

CHAPTER 7

THE EXPANDING HORIZONS

From the Treaty of Hudaybia to the Fall of Mecca
(628 to 630 A.D.)

The bitter struggle between the Prophet and the Quraish was now over. A great vista of expanding horizons now opened before the Prophet and the Muslims after their victory in the Battle of the Ditch. This victory had at least settled one issue—namely, the failure of so to say, the containment policy of the Quraysh by throwing a *cordon sanitaire* around Medina, in order to contain or confine Islam to its small population. Instead, the remaining years of the Holy Prophet's life saw Islam expanding and spreading among the tribes of Arabia from one corner of the Peninsula to the other. At the same time the Prophet sent messages of Islam to the neighbouring kings and emperors. Before we may relate the events of the last years of the Prophet's life, we may here delineate main trends of his policy which become apparent during these years. Broadly speaking, they are :—

1. Prophet's policy of containment of the Quraysh of Mecca : Truce of Hudaybia.
2. His Policy of Northern Advance: conquest of Khybar, etc.
3. His Messages to the kings and emperors of the neighbouring countries ;
4. His Policy of 'winning the hearts' of the Meccans : Fall of Mecca.
5. His Policy of Southern Advance; War with Hawazin.
6. His Policy of Unifying the Arabian Tribes ; Tribal Deputations.

The Truce of Hudaybia

The Battle of the Ditch was a turning point in the fortunes of Islam. For five years the Quraysh of Mecca had tried their level best to crush Islam and the Prophet. At long last the Prophet emerged victorious and secure in Medina. But a great danger still confronted him. The Quraysh had woven a wide network of alliances and confederacies with the Bedouins of Najd and the Jews of Khayber. During the year following the Battle of the Ditch, the Prophet sent or himself led seventeen expeditions against the

Bédoun tribes with a view to smash Qurayshite influence among them and to bring them within the fold of the new Republic of Islam, *Pax Islamica*. This became the foundation of his policy of unifying Northern Arabia from the borders of Syria to the confines of Mecca. But it became obvious that the Bedouin would not submit politically or be converted to Islam unless and until the Qurayshite confederacy and influence were not completely effaced from the regions around Medina. This purpose was achieved by the Truce of Hudaybiya.

Starting with the Pilgrimage to Mecca

Prophet sets out on Pilgrimage: February, 628. About a year after the Battle of the Ditch, the Holy Prophet saw a dream of his visit to Ka'ba. Next morning he called upon the Muslims to prepare for a journey. A few days later he told them that the purpose of journey was the performance of the Umra or Lesser Pilgrimage. Umra is not as elaborate a pilgrimage as the Haj. (It can be performed any time of the year, while the Hajj can be performed only in the month of Zu'l-Hijja). On hearing this news the Muslims, especially the Emigrants, were filled with joy to visit their birth-place which they had not seen for the last six years. The Prophet and the Muslims bedecked themselves in the garb of the pilgrims, that is, two sheets of unsewn cloth. They took with them 70 camels for sacrifice. As the journey was a holy one, they went quite unarmed except for a sheathed sword which alone was permissible to the pilgrims. Thus prepared, the Prophet, accompanied by about 1400 Muslims, left Medina for Mecca in the month Zu'l-Qada, the 6th Hijra/February, 628. "Muhammad's march from Medina to Mecca," writes Gibbon, "displayed the peaceful and solemn pomp of a pilgrimage: seventy camels chosen and bedecked for sacrifice preceded the van; the sacred territory was respected and the captives were dismissed without ransom to proclaim his clemency and devotion."

But the Meccan pagans remained as adamant as ever to the Holy Prophet and Islam due to their undying hostility towards them. They regarded the Prophet's desire for pilgrimage as a subterfuge and his devotion to the House of Allah as a tactical move to lower their prestige in the eyes of the Arabian tribes by visiting them in their own city. Consequently when they heard of the approach of the Muslims, they prepared to resist their entry by force of arms. Thus they were ready to violate the ancient Arab customs about the sanctuary of Mecca and sanctity of the sacred months during which no bloodshed was permissible even in the darkest days of the Age of Ignorance. Besides, the pilgrimage to the Ka'ba was a privilege never denied even to the worst of enemies. But their inveterate hostility to Islam prompted the Quraysh to throw all these ancient traditions to the four winds. On hearing of the Muslims' approach, they bedecked themselves in leopard skins.

and war-attire and moved out of Mecca along with their women and children. It was an indication of their intention to fight to the bitter end. They despatched a cavalry force under the command of Khalid bin Walid and Ikrima bin Abu Jahl to intercept the Prophet's advance.

