

HADRAT UMM-E-HABIBA

(R.A)

Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba was one of those chosen and respected ladies in the history of Islam who embraced Islam in face of opposition of their society and their family, and then stuck to their cause with perseverance whatsoever, could shake Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba from her conviction and faith. She was one of those few Muslims who migrated twice first to Abyssinia and then to Madina.

She was the daughter of Abu-Sufyan, the arch enemy of Islam and the Holy Prophet (SAW) and the sister of Hadrat Muavia (*Hadrat Muavia, became the first monarch in Islamic history. Hadrat Muavia was the greatest rival of Hadrat Ali, the fourth Caliph, and fought two battles with him for acquiring rulership*). Abu Sufyan (*Abu-Sufyan embraced Islam on the fall of Makkah to Muslims*) was the chief of Umayyads a sub-tribe of Quraish and a permanent threat to the ideology of Islam and the existence of Muslims.

The propagation of Islam in Makkah by the Holy Prophet (SAW) had two phases. In the first phase, the message was being passed stealthily without its formal declaration. The second phase started on the directive of Allah to the Holy Prophet Hadrat Mohammad (SAW) for making the message of Islam public. Then the Holy Prophet (SAW) announced his Prophethood in public, while addressing the city dwellers of Makkah from the peak of a hillock named Safa. After this public call and announcement of Islamic faith the Quraishites tortured and teased the converts to the new religion of Islam, to make them return to idolatry. Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba and her husband Abu-Ubaida embraced Islam in the second phase and faced all sorts of harassment and persecution at the hands of the heathens of Makkah. Finally the Muslims were allowed to leave their homeland by the Holy Prophet (SAW) and more than seventy (*According to some reports seventy-two or seventy-four*) men and women left for Abyssinia. At Abyssinia, Hadrat Ramla (*The real name of Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba*) gave birth to a daughter named Habiba and Ramla was then called Umm-e-Habiba.

The migration to Abyssinia did not end her troubles and she suffered another shock. Her husband Abu-Ubaida indulged in excessive drinking apostatized and converted to Christianity.

Perhaps it is true that coming events cast their shadows before. While in Abyssinia, Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba saw a dream, in which she saw her husband in a very ugly and frightening form. During the dream, she was terrified and concluded that something must have gone wrong with her husband. In the morning, Abu-Ubaida took Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba into confidence and said:

“Umm-e-Habiba. I have done much thinking on the matter of religion; I do not consider any religion better than Christianity. Although I had embraced Islam earlier but now I revert back to my original religion. From now on, I will be a Christian’.

Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba persuaded and admonished him. She even explained about her dream, but in vain. Nothing could persuade him. Before embracing Islam, he was a drunkard; now again he started drinking of getting divorce from him, because a Muslim woman cannot remain married to an apostate. The excessive drinking of Abu-Ubaida hastened Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba’s decision and she divorced Ubu-Ubaida. After a few days Abu-Ubaida died of excessive drinking.

After getting divorce from her husband, Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba was left alone in the alien land of Abyssinia. But these troubles and sufferings could not shake her. She was now even more faithful and loyal to her belief. She was a great Muslim woman. She endured the pangs of separation from her husband but never thought of shirking her religion. She had already alienated herself from homeland, family and husband for the sake of Islam. Now she was alone, helpless and deserted in a foreign land. There was no shelter for her and there was no hope either in future. The Makkans had gone to such an extent in their atrocities that they were pressing and persuading Abyssinia to up-root Muslims from these also.

