has he invented a lie About Allah, or is he mad?" (Surah Saba, 34:8).

And this is the very devilish method which the enemies of reality adopt while denying great men and reformers of the society. The Holy Qur'an tells that this abominable method was not peculiar to the contemporaries of the Holy Prophet, as the enemies of earlier Prophets had also used this weapon to contradict them. It says:

Thus whenever an apostle came to those that flourished before them they cried: 'Sorcerer!' or 'Madman!' Have they handed down this cry from one generation to the next? Surely they are transgressors all". (Surah al-Zariyat, 51: 52-53)

The present Injeel also tells that when 'Isa gave counsel to the Jews they said: 'There is satan in him and he talks incoherently. Why do you listen to him?' (St. John, chapter, 10:20 and chapter, 7:48, 52)

No doubt if Quraysh had been in a position to slander the Prophet on any other account they would not have desisted from doing so. However, for more than forty years the honourable life of the Prophet checked them from uttering any other calumny against his character although they were ready to use the smallest thing against him.

For example, he used to sit at times near Marwah with a Christian slave named Jabr. His enemies immediately took advantage of this practice of his and said: "Muhammad learns the Qur'an from this Christian slave". The Holy Qur'an replies thus to their baseless accusation: "We know that they say that a man teaches him the Qur'an. However, the language of the man whom they mention is non-Arabic, whereas this (the Qur'an) is in clear Arabic." [3](#)

Imposture of Nazar Bin Harith

The rusty weapon of propaganda against the Prophet did not prove effective at all, because people realized through their wisdom and intelligence that the Qur'an possesses a wonderful charm. They also felt that they had never before heard such sweet and meaningful words which immediately impressed one's mind. When the enemies did not profit by calumniating the Prophet they thought of another childish plan and hoped that by putting it into practice they would be able to deprive him of the attention and belief of the people.

Nazar bin Harith, who was one of the intelligent and experienced men of Quraysh who had spent a part of his life in Hira and Iraq possessed knowledge about the status of the kings and warriors of Iran like

Rustam and Asfand Yar and of the beliefs of the Iranians about good and evil, was selected to campaign against the Prophet. Darun Nadwah approved the idea that by displaying his art in the streets and bazaars and relating the stories of the Iranians and the adventures of their kings, Nazar should divert the attention of the people from the Prophet to himself.

In order to diminish the status of the Prophet and to show his words and the verses of the Qur'an to be valueless, he said repeatedly: "O people! What is the difference between my words and those of Muhammad? He tells you the tales of the people who were subjected to Divine wrath and fury, and I tell you the story of those who were very much blessed and have been ruling on the face of the earth for long long years".

This plan was so foolish that it did not last for more than a few days. So much so that Quraysh themselves got tired of Nazar's words and deserted him.

Some verses of the Qur'an were revealed in this regard: *"They say: 'Fables of the ancients he has written: they are dictated to him morning and evening'. Say: 'It is revealed by Him Who knows the secrets of the heavens and the earth. He is Forgiving and Merciful'.* (Surah al-Furqan, 25:5-6)

Persistence of Quraysh in Their Faith

The Prophet of Islam knew very well that most of the people practiced idol-worship in imitation of the chiefs of the tribe and this practice was not deeply rooted in their hearts. In case, therefore, a change was brought about in the chiefs and he was successful in guiding one or two of them, most of the difficulties would be solved.

He was, therefore, very keen to attract Walid bin Mughayrah (whose son Khalid later became a Muslim commander and conqueror), because he was the most aged and the most influential person amongst Quraysh and enjoyed respect and authority. He was called the sage of Arabia and his views were respected in various disputable matters.

One day when the Holy Prophet was conversing with him (Walid) Ibn Umme Muktum, a blind man, approached the Prophet and requested him to recite some verses of the Holy Qur'an for him. He insisted so much that the Prophet disliked it, because it was not known as to when another opportunity to converse with the sage of Arabia in a peaceful atmosphere would come. He, therefore, turned away his face from Ibn Umme Mukrum and, with a frown on his brow, ignored him.

