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# The Battle of Badr

## A Watershed Event for Islam

*By*

Brigadier Ghulam Jilani, retired



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**On the Cover:** Map of Ancient Arabian Peninsula. (Source: AIMH)

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## **PREFACE**

*The Battle of Badr is recounted in the books of Islamic history as a defining event in the great struggle of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him). It was actually a watershed event and established Islam as a way of life with all its divinity, magnificence and glory. It is a fact that most battles have been fought for economic reasons. But the choice to confront the strong Meccan Army at Badr, by a relatively weak Muslim Army, instead of a trade caravan led by Abu Sufyan to boost economy of the impoverished emigrants (muhajireen), turned around the pattern of events that were to follow. Victory in the Battle of Badr was a decisive moment for Muslims and Islam. It established Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as a statesman, strategist and leader, with the divine support of almighty ALLAH. The Battle of Badr therefore, is a beacon for future statesmen, strategists and leaders.*

**Brigadier Ghulam Jilani**  
(retired)



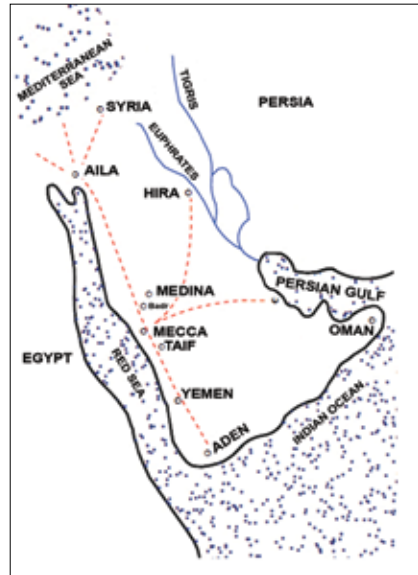


## The Battle of Badr – A Watershed Event for Islam

### Background

A handful of Muslims of Mecca who believed in the Prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH) was persecuted to the extent that it almost became difficult for them to breathe with peace. At the same time rampant violence and economic instability owing to tribal feuds, were becoming more and more commonplace for the people in the oasis town of Yasrib (present Medina) who were looking for a charismatic leader to take control. Muhammad (PBUH) proved to be the need of the hour, from a political and religious standpoint, for rescuing the Yasrabites from the situation to which they had grown accustomed.<sup>1</sup> Thus the Prophet (PBUH) and fellow Muslims of Mecca emigrated to Yasrib, on their invitation.

The cities of Mecca and Medina are described as *islands in a sea of desert*, and were regarded as economic centres of trade on the peninsula. Mecca was a significant trading town, existing mainly as an economic distribution centre with markets and no real product to offer. Medina, was a *large and flourishing oasis* in Muhammad's (PBUH) time, with several Jewish agricultural colonies living among their Arab neighbours.<sup>2</sup> Trade routes naturally connected the region with the outside world, with Medina at the centre, from Yemen to Syria, and Abyssinia to Iraq. Medina was where *the nomad came for goods brought*



Map: Main cities of Arabia (Source: AIMH)

*from the four points of the compass by caravans.*<sup>3</sup>

Hazrat Saad Bin Muaz, an *Ansar* (helper) chief, had visited Mecca for the pilgrimage. It was denied to him by Abu Jahl who seriously threatened him with dire consequences if the Prophet (PBUH) was not killed or expelled from the territory of Medina. Hazrat Saad gave him a counter threat; if he was not permitted to perform the pilgrimage, he would be constrained to block their trade route to Syria. Abu Jahl and the other Quraish immediately realised the gravity of the situation, and felt that if the Muslims gained power through their base at Medina, very soon the Meccans would suffer economically.<sup>4</sup>

1 Watt Montgomery, *Muhammad Prophet and Statesman*, Oxford University Press, 1961, 84-89.  
 2 Montgomery, *Muhammad Prophet and Statesman*, 3.  
 3 Ibid.  
 4 Dr S.M. Rahman, Col Bashir Hussain, *Early Battles of Islam*, Army Education Press, 2001, 32.

