

Chapter 37: The Battle of Ahzab

In this battle the forces of the idolatrous Arabs and the Jews were mobilized against Islam and, after forming a strong military alliance, they besieged Madina for about one month. As various tribes and groups participated in this battle and as the Muslims dug a ditch around Madina to check the advance of the enemy, this battle is called the Battle of Ahzab (i.e. Battle of the Tribes); it is also named Battle of Khandaq (i.e. Battle of the Ditch).

Those, who sparked off this war, were the leaders of the Jewish tribe of Bani Nuzayr and also a group of Bani Wa'il. The strong blow which the Jews of Bani Nuzayr had received at the hands of the Muslims and the manner in which they left Madina under compulsion and settled in Khayber, made them draw out a minute plan for toppling down the very foundation of Islam. And, in fact, they did draw out a dangerous plan and confronted the Muslims along with various tribes. This occurrence was unprecedented in the history of the Arabs.

Their planning was that the leaders of the tribe of Bani Nuzayr, like Salam bin Abil Haqiq and Hay bin Akhtab arrived in Makkah along with some persons belonging to the tribe of Wa'il and, having contacted the chiefs of Quraysh, spoke to them thus:

"Muhammad has made you and us his targets and compelled the Jews of Bani Qaynuqa' and Bani Nuzayr to quit their homeland. You people of Quraysh should rise and seek help from your allies and we have seven hundred Jewish swordsmen (Bani Qurayzah) who will rush to assist you. The Jews of Bani Qurayzah have ostensibly concluded a defence pact with Muhammad but we shall persuade them to ignore the pact and join you. [1](#)

The chiefs of Quraysh were disillusioned and tired of fighting with the Muslims but the boasting of these three persons impressed them and they liked and approved their plan. However, before expressing their approval they questioned the leaders of the Jews thus:

"You are the people of the Scriptures and followers of Heavenly Books and can very well distinguish between truth and falsehood. You know that we have no differences with Muhammad except on account of his religion which is opposite to ours. Now please tell us frankly which of the two religions is better –

ours or his which is based on the worship of One Allah and breaking of the idols and pulling down of the idol-temples."

Let us see what reply these people (who considered themselves to be the supporters of the doctrine of Oneness of Allah and the standard-bearers of monotheism) gave to the ignorant and uninformed group who had acknowledged them to be learned and had placed their difficulties before them. They shamelessly replied: "Idolatry is better than the religion of Muhammad. You should remain steadfast in your faith and should not show the slightest inclination to his religion."[2](#)

It was a shameful stain on the character of the Jews, who made the face of the history of Judaism, which was already dark, still darker. This blunder on their part is so unpardonable that the Jewish writers express great sorrow for it. Dr. Israel writes thus in his book entitled History of the Jews and Arabia:

"It was not proper that the Jews should have committed such a mistake even though Quraysh might have rejected their request. Furthermore, it was not at all proper that they should have sought protection of the idolaters, because such an action is not in conformity with the teachings of the Taurat".[3](#)

In fact this is the policy which the materialist politicians of today adopt for the achievement of their aims and objects. they earnestly believe that one should utilize all permissible and unpermissible means to achieve one's object and in fact, according to their thinking, achievement of a purpose makes unpermissible things permissible for them, and morality is only that which helps them achieve their object.

The Holy Qur'an says thus about this bitter incident:

Haven't you seen how those who had been given a share of the Scripture believe in idols and Satan and say the disbelievers are better guided than the believers!. (Surah al-Nisa, 4:51)

The word of these so-called scholars impressed the idolaters. They, therefore, expressed agreement with their plan and the time of their advance to Madina was also settled.

Those people who were keen to trigger off the war came out of Makkah with happy hearts and first proceeded to Najd to contact the tribe of Ghatfan, who were the sworn enemies of Islam. Out of Ghatfan tribe the families of Bani Fazarah, Bani Murrah and Bani Ashja' conceded to their request on the condition that, after victory was achieved, they would be given one year's proceeds of Khayber.

The matter did not, however, end here, because Quraysh corresponded with their allies-Bani Salim, and Ghatfan with their allies - Bani Asad, and invited them to join this military alliance. Bani Salim and Bani Asad accepted their invitation and on the appointed day all these tribes rushed from different parts of Arabia to invade and conquer Madina.[4](#)

Intelligence Bureau Of Muslims

From the day the Prophet had settled down in Madina he always sent clever persons to different sides, so that they might inform him about the conditions prevailing in those areas as well as the activities of people residing outside the territories of Islam. The informants reported that a strong military alliance had been formed against Islam and those people would march on an appointed day to besiege Madina. The Prophet immediately formed a consultative council so that they might take decisions keeping in view the bitter experiences gained from the Battle of Uhud.