When about two-days journey from Mecca, the Muslims met a small detachment of Khalid's cavalry. As the Prophet had no intention to fight, he left the main road and led the Muslims towards Mecca by a less-frequented lane. At last he reached a place, called Hudaybia, which was just within the sacred perimeter around Mecca and a day's journey from the city. There the camel of the Prophet stopped of her own account. On this the Prophet alighted, declaring that it was a sign from God to halt.

Negotiations. While the Prophet was encamped at Hudaybia, the Quraysh had pitched their tents at Zu Towa in martial array. But negotiations were opened. Budayl bin Waraqah, the Khuz'a Chief, was the first to approach the Prophet, partly to find out the Prophet's intentions and his forces and partly to warn him of the Qurayshite resolve to fight rather than allow him to enter Mecca. The Prophet told him that he had come not to fight but to visit the holy place. And in support of his intention he pointed out his pilgrim's garb and the sacrificial animals. The Bedouin Chief was impressed of the peaceful intentions of the Prophet. He reported the same to the Quraysh leaders. They were, however in no mood to accept his opinion. They next sent Urwa bin Masud, a chief of Taif and the father-in-law of Abu Sufyan. He warned the Prophet not to provoke the Quraysh by forcing his way into Mecca, for the war-minded Quraysh would put his followers to flight if it came to fighting. Abu Bakr, who was present, remarked angrily, "No, never, none of us would leave Muhammad". Urwa also returned to Mecca to report failure. But he was deeply impressed of the Muslims' devotion, loyalty and reverence for the Prophet. "I have been to the courts of the Caesars and of the Chosroes," he said to the Quraysh, "but I have never seen such a devotion as Muhammad commands."

The Prophet then sent a messenger to Mecca, who was ill-treated by the Quraysh. The Prophet then asked Umar to go to the Quraysh. But he suggested the name of Uthman who had a powerful clan to protect him in the city. Thereupon Uthman was commissioned to negotiate with the Quraysh. When he entered Mecca, he met his cousin, Aban bin Said and put himself under his protection. He then went to the Quraysh leaders, who contrived to detain him for a long time.

The pledge of the Tree : Bay't ar-Rizwan. As Uthman did not

return for a long time, a rumour broke out in Muslim camp that he was killed by the Quraysh. This was a critical moment. The Muslims were practically unarmed and their number was small. Convinced of the Quraysh resolve to shed Muslim blood, the Prophet called upon his companions to take a pledge to fight unto death. This pledge was taken at the hand of the Prophet, while he stood under a tree. Hence it came to be known as the Bayt ar-Rizwan, the Pledge of the Tree or the Pledge of Good Pleasure. It was a manifestation of Muslims' determination to stand by the Prophet no matter what the Quraysh might do. Fortunately, Uthman returned soon after and negotiations began anew in right earnest.

The Treaty of Hudaybia concluded : This time the Quraysh leaders deputed Suhail bin Amr, one of their leaders, and other representatives to negotiate a treaty of peace. After a protracted conference a ten-years truce was concluded between the Prophet and Subail, the Qurayshite plenipotentiary. But not without some hitches. The Prophet asked Hazrat Ali to write the terms of the treaty. When he commenced with the words : "Bism Illah ar-Rehman" — "In the name of God, the Most Gracious" — the Islamic way to begin something, Suhail objected and insisted that Ali should begin in the Qurayshite fashion with the words: "Bism Allahumma" — "In the name, O God". The Muslims murmured, but the Prophet yielded and asked Ali to write as Suhail wanted. When Ali next wrote : "This is the treaty between Muhammad Rasul Allah — the apostle of God," Subail again protested loudly : "If accepted Muhammad as the Prophet of Allah, I would become a Muslim. You should simply write Muhammad, the son of Abdullah."

The Muslims murmured louder than before and refused to consent to the change. But the Prophet made a sign to them. They accepted his decision, and the work of writing the treaty was finally concluded. It was witnessed by Abu Bakr, Umar, Abdul Rahman, Sad bin Abi Waqqas, Uthman, Abu Ubayda and Muhamimad bin Maslama (a Medinite Ansar) on the side of Muslims, and by Huyayyib bin Abdul Uzza and Mikraz bin Hafs, on the side of the Quraysh.

The Treaty of Hudaybiya: The text of the treaty was as follows:—

"In thy name, O God! This is the Treaty between Muhammad bin Abdullah and Suhail bin Amr. They have agreed not to resort to arms for a period of ten years. During this time each party shall be secure, and neither shall injure the other. Whoever wishes to enter into covenant and alliance with Muhammad can do so, and

whoever wishes to enter into covenant and alliance with the Quraysh can do so. If a Qurayshite comes to Muhammad without the permission of his guardian, Muhammad shall deliver him back to the Quraysh, but if one of the people of Muhammad comes to the Quraysh, he is not to be returned to Muhammad. This year Muhammad with his companions must withdraw and not enter Mecca against us, but next year he may come to Mecca with his followers and stay for three days, yet without other weapons than those of a traveller, the swords remaining in their sheath."