Meccans not only persecuted the Muslims physically, but politically and economically as well, through their political pressure. Emigrants (*Muhajireen*) who had come from Mecca were only accustomed to trading activities unlike their brothers of *Mawwakhath* (brotherhood) who were agriculturists. Emigrant Muslims of Mecca did not have the wherewithal to send their caravans to Syria or Yemen for trade. Due to economic and political persecution, emigrant Muslims were left with little option but to carry out raids on the Meccan trade caravans, as a logical solution for economic emancipation and revenge. Moreover raids or *razzia* carried out against different caravans for economic benefit were a normal feature of Arab desert life. It was kind of a sport rather than war. A body of raiders would try to take by surprise a few camel-herds and their charges, while the rest of the clan was far away.<sup>5</sup>

### Events that led to a Face off at Badr

Following are the two main events that resulted in a face off between Meccan and Muslim armies at Badr:-

- The fears of the Meccans were coming true when Meccan trade with Syria was threatened by the Muslims. Quraish were vulnerable in their caravans, and it was especially in the spring and early summer months, when their trade with Syria was most active that they lay open to attack

from Medina.<sup>6</sup> Caravans laden with critical goods travelled from Mecca to Syria about twice a year and were only lightly protected against the inevitable armed bandits and thieves. A large Quraish caravan, known as the expedition of *Al-Ashira*, set out along the route from Syria to Mecca along the coastline. About 30 to 40 men accompanied it under the leadership of Abu Sufyan, an experienced and influential military man. In view of the importance of the caravan Muhammad (PBUH) raised the largest force to intercept it. It was probably the first time when *Ansars* were also present. In the earlier *razzias*, only the *muhajireen* had gone.<sup>7</sup> This particular caravan was considered to be a major boost to the morale, economic base and political establishment of Meccans. Abu Sufyan feared that his caravan may be raided by the Muslims of Medina on his way back to Mecca. He for his part, did not remain idle in his preparations and in his anxiety sent out his own spies while questioning every rider. He apparently expected an attack at some point along his journey, therefore himself went to gain information, if Badr was safe and to know about any movement of troops towards Badr. Near a well he found dried camel dung. Breaking it, found date stones inside and exclaimed “By God these are camels from Medina, as this cannot be the fodder of the local grazing camels surely these are the camels of Muhammad (PBUH)”. He immediately got to know about movement of an army of Medina.<sup>8</sup>

5 Montgomery, *Muhammad Prophet and Statesman*, 105.

6 Martin Lings, *Muhammad (PBUH) his life based on earliest sources*, Islamic Texts & G. Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1983, 135.

7 Montgomery, *Muhammad Prophet and Statesman*, 119.

8 Muhammad Hamidullah, *The Battles of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)*, Huzaifa publications, Afandi Manzil Arambagh, Karachi, 18.



Map: Routes of caravans  
(Source: history.mcc.edu)

Thus, he sent one of his fastest rider, a man from Ghifari tribe, by the name of Damdam<sup>9</sup> to return to Mecca for reinforcements and also to inform Meccans that their goods and camels were in danger. Muhammad (PBUH) and his companions are upon them.<sup>10</sup> Abu Sufyan therefore changed his route and instead of coming to Badr, continued on the sea coast. The news of Damdam created an uproar for there was not a single house in Mecca which had not got some proprietary interest or other in the caravan's merchandise.<sup>11</sup> They immediately gathered a 1000 men and 100 horses and set out for Badr.<sup>12</sup>

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was expecting to meet the caravan, he waited for it on the northern edge of the oasis of Badr. But when he received the news that the Meccan army was coming in great numbers he decided to oppose it. Some of his companions who knew the terrain better advised the Prophet (PBUH) to move south to control the water supply.<sup>13</sup>

- Muhammad (PBUH) received news of another caravan, that was on its way to Yemen. He decided to send eight Muslims on a patrol under Abdullah ibn Jahash,<sup>14</sup> to gather intelligence on how well the caravans moving in the south were protected. He had instructions in a letter to proceed until he reached Nakhla between Mecca and Al-Ta'if, to lie in wait there for the Quraish and to find out for the Muslims what they were doing. While they were waiting, they saw a small caravan of Quraish. The camels were laden with raisins, leather and other merchandise. Abdullah and his companions were in a dilemma—though the Prophet (PBUH) wanted just information about the caravan, he also did not forbid them to attack the caravan. It was the sacred month of Rajab, and killing was forbidden, a custom common to all Arabian cultures at that time. They soon realised that if they let the caravan go, they would enter the sacred place, where they would not be able to attack them either. They took council among themselves

9 Lings, *Muhammad (PBUH) his life based on earliest sources*, 138.

10 Ibid.

11 Hamidullah, *The Battles of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)*, 18.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Lings, *Muhammad (PBUH) his life based on earliest sources*, 136.