Some persons preferred fortified defence from the towers and the high places instead of going out of the city to face the enemy. However, this scheme was not adequate, because the huge pack of warriors of Arabia with thousands of soldiers could destroy the fortresses and the towers and could overpower the Muslims. It was, therefore, necessary to take steps to ensure that the enemy did not succeed in approaching Madina.

Salman Farsi, who was fully conversant with the art of Iranian warfare, said: "In Persia, as and when people are threatened with an attack by the enemies, they dig a deep ditch around the town and thus check their advance. Hence, it would be appropriate to safeguard the vulnerable points of Madina by means of a ditch and thus to hold back the enemy in those areas.

Simultaneously, towers and sentry posts should be constructed by the bank of the ditch for purposes of defence and the enemies should be prevented from crossing the ditch by shooting arrows and hurling stones on them from the towers and the fortresses".⁵

The suggestion made by Salman was accepted unanimously and this defensive scheme contributed a good deal towards the safety of the Muslims accompanied by some persons, personally inspected the vulnerable points and marked out the spots where the ditch was to be dug. It was decided that the ditch should be dug from Uhud up to Ratij and, in order to maintain a good order, every forty cubits were entrusted to ten men.

The Prophet himself struck the first pick on the ground and began digging the earth when Ali busied himself with throwing the clay out. The face and forehead of the Prophet was perspiring and he was uttering, "Real life is the life of the Hereafter. O Allah! Forgive the Muhajirs and the Ansar! "

By engaging himself in this work the Prophet manifested a part of the programme of Islam and made the Muslim society understand that a commander of the army and a leader of the society should endure hardships like others and should alleviate their burden.

The Prophet's labour created a peculiar enthusiasm amongst the Muslims and all of them, without any exception, started work, so much so that the Jews belonging to the tribe of Bani Qurayzah who had concluded a pact with the Muslims also rendered help by providing implements.⁶ The Muslims were very

hard up in those days for provisions, and the well-off families were rendering help to the soldiers of Islam.

When the digging of the ditch became difficult on account of the appearance of big stones they approached the Prophet, who himself broke the big rocks with a strong blow.

The length of the ditch can be estimated by taking into account the number of workers. According to a popular version the number of the Muslims in those days was 3000,⁷ and if digging of 40 cubits was performed by ten persons the length of the ditch would come to 12,000 cubits and its breadth was so much that clever and experienced riders could not cross it on horseback.

The Well-Known Remarks Of The Prophet About Salman

When the workers were being distributed a dispute cropped up between the Muhajirs and the Ansar with regard to Salman. Each of the two parties claimed that Salman belonged to them and should work along with them. At this juncture the Prophet put an end to the dispute with a decisive order and said: "Salman is one of the members of my household".

The Prophet spent his days and nights by the bank of the ditch till the work was completed. However, the hypocrites failed to do the work on various excuses and at times went away to their houses without obtaining permission from the Prophet, while the true believers remained busy in their work with firm determination, and discontinued work on good excuse after obtaining permission from the commander, and returned to work again when the excuse ceased to exist. This matter has been narrated in the 62nd and 63rd verses of Surah al-Nur.

The Army Of The Arabs And The Jews Besieges Madina

The Arab army encamped like swarms of ants and locusts on the bank of the deep ditch, which was dug by the Muslims only six days before their arrival. They had been expecting to face the army of Islam at the foot of Mt. Uhud, but when they reached the desert of Uhud they did not find any trace of the Muslims there.

They, therefore, continued their march till they reached the bank of the ditch. They were surprised to see the ditch round the vulnerable parts of Madina and all of them said: "Muhammad has learnt these war tactics from an Iranian, because the Arabs are not acquainted with this type of warfare".

Number Of Soldiers Of The Two Forces

The army of the Arabs exceeded 10,000 persons. The lustre of their swords from behind the ditch dazzled the eyes. As quoted by Maqrizi in al-Imta', Quraysh alone encamped on the bank of the ditch with 4000 soldiers, three hundred horses and 1500 camels, and the tribe of Salim joined them in Marruz

Zahran with 700 men. The tribe of Bani Fazarah with 1000 men and the tribes of Bani Ashja' and Bani Murrah with 400 men each and other tribes, whose total number exceeded 10,000 men, encamped in another part.

The Muslims did not exceed three thousand and their camping place was in the foot of Mt. Sala', which is an elevated spot. This point fully controlled the ditch as well as its outer parts and all the activities and movements of the enemy could be seen clearly from there.