Soon the Holy Prophet (SAW) came to know about the miseries of Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba. In appreciation of her sacrifices for the cause of Islam, he wanted to compensate her. The best practical solution of her problems was her re-marriage. She got the best compensation. The Holy Prophet (SAW) himself proposed to her. He sent Amr-bin-Ummayya with his letter to Najjashi, the King of Abyssinia. The letter contained the message of marriage for Umm-e-Habiba and request that Mehr (*Mehr is the dower money to be paid by a Muslim husband to his wife after his marriage. Mehr can be both in kind or cash or both and it varies according to the social and monetary status of husband*) my be paid by Najjashi on behalf of the Holy Prophet (SAW). Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba herself gave the account of her marriage with the Holy Prophet (SAW) as under:--

“I was all alone in Abyssinia and was quite disturbed. My husband had apostatized and I had sought divorce. A few days after the death of my ex-husband, the maid-servant of Najjashi came to see me. Her name was Abraha. She said that the King had sent me a message. This message was about a letter of the Holy Prophet (SAW), in which he had requested that the King might marry me with Hadrat Mohammad (SAW) on his behalf. I was much pleased and accepted the proposal. I even gave my two silver bracelets and rings to Abraha. Abraha said that the King had asked that, in case of my consent to the proposal, I should nominate the attorney on behalf of the bride”.

Hadrat Khalid bin Saeed, another Muslim living in Abyssinia was nominated attorney by me. In the evening Najjashi called Hadrat Jafar bin Abi Talib (*Brother of Hadrat Ali. Hadrat Ali became the fourth Caliph of Islamic state founded by the Holy Prophet*), Hadrat Othman bin ‘Affan (*The third Caliph who became the husband of*

two daughters of the Prophet one by one and he was a first cousin of Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba) and other Muslims living in Abyssinia to attend the marriage ceremony. When all the invitees were present the Kings started his speech. First, he praised God and said:

“The Holy Prophet (SAW) had written me a letter that I should marry Umm-e-Habiba, the daughter of Abu-Sufyan with the Holy Prophet (SAW). I agree and abide by the Holy Prophet’s directive and fix the Mehr of Umm-e-Habiba as four hundred Dinars”.

Then the King himself placed four hundred dinars before the audience on behalf of the Holy Prophet (SAW). The Hadrat Khalid bin Saeed rose and after praising Allah said:

“I accept the directive of the Holy Prophet (SAW) and marry Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba the daughter of Abu-Sufyan with Hadrat Mohammad (SAW)”.

After formal proposal and consent for negotiation of marriage, King Najjashi presented the four hundred dinars to Hadrat Khalid bin Saeed who delivered the money to me. After the Nikah ceremony, i.e. solemnization of marriage everybody got up to leave but Najjashi held them all back. He said that it is the custom of the Prophets to offer food after marriage and invited the audience to a feast. Everybody had dinner. The other day, Najjashi sent Abraha again with a large quantity of ambergris and musk as gift. Later he boarded me on a ship enroute to Madina. Shurahbil bin Hasna was sent with me as guard”.

When Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba arrived in Madina, Holy Prophet (SAW) had left for Khyber to curb the intrigues of Jews living there. She waited for the Prophet, until he returned victorious from the expedition of Khyber. Muslims had won the battle of Khyber. The marriage of Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba took place in the 6th year of Hijra. The Holy Prophet (SAW) was then-fifty nine years and Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba was thirty-six years old. She was twenty-three years younger than the Holy Prophet (SAW) and was the eighth wife of the Holy Prophet (SAW).

Soon Abu-Sufyan, her father and an arch enemy of Islam, came to know about this marriage. Although sitting on the other side of the fence and opposing Islam with all his might, he was forced to say. “Mohammad is such a man who does not have any blemish on his character”.

This marriage and Abu-Sufyan’s remarks prove that Quraish were not against the Holy Prophet Mohammad (SAW) in his personal capacity, and it was nothing but an ideological confrontation. It was only the faith which brought the Holy Prophet Mohammad (SAW) face to face against his own tribe and he had to fight battles against his own relatives.

Strategically, this marriage proved quite productive because afterwards the hostility of Abu-Sufyan abated to a considerable extent.

Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba had a love bordering infatuation with Holy Prophet (SAW). In 8th year of Hijra, her father Abu-Sufyan came to Madina with a view to re-affirm a peace treaty existing between Quraish of Makkah and Muslims of Madina. According to the peace treaty of Hudaibiya, Quraish could not wage a war against Muslims and their allies. The tribe of Banu-Khuza 'ah had friendly relations with Muslims and they had been invaded by Quraish. The Muslims protested against it. Abu-Sufyan had not come to re-new and re-affirm the treaty, and avoid any armed conflict between Makkans and Muslims of Madina.