to figure out their next move. After some deliberation they decided to strike, killing one person and taking two prisoners, while one escaped. When they returned to Medina and attempted to present the booty to the Prophet (PBUH), he refused to accept the booty and the prisoners stating, *I did not order you to fight in the sacred month.*<sup>15</sup> It was at this time, this revelation 2:17 (Sura Baqarah) was revealed. *They ask you concerning the sacred month about fighting in it. Say: fighting in it is a grave matter, and hindering (men) from Allah's way and denying Him, and (hindering men from) the Sacred Mosque and turning its people out of it, are still graver with Allah, and persecution is graver than slaughter; and they will not cease fighting with you until they turn you back from your religion, if they can; and whoever of you turns back from his religion, then he dies while an unbeliever—these it is whose works shall go for nothing in this world and the hereafter, and they are the inmates of the fire; therein they shall abide.* Although the prisoners on each side were eventually returned, the fact was that the first man was killed by a Muslim, and a significant amount of Quraish property was gone. This blood debt, was a critical component to causing the two armies to meet at Badr.

- The raid of Nakhla in which Amir Bin Al Hadrami was killed and their trade with Syria threatened, deeply perturbed and infuriated the Quraish. They resolved to launch a major offensive against growing strength

of Islam under the leadership of the Prophet (PBUH), and annihilate it thoroughly.

### Shaping up of the Environment Prior to the Battle of Badr

The Prophet (PBUH) before embarking on a military operation against the Meccans, deemed it vital to undertake the following measures:-

- Enter into a pact of friendship and mutual co-existence with the Jews residing in Medina, lest this hostile element and arch enemy of Islam is lured in by the Quraish. The political necessity of an alliance appears obvious, and evident of their importance.<sup>16</sup>
- Assuage other non-Muslim tribes in the region, so that they would not support enemy camp.
- Create seamless coherence between *Mohajirs* and *Ansars*.
- Avoid any direct confrontation with Meccans as long as possible.
- Muhammad (PBUH) set the stage ingeniously to consolidate power in Medina in preparation for Badr. The assemblage of ideas such as martyrdom and muslim brotherhood, created social norms which gelled everyone into a homogenous entity. Personal revenge and tribal rivalries were a thing of the past. This cultural welding together of the tribes through religion, was a critical factor in the future events.
- Muhammad (PBUH) needed to make sure that the alliances he had

15 Major John K. Martin, *Islam's First Arrow: The Battle of Badr as a Decisive Battle in Islamic History and Its Significance Today*, USAF School of Advanced Air and Space Studies Air University Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama June 2011, 61.

16 Ibid, p 55.

already made among the *Ansar* were going to be honoured in any battle beyond Medina. Before embarking upon the expedition, Mohammad (PBUH) consulted his companions. Hazrat Abu Bakr and Hazrat Umer spoke for emigrants in favour of advancing out of Medina. Miqdad rose to his feet and added “Oh messenger of ALLAH, do what ALLAH hath shown thee to do. We will not say unto thee as the children of Israel said unto Moses *Go thou and thy Lord and fight we shall sit here*, but we will say *Go thou and thy Lord and with you we also will fight on the right and on the left, before thee and behind thee*.”<sup>17</sup>

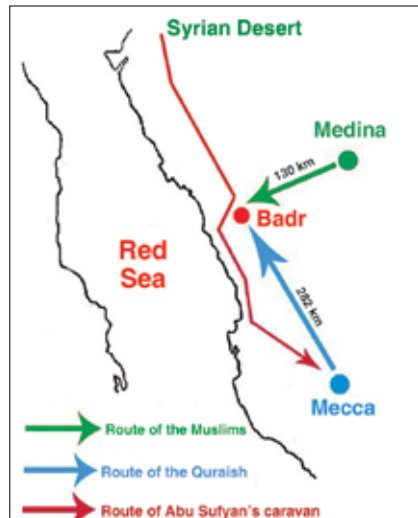
### Intelligence Gathering and Psychological Warfare – A Cutting Edge Development

• During nineteen months between Hijra and the Battle of Badr, seven reconnaissance and *razzia* missions comprising 12 to 200 men were dispatched<sup>18</sup> to achieve the following objectives:-

- Gathering information about terrain conditions around Medina.
- Projecting the strength of the Muslims as a psychological warfare objective.
- Cutting the pagan’s trade routes from Mecca to Syria.<sup>19</sup>
- The Prophet (PBUH) attached great importance to operational and counter intelligence, to frustrate enemy designs. He sent a party under the leadership of Talha Bin Ubaidullah and

Saad Bin Zaid to collect information about the caravan led by Abu Sufyan. They brought the following information:-