Some Muslims had been posted to protect the towers and the sentry posts and to control traffic over the ditch, and they prevented the enemy from crossing the ditch by means of natural and artificial fortifications.

The army of the Arabs stayed on the other side of the ditch for about one month and during this period not more than a few persons were able to cross it. And those who tried to cross the ditch were repulsed by means of special stones which were used in those times instead of the bullets of today. During this period the Muslims had some interesting adventures with the transgressing Arabs which are recorded in history.⁸

The Rigours Of Winter And The Shortage Of Provisions

The Battle of Ahzab took place in winter. Madina was faced with drought that year and a state of semi-famine prevailed. The provisions available with the army of the Arabs were not sufficient to permit them to stay on any more, because they had never thought that they would be detained on the bank of a ditch for full one month. On the contrary they were sure that with a single attack they would be able to overcome the warriors of Islam and would put them to the sword.

Those who had sparked off the war (i.e. the Jews) realized this critical situation after a few days. They understood that with the passage of time the resolution of the commanders of the army would be weakened and they would succumb to the rigours of winter and the shortage of fodder and foodstuffs. They, therefore, thought of seeking help from Bani Qurayzah, who were residing within Madina, so that they might trigger off the war within the city and thus open the way for the army of the Arabs to enter it.

Hay Bin Akhtab Arrives In The Fortress Of Bani Qurayzah

Bani Qurayzah were the only Jews who were residing in Madina, side by side with the Muslims, in perfect peace and tranquility and respected the pact which they had concluded with Prophet Muhammad.

Hay bin Akhtab felt that victory could be gained by seeking help for the army of the Arabs from inside Madina. He decided to instigate Bani Qurayzah to repudiate the pact made with the Muslims so that fighting might flare up between them and this internal disturbance might facilitate victory for the army of

the Arabs. With this plan in his mind he approached the fortress of Bani Qurayzah and introduced himself. Ka'b, who was the chief of Bani Qurayzah, ordered that the gate of the fortress might not be opened.

However, Hay insisted and entreated and said aloud: "O Ka'b! Are you not opening the gate because you are afraid of your bread and water (i.e. because you are afraid that you will have to feed me?) This sentence reflected upon the generosity and manliness of an indisputable chief like Ka'b. It, therefore, prompted him to order that the gate might be opened for Hay.

The war-monger sat by the side of his co-religionist and spoke to him thus: "I have brought a world of honour and greatness towards you. The chiefs of Quraysh, the nobles of Arabia and the princes of Ghatfan who are fully equipped, have encamped on the bank of the ditch to destroy the common enemy (the Prophet) and have given me a promise that until they have killed Muhammad and his companions they will not return to their homes".

Ka'b replied: "I swear by the Almighty that you have brought humiliation and disgrace. In my view the army of the Arabs is like a rainless cloud which thunders but does not rain. O son of Akhtab! O war-monger! Keep your hands off us. The fine qualities of Prophet Muhammad prohibit us from ignoring the pact which we have concluded with him. We have seen nothing from him except truthfulness, sincerity and righteousness. So how can we betray him?

Like a skilled camel-man who tames a refractory camel by rubbing its hump, Hay bin Akhtab said so many things to Ka'b that eventually he agreed to repudiate the pact. Hay also promised Ka'b that if the army of the Arabs was not victorious over Muhammad, he (Hay) himself would come to the fortress and share the fate of Ka'b.

Ka'b called the chiefs of the Jews in the presence of Hay and formed a consultative council and invited their opinions. All of them said: "You may decide whatever you consider expedient and we shall obey you".[9](#)

Zubayr Bata, who was an old man, said: "I have read in the Taurat that in later times a Prophet will rise from Makkah. He will migrate to Madina. His religion will spread throughout the world and no army will gain a victory over him. If Muhammad is the same Prophet this army will not be victorious over him".

The son of Akhtab said at once: "That Prophet will be from amongst Bani Israel, whereas Muhammad is a descendant of Isma'il; he has collected these people around him by means of deceit and magic".

He talked so much on the subject that he succeeded in making them decide to violate the pact. He also called for the pact which had been concluded between Prophet Muhammad and Bani Qurayzah and tore it into pieces before their very eyes. Then he said: "The matter is now finished. You should get ready to wage war".[10](#)

The Prophet Becomes Aware Of The Violation Of The Pact By Bani Qurayzah

The Prophet was informed by his skilled functionaries about the violation of the pact by Bani Qurayzah at this critical juncture. He was very much worried on this account. He at once deputed Sa'd Mu'az and Sa'd 'Ubadah, who were brave soldiers of Islam and chiefs of the tribes of Aws and Khazraj, to collect authentic information.