Abu-Sufyan paid a visit to his daughter Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba. She greeted her father. But when Abu-Sufyan was going to sit on the Holy Prophet's bed, Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba rolled away the bed. Abu-Sufyan did not like this. He said, "You have rolled away the bed so that I may not sit on it?"

"Yes, because you are an idolator, and therefore you are not clean enough to sit on the clean and chaste bed of the Holy Prophet of Allah".

Abu-Sufyan got offended on this reply and said,
"I could not imagine you have changed so much".

Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba was so much in love with the Holy Prophet (SAW) that once she asked him, "O Prophet of Allah, please marry my sister".

"Will it please you". The Prophet asked.

"Yes" She replied.

The Holy Prophet (SAW) didn't marry Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba's sister as it is not permissible under the Islamic law and moreover, he was not inclined to marry women for the sake of pleasure. All his marriages had religious, social or political considerations behind them.

Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba was a very pious, God fearing and a practicing Muslim. She was quite careful in following the minutest details of the tenets of Islam in letter and spirit. She practiced Islam in its true meaning and always taught others to do the same. Once her nephew Abu-Sufyan bin Saeed came to see his aunt and drank *Sattu* (*Barley parched and ground and made into a paste drink*) and later cleaned his mouth by gargling. Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba warned her nephew "You should have made ablution, because the Holy Prophet (SAW) had said that after taking anything cooked on fire, one must make ablution".

She had heard from the Holy Prophet (SAW) that any person offering twelve *Rakaat* (*A part of the prayer which includes recitation from Quran while standing, then bending and prostration*) *Nafil* (*Prayer which is not obligatory*) daily, would get a house made for him in the Paradise. So throughout her life, she offered extra twelve *Rakaat Nafil*s till she died. She was so particular about it that she herself said, "I never missed these *Rakaats* after I had heard it from the Prophet".

Islam does not allow crying or weeping loudly, or cursing one's self or tearing one's clothes or the like on any body's death however close or dearer and nearer he may

be. Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba was such a faithful follower of Islam that on the occasion of her father's death, she asked for perfume and applied it on her cheeks and arms. By this action, she showed that crying loudly or wailing at the time of death is against the teachings of Islam. Sooner or later every one of us had to go to Allah. Nobody is to stay here in this world for ever so why to weep and lament on anyone's death when all of us have to follow the same trial?

Umm-e-Habiba perfumed herself on her father's death and said:

"I could not have done it, if I had not heard it from the Holy Prophet (SAW) that mourning on a dear one's death is not permissible for more than three days for a believer woman, except in case of her husband for which the duration of mourning is one hundred and thirty days".

She did not move away from Madina after the death of the Holy Prophet until she died in the 44th year of Hijra during the reign of her brother Hadrat Mu'avia. She was then seventy-four years old. She was buried at Madina. A few moments before death, she called her co-wives of the Prophet, Hadrat Ayesha and Hadrat Umm-e-Salma (*Hadrat Ayesha and Hadrat Umm-e-Salma were yet alive*) and said: "You have made me happy. May God make you happy for ever".

Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba was a great Islamic scholar. Her knowledge could not be challenged as she imbibed from the main fountain of Islam, i.e. the life of the Holy Prophet (SAW). She spent most of her time in the study of Islam. She had many pupils learning the Hadith as a branch of Islamic code. She had reported about sixty-five traditions.

A few chronologers have reported that Imam Zainul-Abideen (*Imam Zainul-Abideen was the grandson of Hadrat Ali, the fourth Caliph and Hadrat Fatima, the daughter of the Holy Prophet (SAW)*), once dug a corner of the backyard of his house and found a grave stone on which it was written that this is the grave of Ramla bint-e-Zaar. On seeing this he placed the grave stone back to its place. It might prove that Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba was buried in the house of Hadrat Ali. But this report is not authentic. Hadrat Umm-e-Habiba was a true and devoted Muslim. May Allah rest her soul in peace.