

(.Merits of Imam Husayn (A.S

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We should now like to quote some traditions relating to Imam Husayn from Ibn Athir's book entitled Usudul Ghabah.

A man asked Abdullah bin Umar: "What will be the position if the blood of a mosquito touches the dress of a man?" Abdullah bin Umar said: "Look here! This Iraqi enquires about the blood of a mosquito, although these very Iraqis killed the son of the Prophet of Allah and I myself have heard the Holy Prophet saying: "Hasan and Husayn are my two fragrant flowers in the world". The Holy Prophet said: "Husayn is from me and I am from Husayn. Allah loves him who loves Husayn. Husayn is the son of the Prophet and father of the Imams".

Anas bin Harth Kahili, and his father who were the companions of the Holy Prophet, says that he heard the Holy Prophet saying: "This very son of mine (i.e. Husayn) will be killed at a place in the region of Iraq. Whoever is present at that time and is in a position to assist him should assist him".

The prelude to what had been said by the Holy Prophet became apparent in 60 A.H. and Imam Husayn also got ready to meet martyrdom. However, it was not, as some persons have imagined, that, as there was no chance of his escaping death, and he knew that even if he surrendered he would be killed, he became helpless and exposed himself to martyrdom. In fact this was not the position, and whoever says or writes this, says something flabby and baseless. If that had been the case what value would there have been of the Imam's action and how could the world attach all this importance to this sacred rising? This movement is the central point of all the sacred movements of the history of Islam and is in fact the center of all sacred religious movements, whether they were initiated before Imam Husayn or were led after him by Zayd bin Ali, Husayn bin Zayd, Sahib Nafs Zakiyya and his brother Ibrahim, Husayn Shahid Fakh and others. How is it possible that such a movement should be analyzed with such baseless explanations?

The correct position is the same to which we have referred earlier and said that towards the end of 60 A.H. and in the beginning of 61 A.H. Imam Husayn felt that the Islamic society had reached a stage of spiritual and moral degradation which could not be reformed except by means of rising and martyrdom. It does not, however, mean that it was not possible for him to continue to live and he, therefore, chose to be martyred. What is meant is that he could not find any prospect for the existence of religion and the Islamic ummah except by means of sacred

revolution. He concluded that if he wanted the Muslim ummah to live, and there should be a Muslim ummah in the world, he himself must be sacrificed and his dear ones like Zaynab, Umme Kulthum, Fatima bintul Husayn and Ali bin Husayn (Peace be upon them) who were the greatest and the most eloquent orators of the world of Islam should continue Imam Husayn's mission by inviting the attention of the Muslim ummah to its shameful condition, in the bazaars of Iraq and Syria, deliver the Muslim ummah permanently from the danger of death and annihilation, keep alive the sacred movements which were started before Husayn bin Ali and open a smooth path for the future religious movements of the Muslims.

After Walid bin Utbah, the Governor of Madina, tried to coerce the Imam under the orders of the caliph of the time to submit and take oath of allegiance, and the incident of the night of 28th Rajab took place, the Imam did not take the oath of allegiance and deferred his final decision to the following day. Thereafter Abdullah bin Zubayr got alarmed and ran away from Madina on the following day, but the Imam stayed on in Madina. On that day he came out of his house to find out whether there was any fresh news. Marwan bin Hakam met him on the street and said to him during the course of their conversation: "Sir, I am your well-wisher. You should hear me and listen to what I say". The Imam replied: "Let me know what you have to say. If it is something good for me I shall surely accept it". Marwan said: "I suggest that you should take the oath of allegiance to Yazid. This will be beneficial to your world as well as to your faith (i.e. if you recognize Yazid as the caliph, Imam and leader of the Muslim nation, and endorse his leadership of the Muslims of the world, you will preserve your faith as well as your worldly interests, but in case you do not take the oath to him, and oppose him, you will destroy your faith and the world will also slip away from your hands)."