- The caravan was big enough and Meccans had their share in the merchandise.
- The caravan was led by Abu Sufyan and was guarded by forty people.
- The value of merchandise was estimated around fifty thousand dinars loaded on thousands of camels.<sup>20</sup>
- Whereas the caravan was moving along the coastline. Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) army already decided to make their way to Badr, to meet an army of the Quraish instead of going for the caravan, so as to secure water and shelter for



Sketch showing routes of movement  
(Source: tashheetadrees.blogspot.com)

17 Lings, *Muhammad (PBUH) his life based on earliest sources*, 140.

18 Dr S. M. Rahman, Col Bashir Hussain, *Early Battles of Islam*, Army Education Press, 2001, 35.

19 Ibid, p 35-36.

20 [https://www.academia.edu/30649844/Story\\_of\\_The\\_Battle\\_of\\_Badr](https://www.academia.edu/30649844/Story_of_The_Battle_of_Badr). accessed on 17 April 2021.

the tired men after marching for days in the oppressive desert heat.<sup>21</sup> Muhammad (PBUH) sent forward a small reconnaissance party to the Badr wells. They ran into two watermen from the Quraish army. From these two watermen, Muhammad (PBUH) was able to determine that the strength of the Meccan army was between 900 and 1,000 men. This was the law of war laid down by the Prophet (PBUH), which allowed obtaining information about the enemy through all possible sources, in the interest of the Muslim army and for security reasons.<sup>22</sup>

### Why was the Battle Fought at Badr?

- Badr was near the sea coast and a place generally visited by trading caravans because routes to Syria, Mecca and Medina converged at this junction.<sup>23</sup> The journey on the road from Mecca to Badr is about ten hours on a camel and *is very pleasant, the land being more fertile* than the desert which surrounds it. There is plenty of water and pasture for large numbers of camels at Badr itself, with the route marked by the thick forest *al-Is*.<sup>24</sup> Medina was centre of gravity for the Muslims therefore logistics and security were good enough reasons for the Prophet (PBUH) to meet the Meccans outside Medina at Badr. On the eve of March 16, 624, Muhammad (PBUH) and his 313 men were ready to receive the Quraish army, by marching into the valley of Badr.



Site of Battle of Badr (Source: ilmfeed.com)

- When reached Badr at a point short of the site where actually the battle took place Muhammad (PBUH), was asked by one of his more experienced tacticians Hubab bin al Mundhir, “Is this a place which God has ordered you to occupy, so that we can neither advance nor withdraw from it, or is it a matter of opinion and military tactics?” Prophet (PBUH) replied, “it was a matter of opinion”. He therefore, advised to shift the position and move ahead. The Prophet of ALLAH Muhammad (PBUH) accepted this advice and deferring to his expertise, he chose a better position closer to the enemy.<sup>25</sup>
  - This put their foe’s line of sight directly in the sun’s path during the critical early morning stages of the battle that would be fought the next day.

21 Martin, *Islam’s First Arrow: The Battle of Badr as a Decisive Battle in Islamic History and Its Significance Today*, 65.

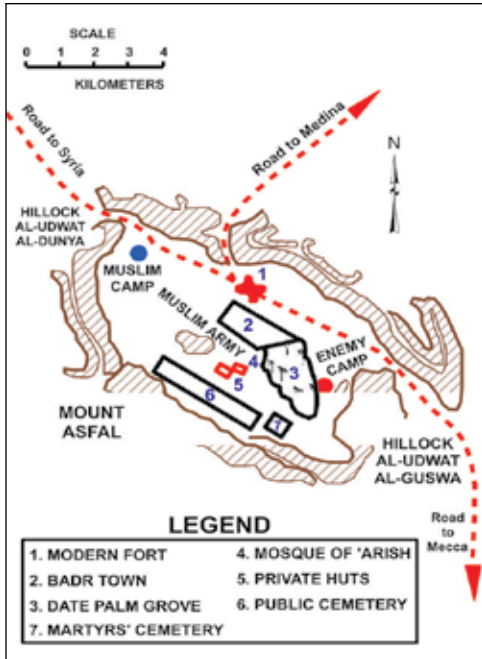
22 Ibid, p 66.

23 Hamidullah, *The Battlefields of the Prophet Muhammad* (Hyderabad: Deccan, 1973), 14.

24 Ibid, p 18.

25 Lings, *Muhammad (PBUH) his life based on earliest sources*, 143.





Sketch showing deployment of forces  
(Source: Book-The Battlefields of the Prophet Muhammad)

- The Muslim army also maneuvered to occupy the critical wells, to deny the enemy any water during the fight, something they would most assuredly have needed with the intense desert heat.<sup>26</sup>
- The Muslim Army was on the higher side of the natural slope. When it rained a night before the battle, the ground became firm on the Muslim's side and swampy towards the Quraish Army.

