

## **The Battle of Ahzāb (Trench): The Best Political and Military Strategy of the Holy Prophet ﷺ (A Historical and Research Review)**

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### **Abstract**

The chain of mutual coexistence between disbelief and Islam began with the Battle of Badr. The battle of Ahzab was an important link to this critical situation. The infidels wanted to eradicate Islam from the face of the earth. But they were repeatedly failing to achieve their goals. Although the Muslims suffered heavy losses in the battle of Uhud. Muslims were challenged to compete again by Abu Sufyan after Badr too. But when the Muslims came to the competition, the disbelievers returned in fear. In the meantime, their preparations continued, which eventually led to the battle of Ahzab. This research work aimed to highlight the historical background of the battle of Ahzab. This research work can be very beneficial and significant for new researchers and scholars.

**Keywords:** Battle of Ahzāb, Political and Military Strategy, The Holy Prophet ﷺ

### **Introduction**

The polytheists of Makkah declared a war on the Muslims in Shawal, Dhul-Qa'dah 5 AH (March 627 AH). Abu Sufyan urged the people to battle the Quraysh and other tribes, including the Jews, and forged numerous agreements in this aim, amassing a strong army, but the Muslims excavated a trench around Medina on the suggestion of Salman Farsi.<sup>1</sup> They were safe from Makkah's polytheists. Because it was the Iranian manner, this was the first example of trench digging in Arabia.<sup>2</sup> The polytheists returned dejected after a month of siege and the slaughter of many of their people. This is referred to as a trench or an Ahzab conflict. The Ahzab is named because they were originally a combination of several tribes. The Qur'an also mentions this fight in Surah Al-Ahzab.

### **Background of The Battle of Ahzāb (Trench)**

#### **A very Large Army**

Following the battle of Uhud, the Quraysh, Jews, and other pagan Arab tribes vowed to collaborate to exterminate Islam. Abu Sufyan, the Quraysh chief, and the Bani Nazeer, a Jewish clan banished from Medina, made the first agreement in this regard. Following that, Bani Nazeer's agents traveled to Najd and persuaded the polytheistic tribes of Ghatfan and Bani Saleem to fight against the Muslims in exchange for a one-year payment of Khyber tax.<sup>3</sup> This union is referred to in the Qur'an as " Ahzab." They had 4,000 soldiers, 300 cavalries, and roughly 1,500 camel riders, led by Abu Sufyan. The Ghatfan tribe, which had 1,000 cavalymen under Anina's command, was the other main force. There were also 400 members from the Bani Mara tribe, 700 from the Bani Shuja tribe, and a few other tribes. The

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overall number of troops surpassed ten thousand, making it one of the region's most powerful armed forces at the time. According to one tradition, the total number was up to 24,000. This army was ready, and it left for Madinah in February or March 627, led by Abu Sufyan, to battle the Muslims.<sup>4</sup>

### **Trench Excavation**

When Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) learned of the plot, he talked with his companions. Salman Farsi proposed digging a defense trench, which the Arabs had never done before. Because he was an Iranian, Hazrat Salman Farsi was familiar with the trench. He proposed building a trench around the city's insecure area. The Holy Prophet agreed with this viewpoint and went out with his companions to see the city.<sup>5</sup> As a result, the trench's construction started. Medina was surrounded by mountains, and the buildings were interconnected, creating a natural defense wall. As a precaution, a ditch was dug between Mount Obaidah and Mount Ratij. The excavation involved everyone, including the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Salman Farsi continued to work with zeal throughout this time, and as a result, the Ansar and Muhajireen began to refer to him as one of them.<sup>6</sup> "Salman is from my family," the Holy Prophet (PBUH) remarked in response. During the excavation, Salman Farsi came upon a big white stone that he and his colleagues were unable to break. Finally, Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) himself arrived and an axe was struck. A bolt of lightning struck, and a chunk of rock shattered. The Takbir was raised by the Holy Prophet (PBUH). With the second and third multiplications, the same thing happened. Why do you recite Takbir every time there is a flash of lightning, Salman Farsi inquired? The Prophet (PBUH) replied that when the lightning first struck, I saw the palaces of Yemen and Sana'a open. When the lightning struck for the second time, I saw Syria and the West being conquered, and when the lightning flashed for the third time, I saw that Kasra would be subjugated by my Ummah.<sup>7</sup> The trench was completed in twenty days. It was about five kilometers long, five cubits (about two and a half meters) deep and so wide that a horseman could not jump even across it.<sup>8</sup> The number of Muslims was about 3,000 who were over fifteen years old and could take part in the war.<sup>9</sup>

### **Inner Area of Battle**

Soon after the completion of the trench, Abu Sufyan's army, which consisted of a large army reached Medina. When he did not find any opponent, he attacked Madinah with enthusiasm. But seeing the unexpected ditch, his steps suddenly stopped and the enemy army was stunned. Finally, Medina was besieged. The enemy thought that with the complete blockade of the city, Muslims would starve to death and surrender automatically.<sup>10</sup>

### **External Area of Battle: Faith Versus Disbelief**

During the siege, there was a severe shortage of food in Madinah. The Companions were starving. One day the Companions complained of starvation and showed stones tied to their stomachs. When the Holy Prophet (PBUH) showed his stomach, two stones were tied to it. Seeing this, the eyes of the Companions were lowered. This siege of Madinah continued for twenty-seven days. There was a possibility of attack by the enemy day and night. Therefore, small detachments of three thousand companions were deployed in different places in turns.<sup>11</sup> The infidels initially adopted the tactic of appointing one of the most famous generals in Arabia.