He also instructed them that if the betrayal by Bani Qurayzah was found to be a fact they should inform him about it by using the code-word of 'Azal and Qarah (names of two tribes who invited Muslim missionaries to their lands and then cut off their heads) and if they were firm with regard to the pact they should contradict the accusation openly. Both of them went up to the gate of the fortress of Bani Qurayzah along with two other persons.

On their first encounter with Ka'b they heard nothing from him except abusive and foul language. One of them then said with occult inspiration: "By Allah! The army of the Arabs will go away from this territory and the Prophet will besiege this fortress and will chop off your heads and will make time difficult for your tribe". Then they returned immediately and said to the Prophet: 'Azal and Qarah ".

The Prophet said loudly: "Allah is Great! O Muslims! There are good tidings for you that victory is near". This sentence, which manifests the perfect bravery and sagacity of the great leader of Islam, was uttered to ensure that the morale of the Muslims might not be weakened on hearing about the violation of the pact by Bani Qurayzah. [11](#)

Initial Transgressions By Bani Qurayzah

The initial plan of Bani Qurayzah that in the first instance they should plunder Madina and frighten the women and the children of the Muslims who had taken shelter in their houses. They, therefore, put this plan in to practice in Madina gradually.

For example the brave men of Bani Qurayzah began going to and fro in the city in a mysterious manner, so much so that Safiyah, daughter of Abdul Muttalib, said: "I was staying in the house of Hassan bin Thabit and Hassan and his wife were also residing there.

Suddenly I saw a Jew loitering about around the fort in a mysterious manner. I said to Hassan: "The intentions of this man are not good. Get up and drive him away". Hassan said: "O daughter of Abdul Muttalib! I don't possess enough courage to kill him and I am afraid that if I go out of this fort I shall meet harm". I, therefore, got up myself, girded my loin, picked up a piece of iron and killed the Jew with one blow.

The person appointed by the Muslims to collect information reported to the Prophet that Bani Qurayzah

had asked Quraysh and Ghatfan to make available two thousand soldiers who should enter Madina from within the fortress and plunder the city. This report was received when the Muslims were guarding the bank of the ditch lest the enemy should cross it.

The Prophet immediately appointed two officers named Zayd Harithah and Maslamah Aslam along with five hundred soldiers to patrol the city and, while uttering *Takbir* (*Allaho Akbar*– Allah is Great!) prevent Bani Qurayzah from committing transgression so that the women and the children should feel comforted by hearing *Takbir*. [12](#)

Encounter Between Faith And Infidelity

By the time the Battle of Ahzab took place the idolaters and the Jews had fought various battles against Islam. However, all these were special battles limited to one community or group only, and did not possess a general aspect to involve the entire Arabian Peninsula in a battle against Islam. As, however, they did not succeed, in spite of all their efforts, to topple down the newly–founded State of Islam, but on this occasion, a mixed army, consisting of the people of different tribes, so as to finish Islam. Speaking idiomatically, they shot the last arrow in their quiver at the Muslims.

Hence, after spending much money and also requesting others for help, they mobilized a big army so that if the Muslims did not take any precautionary measures to defend Madina they might gain an easy victory over them and thus achieve their goal. For this purpose they also brought with them the great champion of Arabia ('Amr bin Abdiwad) so that all difficulties might be solved through the strength of his arm.

On this account, during the days of the Battle of Ahzab and in fact at the time of the encounter between the two respective champions of polytheism and Islam, infidelity and Islam faced each other and this combat was between infidelity and Faith (Islam).

One of the reasons for the failure of the army of the Arabs was the very ditch which had been dug in their way. The army of the enemy tried day and night to cross the ditch, but every time they were faced with the furious attacks of the sentries as planned by the Prophet.

The biting winter of that year and the shortage of foodstuff and fodder were threatening the lives of the Arab army and their animals. Hay bin Akhtab (who had initiated the war) obtained twenty camel–loads of palm–dates from the Jews of Bani Qurayzah but the same were confiscated by the Muslims and distributed amongst the soldiers of Islam. [13](#)

One day Abu Sufyan wrote the following letter to the Prophet: "I have come with a big army to overthrow your religion. But what to do? For it appears that you have considered confrontation with us to be abominable and have dug a ditch between us and yourself. I do not know from whom you have learnt this military strategy, but I have to tell you that until I have waged a bloody battle like Uhud I will not

return".

The Prophet sent him this reply: "From Muhammad, the Prophet of Allah to Abu Sufyan bin Harb.....You have been priding yourself since long and imagine that you can extinguish the light of Islam. However, you should know that you are too humble to do this. You will return soon after suffering defeat and I shall later, break the big idols of Quraysh before your very eyes".

