

The Protection That Was Revoked

Muslims had migrated to Abyssinia because of the torture and persecution by Quraish, but always anxiously waited for some news from their homeland. Those stand-bearers of Unity and justice of God (though an insignificant minority in comparison to the swarms of idolaters who were bent upon maintaining statuesque in religion and social system) were confident that everyday their supporters were increasing and the rank of their adversaries was decreasing. They even hoped that soon the curtain of ignorance would be removed from the eyes of the non believers and the whole tribe of Quraish would embrace Islam, casting away their idols.

By chance a rumour took wings in their locality in Abyssinia that the whole Quraish had been converted to Islam. Though the news was not confirmed, but the refugees deep faith in their religion, and their strong expectation and hope in the ultimate victory of Islam led a group of them to return to Mecca without waiting for the confirmation of the news from reliable sources. One of them was Othman bin Madh'un, the well-known companion of the Prophet who was extra-ordinarily attached to the Holy Prophet, and was greatly respected by all Muslims.

When he reached near Mecca, he realised that the news was not correct; on the contrary, Quraish had intensified the torture and oppression of the Muslims. He was in a bad fix: He could not return to Abyssinia as it was far off; and if he entered Mecca, he would immediately become a target of the Quraish's torture. At last, an idea came into his mind. He thought of taking advantage of an Arabian custom by placing himself under the protection of one of the influential men of Quraish.

According to the Arab custom if a person would request an Arab for protection, he usually would grant his request and would protect him even at the cost of his own life. For an Arab, it was a shame if someone asked him for protection and he did not grant that request even though he might be his enemy. So Othman entered Mecca at mid-night and went straight to the house of Waleed son of Mughira Makhzumi, a distinguished wealthy and influential Quraishite. He asked for his protection which was readily granted.

Next day, Waleed brought him to the Mosque and made a formal announcement before the elders of the tribe that from that moment Othman was under his protection, anyone doing anything against him would

be considered going against Waleed personally. As Waleed was highly respected by Quraish, nobody dared to trouble Othman any more. He was now a protected person. He moved freely as one of the Quraish attending their sittings. But at the same time, the persecution of other Muslims continued unabated. It was hard on Othman, who was not happy at being safe while his fellow Muslims continued to suffer. One day he thought to himself that it was not just on his part to be safe under the protection of a pagan whereas his brethren were being persecuted. He came to Waleed and said:

"I am sincerely thankful to you. You gave me protection and saved me; but from today I want to go out from your protection, and join my friends. Let, whatever happens to them, happen to me" "Nephew, perhaps you are not happy with me, or perhaps, my protection could not keep you safe"

"Why, I am not unhappy at all. But I don't want to live any longer under protection of anyone except God."

"Since you have so decided, I would like you to come to the Mosque announce you're going out from my protection, as I took you the first day there and announced your protection"

"Very well, no objection to it."

They came to the Mosque. When the elders had gathered, Waleed said: "Everybody should know that Othman has come here to announce his exit from my protection"

Othman said: "He is right. I have come here with that very intention, and also to inform you that so long as I was under his protection, he protected me very well and I had no reason to complain. The reason for my going out from his protection is only that I don't like to live under the protection of anyone except God."

This is how the protective period came to end, and he lost his immunity from persecution. But he was still moving freely among Quraish as before. One day, Labeed bin Rabi'a, the well-known poet of Arabia came to Mecca to recite his Qasida (poem) which he had recently composed, and which is now considered as a masterpiece and classics of the pre-Islamic period of Arabic literature. The Qasida begins with the following line:

Know (that Every thing is null and void except God; nothing except Allah is Truth). The Prophet had said about this line, "It is the truest poem has ever composed".

Anyhow, Labeed came, Quraish gathered to hear such a great poet. There was a pin-drop silence to hear a reputedly best work of Labeed. He started recitation with manifest pride:

(Know that everything is null and void except God).

Before he could recite the second line, Othman sitting in a corner said loudly: "Excellent, you have spoken the truth. It is the fact; everything except God is false."

Labeed recited the second line:

(And, without doubt all riches come to an end).

Othman cried, "But this is wrong. Not all riches are to come to an end. This is true only for the material riches of this world. The riches of the life hereafter are immortal and eternal:"

The people were surprised. Nobody had expected that a man who only a short while ago was under the protection of another person and who now had neither security of his life nor power of any wealth would dare criticize a poet of Labeed's stature in the gathering of chiefs and elders of the Quraish.

They requested Labeed to repeat the lines; the poet repeated the first line and again Othman said: "True, correct." But when Labeed repeated the second line, Othman again said: "Wrong. It is not true; the riches of that world are not perishable"

This time Labeed himself felt most annoyed. He cried: "O people of Quraish! By God, your gatherings were not like this before. There were not such rude and discourteous persons among you. How is it that now among you I find such persons?"

A man from the audience with the intention of pacifying him and making him to continue his recitation, said affably: "Please, don't be angry to the talk of this man. He is crazy. And he is not alone. There is a group of some more crazy persons in this city. And they have the same belief as this fool. They have gone out from our religion and have chosen a new religion of their own"

Othman replied to that man forcefully. The man lost his temper; moved from his seat and slapped at the face of Othman, putting his full strength behind that slap. Othman got a black-eye.

Somebody said to Othman:

"Othman! you did not appreciate the value of the protection of Waleed. Had you still been under his protection, your eye would not have become black."

"The protection of God is safer and more dignified than the protection of any other person. So far as my eye is concerned, the other eye also longs to attain the same honor in the way of Allah:"

Waleed came forward and said:

"Othman, I am ready to take you again under my protection:"

"But I have decided not to accept anyone's protection except that of God."

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