**January 28, 1916**

**Holy Prophet Muhammad Manifested Simple Living Even as a King; The Objective of Warfare in Islam and the Unique Example of the Companions of the Holy Prophet in the Battle of Uhud**

I bear witness that none deserves to be served besides Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is the servant and messenger of Allah. —

After this, I seek the protection of Allah from the accursed devil.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.



“And when thou didst go forth early in the morning from thy family, to assign to the believers their positions for the battle. And Allah is Hearing, Knowing.” (3:121)



“When two parties from among you thought of showing cowardice, and Allah was the Guardian of them both. And in Allah should the believers trust.” (3:122)



“And Allah certainly helped you at Badr when you were weak. So keep your duty to Allah that you may give thanks.” (3:123)



“When thou didst say to the believers: Does it not suffice you that your Lord should help you with three thousand angels sent down?” (3:124)

**The Perfect Example of Striving in the Way of Allah**

“And when thou didst go forth early in the morning from thy family, to assign to the believers their positions for the battle. And Allah is Hearing, Knowing.” (3:121)

Some people, when they hear or see these and similar verses in the Holy Quran, wonder what kind of prophet goes forth in battle and assigns combat duties to people. Preparations must have been made in advance for this battle, along with planning and mutual consultations. Swords and bows would have been readied and repaired for the purpose. If a Sufi of our time was to witness this scene, he would think this is some other nation, not the one to which he pledges allegiance. There are Sufis who have not even slaughtered a chicken in their entire life, unlike the Holy Prophet who sacrificed a hundred camels when the occasion demanded. It is quite hard to slaughter a camel for it has to be first injured and brought down to the ground with a spear and then slaughtered with great difficulty.

Holy Prophet Muhammad also had to take part in battles. The Christian critics have raised objections that the Holy Prophet did good work in Makkah but in Madinah worldly concerns became his priority. The type of kingship that the Holy Prophet acquired was, however, quite distinct and unique from all other kings of the world. He combined virtues of kingship and humility in his dealings with the rest of humanity. In name he was a king, but his spartan living was reflected by the provisions in his house, which included a few dates, a handful of barley, a pitcher of water, and a mat so coarse in texture that it left impressions on his body when he rested on it. Whatever cash there was, met the needs of the people.

What was the condition at the time of his death? Did the Holy Prophet, like the king Mahmud Ghaznavi, display his wealth or look at it with regret? Those who have had the opportunity to study the life of the Holy Prophet know that there was not a single penny in the house at the time of his death. This was his kingship! Would anybody be willing to acquire this kind of kingdom and face the numerous difficulties he had to face? The king whose monetary condition is such that there is not a penny in his house at the time of his death. Even if we assume that his objective in life was to acquire kingship, such kingship would still certainly be a source of mercy for the world.

**Unique Example of Following the Messenger of Allah**

Those who kept his company and inherited his kingdom displayed the same characteristics of caring, compassion and simple living. Observe the behavior of Hazrat Abu Bakr and Hazrat Umar. The Kingdom of Hazrat Umar was not small. It had expanded to include Egypt and Persia. Here we have the example of a person who is the ruler of an empire, while his living is so simple and frugal that he wears a patched cloak. This demonstrates that he became the king not for any personal gain. The state treasury under him had greatly expanded to the point that it could accommodate camel loads of goods. Herds of camels were also under its stewardship. His concern for safekeeping of the public trust was also exemplary as illustrated by the following incident.

On an extremely hot summer day, when venturing outside could have been perilous, to escape the stifling heat, a few of the companions had taken shelter in a house. They observed a man driving a camel and wondered who was the person willing to risk his life under such foul weather conditions? Lo and behold it was none other than the Caliph Umar. Upon their inquiry as to why he had gone out on such a hot day, his answer was that a camel belonging to the state treasury had gone loose and he had decided to go out and get it. The state treasury, at that time, was not only in possession of just a single camel, it possessed many. And there was not a dearth of treasures. In spite of all these resources at his disposal, he could not bear the thought of even a minor loss to the public treasury and put his own life at risk in order to protect it.