Reply to the letter, which was indicative of the firm determination of the writer settled in the heart of the commander of the enemy like an arrow. As those people believed in the truthfulness of Prophet Muhammad their morale was weakened.

In spite of this, however, they did not give up their efforts. One night Khalid bin Walid attempted to cross the ditch along with a special battalion. However, he had to retreat on account of the vigilance of two hundred soldiers of Islam serving under the command of Usayd Khizr.

The Prophet was not negligent of strengthening the morale of the soldiers of Islam even for a moment and encouraged them with his stirring and impressive speeches, to defend the freedom of their faith.

One day he turned his face to the soldiers and the officers in a magnificent gathering and after a brief invocation to Allah addressed them thus: "O soldiers of Islam! Remain steadfast before the enemy and remember that Paradise is under the shadow of those swords which are drawn in the path of truth and justice". [14](#)

Some Champions Of The Arab Army Cross The Ditch

Five champions named 'Amr bin Abdiwad, 'Ikrimah bin Abu Jahl, Hubayrah bin Wahab, Nawfal bin Abdullah and Zihar bin Khattab put on their military dress and, standing in front of the army of Bani Kananah, said with peculiar vanity: "Get ready for fighting. Today you will realize as to who are the real champions of the Arab army".

Then they galloped their horses and jumped over the ditch at a point at which its breadth was a little lesser. These five champions went beyond the reach of the arrows of the soldiers who were guarding the ditch. However, the point at which they had crossed was encircled immediately and trespassing by others was prevented.

The halting place of these five champions who had come for single combat was situated between the ditch and the Sal'a mountain (the headquarters of the army of Islam). The Arab champions were playing with their horses with a peculiar vanity and pride, and were challenging their adversaries by means of hints and signs. [15](#)

Out of these five persons, however, the one who was most famous for his valour and skill, came forward and formally challenged his opponent to fight. Every moment he was raising his voice and his demand

for an adversary was ringing in the field and making the hearers shiver. The silence of the Muslims made him bolder and he said:

"Where are the claimants of Paradise? Don't you, Muslims, say that those who are killed from amongst you will go to Paradise and those who are killed from amongst us will go to Hell? Is not even one of you prepared to send me to Hell or to go to Paradise at my hands? He also composed some verses in this behalf, the purport of the first verse is: "I have got tired of shouting and challenging (to a single combat) and my voice has become hoarse".

Perfect silence prevailed in the army of Islam in reply to 'Amr's shouting. Although the Prophet kept asking that one man should get up and relieve the Muslims from the mischief of that man ('Amr), but none was prepared to fight with him (except Ali bin Abi Talib).¹⁶ No alternative was, therefore, left except that this difficulty should be surmounted through Ali, the brave.

The Prophet gave him his own sword, tied a special turban on his head and prayed for him in these words: "O Allah! Protect Ali from all sides. O Lord! 'Ubaydah bin Harith was taken away from me on the Day of Badr and, the lion of Allah, Hamzah was taken away in the Battle of Uhud. O Nourisher! Protect Ali from being harmed by the enemy". Then he recited this verse:

"O Nourisher! Don't leave me alone and you are the best inheritor".¹⁷ (Surah al-Anbiya, 21:89)

Ali walked as quickly as possible to cover the delay already caused. At this moment the Prophet uttered this historical sentence: "Entire faith is facing entire infidelity". Ali composed *rajaz* (epic verses), whose rhythm and rhyme conformed with that of his adversary's, and said: "Don't be in a hurry, because a strong person has come in the field to give you a reply".

The entire body of Ali was covered with iron armour and his eyes were shining through the helmet. 'Amr desired to identify his adversary. He said to Ali: "Who are you?" Ali, who was famous for the clearness of his accent, replied: "I am Ali, son of Abu Talib".

'Amr said: "I shall not shed your blood, because your father was one of my old friends. I am thinking about your cousin who has sent you in the field with so much confidence. I can pick you up on the point of my lance and keep you suspended between the earth and the sky so that you are neither dead nor alive".

Ibn Abil Hadid says: "Whenever my teacher of history (Abul Khayr) explained this portion he used to say: "In fact 'Amr was afraid of fighting with Ali, because he was present in the Battles of Badr and Uhud and had witnessed his valour. He therefore, wished to dissuade Ali from fighting with him".

Ali said: "You need not bother about my death. In both the cases (i.e. whether I kill or am killed) I shall be blessed and my place shall be in Paradise, but in all cases Hell awaits you". 'Amr smiled and said: "O Ali! This division is not just. Both Paradise and Hell belong to you".