### Battle Lines Were Drawn

This is a peculiar story that is

important in understanding the motives for the Quraish as they aligned their forces. The Meccan army sent a scout to reconnoitre the Muslims and determine their strength. When he returned, he reported that they only had *three hundred men* and didn't see any *in ambush or support*. Surprisingly, this scout attempted to dissuade the Quraish from continuing. Based on his observations he opined that the Muslim army was prepared to fight with no retreat and no reinforcements. He let them know that *these men have no defence or refuge but their swords*, and it was apparent that not one of them would be slain till he slew one of the Quraish. Someone asked Abu Jahl his opinion on the matter, and he encouraged the army to fight. He told the army that they had the *blood revenge before their eyes*. To him, there was no turning back now.<sup>27</sup>

### • Opposing Forces

	<u>Muslims</u>	<u>Quraish</u>
Commander	Muhammad (PBUH)	Abu Jahl
Infantry	313 men	1000 men
Cavalry	2 horses	200 horses
Services	70 camels	700 camels

### • Muslim Plan and Deployment

The Prophet (PBUH) personally deployed his force and carried out detailed coordination. And at last he prayed *O lord forget not thy promise of*

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p 138.

<sup>27</sup> Martin, *Islam's First Arrow: The Battle of Badr as a Decisive Battle in Islamic History and Its Significance Today*, 61.

assistance. *O Lord if this little band were to perish there will be none to offer thy worship.*

- Prophet (PBUH) selected a higher ground and a water source for his troops.
- The deployment was such that the centre was slightly jutting out and both the flanks curved inwards. Bowmen were on the flanks and men with swords and lances were in the centre. This was to guard against direct threat to centre.<sup>28</sup>
- The best warriors were kept in front ranks to absorb the initial shock of the attacker.<sup>29</sup>
- A command post was established in depth at a higher ground, to control the battle.<sup>30</sup>
- A force under Hazrat Ali was earmarked as reserve for possible offensive or response.<sup>31</sup>
- **Quraish Deployment.** When the Quraish came to know about the presence of the Muslims they were upset after knowing that the Prophet (PBUH) had got all the information from captured slaves.
- They were in a state of indecisiveness whether to fight or go back. Abu Jahl was determined to fight.

- There was a shortage of water towards the Quraish camp.
- Due to rain a night before the battle the side where Quraish had camped, being lower, had turned marshy.

### • **Conduct of Battle**

- 17<sup>th</sup> of Ramazan 2<sup>nd</sup> Hijri, March 624 AD witnessed the first battle between nonbelievers and Islam.
- The battle started when from the Quraish side Utba, Waleed and Shayba came forward, and threw down the gauntlet as per tradition. Three Ansar came forward. But the Quraish refused to fight them considering them inferior and shouted *O Muhammad (PBUH) send forth against us person's of our own tribe.* Hazrat Ali, Hamza and Ubeida accepted the challenge. Hazrat Ali and Hazrat Hamza took no time in killing Waleed and Utba respectively but Shayba somehow managed to injure Hazrat Ubeida. He was later killed by Hazrat Ali. Similarly, Muhammad (PBUH) invoked ALLAH's help for his army when he said, *ALLAH's help comes to you. Here is Gabriel holding the reins of a horse and leading it. The dust is upon his front teeth.* Muhammad (PBUH) opened the battle by

