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The Son of Hatim

Before the advent of Islam, there were in Arabia autonomous tribal chiefs. The people were used to the rule of their chiefs and obeyed them; and often paid them tributes and taxes. The well- known generous Hatim, of the tribe of Tai, was one of the tribal chiefs of Arabia. His son, Adi, succeeded him after his death and the Tribe submit- ted to his rule. He was taxing them to the extent of one-fourth of their income every year. His lordship coincided with the advent of the Prophet.

The Tai tribes were idol-worshippers, but him- self was a Christian, but kept his beliefs secret from his people. The people, after being acquainted with the liberal teachings of Islam, felt themselves relieved from the burden of their lords who had hitherto imposed their rule upon the people. Owing to this fact, Adi, like other lords used to look upon Islam as the greatest danger for himself; and was harboring enmity against the Prophet.

But the die was cast. People were embracing Islam in increasingly large numbers; and the religion of Allah was advancing day by day. He knew that the day was near when the Muslims would come looking for him also, and that would be the end of his lordship. He therefore, instructed his special steward, a slave, to always keep strong and light-footed camels ready near his camp and to remain watchful.

One day the slave came to him and said, "Make whatever arrangements you want to make as the Muslims are very close." Adi mounted his family on the camels and took whatever valuables and luggage he could take, and escaped to Damascus where the people were of his religion. But in the confusion, he forgot to take his sister, Safana with him; and she was left behind.

The Muslims defeated the tribe in the battle; and some were made captives. Muslims brought Safana to Medina along with other captives and related the story of Adi's escapade to the Prophet.

The prisoners were sheltered in a low walled compound near the Mosque. One day, the Prophet, while going to the Mosque passed beside the enclosure. Safana, intelligent and talkative as she was, moved from her place and said:

"My father is dead; my guardian is hiding; be generous to me, God will be generous to you."

Prophet: "Who is your guardian?" "Adi, son of Hatim"

"The one who has run away from God and His Prophet?"

Saying these words the Prophet went away. Next day again she repeated the same words, heard the same reply. Her plea produced no result. The third day, having lost her hopes, she decided to keep silent. But a young man walking behind the Prophet made signs to her to repeat her demand. She repeated the same words. The Prophet said, "Very well, I am waiting for some reliable man from your tribe. As soon as such a man is found I shall send you with him to your tribe. Inform me if you find such a person who has come to Medina"

She asked the people who was the young man walking behind the Prophet who had encouraged her to repeat her demand. They said he was Ali.

After some time, Saffana informed the Prophet that some men of her tribe had come to Medina. The Prophet gave her a new dress, some cash for meeting the expense of the journey and a camel to ride on. She went along with them to her brother in Syria.

When she saw her brother, she reproached him and said, "You brought out your wife and children forgot me the memory of your father!" Adi apologized to her. Then, as she was an intelligent woman, Adi consulted her about his plan. He asked "What do you advise me to do, since you have seen Mohammed from near? Should I join him or keep aloof from him?"

"I believe you should join him. If he is a Prophet of God it will be a credit to your honor and nobleness. And if he is not a prophet, and only wants to be a worldly ruler, then in a place (Medina) which is not far from Yemen (your place), nobody will dare to dishonor you, because of the honor and respect you have among the people of Yemen. Either way, your honor is guaranteed."

The idea appealed to Adi. He decided to go to Medina and to observe the Prophet's manners minutely. If he was a prophet he would follow him like other Muslims. But in case he was only a man with worldly ambitions of power and pelf, then he would cooperate with him to the extent of the common benefits of both.

He entered the Mosque of Medina and saluted to the Prophet. The Prophet accorded him due respect and took him to his house.

On their way a haggard woman caught hold of the garment of the Prophet and entered into a discussion with him. A long time passed; and the Prophet answered all her questions with kindness and patience.

Adi said to himself, "This is the one sign from the character of this man that he is a prophet. People having worldly ambitions do not have such a disposition and temperament of replying to a poor old woman with so much patience and kindness"

When they entered the house Adi found his life most simple and unpretentious. There was only a quilt which the Prophet used to sit upon, but now he spread it for Adi to sit. Adi insisted that the Prophet should sit upon the quilt; but he flatly refused. Ultimately, Adi sat upon the quilt and the Prophet sat on the ground. Adi said to himself, "This is the second sign of the character of this man, This is the character of the Prophets, not of the kings"

The Prophet turned to him and said, "But was not your religion Christianity?" Adi said "Yes, why?" The Prophet said, "then why, and on what grounds, were you taking one fourth of the income of your people? Is it not inadmissible in your religion?"

Adi, who had kept his religion secret even from his closest relatives, was surprised to hear it from the Prophet. He said to himself, "this is the third sign that this man is a prophet."

Then the Prophet said: "You are looking at the present poverty and helplessness of the Muslims. You find that the Muslims today are living in distress. They are surrounded by crowds of enemies and have no security of their lives and properties. They have no power in their hands. By God, the time is not far when such a vast wealth will come to them that there will be no poor among them. By God. their enemies will be vanquished and there will exist such a perfect peace and order that a woman shall be able to travel from Iraq to Hijaz alone and nobody will trouble her. By God, the time is near when the white palaces of Babylonia will come under the hands of the Muslims"

Adi embraced Islam with perfect Faith and Sincerity, and remained faithful to the end of his life. He lived upon the years after the Holy Prophet. He always remembered the talks of the Holy Pro- phet in his first meeting with him, and the forecasts at that time, about the future of Muslims. He used to say, "By God, in my life-time I saw Muslim conquering the white palaces of Babylonia, and there is such a peace and order that a woman can travel from Iraq to Hijaz without anybody troubling her. By God, I am sure a day will come when there will be no poor among the Muslims"

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