Ali reminded him that one day he ('Amr) had put his hand into the coverings of the Holy Ka'bah and had made a promise to Allah that as and when any warrior made three suggestions to him in the battlefield he would accept one of them. Ali, therefore, suggested to him that he should embrace Islam. He replied: "O Ali! Leave this for it is not possible".

Then Ali said: "Abandon fighting and leave Muhammad to himself". He replied: "It is a matter of shame for me to accept this proposal, because tomorrow the poets of Arabia will satirize me and will imagine that I did so on account of fear". Then Ali said: "Your opponent is on foot. You should also dismount so that we may combat with each other". He said: "O Ali! This is a very insignificant suggestion and I had never thought that an Arab would make such a request to me". [18](#)

Combat Between The Two Champions Commences

Fierce fighting started between the two champions and both of them were enveloped in dust, so that the on-lookers were not aware of the developments. They could only hear the clashing of their swords. 'Amr aimed his sword at the head of Ali and although the latter warded off the blow with his special shield his head was, nevertheless, wounded. He, however, availed of the opportunity and gave a sharp blow on his feet. Consequently one or both of the feet of 'Amr were cut off and he fell down on the ground.

The voice of Takbir was heard from within the dust which was a sign of Ali's victory. The scene of the fall of 'Amr on the ground created such a fear in the hearts of other warriors, who were standing behind him, that they galloped their horses involuntarily towards the ditch and all of them, except Nawfal, returned to their camping-place. Nawfal's horse fell into the ditch. Those who were posted on the bank of the ditch began to stone him.

He, however, said loudly: "To kill a person like this is contrary to the code of bravery. Let one of you come down so that we may fight with each other". Ali plunged into the ditch and killed him.

Fear overtook the entire army of the polytheists and Abu Sufyan was more terrified than every one else. He thought that Muslims would mutilate the body of Nawfal to take revenge of Hamzah. He, therefore, sent some one to purchase the dead body of Nawfal for ten thousand Dinars. The Prophet, however, said: "Hand over the dead body to them and it is not permissible in Islam to take the price of the dead."

The Value Of This Blow

Although, ostensibly Ali killed a fierce enemy of Islam, but in reality he restored to life those persons who had been trembling to hear the heart-rending roarings of 'Amr and also terrified the ten thousand strong army which had determined to finish the newly-formed State of Islam. The value of this self-sacrifice would have become known if the victory (in the absence of Ali) had fallen to the share of 'Amr.

When Ali had the honour to present himself before the Prophet the latter assessed the value of the blow

given by him to 'Amr in these words: "The value of this self-sacrifice excels all the good deeds of my followers, because, as a consequence of the defeat of the greatest champion of infidelity the Muslims have become honourable and the community of infidels has become degraded and humble".¹⁹

Magnanimity

The coat-of-mail of 'Amr was very costly but Ali was too magnanimous to touch it, although the Second Caliph criticized him for not having removed it from the body of 'Amr. 'Amr's sister came to know about the incident and said: "I am not at all sad on account of my brother being killed, because he has been killed at the hands of a magnanimous person. If it had not been so I would have been shedding tears throughout my life."²⁰

The Army Of The Arabs Is Divided

The motive of the Arab and the Jew armies for fighting against Islam was not one and the same. The Jews were afraid of the ever-increasing expansion of Islam, whereas Quraysh were motivated by their old enmity for Islam and the Muslims. As regards the tribes of Ghatfan and Fazarah and other tribes they had participated in this battle for the sake of the proceeds of Khayber which the Jews had promised them.

Hence, the motive of the last group was purely material and if their object could be achieved through the Muslims they would very gladly have returned to their homes, especially because winter and shortage of provisions and prolonged siege of the city had made them dejected and their animals were on the brink of death.

The Prophet, therefore, appointed a body of men to conclude a pact with the chiefs of the said tribes to the effect that the Muslims were prepared to give them one-third of the fruits of Madina, provided they dissociated themselves from the ranks of Ahzab (tribes) and returned to their own areas. The representatives of the Prophet drew up an agreement with the chiefs of the tribes and brought it to him for his endorsement.

However, the Prophet placed the matter before two brave officers namely Sa'd Mu'az and Sa'd 'Ubadah. Both of them stated unanimously that if this pact was to be concluded in compliance with the command of Allah it would be acceptable to the Muslims, but if it was according to the personal view of the Prophet and their opinion was being sought they thought that the proposal should end then and there and should not be approved. As regards the reason for their saying so they stated:

"We have never paid tribute to these tribes and none of them could pick up courage to take even one palm-date from us by force and coercion. And now that we have embraced Islam by the grace of Allah and under your guidance and have become honourable and respectable by means of Islam the question of our paying them any tribute does not arise. By Allah! We shall reply to their vain and hollow demand

with our swords until the matter is settled by Divine commandment".

