

Chapter 12: Departure of Imam from Madina

After his departure from Madina Imam Husayn reached Makkah on 3rd of Shaban and sent his cousin Muslim bin Aqil to Kufa in the middle of Ramazan. From that time till the 8th of Zilhaj he continued to stay on in Makkah. None could imagine that on the 8th of Zil-Haj when the people were putting on Ehram (pilgrim's garb) to perform Haj the son of the Holy Prophet of Allah and child of Makkah and Mina would leave Makkah without performing the ceremonies of Haj and would abandon Ehram after performing Umra.

However, the Imam decided to depart from Makkah. He went round the Ka'ba, performed Sa'i between Safa and Marwa and then abandoned Ehram, because there was the danger of his being arrested or killed within the precincts of the sanctuary, and in case he was killed in that way his object could not be achieved. The Imam did not leave Makkah to escape from being killed. He left Makkah so that if he was killed it should be in such a way that Islam should always benefit from his martyrdom.

According to Luhuf the Imam addressed a gathering before his departure. After praising the Almighty Allah he said: "Death has marked the human beings in the same manner in which a necklace leaves its mark on the neck of a young woman" (i.e. every human being is destined to die). In these words he hinted at the fact that during those days the social and religious corruption could not be remedied except by the martyrdom of a person like him, who was the son of the daughter of the Holy Prophet of Allah.

In the discourse delivered before his departure from Makkah he speaks about martyrdom, death, going before his grandfather, the Holy Prophet of Allah, and before his parents and falling into the clutches of the hungry wolves of Karbala. He told the people that his journey would end in this manner. We know that Imam Husayn delivered this discourse earlier than the 8th of Zil-Haj and possibly on the seventh of that month before a gathering of the pilgrims of the House of Allah.

At that time the political conditions were apparently favorable for Imam Husayn, and the people thought generally that Yazid bin Mu'awiya would soon step aside and his caliphate would topple down and the Imam who was entitled to the caliphate would attain to it. This was because Muslim bin Aqil, his special representative, had sent a report from Kufa saying: "All the people are with you and do not recognize the caliphate of anyone else. They are also not prepared to acknowledge anyone as their ruler except you.

Hence you should come as early as possible".

Apparently the conditions were very favorable and reassuring, but in spite of this Imam Husayn was talking about death and martyrdom and the fierceness of the Iraqi wolves.

The fact is as already stated by us i.e. Imam Husayn wanted to tell the people that he had already assessed that no result could be achieved and nothing useful and positive could be done without his own martyrdom as well as that of his friends. That is why he said that man cannot avoid death.

He said: "I am keen to see the Prophet of Allah, Ali, Hamza, Ja'far and my mother Fatima in the same way in which Ya'qub was keen to see Yusuf. A site of martyrdom has been selected for me by Allah and I am going there". It transpires from this sentence that this was a Divine plan and not one drawn by Husayn bin Ali. The Almighty Allah had destined since eternity that such deviation and corruption, could take place in the Muslim society, and Husayn bin Ali would make an unprecedented self-sacrifice and meet martyrdom to remedy the situation.

The Imam said: "I can see as if the desert wolves of Iraq are attacking me between Nawawis and Karbala and tearing me into pieces. They are filling their hungry flanks and empty pockets. It is for them to fill their pockets and to feed themselves to satiety, and for me to fight against this social and religious corruption. This is the plan devised by Allah and it is He who has considered my martyrdom to be the remedy and the means of reforming the present state of affairs. It is impossible to escape from whatever has been destined by Him.

We, the family of the Holy Prophet, are happy with what Allah is pleased with, and like whatever He likes. We bear with patience all the difficulties which He makes us face and He also gives us full reward which is admissible to the patient people. I am a part of the body of the Prophet of Allah and a part of his body cannot remain separate from him. I shall join him in Paradise so that he may be pleased to see me and fulfil the promises made with me. Only he, who is prepared to sacrifice his life for my sake and to meet Allah, should accompany me. God willing I intend to depart tomorrow morning".

The Divine religion, the rights of the people and the interests of the Islamic society can be defended at different times in different ways. It may be by spending money in the path of Allah. It may be by speaking for the sake of Allah and bringing the people to the right path by means of useful and instructive words. It may be by writing a book for the sake of Allah and bringing the people nearer to truth and reality with useful publications and increasing their religious and moral insight.

However, Imam Husayn declared that at that juncture the problem with which Islam was faced could not be solved with financial assistance or through writing or verbal benevolence. On the contrary the matters had taken such a turn that it was not possible to restrain corruption and eradicate its foundation except by means of self-sacrifice and martyrdom.

It would not have been right for anyone to think that as Imam Husayn was going to take a step forward in

the path of Allah he too would contribute some money or present five swords, seven coats of mail and four spears to him or say like Ubaydullah bin Hurr Juafi in response to the Imam's call that he would give him a strong horse.

Husayn bin Ali did not, however, require swords, lances, horses or money, but was prepared to accept only that person who was sincerely prepared to lay down his life for his sake. He said: "Only that person, who is prepared to sacrifice his life for the sake of Allah and to meet the Almighty, can join me in this journey. God willing I shall be departing tomorrow morning".

It is surprising that in spite of all these emphatic pronouncements of the Imam many unfortunate opportunists also joined him under the impression that the circumstances were favorable and perhaps most of them remained with him till the news of the martyrdom of Muslim bin Aqil was received. The fact is that from the very beginning these people sided with him, who became caliph and assumed authority.

They were not prepared to support the Imam who was going to die and meet martyrdom, who was to be deprived of water, and whose companions were one day going to die the honorable death of martyrs.

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