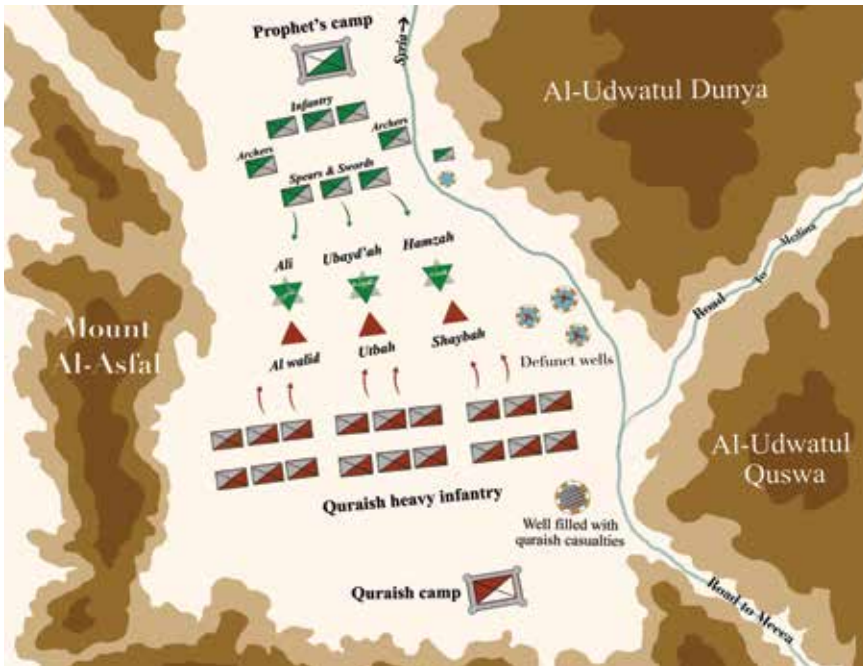
28 Rahman and Hussain, *Early Battles of Islam*, 42.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.





Map: Battlefield of Badr (Source: historiaislamica.com)

picking up a handful of rocks to throw at the enemy, as an indication to start the attack. It was then (some traditions say it was Gabriel and his 1,000 angels) a windstorm came over the Meccans and clouded their vision, disorienting their army. This story is somewhat corroborated by a report from a bystander who while overlooking Badr from a hill said “we being polytheists waiting to see the result of the battle so that we could join in the looting. And while we were on the hill a cloud came near and we heard the neighing of horses and I heard one saying, forward, Hayzum! (The name of Gabriel’s horse)”<sup>32</sup>

- Thereafter an open battle started and the Quraish archers started firing arrows from far distance at Muslims. Prophet (PBUH) used arrows as a strategic weapon and fired them at the explicit enemy which was identifiable. The sudden targetted attack of arrows was fatal for the Quraish. Their efforts to out flank the Muslims fell apart. Their arrows were flying nowhere and by midday they were feeling utterly helpless because of an acute shortage of water. At this time the Prophet (PBUH) gave orders for a counter attack. The

32 Martin, *Islam’s First Arrow: The Battle of Badr as a Decisive Battle in Islamic History and Its Significance Today*, 71.



Memorial of 14 martyrs of Badr

(Source: ilmfeed.com)

enemy was given no time to regroup. One Muslim group attacked the standard bearers of the Meccans.<sup>33</sup> With the fall of standards, the Meccans ran post-haste, leaving behind **seventy dead and seventy prisoners. Total fourteen Muslims embraced martyrdom in the battle.**

## Analysis

### • Overarching Outcome of the Battle of Badr

- It is critical to understand the significance of Badr in the Islam. An entire section of Holy Quran (Surah Al-Anfal chapter-10) is devoted to it, as well as the belief in divine intervention, are two factors that should indicate its particular importance. No other religious text devotes

such attention and space to a single battle as the Quran does to the Battle of Badr.<sup>34</sup>

- Badr was decisive for Muhammad (PBUH) and the blossoming faith of Islam. After Badr, Muslim forces were no longer seen as just wandering groups carrying out raids for economic gain. These fighters, ready to die for an ideology, were deemed as an army that would continually threaten other powers.
- Badr conferred the stamp of approval on the prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH) and established Islam as a divine religion. His preaching touched hearts and minds far and wide in the entire region. The Battle of Badr actually infused strength in the

33 Rahman and Hussain, *Early Battles of Islam*, 44-45.

34 Martin, *Islam's First Arrow: The Battle of Badr as a Decisive Battle in Islamic History and Its Significance Today*, 87.

mEEK, shy and apprehensive Muslims. It inculcated the spirit of a collective effort which according to the decrees of the Quran, became a divine effort to wage Jihad, which precipitated the establishment of Islam as a world religion.

- Badr served as a transition from a defensive strategy to a relatively more offensive build up period.
- The teachings of Muhammad (PBUH) precipitated a change in the values of his companions, in a manner that their profound tribal affection and loyalty to clan, kith and kin was replaced by devotion to the cause of Islam and the Prophet (PBUH). He constructed a new ideology which changed their pattern of behaviour which was based on loyalty to tribe and nurturing enmity on small issues or petty matters for generations. They were now ready to die on the call of their leader, and were prepared to fight and kill their blood relations for the cause. This transformation of fighting in unison as brothers, served the armies of Islam in years to come.
- If the pagan army had succeeded in defeating the Muslim Army at Badr, perhaps the budding religion would have met an end.

