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# Chapter 62: A Will which was Not Written

The last chapter of the life of the Prophet of Islam, when he was confined to bed, is one of the most delicate and subtle chapters of the history of Islam. In those days the Muslims were passing through very tragic moments.

Open disobedience on the part of some companions and their refusal to join the army of Usamah was an evidence of a series of underground activities and the earnest determination of the persons concerned that after the demise of the Prophet they would take possession of the governmental and political affairs of Islam, and would push back the person, who had been formally appointed on the day of Ghadir as the successor to the Prophet.

The Prophet also knew to some extent their intentions and, in order to neutralize their activities, insisted that all the senior companions should join the army of Usamah and should leave Madina as early as possible to fight against the Romans.

However, in order to put their own plans into operation, the political jugglers excused themselves from joining Usamah's army on various pretexts and even prevented the army from marching off, so much so that the Prophet passed away but the army of Islam did not depart from Jurf (camping-place at Madina) and returned to Madina after sixteen days. Their detention was due to the death of the Prophet.

Thus the desire of the Prophet that on the day of his death Madina should be free from political mischief-makers, who might indulge in activities against his immediate successor, was not fulfilled. They did not only fail to leave Madina but endeavoured to forestall every action, which could possibly confirm the position of Ali as the uninterrupted successor of the Prophet and to prevent the Prophet, by different means, from talking on this subject.

The Prophet came to know about the shocking actions, and secret activities of some of their daughters, who happened to be his wives. In spite of the fact that he was suffering from high fever, he entered the mosque, stood by the side of the pulpit, turned his face to the people and said with a loud voice which could be heard even outside the mosque:

"O people! The mischief has been sparked off and rebellion has appeared like the pieces of a dark night. You have no excuse against me. I did not declare lawful anything except that which the Qur'an declared lawful and did not declare unlawful anything except that which the Qur'an declared unlawful. 1

This sentence shows the Prophet's grave anxiety about the future and about the fate of Islam after his own death. What did he mean by the mischief which had been sparked off? Could it be anything other than the mischief and dispersion which was created after the death of the Prophet and its flames have not yet extinguished but continue to flare up?

## Bring A Pen And An Ink-Pot So That I May Write A Will

The Prophet was aware of the activities which were in the offing outside his house, to take possession of the caliphate. In order to check the deflection of the caliphate from its real pivot and the appearance of differences and disputes he decided to affirm the Caliphate of Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, and the position of Ahl al-Bayt in writing so that the document in question might serve as a clear-cut evidence on the subject of caliphate.

One day, when the senior companions came to enquire about his health, he lowered his head a little and reflected for some time. Then he said to them: "Bring me a sheet of paper and an ink-pot so that I may write something for you, after which you will never be misguided".2

At this moment the Second Caliph broke the silence and said: "Sickness has overpowered the Prophet. The Qur'an is with you. The Divine Book is sufficient for us".

The view expressed by the Caliph became the subject of discussion, some persons opposed him and said: "The orders of the Prophet must be obeyed. Go and bring him pen and paper so that whatever he has in mind should be recorded". Some others took the side of the Caliph and prevented the procurement of pen and ink. The Prophet was extremely annoyed on account of their dispute and presumptuous words and said: "Get up and leave the house". (Be off from here).

After narrating this incident Ibn Abbas says: "The greatest calamity for Islam was that the discord and dispute of some companions prevented the Prophet from writing the deed which he intended to write".3

This historical event has been quoted by a number of Sunni and Shi'ah traditionalists and historians, and from the viewpoint of a critical study of tradition they consider it as falling under the category of the authentic and correct reports.

The point, which needs attention is that the Sunni traditionalists have quoted only the purport of the words of Umar and have not reproduced his presumptuous remarks. Evidently they have refrained from quoting the original remarks not because reproduction of such presumptuous remarks amounts to taking liberty with the Prophet but have altered the words of the Caliph with a view to protecting his position, so that the posterity might not form an adverse view about him on coming across such insulting remarks of

his. Hence when Abu Bakr Jauhari, author of al-Saqifa, reaches at this point in his book he says, while quoting the remarks of Umar: "Umar said something the purport of which is that the sickness had overpowered the Prophet".4

However, when some of them wish to quote the text of the remarks of the Caliph, they refrain, with a view to protecting his position, from mentioning his name clearly and write only this: "And they said: The Prophet of Allah has spoken in a delirious state of mind".5

It is an admitted fact that whosoever utters such an indecent and repulsive sentence cannot be forgiven, because, as clearly mentioned by the Qur'an the Prophet was immune from every kind of mistake and whatever he said was revealed to him.