He would also go from door to door and ask the people of Madinah if they needed any provisions, so that he could bring it to them from the marketplace. He would then personally deliver the bags containing these provisions. On one occasion, he observed a woman stirring a pot over a fire. He asked her what she was cooking. She replied she did not have anything in the house to cook. In order to pacify her children who were crying with hunger, she had lighted the fire and was pretending to cook something so that they would perhaps get tired of waiting and go to sleep. Upon hearing this, he told her to wait. He went to the market to personally get and deliver a sack of flour and some other provisions to meet her needs. This was the kind of spiritual revival the Holy Prophet had generated amongst his companions. Neither he, nor his companions, had any desire for power or kingdom. It is the desire for a life of ease and comfort that motivates the wish for kingdom and power. They remained penniless while the state treasury was full.

**The Purpose of Warfare in Islam**

What was the purpose of the battles fought in the early history of Islam? This has been the subject of much debate. The truth in this matter can be easily concluded on the basis of a few simple facts. The battlefield of Badr, where the first confrontation took place, was located only three days journey from Madinah and nine days from Makkah. The second battle was at Uhud, which was only one days journey from Madinah and an eleven day journey from Makkah. The third battle of Ahzab occurred in the surroundings of Madinah. This clearly shows that the Holy Prophet was not the one who attacked the enemy but was invariably attacked by the enemy first. This also shows that enemies were bent upon destruction of the Muslims and therefore repeatedly attacked them. The Holy Prophet fought purely in self-defense and for the protection of Muslims and Islam and not to fulfill some personal motive.

**Various Incidents Related to the Battle of Uhud**

In the battle of Uhud, the enemy attacked with a force three thousand strong. It was the Holy Prophet’s habit to consult with his companions on all occasions. He sought counsel from his companions to decide whether it would be appropriate to confront the enemy while remaining within the confines of Madinah or to meet them in battle outside. A majority of the companions, who were extremely valiant said, “O prophet of Allah, if we remain in Madinah and do not go forth to confront the enemy, they would get the signal that Muslims are fearful.” It was the Holy Prophet’s opinion that the battle should be conducted while remaining in Madinah. In a dream he saw that he had put his hand into a strong coat of mail and also saw a cow being slaughtered. He interpreted the slaughtering of the cow to indicate martyrdom of the Muslims and the strong coat of mail as staying within the confines of Madinah. Some of the companions were of the same opinion that Muslims should remain within Madinah and face the enemy. Abdullah bin Ubayy who was the leader of the hypocrites[[1]](#footnote-1) also held the same opinion.

**Holy Prophet Muhammad Followed the Consensus of Opinion**

People say that although the commandment is for consensus, after obtaining a mutual consensus, do as you please. Observe what the Holy Prophet did. Although his personal opinion was to stay within the confines of Madinah, he put that aside in favor of the majority opinion and decided to go outside Madinah to engage the enemy.

**Various Duties Performed by the Holy Prophet**

This is expressed in the Quranic words:

“And when thou didst go forth early in the morning from thy family, to assign to the believers their positions for the battle.” (3:121)

Observe also, all the different qualities manifested, and the duties performed by the Holy Prophet. He is the leader of the prayer service, delivers Friday sermons, resolves legal disputes as a judge, is the exemplar and religious teacher for his followers and at the same time he is engaged in religious debate with some nations while others have to be engaged with the sword. He is also the general leading his companions into battle and assigns believers to battle positions. There has never been a person in the world with so many different capabilities, nor is one expected in the future. The enormous spiritual strength of a solitary individual, fulfilling tasks of such great responsibility, is found only in the person of the Holy Prophet.

