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Chapter 6: The Triangular Danger, The Three Enemies Of Islam

On the day when the great Prophet of Islam passed away, there were three enemies who threatened Islam from both inside and outside and the fear was that they might attack Islam.

The first side of the triangle of enmity

The internal danger was due to the hypocrites of Medina and its suburbs who had intended to kill the Prophet when he was returning from the holy war of Tabuk. They had planned to startle the Prophet's camel so that he might lose his life.

Aware of their nasty intentions, the Prophet could easily foil their intrigues. However, for the general good, he never told anyone except for selected friends such as Hothaifah about these conspiracies.

A group of hypocrites were awaiting the Prophet's death. Exposing them, the Holy Quran says,

'therefore continue to remind ... you are not a soothsayer, or a mad-man' or do they say: A poet, we anticipate for him the evil accidents of time" we are waiting for his death and for the decline of his religion.

A group of enemies were under the illusion that with the Prophet's death Islam would cease to expand. Some others thought with the weakening of Islam they could revert to their ideology of the pre-Islamic age.

Upon the Prophet's demise, Abu Sufyan, who had decided to bring forth discrepancy between the Quraysh and Bani Hashim, hypocritically entered Ali's house and asked him for allegiance, telling him: in

this way the children of Taym and Adi would not oppose you. Imam Ali (as) realized that he had the intention of creating disagreements among people and causing bloodshed. He, therefore, refused his allegiance and continued with the burial ceremony of the Prophet.2

The mosque of Tharar, which was built in the ninth year of Hijra, and was later destroyed by the order of the Prophet, was an underground center for the hypocrites towards the final years of the Prophet. They were connected to Ibn Amer, the enemy of God upon the capture of Mecca. Ibn Amer escaped to Rome from where he could distribute the necessary orders.

In the ninth year of hijra, the Prophet left Medina for Tabuk, extremely concerned with the internal chaos and the coup d'etat which the hypocrites had planned to carry out. Therefore, he appointed Ali (as) as his substitute in Medina and he delivered his historic statement regarding Ali (as):

"You are to me what Harun was to Musa"3.

Then he reminded Ali (as) to stay in Medina to handle the internal chaos.

There are many verses in the Holy Quran which deal with the hypocrites plotting against Islam. All the verses confirm their enmity towards Islam.

When the Prophet passed away, there were many saboteurs living in Medina.

Upon the Prophet's demise, a group of Arabs reverted to their apostasy and were backslidden. By expelling the alms officials, they started their opposition. Although they were not from among the hypocrites, they were weak in their religion, changing to different directions as conditions changed. They tried, in this way, to avoid the newly founded Islam.

With such enemies in the vicinity constantly awaiting opportunities to disrupt Islam, how could the Prophet not consider a successor for himself?

Other sides of the enmity triangle

The other two sides of the triangle were two great empires of the time: Rome and Iran. The first military clash took place between the Christian army of Rome in Palestine in the eighth year of Hijra which ended in severe defeat for the Islamic army and in their return to Medina under the command of Khalid Ibn Walid. In this war, the great leaders of the Islamic army were killed: Jaafar Tayyar, Zaid Ibn Harith and Abdullah Rawahah. Such a clear defeat by the army of infidels, would give momentum to Caesar's army. Every minute there was the danger of their attack to the very center of the newly built Islam.

For this reason, the Prophet along with thirty thousand troops headed to the coasts of Syria in the ninth year of hijra to take part in a military maneuver to discourage the army from future attacks and to enter into military pacts with some tribes. In this military movement, which was full of various obstacles, no clash took place between the Muslims and the Romans. The Prophet then headed for Medina.

This sort of victory did not convince the Prophet, who was restless to compensate for such defeat. So, a few days prior to his death, he prepared a flag for Osamah Ibn Zaid and ordered his followers to accompany him to the coasts of Syria and start an attack before being taken by surprise by the foreign troops.

All these movements indicate that the Prophet was extremly worried about the north and he predicted that Islam would be attacked by the Roman state.

The other side of this triangle of enmity was the Sassanid Kingdom of Iran. This enmity was so bitter that Khosro Parviz tore up the Prophet's letter in rage and killed the Prophet's ambassador and wrote to the governor of Yemen to kill the new Prophet and send his head to the Madaen court!

Hijaz and Yemen had long been colonies of Iran. But then, due to the advent of Islam the two gained independence and it was probable that the two states stage attacks against Iran.

Although Khosro Parviz passed away while the Prophet was still living, the separation of Yemen and Hijaz and their shores was always in the minds of the kings who reigned after Khosro Parviz, who were worried about the new power whose troops were equipped with faith, sincerity and unity.

With such powerful enemies, could the Prophet pass away without having nominated a political successor for himself? Reason would not allow us to attribute such negligence to the Prophet.

1. . Quran 52:30.

2. Al-Darajat Al-Rafiah, p. 77. Ali (as) expressed his ideas concerning Abu Sufyan with the following statement. ما ذلت عدق الإسلام وأهله

"you have always been an enemy to Islam and Moslems".

Refer to "Al-Esty'ab" vol. 2 / p. 690.

3. This narration has been repeated frequently.

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