

(.The Last Hours of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W

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The Holy Prophet (S) returned from the Farewell Haj at the end of the month of Zilhaj of 10 A.H. After passing the one month of Muharram, he fell ill at the beginning of Safar 11 A.H. At that time, news was received that the Romans to the north west of Arabia were preparing to attack the Muslim capital of Madina. The Holy Prophet (S) reacted to this dangerous situation by ordering the mobilisation of a huge Muslim army under the command of Usama bin Zayd. He specifically ordered all the Muhajir who had migrated with him to Madina to participate in the battle, except for Imam Ali (A). To arouse the morale of the Muslims the Holy Prophet (S) tied the banner for Usama with his own hands and then instructed him, "Fight in the name of Allah and in His path.

Fight the enemy early in the morning, and cover the distance to that place so quickly that you reach them before they are aware of your march."

Usama fixed his camp at Jurf, 3 miles outside Madina, so that the Muslim soldiers could gather there ready for the expedition. Usama was a young man of 20 years and the son of Zayd, who was a freed slave. The people of Madina protested that they did not want to follow such a young commander. When the Holy Prophet (S) heard of the reluctance of the Muslims, he warned them that whoever kept back from Usama's army in spite of his clear orders, would earn the Curse of Allah. Even then, the companions of the Holy Prophet (S) did not proceed, using his illness as an excuse to remain in Madina. As time passed, the condition of the Holy Prophet (S) grew worse and ultimately the expedition of Usama never materialised.

The expedition to Syria under Usama shows that the Holy Prophet (S) had two things in mind. Firstly, he wanted to teach the people that age was not important in the distribution of responsibility and power, and the criteria for leadership were personality and ability.

This valuable lesson was ignored in the following months by Abu Bakr and Umar, who denied the rights of Imam Ali (A) on the grounds that he was too young to lead the people. The second interesting point is the insistence of the Holy Prophet (S) that Imam Ali (A) remain behind while other prominent Muslims should accompany Usama. This was to keep the biggest hypocrites out of Madina so that Imam Ali (A) could take over his appointment as Caliph without interference.

However, the hypocrites were aware of the plan of the Holy Prophet (S) and used his weak condition as an excuse to disobey him. They wanted to make certain that they were in Madina

at the time of his death so that they could plot to steal the Caliphate from Imam Ali (A). History shows that Abu Bakr, Umar and others managed to do exactly as they planned. May Allah curse them forever for their treachery. The Holy Prophet (S) fell seriously ill while he was living in the house of his wife Maimoona. It was decided that he would stay at the house of his wife Ayesha where everyone could come to meet him. The Holy Prophet (S) was well aware of the plan by the people to deny the right of Imam Ali (A). When his fever took a turn for the worse, he knew that he did not have much time left. He requested the companions around him to bring some paper and a pen so that he could dictate a will for the guidance of the people. Umar, who at once realised that his plans would not succeed if the Holy Prophet (S) left a written document, protested by saying that the Holy Prophet (S) was out of his mind due to the fever and did not know what he was saying. He stated that the Holy Qur'an was enough for them and that there was no need for a will. Other companions disagreed and there was a loud commotion as they argued. As the voices grew louder, the Holy Prophet (S) felt disturbed and indicated that all of them should leave. It is important for us to realise that this one action of the accursed Umar caused an eternal division between the Muslims and he is responsible for the thousands of deaths that have resulted from conflicts between the Shia and the Sunnis over the centuries.

As the life of the Holy Prophet (S) slipped away, his dear family were around him all the time. Bibi Fatima (A) could not bear the thought of the loss of her beloved father and tears fell continuously from her eyes. The Holy Prophet (S) gently asked her not to weep and then whispered something in her ear that made her stop crying and smile. When she was asked about it later by Ayesha, Bibi Fatima (A) said that her father had told her not to worry because she would be the first after him to leave the world and join him.

The Holy Prophet (S) said his farewell to his companions and kept on reminding them to follow the Holy Qur'an, and not to abandon the Ahlul Bayt, who would guide them on the right path of virtue and truth. He then called his grandsons and hugged them warmly. With tears in his eyes, he kissed Imam Hasan (A) on the mouth and Imam Husain (A) on the neck. When asked about this he said that one of his grandsons would be given poison to drink while the other would have his neck cut. As the condition of the Holy Prophet (S) worsened, the whole of Madina was immersed in grief, sorrowful at the thought of losing the beloved Prophet of Allah, who had taught them everything about the true path to salvation.

THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF THE HOLY PROPHET (S)

During the last moments of his life, the Holy Prophet (S) opened his eyes and asked for his

brother to be called. Ayesha called her father Abu Bakr, but when the Holy Prophet (S) saw him he placed his head back on his pillow and repeated that his brother should be called for. Hafsa, another wife of the Holy Prophet (S) called her father Umar, but the same thing happened. Ayesha then sent for Imam Ali (A) saying that the Holy Prophet (S) would see no one else. When Imam Ali (A) arrived, the Holy Prophet (S) raised his cloak and took him under its cover.

He then placed his head on the chest of Imam Ali (A) and talked to him for a long time. In the last moments of his life a knock was heard on the door. Bibi Fatima (A) told the caller to come later, because her father was very ill. However, the caller was insistent and kept on knocking. Bibi Fatima (A) told him again to come later. When the third knock came, tears welled up in Bibi Fatima's (A) eyes, but her father said to her, "O Fatima, let him in. For it is none other than the Angel of Death. It is only in respect of your presence that he is asking for permission to enter, otherwise he waits for nobody when he comes to take away the soul."

Soon afterwards the signs of death began to appear on his face. The last sentence he spoke was, "No. With the Divine Companion". It appears that at the time of his last breath the angel Jibrael (A) gave him the option to recover from his illness and remain in this world or to allow the Angel of Death to remove his soul so that he may proceed with him (the Divine Companion) to the next world. The Holy Prophet (S) uttered this sentence and passed away on Monday 28th Safar 11 A.H. He was 63 years old.

As the sound of mourning rose from the house of the Holy Prophet (S) the people outside knew that he had breathed his last. Soon afterwards the news of his death spread throughout Madina, plunging everyone into sorrow. Imam Ali (A) bathed the sacred body of the Holy Prophet (S) and shrouded him. The Holy Prophet (S) had directed that his body should be bathed by one who was nearest to him, and such a person could be none else than Imam Ali (A).

The first person to offer the funeral prayers for the Holy Prophet (S) was Imam Ali (A). Thereafter the companions came in groups and offered prayers, and this practice continued till noon on Tuesday. It was then decided to bury the Holy Prophet (S) in the same house where he had passed away.

It was a most tragic event. The great personality who had changed the future of humanity with his efforts and sacrifice was no more. The Holy Prophet (S) had made a great contribution to the welfare of humanity at large. He had spread the message of Allah, practising the religion himself and then asking others to follow him.

He had established the rights of people when everywhere their rights were being violated; he had spread justice when tyranny was the norm; he introduced equality at a time when

discrimination was so common; and he gave freedom to the people when they were suppressed by injustice. He had faithfully carried out the great mission entrusted to him by Allah.

The Holy Prophet (S) had always told the people, "I have only been sent to perfect your Akhlaq (moral character.)" In appreciation of the character of the Holy Prophet (S) himself, the Holy Qur'an testifies:

(O Our Prophet,) Verily for you there is a great unending reward. And most certainly you have outstanding Akhlaq. Surae Qalam, 68 : 3,4

.May Allah send His blessings on the Holy Prophet Muhammad Mustafa (S) and his Progeny