The Prophet said: "The reason for my thinking about such a pact was this that I saw that you had become the target of the Arab army and were being attacked from all sides. I, therefore, thought that this problem should be solved by creating a rift between the enemies.

However, now that your firm resolution has become evident, I hereby stay the conclusion of the pact and say to you—and believe in what I say that Allah will not humiliate His Prophet and will carry out His promise about the victory of monotheism over polytheism". At this stage Sa'd Mu'az deleted the contents of the deed with the permission of the Prophet and said: "The idolaters may do whatever they like. We are not a people who pay tribute".[21](#)

Factors Which Divided The Arab Army

1. The first factor of success was the talks between the representatives of the Prophet and the chiefs of the tribes of Ghatfan and Fazarah. For, although this agreement was not approved finally, its violation and rejection was also not announced. In this way the said tribes became double-minded with regard to their allies and were continuously awaiting the confirmation of the agreement and whenever they were asked to carry out a general attack they rejected such demands on one excuse or another in the hope of the conclusion of the agreement in question.

2 Many persons had pinned their hopes on the success and victory of 'Amr, the mighty champion of Arabia. Consequently, when he was killed, intense fear prevailed among them. It was especially so, because, after 'Amr being killed, other champions fled the battlefield.

3. Na'im bin Mas'ud, who had embraced Islam recently, played a great part in creating differences between the tribes. He chalked out an excellent espionage plan which was not less shrewd than the activities of the spies of the present times; it was rather superior and more effective.

He came in the presence of the Prophet and said: "I have embraced Islam recently and have very old friendly relation with all these tribes, but they are not aware of my conversion to Islam. If there are any orders you may like to give, I shall carry them out". The Prophet said: "Do something to scatter these people" i.e. there is no harm if planning is done and a remedy is sought to safeguard some sublimer interests.

Na'im thought over the matter for some time. Then, in the first instance, he went to the tribe of Bani Qurayzah who were in fact the fifth column of the enemy and were threatening the Muslims from the back door. He arrived in the fortress of Bani Qurayzah and expressed deep affection and friendship with them and said all sorts of things whereby he could gain their confidence. Then he added:

"Your position is different as compared with the allied tribes (viz. Quraysh and Ghatfan), because Madina is the residence of your women and children and all your property is here and you cannot at all afford to

shift elsewhere, whereas the centres of life and business of the allied tribes, who have come to fight against Muhammad, are outside Madina and far away from it. If they are successful in the war they will achieve their object, but if they are defeated they will at once march off to their places which are beyond the reach of Muhammad.

You should, however, know that if the tribes are not successful and return to their places abandoning warfare, you will be left at the mercy of the Muslims. I think that now, as you have associated yourselves with the tribes, it is better that you should stick to this decision.

However, in order to ensure that the tribes will not leave you alone during the war and return to their homes you should take some of their nobles and chiefs as hostages so that when the circumstances become difficult they should not abandon you and should settle the affairs, because they will be obliged to fight against Muhammad to the last in order to get their men released".

The views of Na'im were endorsed unanimously and he was satisfied that his words had the desired effect on them. Then he left their fortress and went to the camping-place of the tribes. The chiefs of Quraysh were his old friends. Hence, during his conversation with them he said:

"Bani Qurayzah are very much ashamed and repentant to have violated their pact with Muhammad and now wish to make amends for it. They have, therefore, decided to take some of your men as hostages and hand them over to Muhammad.

In this way they will prove their sincerity and Muhammad will kill your men immediately. They have already discussed this matter with Muhammad and have assured him that they will henceforth support him to the last moment of their lives and Muhammad has also endorsed their plan. Hence, if the Jews demand hostages from you, you should not agree at all. You should know that the result of such an action will be dangerous.

A clear proof of this fact is that in case you ask them tomorrow to take part in the battle and attack Muhammad from behind you will see that they will not at all agree to do so and will put forth different excuses. Then he went to the camping-place of Ghatfan and had a talk with them in a particular manner.

He said: "You, the tribe of Ghatfan are my kith and kin. I don't think you will accuse me for what I say. I will talk with you about something but I wish that you will not mention it to anyone. All acknowledged him to be a truthful person and their friend. Then he told them in detail what he had already told Quraysh and warned them about the activities of Bani Qurayzah and said: "You should not give them a positive reply in any circumstances".

He discharged his responsibility creditably well. Then he came to the camping-place of the Muslims secretly and published all this gossip amidst the army of Islam (i.e. the Jews wanted to take hostages from the forces of the Arabs and to surrender them to the Muslims). No doubt the object of this publicity

was that the matter should cross the ditch and reach the ears of the Arabs.