The Imam said in reply to these presumptuous words of Marwan: "We are from Allah and to Him we shall all return." (Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 156). This verse is usually recited to console ourselves or others when a calamity befalls us. The calamity in connection with which the Imam recited this verse to console himself and others was the intellectual degradation of the Muslims i.e. they had deviated from the true path of religion to such an extent that Marwan had the audacity to say that if Husayn bin Ali took the oath of allegiance to Yazid his faith as well as his worldly interests would be secure, but otherwise both of them would be jeopardized. Then the Imam said: "If the affairs of the Muslim ummah have really taken such a turn that a person like Yazid is going to be the protector of Islam and the Muslims and the ruler of the Muslim world and successor of the Holy Prophet, one should say: "May Allah save Islam", because I have myself heard the Prophet of Allah saying that caliphate is unlawful for the family of Abu Sufyan". Thereupon the discussion between the Imam and Marwan got

protracted and eventually Marwan parted with the Imam in a state of anger. Imam Husayn went from Madina to Makkah and on the 8th day of Zil-Haj, which is called tarwih day and which coincided with the day on which Ha-ni bin Urwah was arrested by Ibn Ziyad, and Muslim bin Aqil staged arising in Kufa, he (Imam Husayn) proceeded to Iraq. The Muslims wondered much at the Imam's sudden departure from Makkah at a time when the ceremonies of Haj were to be performed.

Farazdaq, a poet whose name is well-known in the history of Islam says: "In 60 A.H. I took my mother to Makkah to perform Haj. When I arrived in the precincts of the sanctuary and was driving my mother's camel I saw Husayn bin Ali. He was armed and was going out of Makkah. I asked the people: "To whom do these camels belong?" They replied that they belonged to Husayn bin Ali. Thereupon I went to the Imam, saluted him, and said: "O son of the Prophet of Allah! May Allah grant your wishes and may my parents be your ransom, why are you leaving Makkah without performing the ceremonies of Haj?" He replied: "If I had not made haste and not come out of the city I would have been arrested". Then he asked me: "Who are you?" I replied: "I am an Arab." I swear by Allah that he did not make any further investigation or inquiry about me. Then he said: "Do you know anything about the people you have left behind (i.e. the Iraqis)?" I replied: "You have enquired about it from the right person. I know those people very well. Their hearts are with you and their swords are against you. The Divine decree descends from heaven and Allah does what He likes". The Imam said in reply: "You have spoken the truth. Only that thing which Allah wills happens. If the Divine decree is according to our wishes we shall thank Allah for His blessings, and it is also He who can make one succeed in the matter of thanksgiving. And if the Divine decree does not accord with our wishes, and blocks the path of hope, even then one, who has good intentions and a pure heart, does not perish".

Farazdaq said: "May Allah grant your wishes and protect you from all calamities". Then Farazdaq enquired from the Imam about Haj ceremonies and took leave of him after obtaining the requisite answers.

What the Holy Imam said to Farazdaq needs very careful consideration. The Imam meant to say: 'I am not one of those persons who have an object in view and strive to achieve it, but may or may not meet success. I have a set objective before me and, whatever the circumstances may be and whoever gains victory or sustains defeat, I shall attain to that objective. A person may work hard to acquire wealth. Another may strive to attain to a high position. Another may go to a doctor for his own treatment or that of his patient. Another may step into the battlefield to defeat his rival. Some may perform good deeds or apparently good deeds to acquire renown and honor. It is possible that such persons may achieve their object,

and it is also possible that in spite of their best efforts they may not meet success. It is not necessary that man should achieve what he desires. More often than not our earnest desires suddenly turn into failures. That is what happens to most of the people. They make efforts to achieve their object. At times they are successful, but at other times they not only fail to achieve success but also lose their wealth, and occasionally their life, without getting anything in return.