Muhammad (PBUH) was no longer just a preacher, he established himself as a statesman and leader who after the battle of Badr, wielded political power in the *Hijaz*. ALLAH has his own designs-this victory changed many hearts and minds.

- **Prophet (PBUH) as Strategist**

An attack on a vulnerable and relatively under protected trade caravan led by Abu Sufyan would have resulted in economic benefits, further exposing Meccan trade to Syria on this route, and ensued tactical advantages. But taking on an army which was led by all the distinguished chiefs of their respective clans of Mecca intoxicated by pride in their strength and equipment, dreaming of giving a thorough defeat to the Muslims was given an unexpected and disastrous defeat, which produced strategic effects for the nascent and fledgling religion and Prophet of Islam (PBUH). It established the state of Medina as a force to reckon with, one to be treated with respect and awe. It gave unique strength and confidence to Muslims. Islam as a religion and way of life found a new meaning when a weaker force defeated a much stronger one, and put a stamp of approval on its divine nature. It is for this reason that when ALLAH gave the choice to take on one of the two caravans the Prophet (PBUH) chose the one armed and coming from Mecca. Sura 8:7 (Al-Anfal) addresses it like this *Allah promised you one of the two parties that it shall be yours*. He put into effect in

that battle the total national power, the main plank of which was ideology and character.

- **Wars are not Won by Overwhelming Strength Alone**

Abu Sufyan was apprehensive that his caravan would be attacked by the Muslims. His personal reconnaissance of Badr confirmed his anxiety, when he found dried camel dung with date stones. He therefore, decided to continue to move along the coastline, and made a two nights forced march to reach Mecca safely. No sooner had he reached Mecca, that he sent a fast rider to inform Abu Jahl that the caravan had reached Mecca safely. Therefore, now the Meccan Army should also come back. He told them, "Since you came out to save your caravan, your men, and your property, and God has delivered them, go back." But they still went on. It seemed the caravan's and people's safety was not enough. Abu Jahl's response was, "We will not go back until we have been to Badr." In a show of confidence bordering on arrogance, he continued, "We will spend three days there, slaughter camels and feast and drink wine, and the girls shall play for us. The Arabs will hear that we have come and gathered together, and will respect us in the future." Each side now knew what they were facing. The Muslims received their wish of a decisive action against the Quraish and the Meccan army looked to inflict retribution for Muhammad's (PBUH) unacceptable

activities.<sup>35</sup> It was not the only time in military history, when an arrogant enemy aimed at complete destruction of its opposing force because of its overwhelming strength but eventually it was defeated. In similar fashion, in September 1965, the urge of the Indian Chief of Army Staff, **General Jayanto Nath Chaudhry** to have a drink at Lahore Gymkhana, or to add Lahore to Indian territory, brought nothing but disgrace for the Indians. General Chaudhry eventually had to enjoy that peg far from Lahore, with fear and regret replacing confidence and ambition in his heart.<sup>36</sup>

- **Prophet (PBUH) as a Diplomat**

In today's world deft handling of foreign policy and relations with neighbours, is considered an essential requirement to create positive conditions for any offensive or defensive strategy on the battlefield. The Indian Prime Minister before 1971 War was advised by her army chief General Manekshaw, to launch a diplomatic offensive before attacking erstwhile East Pakistan, and she did exactly the same. Our Prophet (PBUH) understood the nuances of diplomacy and launched a diplomatic effort to align neighbouring tribes and Jews on his side, to ensure that even if they don't support the Muslims in their war effort with Meccans they should not at least go against them. This diplomatic effort served the Muslims well when they decided to meet the Meccans at Badr.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p 67.

<sup>36</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/article/56351/india-couldnt-beat-us-in-1965-cant-beat-the-stronger-pakistan-of-today-either>. accessed on 18 April 2021.

- **Clarity of Objective**

The Muslims were clear in their strategic objective of defeating the pagans. Attacking the caravan would have given them worldly benefit, but it was of tactical advantage only. It was therefore the wisdom of the Prophet (PBUH) that instead of opting to attack the caravan, he decided to meet the pagan army at Badr.

- **Confidence in Prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH) and Faith in ALLAH**

The Muslim's belief in the leadership of Prophet (PBUH) gave them confidence and courage, for they knew he was leading them in the right direction. Although the Muslims lacked in both equipment and numbers, they had strong faith in ALLAH, and were sure of their righteous cause. This belief did wonders for them.