This incident was over. However, the Prophet was thinking about the matter when the first fourteen verses of Surah 'Abasa were revealed:

He frowned and then turned away from a blind man who had come up to him. You never know. Perhaps he wanted to purify himself, or receive some (Qur'anic) advice which would benefit him. Yet you pay attention to a rich man, though you will not be questioned even if he never purifies

himself. As for the one who comes to you earnestly (striving for guidance) and who has fear of God, you ignore him. This is an admonition. These verses are a reminder, so let those who want to follow its guidance do so. (Surah 'Abasa, 80: 1-17)

Distinguished Ulema and research scholars amongst the Shi'ah consider this portion of the episode to be baseless and inconsistent with the good nature of the Holy Prophet and they say that the verses themselves do not indicate that it was he who frowned and turned away his face from the blind man.

It has been quoted from Imam al-Sadiq that the person meant was one who belonged to the family of Umayyah. When Ibn Umm Muktum approached the Prophet that man showed hatred for him and these verses were revealed to admonish him.⁴

They Prohibit Hearing of The Qur'an

The idolatrous administration of Makkah had chalked out an extensive programme to check the expansion of Islam. They put their schemes into operation one after another, but failed to achieve their purpose.

They carried on extensive propaganda against the Prophet from time to time, but did not meet with any success. They saw that he was steadfast in his mission and the rays of the light of Divine monotheism were penetrating further day after day.

The chiefs of Quraysh decided to prohibit the people from hearing the Qur'an and in order to ensure the success of their scheme they posted spies in all parts of Makkah so that they might restrain the pilgrims and tradesmen, who visited Makkah, from contacting Muhammad and might stop, by all possible means, their hearing of the Qur'an. The spokesman of the group circulated a declaration amongst the Makkans, about which the Holy Qur'an says:

"The disbelievers say: 'Do not listen to this Qur'an but make a lot of unnecessary noise while it is being read so that perhaps you will defeat it!'" (Surah al-Fussilat, 41:26)

The most effective weapon used by the Holy Prophet which created a strange awe and fear in the hearts of the enemies was the Qur'an itself. The chiefs of Quraysh could see that many sworn enemies of the Holy Prophet went to meet him just to ridicule or harm him, but as soon as they heard a few verses of the Holy Book they became his sincere followers. To prevent such occurrences Quraysh decided to prohibit their subordinates and supporters from hearing the Qur'an and declared conversation with Muhammad to be unlawful.

The Law-Breaking Legislators

The same people who strictly prohibited the hearing of the Qur'an and punished all those who defied the declaration, came, after a few days, under the category of law-breakers and practically broke secretly

the very law which they had themselves approved!

One night Abu Sufyan, Abu Jahl and Akhnas bin Shariq left their houses and proceeded to the residence of the Prophet, without the knowledge of one another. Everyone of them concealed himself in a corner and their object was to hear the Qur'an of Muhammad, which he used to recite at night with a pleasant voice, while performing his prayers. All of them remained there till morning, without being aware of the presence of others, and heard the Qur'an.

In the morning they had to return to their houses. They met on the way and reproached one another saying that if the simple-minded people came to know about their activities what would they think about them?

The same thing was repeated during the next night. It would seem that an inner urge and charm attracted them to the house of the Holy Prophet. At the time of their return they met again and exchanged mutual reproaches and decided not to repeat their action. However, the attraction of the Qur'an was such that they again went to his house without the knowledge of one another and sat round it and heard the Qur'an till morning. When they heard the Qur'anic verses their fear increased every moment and they said to themselves: "In case the promises and the threats of Muhammad be true, we have led sinful lives".

When it was dawn they left the house of the Prophet for the fear of the simple-minded people and again met one another. All of them admitted that they could not withstand the attraction of the 'call' and the law of the Qur'an. However, to prevent any unpleasant occurrences, they concluded a mutual agreement that they would not resort to this action again.⁵

Preventing People from Embracing Islam

After implementing the first programme of hearing the Qur'an to be unlawful, they started the second one. People residing in near and far off palaces, as and when they were inclined towards Islam, proceeded to Makkah. The spies of Quraysh contacted them on the way or at the time of their arrival in Makkah and prevented them under different pretexts from embracing Islam. Here are two clear examples:

1. A'asha was one of the great poets of the Age of Ignorance and his verses were quoted in the assemblies of Quraysh. He heard about the commandments of Allah and the splendid teachings of Islam at the time when he had grown old. He lived at a place which was at a far-off distance from Makkah.

