

Khalifa Ali bin Abu Talib - Battle for Basra

The battle

Some attempts were made to negotiate peace, but such attempts failed and the armies on both the sides took themselves to the battle field. Before the battle began, the representatives of each side in the usual Arab way declaimed the righteousness of their cause. After Talha and Zubair had spoken, Ayesha addressed the people of Basra. She said that she had no intention of fighting against the people of Basra, and shedding unnecessary blood. She added that her object was to seek vengeance for the blood of the innocent Othman. He was the Caliph of the entire Muslim world including Basra and as such it was an obligation on their part to help in seeking such vengeance and bringing the murderers of Othman to task. She observed that the war was no solution of the matter and her very presence there was a positive proof to the effect that she wanted a peaceful resolution of the crisis that had overtaken the Muslims just as any mother would like any dispute between her sons to be settled peacefully and amicably. Her speech was impressive and effective. It started a good deal of argument and disagreement among the ranks of the army of Basra, and some of the persons withdrew.

In spite of some defections from the ranks of the army of Basra there was no weakening of their will to give a fight to the confederates. Jariya b Qadama, a distinguished citizen of Basra stepped forward from the ranks, and addressing Ayesha said that though the assassination of Othman was painful to the people of Basra, her discarding of the veil, and leading an army was more painful to them. He wanted her to return to Makkah or Madina, and not to meddle in politics which did not behoove her as the Mother of the Faithful. Another citizen of Basra taunted Talha and Zubair for leaving their wives and mothers at their homes and dragging the Mother of the Faithful to the battle field. Talha and Zubair were also criticized for taking the oath of allegiance to Ali and then breaking it. Another Basrite addressed Ayesha in the following terms: "Mother if you have come here of your own free will, go back to your house. If you have been brought here by force, we can conduct you to your house with honor and safety."

By this time excitement among the warriors on both the sides reached a high pitch, and the war began with an attack on the forces of the confederates led by Hakim b Jabala the deputy of Othman b Hanif. Hakim under a mistaken notion of his loyalty to Ali, hurled abuses on Ayesha. When his own men objected to such conduct, he shot dead those who objected. Ayesha instructed her men to remain on the defensive hoping that the fury of the attack of the Basrites would soon be over and it would be possible to stop the war. When Hakim and his men penetrated deep into the ranks of the confederates, she ordered a counter charge, the battle continued till nightfall. There was considerable loss of lives on both the sides, but the loss in the ranks of the forces of Basra was much heavier.

After night fall when the forces of Othman b Hanif had retired those people of Basra who had joined the ranks of the confederates advised that at midnight the confederates should occupy that part of Basra which was largely populated by those who were opposed to the Alids. The operation was successfully carried into effect and the following day, the fight had to take place in the city of Basra itself. That put the forces of Othman b Hanif to disadvantage and many persons of these forces were killed. By the end of the day, Othman b Hanif was faced with defeat and he sued for peace.

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