The dispute of the companions in the presence of the infallible Prophet was so repugnant and annoying that some of his wives, who were sitting behind a curtain, asked, by way of objection, as to why his orders were not being obeyed. In order to silence them the Caliph replied: "You women are like the companions of Prophet Yusuf. As and when the Prophet falls ill you shed tears and when he regains health you rule over him".6

Although some fanatics have apparently coined excuses for the Caliph having opposed the demand of the Prophet they have condemned him from the standpoint of logic, and have considered his remark (The Book of Allah is sufficient for us) to be baseless. All of them have admitted it very clearly that the Sunnah of the Prophet is the second pillar of Islam and the Book of Allah cannot at all relieve the Muslim Ummah from the need of the Prophet's Sunnah.

It is, however, surprising that Dr Haykal, the author of the book Hayat-i Muhammad has undertaken to side with the Caliph by way of a hint and writes: "After this event Ibn Abbas believed that on account of not writing what the Prophet wanted to be written the Muslims had lost something important but Umar stuck to his view, because Allah says in the Qur'an:

We have neglected nothing in the book 8

If, however, he had studied the preceding and succeeding words of the verse he would not have explained it in such an unjustified manner and would not have risen in support of the Caliph against the clear-cut words of the infallible Prophet, because the meaning of the word 'book' in the said verse is the creation and the pages of existence and the various species in the world of existence are different pages of the book of creation and these innumerable pages give shape to the book of creation. Here is the text of the verse:

All the beasts on land and flying birds have different communities just as you (men) have. We have not neglected anything in the book. They will be brought into the presence of their Lord. (Surah al-An'am, 6:39)

As the words preceding the sentence under consideration relate to the animals and the birds and the words succeeding it relate to the Day of Resurrection it can be said definitely that in this verse the meaning of the word book, from which nothing has been left out, is the book of creation.

Besides this, even if we admit that what is meant by the word book in this verse of the Qur'an is the Qur'an itself even then, as specified by the Qur'an itself, it is an admitted fact that it can be understood only in the light of the hadith and the guidance of the Prophet of Islam. The Holy Qur'an says:

Whom we had sent with miracles and revelations.

'Ask those who know about the Books, if you do not know about this'. We have revealed the Qur'an to you, so that you may explain to mankind what has been revealed to them and so that perhaps they will think. (Surah al-Nahl, 16:44)

In this verse it has not been said: "You may read to mankind". The words used are: "You may explain to mankind". Hence even if the Book of Allah be sufficient for mankind it stands in great need of explanation by the Prophet.

If the Muslim ummah could really dispense with such a document (i.e. the one which the Prophet proposed to write) why should Ibn Abbas have said the following words, while tears were trickling down his cheeks: "What a painful day was Thursday; when the Prophet said: "Bring me a shoulder-bone and an ink-pot or a paper and an ink-pot so that I may write something for you and you may not be misguided in future"; some persons said "The Prophet is......."9

How can it be said that in spite of the sentiments expressed by Ibn Abbas and the insistence made by the Prophet himself, the Qur'an has enabled the Muslim Ummah to dispense with the will in question. And as the Prophet did not succeed in dictating such a will, can it be guessed by means of any definite indications as to what he intended to record in his will?

### What Did The Will Aim At?

One of the best method of explaining the verses of the Qur'an, which even now commands the attention and favour of the research scholars and the ulema of the present times, is that the brevity and the ambiguity of a verse which may have been revealed on a subject, may be removed by means of another verse on the same subject, which may, from the point of view of expression, be more clear than the former one. In the terminology of exegesis, it is called explaining one verse with the help of another.

This method is not peculiar to the explanation of the verses of the Holy Qur'an; it applies to the Islamic traditions as well and the ambiguity of one hadith can be removed with the help of another tradition, because our great leaders have given emphatic and repeated directions on delicate and appreciable matters, the expression of which with regard to the aim is not identical and at the same level. Sometimes the aim has been expressed clearly and at another time it has been considered advisable only to allude

As has been stated above the Prophet, while confined to bed, asked his companions to bring him pen and paper so that he might dictate a will and the same should be recorded. He also told them that the will would ensure their not going astray at anytime. (As is clear, the reason mentioned by the Prophet for writing the will was that people might not go astray). Later, on account of differences between those present, the Prophet abandoned the idea of writing the will.

It may possibly be asked: "On what subject did the Prophet want to write a will?" Reply to this question is quite clear, because, keeping in view the basic facts mentioned at the beginning of this discussion, it must be said that the aim of the Prophet in writing the will was nothing except confirming the Caliphate and succession of Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, and making it obligatory for the people to follow the members of his household.

This conclusion can be arrived at by studying the Hadith Thaqalayn which has been accepted by the Sunni and the Shi'ah traditionalists unanimously, because he spoke thus with regard to the will which he wanted to execute: "I am writing this document to ensure that you do not go astray after me".