The Imam says: 'I am not one of those people and whatever the future circumstances and the political conditions of Iraq may be, I shall achieve my object. I have risen only to perform the duty which devolves upon me from Allah in the present circumstances. It is not my object to become a caliph or to rule over the Muslims. If I am successful I shall have performed my duty and it will be quite right, and if my enemy is the winner, even then I shall have performed my duty. There is no other object of my movement'. Truly speaking it makes no difference for the godly persons, and those, who have no material motive and perform jihad for Allah, with a view to perform their duty, whether they are victorious or defeated. This interpretation is also on account of the inadequacy of words, otherwise the word defeat does not exist in the dictionary of the godly persons. This was what Imam Husayn said while going to Iraq when he told Farazdaq: "If we succeed we shall thank Allah, but even if destiny does not favor us we shall not perish, because our intention is good. It is possible that we may be killed but we shall not die, because there is a great difference between being martyred in the path of Allah and for the sake of enjoining to do good and restraining from evil on the one hand and dying and perishing on the other".

The Imam said exactly the same thing on the day of A-shura in one of his addresses to the people of Kufa. By reciting some poetical verses of the companion of the Holy Prophet named Farwa bin Mura-di, he hinted that if some of his friends or enemies thought that that was a day of his death, defeat and destruction, they were sadly mistaken, for the fact was that it was the day of his martyrdom -a martyrdom which would be the first step towards his eternal life. Ibn Tawus writes that when Burayr bin Khuzayr Hamdani counseled the people but they did not pay any heed to him, the Imam himself mounted a camel and asked them to become silent. When they became silent and attentive he praised Allah in a befitting manner and invoked blessings for Muhammad, the angels and other Prophets. Then he said: "O People! Woe be to you! You have deceived us. You cried for help, and we got up quickly to come to your rescue. However, you wielded against us the same sword, which we had given in your hands and kindled for us the same fire, which we had lit to destroy our common enemy. You joined your enemies to fight against your friends and well-wishers, although you have not received justice

from them (i.e. from the enemies) in the past and cannot also entertain any hope in the future. Woe be to you! Why did you not take a final decision and forsook us when the swords were still sheathed and the people were tranquil and calm? Why did you begin to fly hurriedly like newly-winged locusts, and why did you fall in the fire of mischief like moths? May you never be blessed, O mean people! who have thrown the Qur'an away and tampered with its words. "O you supporters of sins and friends of Satan and those who have wiped out and destroyed the traditions of the Prophets! Have you withdrawn your hands from our assistance and are you going to support the oppressors? I swear by Allah that you have always been unfaithful. You are inherently faithless people. You are the most filthy fruit, which is of no use to your friends and well-wishers, and chokes their throats, but is easily swallowed by the enemies. By choking the throats of the friends it is meant that you promise assistance and support and boast of your devotion and manliness, but when you are put to test and when it is time to defend Islam and offer sacrifice, you are not only useless, but your oppression and injustice does not spare even your friend, and threatens his life like a choking morsel!"

Then the Imam said: "O people of Kufa! You should know that this bastard (i.e. Ubaydullah) son of that bastard (i.e. Ziyad) has obliged me to choose one of the two things; either the swords be unsheathed i.e. there occurs a fierce battle, which culminates in my martyrdom and self-sacrifice or I should fall into disgrace and humiliation and submit to his will so that he may do with me whatever he likes. However, disgrace and humiliation are not acquainted with us. Allah does not like that we should be put to shame and humiliation. The Prophet and the godly persons do not yield to abjectness and humiliation.

We have been brought up in the laps of pure mothers. The young men with the sense of honor and the gentlemen with undaunted courage will not go the way of ignoble and weak persons so long as the path of death and martyrdom is open before them, and will not also agree to our humiliation and abjectness. Although at present my faithful friends are few, and many others have ceased to support me, I shall not choose any path other than fighting, and shall not go except the way of martyrdom".

