

The Strategic Religio-Political Migration of Mohammad (S) from Makkah to Madinah

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Abstract: Nabawi migration or Hijrah has special significance in Islam. It denotes the departure of Rasulullah (S) from Makkah to Madinah for seeking refuge from serial persecution by the then ruling class of Quraish. Due to sheer hostility, the so-called Muslim historians since the early era of Islam have intentionally neglected the celebrated contribution of Amir al-Mumineen Ali (as) in the Nabawi migration. In this article, I briefly narrate the sacrifice of Ali ibn Abi Talib (as) in facilitating the Nabawi migration, the recognition for which is also present in the Qur'an in the form of an Ayah that contains high praise for him. The Hijrah was not an escape as opponents of Islam have always alleged, but a carefully planned migration. It ushered the beginning of a new era for Muslims – a peaceful phase of life in Madinah compared to Makkah. Afterwards, a golden precedent of the organizational principle was set which emphasized the concept of "Akhawah" – the gift of Muslim brotherhood. Today Muslims are in turmoil because they have neglected this gift conferred by the Nabawi institution.

The misconception of the Orientals (specialists of eastern sciences) with regard to the Nabawi Hijrah (migration) is due to viewing it from a human prism, whereas every action of Rasulullah (S) was carried out in accordance with the Wahi (Commandment of Allah). Hijrah was such a success and completely unique in that it was the first mass migration to safeguard the religion of Allah. Complete submission to the Mashiyat 'ilahiyyah (divine strategy) allowed Rasulullah(S) to leave Makkah. He would have suffered trials and tribulations for many years in Makkah had he not been commanded to leave for Madinah. Orientals due to their limited understanding have linked the migration to Rasulullah's (S) fear for his life and presented it as a cowardly act which was in fact below the dignity of the Nabi (S) – the representative of Allah. He had been braving all kinds of atrocities during the thirteen years of his mission to spread the Daw'ah of Tawhid among the Mushrik (pagan) Arabs of Makkah. No place was more dangerous than "Shab'i Abi Talib" in the life of Rasulullah(S), and no other period as difficult.

Abu Talib (as), the Imam from the Ibrahimi lineage, [1] used to change the sleeping place of Mohammad (S) daily in Makkah. Every night Ali al-Murtada (as) slept at the place where Rasulallah (S) had slept the night prior. This was to safeguard the life of Mohammad (S). It was the wish of Al-Imam Abu Talib (as) that if there was an attack, his dear nephew should remain safe, and instead Ali (as) or his other sons should face it. Al Imam Abu Talib (as) by endangering his own life had prepared the ground for the Daw'ah of Islam for his beloved nephew Mohammad (S). Rasulallah (S) continued the Talim of Islam among the different tribes of Arabia by different means and under different conditions. In those days, to contact people individually and to meet them at the place of their stay was next to impossible. Therefore, Rasulallah (S) selected the season of Haj for the great purpose of the Daw'ah. People from different places and tribes who wanted to meet anybody used to come to Makkah. Rasulallah (S) used to take this opportunity to deliver sermons. As these delegations had come to perform Haj, their minds were thus inclined to listen to the voice of virtue. Since the Bani Hashim, the family of Rasulallah (S), enjoyed a prominent position and leadership in Arabia on account of Raqqaya and Saqqaya (caretaker of Zamzam), people listened to his sermons with respect and attention.

Likewise, Al-Imam Abu Talib (as), the guardian and affectionate uncle of Rasulallah (S) was famous for his poetic as well as his oratory skills [2] throughout Arabia. When people listened to Abu Talib's poems in praise of Rasulallah (S) wherein benedictions of Islam were beautifully discussed, they memorized them. They sang those couplets not only among their tribe but also to all those they met en-route. Consequently, the eternal message of Islam was spread through the poetries of Al-Imam Abu Talib (as). In this way, the Talim of Islam began to spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula. It is therefore a complete falsehood and character assassination of Al Imam Abu Talib (as) by advocates of Umayyads who argue that he was Mushrik. It is due to their inborn jealousy with Ali al-Murtaza (as) that the devotees of Abu Sufiyan have from the beginning tried to create doubt about the pious faith of Al-Imam Abu Talib (as) regarding Tawhid.

If one is to impartially study the singular role of Al-Imam Abu Talib (as) in the early phase of Islam, they will irrefutably conclude that without his help Islam would not have gained momentum. The famous scholar of the Ahl al-Sunnah, Ibn Abil Hadeed al-Mutazali has praised the unforgettable contributions of Al-Imam Abu Talib (as) and his son Amir al-Mumineen Ali (as) for the establishment of Islam. In one of his famous Qasaid available in "Sharh Nahj ul-Balagha," he acknowledged this courageously: [3]

"Wa Lavla Abu Talibin Wabnuhu;

Lama Masalad'dinu Shakhsan Wa Qama."