And in the Hadith Thaqalayn also he used identical words and insisted that the people should follow the two Siqls (weighty or precious things viz. the Holy Qur'an and his progeny) so that they might not go astray after him. Here is the text of the Hadith Thaqalayn:

I am leaving two weighty (valuable) things amongst you. So long as you follow both of them you will not go astray. These two valuable things consist of the Book of Allah (the Qur'an) and my progeny and Ahl al-Bayt".

Can it not be concluded from the wording of these two traditions, and the similarity present in them, that the aim of the Prophet in asking for pen and paper was to record the contents of the Hadith Thaqalayn in a more clear manner and to confirm the rulership and direct caliphate of his successor, which had been announced verbally on the 18th of Zil Haj when the Iraqi, the Egyptian and the Hijazi pilgrims were parting company (at Ghadir Khum).

Furthermore, the strong opposition of one, who immediately after the demise of the Prophet constituted a consultative body in Saqifah bani Sa'idah for the selection of a caliph and made his old friend a candidate for it in a special manner and the latter's nominating him as a caliph in violation of all principles, perhaps in recompense for his help, shows that there were indications in the gathering and into the speech of the Prophet that he wanted to dictate something about the caliphate and the rulership of the Muslims. He, therefore, strongly opposed the bringing of pen and paper, for otherwise there was no reason why he persisted so much that the pen and the paper should not be brought.

### Why Did The Prophet Not Persist In Writing The Will?

Why did the Prophet not exercise his power to write the will when, in spite of the opposition by some persons, he could very well call his secretary and dictate the same to him?

The reply to this question is also clear. If the Prophet had persisted in writing the will, they, who were saying that illness had overpowered him, would have persisted more in their impoliteness and their supporters would also have given publicity to this view and endeavoured to prove their viewpoint. In that case, besides the fact that impoliteness towards the Prophet would have spread and continued, the will, too, would have lost its value.

Hence, when some persons in order to make amends for the ill treatment, asked the Prophet, whether they might bring pen and paper he was much disturbed and said: "After all that has been said, do you want to bring pen and paper? I recommend only that you should behave well with my progeny". Having said this he turned his face from those present and they too got up and dispersed. Only Ali, Abbas and Fadl remained there. 10

#### **Making Amends For The Matter**

Although the open opposition by some companions made the Prophet abandon the writing of the will, he made his object known in another manner. History testifies that while he was very seriously ill he placed one hand on the shoulder of Ali and the other on the shoulder of Maiymunah, his slave–girl, and proceeded towards the mosque. In spite of severe pain and inconvenience he made himself reach the pulpit and mounted it. Tears trickled from the eyes of the people and perfect silence prevailed over the mosque. People were waiting to hear his last words and recommendations.

The Prophet broke the silence of the gathering and said: "I am leaving two valuable things amongst you". At this moment a man stood up and asked: "What is meant by two valuable things?" Then he added: "One of them is the Qur'an and the other is my progeny".11

Ibn Hajar Askalani has given another version of making amends for the matter and it is not incompatible with the former. He says: "One day, while the Prophet was unwell and his bed was encircled by his companions, he turned his face towards them and said: "O people! The time of my death has arrived and I will be leaving you soon. Be it known to you that I am leaving the Book of Allah and my progeny and AhI al-Bayt amongst you. Then he held and raised the hand of Ali and said Ali is with the Qur'an and the Qur'an is with Ali and they will not separate from each other till the Day of Resurrection". 12

The Prophet had narrated Hadith Thaqalayn on different occasions and in various ways, before he fell ill and had drawn the attention of the people to these two weighty things but the fact that, even when bedridden, he once again gave attention to the correlation between the Book and his progeny and stressed their importance before the same persons, who had opposed his writing the will, would make one believe

#### **Distribution Of Dinars**

The policy of the Prophet with regard to public treasury (Baytul Mal) was that at the very earliest opportunity he distributed its property amongst the needy persons and refrained from keeping the contents of the treasury in custody for a long time. Hence, when he was confined to bed, and some Dinars were lying with one of his wives, he asked her to bring them to him.

When the Dinars were placed before him he took them in his hand and said: "How will Muhammad expect anything of Allah if he meets Him and has these with him?" Then he ordered the Commander of the Faithful to distribute the money among the poor 14

# The Prophet Is Annoyed On Account Of The Medicine Given To Him

During her stay in Ethiopia Asma' daughter of 'Umays, who was a near relative of the Prophet's wife, Maiymunah, had learnt the composition of a medicine which was the juice of some herbs. She imagined that the Prophet was suffering from pleurisy and in Ethiopia this ailment was treated with the said syrup.