It was here that the Holy Imam recited the following poetic verses of Farwa ibn Musayk Muradi which represent a world of spiritual greatness, peace and vigor.

"If we have been victorious today it is not something new, because we have always gained victory and even if we are defeated, predominance and victory is ours; and truth is victorious in all circumstances, whether it wins or loses.

We are treading this path with courage and manliness and are not accustomed to fear and cowardice. However, what can be done if it be so destined that we should meet martyrdom and

others should attain to rulership.

It is customary in the world that after attacking the people and trampling upon them death goes back and then renews its attack and crushes another group. Fate is drawing the gentlemen of Bani Hashim towards death in the same manner in which it did in the past ages.

If the kings of the world had been immortal, we, who are the rulers of the Kingdom of heaven, would have lived for ever. And if the virtuous and magnanimous persons had continued to live in the world, we, who are the basis of magnanimity and the essence of virtue, would have continued to live.

Tell those who rejoice at our misfortune and affliction today: "The time of your affliction is also drawing near, and time will bring down a terrible disaster on you".

With this spirit, showing his greatness, determination, devotion and faith, the Imam proceeded from Makkah to Iraq. He knew very well what he was doing, where he was going and what the result of his action would be. However, others and even the relatives and devotees of the Holy Imam were worried lest the favorable circumstances should become unfavorable and eventually the Imam should be martyred. The Imam was going to meet martyrdom but his friends and relatives were requesting him not to go lest he should be killed.

One of those persons was Abdullah bin Ja'far, the nephew and son-in-law of Imam Ali. After the departure of Imam Husayn from Makkah Abdullah sent him a letter through his sons Awn and Muhammad. In that letter he entreated the Imam in the name of Allah to return. He also wrote: "I am afraid that you and your men will be martyred, and if you are killed today light will disappear from the world, because people are guided by you and all faithful persons count on you. You should not, therefore, be in a hurry, because I am coming after this letter". Then Abdullah left along with the brother of Amr bin Sa'id, the Governor of Makkah. He was carrying a letter from his brother (the Governor of Makkah) to the Imam wherein he assured him of security and asked him to return to Makkah with full confidence. Both of them came to the Imam, presented the letter of the Governor of Makkah to him and insisted on his returning. The Imam told them in reply: "I have seen my grandfather, the Prophet of Allah, in a dream and he has directed me to continue my mission". They asked him as to what else he had dreamt, but he told them that he had not informed anyone about his dream and would not do so throughout his life. Abdullah bin Ja'far lost hope of the Imam's return. However, he ordered his two sons,

Awn and Muhammad to join the Imam. Later they were martyred on the day of A-shura.

The Imam continued his journey towards Iraq till he reached near Kufa. From there he wrote a letter to the people of Kufa and sent it to them through Qays bin Mashar Saidawi. He had not

yet received the news of the martyrdom of Muslim bin Aqil. In this letter he wrote to the Kufians: "I have received Muslim's letter and have come to know about your allegiance, sincerity, and firm determination to assist me in the path of Allah. I pray to Allah that He may not withhold His kindness from us and grant you handsome reward for your sincerity and firm determination. I left Makkah on Tuesday the 8th of Zil-Haj i.e. on Tarwih Day and have proceeded towards you. When my messenger reaches Kufa you should reinvigorate your resolve and quicken your efforts. If Allah wills I, too, shall join you soon".

Qays took the Imam's letter and proceeded to Kufa, but when he reached near the city he was arrested and taken before Ibn Ziyad. Ibn Ziyad asked him to mount the pulpit and abuse Husayn bin Ali. Qays mounted the pulpit, praised Allah and then said: "O people! Husayn is the best of all creatures living at present, and is the son of Fatima, the daughter of your Prophet. I have been sent by him. All of you should rise to assist him". Thereafter he cursed Ubaydullah and his father and invoked blessings for Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib. As ordered by Ubaydullah he was hurled down from the roof and consequently all his bones were cracked.