If Abu Talib (as) and his son Ali (as) had not supported Rasulallah(S);

Islam would not have survived and flourished as a religion.

"Fa Zaka Bey Makkata Aawa Wa Hama;

Wa Haza Bey Yasriba Jassal Hamama."

Al-Imam Abu Talib (as) protected Rasulallah (S) in Makkah;

Likewise his son Ali (as) divided the whirlpools of death in Yasrab for him.

*“Takaffala Abdu Manafin Bay Amrin;
Wa Awda Fakana Aliyun Tamama.”
Al-Imam Abu Talib (as) fulfilled the responsibility of his guardianship;
And Ali (as) executed his assigned duty with perfection.*

Another name of Al-Imam Abu Talib (as) is Imr’an, while his Kuniyah is Abd Manaf. When Ali (as) informed Rasulullah(S) about the demise of Al Imam Abu Talib (as), he wept bitterly. Rasulullah(S) and Ali (as) jointly arranged the burial and Rasulullah(S) offered the Dua of the Tarhim [4] with tears. After the departure of his beloved uncle, in Makkah only a couple of sincere people were with Rasulullah (S) as the chieftains of the Quraish had become deadly enemies of Islam. They were those, who ten years later, on the day of the conquest of Makkah, entered into the fold of Islam to save their heads from the swords of Ali ibn Abi Talib (as) and Hamzah (as). Their Islam was pointed out by this historical sentence of Rasulullah (S): [5]

“La Tatribu Alaykum ul-Yawma Antum ut-Tuluq’a”

No interrogations for you today as you are the freed ones.

It is a black chapter in the Muslim history that Muslims forgot the real heroes of Islam, the progeny of Rasulullah(S), and glorified the villainous Umayyads – the children of the freed ones.

In the 13th year of Nubuawah, 73 people from Madinah entered into the fold of Islam and humbly requested their Moulā (master) Rasulullah (S) to leave the distressful life of Makkah, and bestow honour to Madinah with his Barak’ah. Rasulullah (S) accepted their invitation and directed his companions to migrate to Madinah. The Kuffaar of Madinah received the news of this through the Munafiqeen. The Quraish wanted to protect the practices of their forefathers and safeguard their Aqaid by killing Rasulullah(S). All the Shayateen of Makkah gathered in “Dar un Nudwah” to plan the murder of Rasulullah (S). Abu Jahal (L) advised that selected warriors of all the tribes attack Mohammad (S) in order to kill him at once. They conspired [6] that if this were to happen, Bani Hashim would never be able to avenge it as going against all the leading tribes of Arabia would be impossible.

The Qur’an describes this event: [7]

“Verily we have revealed our Zikar (Mohammad) and We are his protectors.”

Allah knew best that the time had come to depart and that Islam will spread far and wide within a short span of 10 years from Madinah. Rasulullah (S) declared Madinah as the Markaz of Daw’ah, which was also an excellent example of his political-strategic insight. Hijrat, which took place under the divine instruction of Wahi, brought numerous successes. The spirit of Islam, which was visible in Madinah, was in fact the outcome of the hardship and sacrifices of Rasulullah (S) in Makkah.

Jawad Chirri discusses: [8]

“On the night of Hijrah, Jibr’ael instructed Rasulullah(S) not to lie on his bed, as a gang of powerful assassins were to attack him on his bed. Rasulullah(S) then ordered Ali (as) to sleep on his Nabawi bed, which had turned into a death bed. He (S) informed Ali (as) about his secrets, and Mohammed (S) also delivered the Aman’at to Ali (as) to be handed over to the Mushrikeen who had deposited it with him”. [9]

Rasulullah(S) instructed Ali (as) to sleep on his bed to confuse the enemies, which Ali (as) accepted. Ali was always ready to sacrifice for Mohammad(S). Rasulallah (S) took a fistful of dust in his hand and went out of the house throwing it while reciting an Ayah of Surah Ya'seen towards the direction of the vigilant Kuffaar: [10]

And We have put before them a barrier and behind them a barrier and covered them, so they do not see.

Historians are unanimous in accepting that this was a moment of great danger. Ali (as) at that moment knew that the Quraish had made up their minds to kill Rasulallah (S), but for the "Conqueror of Khaybar," that death bed was like a bed of roses. Ali wore the famous Hazrami stole of Rasulallah (S) and lay on his bed. When Rasulallah (S) left Makkah for Madinah, an Ayah of Surah al-Baqarah was revealed on the submission, devotion and the spirit of sacrifice of Ali (as): [11]

"There is one who sells his life merely for the sake of Allah and Allah is very kind on His created ones."