We may summarize the terms of the Treaty of Hudaybia thus:—

- ✓ 1. It was a truce between the Muslims and the Quraysh of Mecca for a period of ten years.
- ✓ 2. The Muslims should return this year to Medina without performing the pilgrimage. They might, however, come for pilgrimage next year, when they should stay in Mecca for three days.
- ✓ 3. Anyone of the Arab Tribes may enter into alliance or treaty with the Prophet. In the same way any tribe was free to ally itself to the Quraysh.
- ✓ 4. Anyone of the Quraysh who flees from Mecca to Medina shall be returned by the Prophet to the Quraysh, but any Muslim who flees to Mecca will not be restored by the Quraysh to the Muslims.

Disappointment among the Muslims: The Treaty was obviously unsavourable to the Muslims. Firstly, it required the Medina without performing the Umra or lesser pilgrimage which was the only purpose of their journey. Secondly, the clause which particularly incensed them was their unequal position regarding the repatriation of a Muslim who fled from Mecca and took refuge with the Muslims in Medina, while in a similar case the Muslims could not ask for the repatriation of one of them who would flee to the Quraysh.

Incident of Abu Jandal: As Fate would have it, an incident occurred only a few moments after the treaty of Hudaybia was signed, which agitated and saddened the hearts of the Muslims. Abu Jandal, the son of the Qurayshite plenipotentiary, Suhail, was a Muslim. But he was still in Mecca, where he suffered terribly at the hands of his pagan relatives. However, he managed to escape from Mecca and rushed into the Muslim camp just at the time when the treaty was finalised. He desired to accompany the Muslims to Medina. On seeing him, his cruel father promptly demanded that the Prophet should hand over the lad to him in compliance

with the terms of the treaty. Abu Jandal earnestly appealed to the Muslims not to deliver him back into the hands of his tormentors. The hearts of the Muslims were deeply touched at the sight of his pitiable condition. He showed them the scars on the body inflicted by his torturers. The Prophet tried to get an exception in his case. But Suhail obstinately insisted that the treaty must be complied with at this very first test. The Prophet had to yield. He told Abu Jandal to return to Mecca. "Have patience Abu Jandal!" he said, "and put thy trust in Allah. He will show to thee and others like-minded with thee a way of deliverance." Abu Jandal was taken back in custody to Mecca.

Umar's Protestations: Already the Muslims had misgivings about the unequal terms of the Treaty of Hudaybia. They knew that the purpose of their journey was holy and peaceful. They also knew that they were not defeated in a fighting. They asked themselves that why should then they accept a treaty which favoured the Quraysh so much, especially when it entailed such heart-rending implications as shown by the incident of Abu Jandal. Umar expressed these misgivings and disappointments loudly. "Are you not the true Messenger of Allah?" he asked the Prophet, "Is not ours a righteous cause?" The Prophet replied, "Yes". "Why then", Umar asked further, "Why then should we suffer so much humiliation in the matter of faith?" The Prophet assured him that whatever he did was at the bidding of Allah. "Did you not tell us" added Umar, "that we shall perform the pilgrimage?" "But I never said," replied the Prophet, "that we shall do so this very year". Umar became silent but not convinced. The Prophet, joined by the Muslims, performed the rites of pilgrimage on the very spot they were encamped and then returned to Medina.

Consequences of the Treaty of Hudaybiya: (1) "A Clear Victory". The Prophet was right. The Treaty of Hudaybiya was apparently a humiliation but really a harbinger of Islamic victories to come. These victories were foretold by the Quran soon after. While yet on the way to Mecca, the Prophet received a Divine revelation: "Verily We have given unto thee a clear victory..." (Surah Al-Fath.) This shows that the Treaty of Hudaybiya was not a defeat but a victory in the eyes of God. The Prophet at once summoned Umar to recite him the revelation. On hearing it, Umar was filled with joy and his sense of frustration was gone. Soon the Surah Al-fath was on the lips of all Muslims and they were filled with exaltation at the tidings of new victories to come. The first of these victories was against the Jews of Khayber, which came only two months after the Treaty of Hudaybiya.

