

Khalifa Ali bin Abu Talib - Campaign Against Banu Mustaliq

Ayesha and her necklace

While returning from the campaign against Banu Mustaliq an incident took place which cast its shadow on the future course of Islamic history. Each time the Holy Prophet went on a campaign, one or two of his wives accompanied him, and the decision was always taken by the drawing of lots. On the Banu Mustaliq campaign, Ayesha accompanied the Holy Prophet. She traveled on the back of a camel in a closed litter. On the way to Madina the returning army followed by its long procession of supplies, captives and thousands of beasts after travelling throughout the night broke camp at dawn. Ayesha left her litter to satisfy a natural need and returned to her camel. Back in the litter she noticed that she had lost her necklace of Yemenite agates. Returning in her footsteps she sought the necklace for some time, and at last finding it, returned to the caravan. But the spot was deserted and the caravan had left. The camel rider seeing the litter closed, and thinking that it was occupied had placed it on the camel and departed with it. Ayesha called aloud but no one responded to her call. She decided to lie there covering herself hoping that some one would come to fetch her. Soon she fell asleep. "We belong to God and to Him we return" fell on the ears of Ayesha and she awoke with a start. A young man stood there holding a camel by its tether. The young man Safwan bin Muattal following the army in the rear noticed a young woman sleeping in the desert, and upon approaching her recognized her as the wife of the Holy Prophet. Ayesha quickly covered herself with a veil, Safwan adjusted the camel's saddle-girth, and made it kneel. Ayesha mounted the camel. Holding the beast by the bridle, Safwan took the road to Madina. After a long and tiring journey, Ayesha caught up with the army at noon. The arrival of Ayesha attended by a young man caused some rumors in the camp.

Back in Madina, the calumnies of the slanderers gained publicity. Safwan swore that in his lifetime he had never touched a woman. Ayesha fell sick. She realized that the behavior of the Apostle of God towards her had changed. She went to the house of her father. Amidst sobs, Ayesha asked her mother "Mother, what story are the people relating about me". Her mother replied, "do not be distressed. By Allah, there is not a handsome and noble woman whom her husband loves, but has other wives besides her, that such tales are bandied about". This did not console the young lady. She knew no rest, and her tears did not cease to flow. The Holy Prophet consulted his friends about divorcing Ayesha. Umar said that he was certain that the hypocrites were speaking lies. He added, "By reason of God not allowing a fly to settle upon your blessed skirts, because it alights also on impure things, how then God would not preserve you and your name from a worse defilement". The other Companions advised the Holy Prophet to keep his exalted mind at ease, for they were certain that God would cause the innocence of the young lady to become manifest. Ali was of the view that there was no dearth of women for the Holy Prophet and Ayesha could be divorced even though she was innocent.

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