Each general fought the entire army on his turn, but it was impossible to cross the trench. So no one succeeded. One day there was a general attack. All the forces suddenly moved. Coincidentally, the trench was less wide from a place. The enemy put all the force in this direction. So did Amr ibn Abdud, Zarar, Jabira, and Nawfal who were famous Arab heroes. They succeeded in crossing the ditch. Amr was the first to fight.<sup>12</sup> Amr ibn 'Abdud was a famous warrior of Arab and people trembled at his terror. He challenged Sipah-e-Islam and made fun of Paradise by saying, "Where are the claimants of Paradise? Is there anyone I can send to heaven or he will send me to hell 'and kept repeating his words. The Prophet (PBUH) said, 'Is there anyone who can remove its evil from our heads?' Ali agreed. At that time the Holy Prophet (PBUH) did not allow him and asked him a second time and then a third time. All three times Ali was ready.<sup>13</sup> The Prophet (PBUH) gave him his turban and sword and said, "All faith is going against disbelief tomorrow." A fierce battle in which I was covered in dust came the sound of the slogan Takbir. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said, "By God, Ali has killed him." The terror of Amr ibn 'Abdud's assassination was so great that the rest of his companions immediately fled. While fleeing, Nawfal bin Abdullah fell into a ditch and was killed by Ali and the rest escaped. The battle continued that day. The arrows and stones from both sides could not be stopped. This is the day when the four prayers of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) could not perform. In these circumstances, what was most disturbing for the Muslims was the betrayal of Banu Qurayzah. This tribe of Jews still lived in Medina. Initially, its relationship with Muslims was cordial. But during the siege, the chief of Banu Nadeer which name was Hayi bin Akhtab went to Banu Qurayzah and succeeded in reuniting them with him. Therefore, the Muslims were also threatened from this side. The Prophet (PBUH) appointed a group of companions (Sahaabah) in this direction. To prevent the impending attack of Banu Qurayzah.

The Prophet (PBUH) said: "The multiplication of the day of Khandaq Ali is better than the worship of all jinn and humans.<sup>14</sup> Banu Qurayzah, on the other hand, made yet another error. The Qurayzah population was linked to the forts in which Madinah's women were housed. The Jews devised a plan to attack the forts and dispatched a representative to investigate. When the Holy Prophet's aunt, Hazrat Safia, saw him, she grabbed a hard stick from the tent and ripped off his head. She then hurled his body off the cliff. This alarmed the Jews, who assumed the Muslims in the fort were responsible. The army has surrendered.<sup>15</sup>

### **A Rift Between the Parties**

The enemy was skillfully separated by the Muslims. Naeem, one of Banu Ghatfan's chiefs, had converted to Islam, but the infidels were unaware. The Banu Qurayzah do not trust you, thus they are holding you captive, he remarked to the Quraysh. As a result, the Quraysh and the Jews became estranged, and their mutual trust was shattered.<sup>16</sup>

### **Allah's (SWT) Help**

Finally, a strong wind blew one day. The poles of the infidels' tents were uprooted. The pots had been turned upside down. Mud had gotten into the food supply and cutlery. The enemy's despairing army was terrified by the thunder of the skies and the torrential rain. As a result, the Quraysh played the return drum before sunrise. Suddenly, the enemy's defeated armies vanished from Medina's horizon.<sup>17</sup>

### **Reasons for the failure of the siege**

Some reasons of failure for the siege of infidels in the battle of Ahzāb are given below;

1. The digging of trenches was the most essential cause for the invading parties' defeating opponents of Islam. The city was preserved from the enemy's grasp thanks to this strategy. The trench was not customary in Arabia. Therefore, the Quraysh and the Jews had no idea of such a plan, so they were astonished to see it and did not think of any way to deal with the new situation.<sup>18</sup>
2. Weather extremes were also a significant factor in turning the tide against the unbelievers' ambitions. It was bitterly cold, and Abu Sufyan's army was camped out in the open air. The opposing soldiers had been fighting the terrible weather for a month and were exhausted. Finally, Allah (SWT) brought such a severe storm and rain that the infidels' courage was destroyed, and they played the return drums.<sup>19</sup>
3. During the siege, the vast army's greatest vulnerability was its diversity. It was difficult to feed a massive army of 24,000 men. The siege took a long period. The sense of a supply scarcity grew stronger and the supply shortage moot was increased. The enemies now had no choice but to flee.<sup>20</sup>
4. The arrival of the holy months was one of the reasons for the Quraysh's return. War was regarded as a significant flaw during these months, according to ancient Arab customs and traditions. As a result, continuing to combat throughout those days was inappropriate.<sup>21</sup>
5. The invading force was made up of numerous elements, and the Quraysh Arab tribes had attacked Medina together. As a matter of urgency, these factors came together. However, there was a dearth of genuine harmony between them. They didn't trust one other completely.<sup>22</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Following the migration, the world of unbelief began a series of violent actions against Madinah. This conflict was the last link in the chain. This was the Quraysh's final failed attempt at Makkah to expel Islam from Arab territory. They were disheartened by their point of view. They never had the confidence after that to target Islam's heartland (Madina). From an Islamic perspective, on the contrary, it was a great victory. The Arab unity has been immobilized by Islam. Islam spread throughout Arabia as a result of this. And Islam grew quickly. It is logical to conclude that this was the final impediment to Islam's progress. Thus, in a very short period, the power of Islam increased to the point that Mecca was conquered. The secret of the Banu Qurayzah Jewish tribe of Medina's treason and violation of covenant was disclosed as a direct result of this fight. As a result, they were besieged and evacuated soon after the combat ended. This was the sole remaining Jewish tribe from Medina in the heart of Islam. Medina was forever cleansed of Jewish wickedness and machinations after this tragedy.

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