(2) The settlement at Iyes: The Quraysh had imposed an unjust and an unequal term of repatriations. Prophet had accepted it for he

rightly believed that Islam was so attractive to its converts as to restrain them from deserting their faith and co-religionists. Nevertheless, it was a harsh condition for those persons who were still in Mecca but had accepted Islam. They were cruelly treated by their heathen relatives and compatriots. One such Meccan was the young convert named Abu Basir. A little time after Hudaybiya, he managed to escape from the clutches of his persecutors and reached Medina. But two Qurayshites, including his master, reached Medina close upon his heels and demanded his restoration according to the terms of the treaty. Abu Basir remonstrated as Abu Jandal had before him. But the Prophet had pledged his word to the Quraysh and delivered Abu Basir to the Qurayshite envoys. On the way back, Abu Basir killed one of the two men, while the other took to his heels. Knowing that he would find no refuge in Medina, Abu Basir fled to the hilly tract on the Red Sea coast, called Iyes, on the coastal road to Syria. It soon became a sort of no man's land between Mecca and Medina. Soon as many as 70 converts fled from Mecca to Iyes and joined the little band of Abu Basir. They took to harassing and plundering the Meccan caravans trading with Syria.

This fact created a difficult situation for the Quraysh. They had accepted ten-year truce in the hope that their trade caravans could safely go by Medina to the north. Though the Muslim attacks on their caravans came to an end, yet the small band of Abu Basir became a new source of danger to the free flow of their trade. They were then forced to beg the Prophet to cancel the clause of extradition of the fugitives and enable the converts to re-join the Muslims in Medina. Thus one of the clauses of the Treaty of Hudaybiya, which rankled so bitterly in the hearts of the Muslims, was abrogated. The Iyes settlement then ended as these converts found the doors of Medina opened to them.

The Strategy of the Prophet : If we keep in mind the over-all situation in which the Prophet found himself vis-a-vis the Quraysh and the tribes of North Arabia, the treaty can well be described as a tactical retreat but a strategical victory. Though the Quraysh had suffered a defeat in the Battle of the Ditch, they were yet a power to reckon with. They still had a strong system of alliance with the Jews of Khayber and other Jewish settlements and with the Bedouin tribes of North Arabia, with Mecca as its centre. The seventeen expeditions, despatched against them after the Battle of the Ditch, could not shake this alliance system of the Quraysh.

By entering into the ten-year truce with the Quraysh the Prophet reaped several political and strategical advantages. First of all, Medina became an equal power with Mecca in the eyes of the whole

of Arabia. The Quraysh had now themselves recognised the Republic of Medina. Secondly, the Quraysh became neutral in the struggle between the Prophet, on the one side, and the Jews and the Bedouins on the other. In other words, the whole Meccan system of alliances now crumbled to pieces. Its place could now be taken by a new alliance-system, centred around Medina of the Prophet. Thirdly, the Jews of Khayber could now be punished for their treacherous dealings with the enemies of Islam. Fourthly, the Prophet now resolved to win the hearts of the Quraysh by peaceful relations with them rather than by inflicting defeat upon them, so that they would become his allies and supporters in the spread of Islam throughout the vast peninsula of Arabia. Fifthly, the treaty of Hudaybiya opened the door to his policy of unifying whole of Arabia under Islam. To this end the unification of the tribes of North Arabia was the first step, which could not be taken if the Quraysh of Mecca had remained hostile and war-like. In short, the Treaty of Hudaybiya finally placed Medina on the political map of Arabia and enabled it to become the nucleus of the first Islamic State in its history.

The Winds of Change over Arabia : That the Treaty of Hudaybiya was indeed a signal triumph of Islam, was amply illustrated by the spread of Islam among those tribes which had opposed it so fiercely before. In fact, far more people accepted Islam during the two years following this treaty than in six years preceding it. "There was no previous victory," writes Az-Zuhri "in Islam, greater than this. On all other occasions there was fighting : but here war was laid aside, tranquillity and peace restored ; the one party henceforth met and conversed freely with the other, and there was no man of sense or judgement amongst the idolaters who was not led thereby to join Islam. And truly in the two years that followed, as many persons entered the Faith as there belonged to it altogether before, or even a greater number." In fact, such celebrated names in the history of early Islam as Khalid bin Walid and Amr bin al-As, who had been so hostile to Islam, now adopted the Faith, and emigrated to Medina. Their conversion was an ample proof that Islam was now victoriously established in Arabia. Ibn Hisham, the earliest biographer of the Holy Prophet aptly remarks, "And the proof of this is that whereas Muhammad went forth to Al-Hudaybiya with only fifteen hundred men, he was followed two years later, in the attack on Mecca, by ten thousand."

Banu Bakr and Banu Khuza'a. The truce of Hudaybiya lasted only for two years. It was due to the violation of its clause by Banu Bakr. This tribe allied itself to the Quraysh in accordance with the terms of the treaty, while Banu Khuza'a, their neighbouring tribe, became the allies of the Holy Prophet. We shall deal with the quarrel between these two tribes in a subsequent chapter.