Representatives Of Quraysh Visit The Fortress Of Bani Qurayzah

Abu Sufyan decided during the night preceding Saturday to settle the affair. The chiefs of Quraysh and Ghatfan sent their representatives to the fortress of Bani Qurayzah and they said to them (i.e. to Bani Qurayzah): "This is not the region of our residence, and our animals are dying. You should attack the Muslims tomorrow from the back door so that we may settle this affair". The chief of Bani Qurayzah said in reply:

"Tomorrow is Saturday and we Jews don't undertake any work on that day, because some of our ancestors resorted to work on this day and were subjected to Divine wrath. Furthermore, we are prepared to participate in fighting only if some of the nobles of the tribes are available in our fortress as hostages, so that you may fight to the last moment to ensure their release and may not leave us friendless".

The representatives of Quraysh returned and informed the chiefs of the tribes of the position. All of them said: "Na'im was correct in expressing sympathy with us and Bani Qurayzah want to deceive us". The representatives of Quraysh contacted the chiefs of Bani Qurayzah and said: "It is not possible for us to surrender our nobles to you as hostages and we are not prepared to give you even one of our men as a surety. In case you are inclined to attack the Muslims you should do so tomorrow and we shall assist you with all our resources".

The words of the representatives of Quraysh and especially their saying that they were not prepared to surrender even one person as a hostage convinced Bani Qurayzah that whatever Na'im had said was correct. It confirmed their fears that Quraysh were far-sighted and if they did not succeed in the matter they would return home and leave them (i.e. Bani Qurayzah) at the mercy of the Muslims.[22](#)

The Last Factor

Another factor, which may, in fact, be called Divine assistance, was added to the above-mentioned factors and scattered the tribes. This factor was that suddenly the atmosphere became stormy and the weather grew very cold. The change in the atmosphere became so radical that the tents were pulled off, the pots in which food was being cooked were turned upside down, the lamps were extinguished and burning fire was scattered in the desert.

At this juncture the Prophet deputed Huzayfah to cross the ditch and collect information about the enemy. He says: "I managed to reach near Abu Sufyan and saw him addressing the commanders of the army. He was saying: "The spot at which we have encamped is not the place of our residence. Our animals are dying and the wind and storm has not spared tents, sheds and fire for us. Bani Qurayzah, too, have not helped us. It is better if we march off from here".

Then he mounted his camel whose knees were tied and whipped it repeatedly. The poor man was so much afraid and puzzled that he could not realized that the knees of the camel were tied.

It was not yet dawn, when the army of the Arabs left the place and none of them could be seen there any longer."[23](#)

- [1.](#) Mughazi-i Waqidi, vol. II, page 441.
- [2.](#) Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. II, p. 214; Tarikh-i Tabari, vol II, p. 233.
- [3.](#) Hayat-i Muhammad.
- [4.](#) Mughazi-i Waqidi, vol. II, page 443.
- [5.](#) Tarikh-i Tabari, vol. II, page 224.
- [6.](#) Mughazi-i Waqidi, vol. II, page 445.
- [7.](#) Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. II, p. 220; Mughazi, vol. II, p. 453.
- [8.](#) Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. I, page 238.
- [9.](#) Mughazi-i Waqidi, vol. II, pp. 455 – 456.
- [10.](#) Biharul Anwar, vol. II, page 223.
- [11.](#) Mughazi-i Waqidi, vol. II, pp. 458–459.
- [12.](#) Seerah-i Halabi, vol. II, page 335.
- [13.](#) Seerah-i Halabi, Vol. II, page 345
- [14.](#) Seerah-i Halabi. vol. II, page 349.
- [15.](#) Tarikh-i Tabari, vol. II, page 239 and Tabaqat-i Kubra, vol. II, page 86.
- [16.](#) Waqidi says: Perfect silence prevailed amongst the Muslims when 'Amr was challenging (for a single combat), Mughazi, vol: II, page 470.
- [17.](#) Kanzul Fawa'id, page 137.
- [18.](#) Biharul Anwar, vol. XX, page 227.
- [19.](#) Bihar, vol. XX, page 216 and Mustadrak Hakim, vol. III, page 32.
- [20.](#) Mustadrak Hakim, vol. XXX, page 33.
- [21.](#) Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. II, p. 223; Bihar, vol. XX, p. 252.
- [22.](#) Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. II, pp. 229–231; Tarikh-i Tabari, v. II, pp. 242–243.
- [23.](#) Tarikh-i Tabari, vol. II, page 244

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