When the Prophet's condition was very serious and he was suffering from acute pain, she dropped some of that medicine in his mouth. When the condition of the Prophet improved somewhat, and he came to know about the incident he was very much displeased and said: "Allah does not at all make his Prophet suffer from such an ailment". 15

### **Last Farewell To Friends**

During the period of his illness the Prophet used to come to the mosque sometime or other, and offered prayers along with the people, and also talked on some matters. On one of those days he arrived in the mosque, while he had tied a piece of cloth on his head, and Ali and Fadl bin Abbas had placed their hands under his arm–pits, and he was walking with dragging feet. He mounted the pulpit and began to speak, saying: "O people! The time has arrived when I should leave you. If I have made a promise with anyone I am prepared to fulfil it, and if I owe something to somebody, he should speak out, so that I may make payment to him".

At this moment a man stood up and said: "You promised me some time back that if I married, you would help me with money". The Prophet ordered Fadl to pay the required amount to him immediately. Then he dismounted the pulpit and went home.

Thereafter he came to the mosque again on Friday (i.e three days before his death) and began to speak, and said *inter alia:* "Whoever has any right over me should get up and mention it, for punishment in this

world is lighter than the punishment on the Day of Judgement."

At this moment Sawadah bin Qays stood up and said: "At the time of return from the Battle of Ta'if, when you were riding a camel, you raised your scourge to hit your animal, but by chance it struck my belly. I now want to take revenge".

The offer made by the Prophet was not a mere formality for he was seriously inclined to compensate others even for those rights, which are not usually cared for by the people. 16 He therefore, ordered the same scourge to be brought from his house.

Thereafter he pulled up his shirt so that Sawadah might take revenge. The companions of the Prophet were watching the scene with grieved hearts, and with tears in their eyes, and were awaiting as to where the matter would end, and whether Sawadah would actually take revenge.

However, they suddenly saw Sawadah kissing the belly and chest of the Prophet. At this moment the Prophet prayed for him and said: "O Allah! Forgive Sawadah in the same manner in which he has forgiven the Prophet of Islam". 17

- 1. Seerahi Ibn Hisham, vol. II, p. 654 and Tabaqat-i Ibn Sa'd, vol. 2, p. 216.
- 2. Evidently what was meant was that the Prophet might dictate the deed and one of his secretaries might write it out, because the Prophet had never held a pen in his hand or written anything.
- 3. Sahih Bukhari, Kitabul 'Ilm, vol. I, page 22 and vol. II, page 14; Sahih Muslim, vol. II, page 14; Musnad Ahmad, vol. I, page 325 and Tabagat-i Kubra, vol. II, page 244.
- 4. Sharh-i Nahjul Balaghah, Ibn Abil Hadid, vol. II, page 20.
- 5. Sahih Muslim, vol. I, page 14 and Musnad Ahmad, vol. I, page 355.
- 6. Kanz al-Ummal, vol. III, page 138 and Tabaqat, vol. II, page 244.
- 7. The late Allamah Mujahid Sharfuddin has collected all these excuses his book entitled al-Muraji'at and refuted them in a decent manner.
- 8. Hayat-i Muhammad, page 475.
- 9. Musnad Ahmad, vol. I, page 355.
- 10. Biharul Anwar, vol. XXII, page 469, quoted from al-Irshad by Shaykh Mufid and A'lamul Wara' by Tabrsi.
- 11. Biharul Anwar, vol. XXII, page 476, quoted from Majalis by Mufid.
- 12. al-Sawaiq, Chapter 9 of Part 2, page 57 and Kashful Ghummah, p. 43.
- 13. The Hadith Thaqalayn is one of those traditions which are unanimously accepted by the Sunni and the Shi'ah traditionalists, and it has been narrated by the companions of the Prophet in sixty different ways. Ibn Hajar Askalani writes: "The Prophet invited the attention of the people to the correlation between the Book and his progeny on different occasions like the day of Arafah, the day of Ghadir, on return from Ta'if, and even while he was confined to bed. (al–Sawaiq al–Muhriqah, page 136). The late Mir Hamid Husayn of India has allocated a part of his book to the narration of authorities for the Hadith Thaqalayn. It has been published recently in Isfahan in six volumes. In the year 1374 A.H. a tract about this hadith was published by the Darut Taqrib Foundation (Egypt). Its importance from the viewpoint of authorities and the esteem shown to it by the traditionalists in different eras of Islamic history have been quoted in it briefly.
- 14. Tabaqat-i Kubra, vol. II, page 238.
- 15. Tabaqat, vol. II, page 236.
- 16. Manaqib-i Al-i Abi Talib. vol. I. page 164.
- <u>17.</u> Furthermore, as the Prophet did not hit Sawadah's body intentionally he had no right to take revenge, but the act could be compensated by payment of 'diya' money (prescribed compensation). In spite of this the Prophet decided to meet his

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