Numerous Mufassarin have mentioned [12] that this Ayah was revealed exclusively for Amir al-Mumineen Ali ibn Abi Talib (as). At night when the assassins seized the house of the Nabi and surrounded the Nabavi bed from all sides, the Noor of Wasayah rose from the bed of Nubuawah. Ali (as) sprang from the bed with his sword. Khalid attacked Ali (as) with great anger. Ali (as) swiftly snatched Khalid's sword and twisted his hand. The mercenaries threatened Ali and inquired about the whereabouts of Moḥammad (S). In the shadow of swords, Ali (as) demonstrated the courage of Bani Hashim and countered:

"He is in the protection of Allah wherever he is. Have you entrusted Moḥammad (S) to me that you ask?"

Many prominent scholars of Islam [13] have recorded this event:

"Allah had sent Jibra'el and Mika'el for the protection of Ali (as) and they both guarded his bedroom".

In this tense situation, the gallantry which Ali (as) demonstrated was the result of the Talim and Tarbiyyah of Rasulallah (S). Hijrat was planned divinely to crush the cursed plan of "Dar un Nudwah". Time and the divine commandment dictated that Hijrat no longer be delayed. Rasulallah (S) did not adopt the Hijrat due to the fear of Kuffaar, but to defeat the hostile forces of Islam. Hijrat is one of those accredited events in the history of Islam about which the Qur'an says: [14]

"Remember the time (Mohammad) when the Kuffaar and Mushrikeen planned to kill you. They did trickery, while Allah made them fail. Allah is the greatest of plan makers."

After handing over the Aman'at, Ali (as) reached Madinah with his mother Fatimah bint Asad (ra), his wife Fatimah (as), Fatimah bint Zubair (ra) and the rest where Rasulallah (S) provided accommodation to Ali (as) in his own house. [15] It was the 1st year of Hijrah when Rasulallah (S) declared Ali (as) to be his brother alone and said: [16]

"O, Ali! You are my brother in Duniya as well as in the A'akhirah"

In the long history of Islam, Rasulallah (S) frequently discussed the merits of Ali (as) which made it abundantly clear that Ali (as) was his sole successor.

Selected Bibliography:

- [1] Ibrahim (as) to Abu Talib (as) were all Imams of the time. For further study see article: Al-Imam Abu Talib and his role at the beginning of the Daw'ah, on www.durrenajaf.com
- [2] 1-Diw'an Abu Talib; 2- Ghayat al-Matalib Fi Sharh Diw'an Abi Talib, by Ustad al-Azhar, Mohammad Khalil al-Khatib
- [3] Sharh Nahj ul-Balaghah, Ibn Abil Hadid al-Mutazali, vol. XIV, p.68
- [4] Sharh Nahj ul-Balaghah, Ibn Abil Hadid al-Mutazali, vol. XIV, p.76
- [5] Tabari, Vol. 1, Chap. 3
- [6] i- Sirat un-Nabi, Ibn Hasham, Vol. 1; ii- Tarikh Ibn Khaldun
- [7] Qur'an, Surah al-Hijr 15, Ayah 9
- [8] I, Sharh ul-Akhh'ar, Sayyidna Qadi al-Nauman, Iran; ii - "The Brother of the Prophet Moḥammed (The Imam Ali)", By Mohamad Jawad Chirri, Qum.
- [9] All of Arabia acknowledged Rasulullah as "Al Sadiq" and "Al Amin" which is an irrefutable recorded fact.
- [10] Qur'an, Surah Yasin 36, Ayah 9
- [11] Qur'an, Surah al-Baqarah 2, Ayah 207
- [12] i- Tafsir al-Tahsil Le-Uloom-ut-Tanzil, vol. I, P. 94, Mohammad Ibn Satif Kalbi; ii - Tafsir Qurtubi, vol. 3, P. 347, Abu Abdullah Mohammad Qurtubi; iii- Usdul Ghaba, vol. iv, P. 25, Abul Hasan Shebani; iv- Tafsir Naishapuri, vol. I, P. 281, Abu Bakar Neshapuri; v Noor al-Abs'ar, P. 86, Shablikhi
- [13] Several historians recorded this episode.
- [14] Qur'an, Surah al-Anfal, Ayah 9
- [15] "Muruj al-Zahab", vol. 2, p. 377
- [16] "Sirah al-Nabi", Ali ibn Burhanuddin al-Halabi, vol. 2, p. 97; 2; "Al Mustadrak", Al Hakim, vol. 3, p. 14;3- "Kanz ul-Ummal", Al Muttaqi al-Hindi, Hadith 6105,

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