**The Mischief of Abdullah Ibn Ubayy**

“When two parties from among you thought of showing cowardice and Allah was the Guardian of them both…” (3:122)

When the Holy Prophet left Madinah, he was accompanied by one thousand men. A short while later, Abdullah Ibn Ubayy, who was the leader of the hypocrites, was able to persuade three hundred men to accompany him by telling them that the Holy Prophet and those with him were going forth to get killed and they would be better off staying with him in Madinah. The Holy Prophet paid no attention to their departure and stuck with the decision already made. He led the remaining seven hundred men to the site of Uhud. The two tribes of Banu *Salimah*, and Banu *Harithah*, upon witnessing the departure of three hundred men, also entertained the idea of deserting the Muslim army on account of superior enemy forces, but did not actually desert. Allah strengthened their hearts and they stood firm to face the enemy. The Holy Quran enjoins, “And in Allah should the believers trust.” The believers do not put their trust in their strength, their numbers, or their armament but rely only upon the help of Allah. If the help of Allah is not there, all else is of no benefit.

**Muslims Reminded of the Battle of Badr and Advised to Remain Tranquil**

“And Allah certainly helped you at Badr when you were weak. So keep your duty to Allah that you may give thanks.” (3:123)

The Muslims are told not to become anxious and are reminded of the battle of Badr when Allah’s help was clearly manifested. In the battle of Badr, the Muslims had no resources. Those who had migrated from Makkah to Madinah (the *muhajireen*) had left all their property behind. They neither had wealth nor weapons. The Muslims of Madinah, the Helpers (*ansar*), were farmers and were neither wealthy nor did they have any experience with combat. Victory at Badr was therefore a complete manifestation of the help of Allah the Most High. Allah reminds Muslims not to be fearful for they had received His help previously at Badr where their numbers were even fewer. They were told to be thankful for the help of Allah on that occasion so that His help may be with them once again.

**The Help of Angels**

“When thou didst say to the believers: Does it not suffice you that your Lord should help you with three thousand angels sent down?” (3:124)

What is this help that is rendered through the angels, and how is this assistance provided? A following verse provides the answer: “And Allah made it only as good news for you, and that your hearts might be at ease thereby” (3:126). The help of the angels was a form of good news to give solace and tranquility to their hearts. People have made an error in understanding this. They think that an army of angels joined the Muslims to fight the disbelievers. Allah stated that its purpose was, “so that your hearts might be at ease thereby.” The connection of the angels is with the hearts of men and not with their bodies. It is the hearts that gain solace through their support. In battle, it is not numerical strength that matters, for if the hearts are firm, even a few can be victorious over many. In the context of Badr also it is said, “And Allah gave it only as good news, and that your hearts might be at ease thereby” (8:10). A thousand angels were sent on that occasion because the strength of the enemy was a thousand. Whereas they strengthened the hearts of the believers, they cast terror into the hearts of the disbelievers (8:12). The strength of the enemy at Uhud was three thousand hence three thousand angels are mentioned. It seems that angels are sent in proportion to the strength of the enemies.

**Khaled bin Waleed**

The three thousand seasoned warriors who were part of the enemy force also included Khaled bin Waleed, whose wartime exploits became legendary after his conversion to Islam. With a few men, he would attack thousands and emerge victorious. On this occasion however, when he was fighting against Islam and the Muslims, his bravery and effort was of no avail and he ran away.

**Who was defeated?**

It is erroneously propagated that Muslims were defeated in this battle. The Holy Quran says, “That He may cut off a part of those who disbelieve or abase them so that they should return in failure” (3:127). The words, “so that they should return in failure,” clearly indicate that the enemy did not succeed in achieving its objective. Careful perusal of details of this battle show that the enemy failed and returned back to Makkah from the battlefield. If they were victorious, why did they turn back? How many Muslims did they take as prisoners? They returned to Makkah empty handed, without a single prisoner in their captivity. This clearly shows that they were the party who were defeated and not the Muslims. If the Muslims were the defeated party, they certainly remained on the battlefield, while those assumed to be victorious were retreating back to Makkah. If the enemy had been genuinely victorious, the Muslims would be the ones running with the disbelievers in pursuit.