The 'call' of the Holy Prophet had not yet been extended fully to that area, but even that which he had heard about Islam in brief terms created a great love for it in his heart. He composed a marvellous panegyric in praise of the Prophet and did not consider a gift better than that he should recite it in the presence of the Prophet.

Although the number of the verses of this panegyric does not exceed twenty four, these are the best and the most eloquent verses recited in the praise of the Holy Prophet during those times. The text of these verses may be seen in his poetical works.⁶ The poet commends upon the sublime teachings of the Prophet which had illuminated his mind.

A'asha had not yet been fortunate enough to come to the Prophet when the spies of the idol-worshippers contacted him and became aware of his feelings. They knew well that A'asha was a sensual person and was addicted to wine. They at once took advantage of his weak points and said: "O Abu Basir! The religion of Muhammad does not conform to your mentality and moral condition!" He said "Why not?"

They replied: "He has declared adultery unlawful." He said: "I have nothing to do with it and this thing does not stand in the way of my embracing Islam". They added: "He has also banned drinking of wine". On hearing this he became somewhat uneasy and said: "I am not yet satiated with wine. I shall return now and shall drink wine to my fill for a period of one year and shall come next year and embrace Islam at his hands". He then returned, but death did not permit him to do what he had said, for he died the same year.⁷

Another Example

Tufayl bin 'Amr, who was a wise man and a melodious poet and enjoyed great respect in his tribe, came to Makkah. It was very detestable and annoying for Quraysh that Tufayl should embrace Islam. The chiefs of Quraysh and the jugglers of diplomacy, therefore, gathered round him and groaned and said: "That man who is offering his prayers by the side of the Ka'bah has destroyed our unity and created dissensions amongst us by his magical narrations and we are afraid that he would create a similar discord in your tribe also. It will, therefore, be much better if you do not converse with him at all".

Tufayl says: "Their words impressed me so much that fearing that Muhammad's magical narrations might affect me, I decided not to speak with him or to hear what he said. In order to ward off the influence of his magic, therefore, I decided to put some cotton in my ears while performing 'tawaf', so that his voice should not reach me, while he was reciting the Qur'an and offering his prayers. In the morning I entered the mosque after having put cotton in my ears and was not at all inclined to hear him speak.

However, I don't know how it happened that all of a sudden some extremely sweet and charming words reached my ears and I enjoyed them very much. Upon this I said to myself: "Curse upon you! You are an eloquent and intelligent person. What is the harm if you hear what this man says? If he says something good you should accept it, otherwise you can very well reject it. I waited, however, so that I might not contact the Prophet openly.

At last the Prophet proceeded to his house and entered it. I also obtained permission and entered his house. I told him the entire story and said: "Quraysh ascribe so many things to you, and in the beginning

I had no intention of seeing you. However, the sweetness of the Qur'an has drawn me to you. I now request you kindly to explain the nature of your religion and recite a portion of the Qur'an to me".

"The Holy Prophet made his religion known to me and recited some verses of the Qur'an".

Tufayl adds: "By Allah! I had never heard a narration more appealing and had never seen a law more moderate!"

Then Tufayl said to the Prophet: "I am an influential man in my tribe and shall take steps for the propagation of your religion".

Ibn Hisham writes⁸ that he (Tufayl) was with his tribe till the Battle of Khayber and remained busy in propagating Islam and joined the Holy Prophet in that very battle along with seventy or eighty Muslim families.⁹ He remained steadfast in Islam till he met his martyrdom in the Battle of Yamamah.

¹. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. I, page 270.

². Majma'ul Bayan, vol. X, page 387.

³. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. I, page 393.

⁴. Majma'ul Bayan, vol. I, page 437

⁵. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. I, page 337.

⁶. Diwan-i A'asha, pp. 101-103.

⁷. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. I, pp. 386 - 388.

⁸. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. I, page 410.

⁹. Dr Haykal says: "He joined the Prophet after the conquest of Makkah and we have not yet found any evidence for this statement.