The Imam continued his journey towards Kufa till he reached a place called Zurud. There he learnt about the martyrdom of Muslim and Hani and said: "We are from Allah and to Him we all will return." He also said repeatedly: "May Allah's blessings be upon both of them".

At the halting place called Uzaybul Hajanat he received the news of the martyrdom of Qays bin Mashar. He invoked blessings for him and prayed that Allah might grant him a place in Paradise. At the halting place called Zabala he informed his companions about the martyrdom of Muslim and Hani and the state of affairs in Kufa, and said: "Our supporters have withdrawn their support from us. Whoever wishes to leave us and go his way should do so". It was here that most of his companions went away, and only a few of them remained with him.

Muhammad bin Jarir Tabari, the famous Islamic traditionalist, exegetic, historian and jurist, in his famous history book entitled Tarikh-e Umam Wal Muluk, has stated that "Imam Husayn addressed the people at the halting place called Zi Hasam and delivered a brief speech. In this speech he stated more clearly the motive of his rising and announced his readiness to be martyred. He said: "You can see what turn the matters have taken. The people are becoming disloyal and unkind. Their goodness is disappearing. The world is passing quickly and nothing except something insignificant and a mean and worthless life remains out of it. The world today is just like a pasturage in which nothing grows except harmful grass".

Why did the Imam speak ill of the state of affairs at that time and why did he complain and express regret? He himself explains this in his concluding sentences. There he does not speak about the anxieties of life, or drought or lack of security and peace. The thing which had made

life unpleasant and unbearable for the Imam was other than those things which usually make life unpleasant and unwholesome for the people.

Just think what the situation at that time was. It was the time when the vanguard of the needy had arrived and there was a danger of the Iraqi soldiers crowding round the Imam. Some persons, therefore, wished that the Imam had not taken this step. Possibly some short-sighted persons imagined that the Imam himself also thought in the same way and regretted his action and its consequences. It was, therefore, necessary that the Imam should reveal the motive of his rising to some extent and mention more clearly what had made his life unpleasant, difficult and unwholesome. It was for this reason that in the above-mentioned brief address he also said: "The present condition of the Muslims is such that truth is not being followed and falsehood is not being abandoned".

Imam Husyan meant to say: 'In these circumstances it is necessary for an able and self-sacrificing personality like me, the son of the Prophet of Allah, to rise. Don't you see and in other words why don't you ask me as to why I don't surrender and take the oath of allegiance, and why I don't recognize the present Islamic Government formally and acknowledge Yazid, the grandson of Abu Sufyan as the leader and Imam of the Muslims of the world? Don't you know that there is now no occasion for asking these questions? Don't you see the present condition of the Muslims and don't you realize that the people do not act upon Truth?' Apparently the Imam might mean that, for example, the people told lies or indulged in back-biting in their meetings or kept asleep in the morning and allowed their prayers to lapse. However, it is not so, because such sins have always existed among the people to a more or lesser extent. It seems that the Imam wanted to say: 'Don't you see that the present leadership of the Muslims does not conform to the real Caliphate and Succession of the Prophet of Allah. It does not follow the Prophet and has deviated from its natural course which ought to be adherence to truth and justice. The present caliphate is committing oppression, leaving the tyrants free and even encouraging them.'

Then Imam Husayn said: "In such circumstances a pious person should crave for death and this regrettable condition makes a believer fond of martyrdom and meeting Allah".

In the sermon delivered by Imam Husayn in Masjidul Haram he spoke about death, martyrdom and self-sacrifice. Here also he spoke about martyrdom and lack of interest in life. He said: "Living with oppressors does not bear any fruit except weariness, annoyance and vexation". What the Imam said here briefly was stated by him in detail and he explained more clearly the conditions prevailing in those days when he came face to face with Hur bin Yazid Riyahi who .had come from Kufa along with one thousand horsemen to arrest him