## **Military Lessons**

- **Unity of Command**

The Prophet (PBUH) was the supreme leader and ideal commander who consulted his companions on every issue and accepted good advice but the ultimate decision was only his and every one abided by it. He led from the front whenever the need arose. This generated tremendous discipline among the Muslims, which was quite contrary to the enemy who were characterised by deep divisions among themselves. The Meccan Army however, had

four distinct tribal chiefs who held sway over their tribesman and were fighting for the clan and respect of their respective tribe. The Muslim Army was responding only to the call of Prophet of Islam (PBUH) and for the cause of ALLAH alone - no personal or tribal glory. Principles of war derived in modern warfare, were practiced by the Prophet (PBUH) in the first battle of Islam.

- **Professionalism of a Muslim Soldier.**

Discipline inculcated in the Muslims through the teachings of Prophet (PBUH) resulted in tremendous self-control and allegiance to the command. This made Muslim soldiers battle hardy, selfless and caring for their colleagues due to the brotherhood established between *Ansar* and *Muhajireen*. On the other hand pagans were selfish and deeply divided due to tribal feuds.

- **Superior Planning Vis-a-vis Meccans**

It was based on intelligence and consultation.

- Prophet (PBUH) remained well informed about the enemy strength and time of arrival at Badr, through his reconnaissance parties.
- Planning was well thought out as a result of thorough consultative process among his companions. For example

the camp was moved on the suggestion of Al Habab.

### • **Upsetting Tactical Balance of Meccans**

- Threatening a trade route vital to the enemy.
- Astute handling of relations with other tribes, the Prophet (PBUH) denied Quraish their freedom of action and they were unable to conclude any agreement against the Muslims which could upset their tactical balance anytime during the conflict.
- The enemy was denied the most crucial commodity of war-water.

### • **Organization of the Force**

Prophet (PBUH) exercised complete control over his body of troops for following reasons:-

- By forming the army into two companies.
- By organising each company into rows. This linear combat formation was more suitable for control.
- By issuing a combat order that would ensure his control at every stage of the battle.<sup>37</sup>

• **Use of Code words.** First time in Arab history codewords were used

to distinguish friend and foe. *AHAD* was the code word used for war.<sup>38</sup>

• **Tactical Appreciation Based on Ground and Weather.** The Prophet (PBUH) never overlooked importance of ground and weather in the conflict between Islam and nonbelievers. He selected the ground:-

- Where water was available.
- Where the Muslims were on higher ground leaving a lower ground for the enemy, which turned into a slush after rain.
- Where the Muslim Army was deployed in a manner that the sun was behind them and was directly in the eyes of the enemy when it rose in the morning.

## Conclusion

The victory at Badr was a watershed event so momentous for the nascent Muslim community that it was believed to be miraculous. It confirmed the vitality of the *Ummah* and the collective effort of brotherhood between *ANSARS* and *MUHAJIRS* created by the Prophet (PBUH). Victory at Badr established Islam as a religion with its eternal message. The companions of the Prophet (PBUH) who participated in the battle, got a unique distinction and were thereafter known as *BADRYANS*.

<sup>37</sup> Rahman and Hussain, *Early Battles of Islam*, 48-49.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p 49.

## **Noteworthy Inferences**

- Impeccable character of a leader is a war winning factor.
- Ideology is more important than the means to wage a war.
- Though economic benefits are important, but strategic effects can only be achieved through destruction of the enemy.
- A nation-state constructed on solid cultural, political and religious grounds is more secure than a nation of disparate cultures, ethnicities and tribal outlook.
- Effective diplomacy and intelligence gathering are indelibly linked to wage any war effort.
- Consultation is important for correct decision making.
- Divine support is promised by ALLAH, but individual and collective effort is essential to turn conditions in one's favour.
- Weakness in material resources can be overcome through better management, organisation, discipline, training, planning and deployment of forces.
- Internal security is key to effectively fight external aggression.
- One's enemy can only be defeated by maintaining friendly relations with other neighbours. Not many fronts should be opened at the same time.
- It is always important to read the enemy's mind, and defeat him psychologically.
- It is lawful and in accordance with religious norms to obtain information about the enemy before and during the war.







## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brigadier Ghulam Jilani, Sitara-e-Imtiaz (Military) was commissioned in 34 Punjab (LAT) in 1987. The officer commanded his parent battalion and an infantry brigade. He also remained on the faculty of School of Infantry & Tactics. He served as a grade-III staff officer in a brigade, grade-II staff officer in Military Operations Directorate and grade-I staff officer in a strategic formation. He is presently serving as research director in the Army Institute of Military History.



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