**Details of the Battle Elaborated**

The truth of the matter is that the Holy Prophet had placed fifty archers at a critical location on the battlefield with specific instructions not to abandon their post no matter which way the tide of battle turned. When they saw the enemy running, they made the erroneous decision to abandon their post and pursue the enemy to partake of the war booty. Their leader tried to convince them by reminding them of the Holy Prophet’s instructions, but they did not pay heed and left their position. When the enemy noticed this critical position to be empty, they turned back and attacked the Muslims from the rear causing dispersal in the Muslim ranks. As a result of their action many Muslims were martyred. Considering this as a good opportunity for withdrawal, the enemy retreated. In spite of this, the Muslims remained on the battlefield and the following day the Holy Prophet gathered his followers and pursued the enemy, but they had retreated a great distance by then. In fact, they had already been intimidated by their initial confrontation with the Muslims. They considered this a valuable opportunity to show the Muslims that they were not fearful of them. If indeed they were victorious, then why did they retreat and not pursue the Muslims? Why did they not take any war booty or prisoners with them? The following day, when they were pursued by the Holy Prophet, they were nowhere to be found. It was obvious that they had hastened in their retreat for fear of pursuit by the Muslims. They considered it good fortune that they had escaped what might have been a dangerous loss.

**How the Disbelievers were Dealt With by Allah the Most High**

Allah the Most High says, regarding these disbelievers, “Thou hast no concern in the matter whether He turns to them (mercifully) or chastises them; surely they are wrongdoers” (3:128)

There exists a certain relationship between the Creator and His creation. This verse emphasizes that since they are Allah’s creation, He may choose to deal with them mercifully or chastise them. People have related this verse to the incident that occurred four months after the battle of Uhud in which leaders of certain tribes visited the Holy Prophet and asked for religious teachers to be sent with them. Seventy teachers who had committed the Holy Quran to memory were sent with them and were treacherously murdered. The murder of seventy men at such a critical time when Muslims were already small in number, particularly those who had committed the Holy Quran to memory, came as a great shock to the Holy Prophet. Ibn Umar says that he heard the messenger of Allah saying, when he raised his head after *ruku* in the last *rak’ah* of the morning-prayer: “O Allah curse such and such people…” So Allah revealed to him, “thou hast no concern in the matter whether He turns to them (mercifully) or chastises them; surely they are wrongdoers” (B. 64:22).

Allah wanted the Holy Prophet to be such an example of mercy that it was desirable in Allah’s wisdom for not even such a thought to enter the heart of the Holy Prophet. It is then stated: “And to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. He forgives whom He pleases and chastises whom He pleases. And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful” (3:129). It is the forgiveness of Allah that is all encompassing; therefore His mercy and forgiveness are always to be hoped for.

**The Second Khutba**

**Need of the Times**

Every age has its specific needs. Amongst other needs, fighting in self-defense was essential for the Holy Prophet to undertake (in Madinah). That is why he was, “to assign to the believers their positions (*maqaid*) for the battle.” In this day and age, it is the battle of conclusive evidence and arguments; hence people who are being prepared by us for this purpose should be taught those methods whereby they can defend against propaganda of the critics of Islam and break their strength. Our students, who are being prepared for the propagation of Islam, should be aware of those techniques and the conclusive proofs whereby hostile criticism can be countered. Also, other members should be ready to meet this challenge. If they cannot spare much time for this, they should dedicate one hour daily for the study of the Holy Quran. If they become familiar with the Quran, they can propagate Islam while they are involved in their businesses. After all, how did Islam spread to the African continent? Who were the preachers sent over there? They were traders who carried the message of Islam along with their merchandise.

The people who went from India to England did not set a good example. That is why people there became hostile toward Islam. Otherwise the Quran says, “Is the reward of goodness aught but goodness?” (55:60). If they had learned worldly knowledge from them and given them knowledge of the religion, Islam would have spread there by now. If our youth, to whom taking out time for this task appears very difficult, spend half an hour every day to learn the Quran, their abilities will improve greatly. An elephant is not aware of its strength. They have all these strengths and capabilities within them. They need to be aware of them. When you acquire the knowledge of the Holy Quran, you will become cognizant of your strengths and develop the zeal to propagate the message of Islam.

1. These were people who outwardly professed Islam, but secretly worked against it and sided with the enemies of Islam. No action was ever taken against them, and eventually most of them became sincere Muslims. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)