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## Chapter 20: Sermon of Imam to the Army of Yazid

Then the Imam mounted his camel and addressed the people with a very loud voice, which could be heard by most of them:

"O people of Iraq! Listen to me and do not make haste to kill me so that I may tell you what I must, and appraise you of the reason for my coming to Iraq. If you accept my excuse, believe in what I say, and behave towards me fairly, you will level for yourselves the path of prosperity, and then you will have no reason to kill me. And even if you do not accept my excuse and deviate from the path of justice, you must ponder over the pros and cons of the matter before you kill me, and should not undertake such a delicate task rashly and without deliberation. My supporter is the Almighty Allah Who has revealed the Qur'an. Allah guards His deserving slaves".

When the Imam's speech reached this stage, he heard the wails and lamentations of his sisters and daughters, who were hearing him. Thereupon he said to his brother Abbas and his son Ali: "Go and silence these women, because hereafter they will have to weep much". When the voice of the ladies of the Holy and impeccable family was no longer heard the Imam praised Allah and invoked blessings for the angels and the prophets.

He spoke in more eloquent and expressive words than any orator, who had existed before him, or would come after him, and said to the people of Kufa: "O people! Identify me and see who I am. Then you will come to your senses and reproach yourselves. You should reflect carefully whether it is permissible for you to kill me and to disregard the reverence due to me.

"Am I not the son of your Prophet's daughter? Is the *wasi* (vicegerent) of your Prophet and his cousin and the first person, who expressed belief in Allah and confirmed what was brought by His Prophet, not my father? Is the Doyen of Martyrs Hamza bin Abdul Muttalib not the uncle of my father? Is the martyr Ja'far bin Abu Talib who has two wings and flies with Allah's angels not my uncle?

Have you not heard that the Holy Prophet has said about me and my brother: "These two sons of mine

are the chiefs of the young men of Paradise". If you think that whatever I am saying is true so much the better. I swear by Allah that I know Allah hates the liars, and I have never told a lie. And even if you do not believe in my words and refute me, there are still some companions of the Holy Prophet amongst you who, when asked, will apprise you of the facts.

Ask Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari, Abu Sa'id Khudari, Nahl bin Sadi, Zayd bin Arqam or Anas bin Malik, so that they may tell you that they have heard these words from the Holy Prophet about me and my brother. Is this tradition itself not sufficient to restrain you from killing me? If you are doubtful about this tradition can you doubt even this that I am the son of your Prophet's daughter? I swear by Allah that between East and West there is no son of the daughter of a Prophet except me either amongst you or amongst others.

"You should tell honestly whether I have killed anyone from amongst you so that you may take revenge! Is it that I have appropriated your wealth and you are claiming it? Have I injured you for which you have risen to compensate?" None of them, however, came forward to give a reply to what the Imam said.

He was, therefore, obliged to call some of them by their names and addressed them in these words: "O Shabath bin Rabie, Hajjar bin Abjar, Qays bin Ashath and Yazid bin Harith! Did you yourselves not write letters to me saying: "The fruits have become ripe and the lands are green and fresh and the soldiers of Iraq are ready to sacrifice their lives for you and you should, therefore, proceed to Iraq as early as possible?"

Tabari writes that in reply to the Imam they said: "We did not write any letter and are not aware of what you are saying." Truly speaking it is the height of meanness and foul play that the same persons who invited their Imam by means of a large number of letters and had signed those letters, were replying to him with utmost impudence that they had neither written any letters to him nor invited him!

Here we introduce to the readers one of those mean persons so that they may come to know to what extent one can go on account of worldliness and lack of will-power. They appear before the people in one guise today and in another guise tomorrow. One day they draw their swords for the sake of Allah and on another day against Him. If they are friends of Ali on one day they become his enemies on the following day. One day they kill Imam Husayn and on another day they claim to be the avengers of his murder.

Shabath bin Rabie i.e. the very person who was the Commander of the Iraqi army on the day of Ashura and one of the killers of the Imam was at one time the mu'azzin of Sajah and he accepted this office when he claimed to be a prophet in the tribe of Bani Tamim. However, when Sajah was disgraced he embraced Islam. He had also a hand in the murder of Uthman. Then he became one of the followers of Ali. Later he revolted against Ali, became one of his opponents and joined the Khawarij. After some time he left the Khawarij also and went in seclusion.

In 61 A.H. he participated in killing Imam Husayn and his companions with great savagery. Afterwards

when Mukhtar bin Abi Ubayd Thaqafi rose to avenge the murder of Imam Husayn, he (Shabath) who himself was one of the murderers of the Imam joined Mukhtar as an avenger of the Imam's murder. Later he became the chief of Kufa police. He had a hand also in the murder of Mukhtar bin Abi Ubayd. He died in about 80 A.H.

How can those persons who do not have the least moral sense benefit from the celestial spirit of Husayn bin Ali and how can their untalented and corrupt souls receive any reflection of the sublime soul of the infallible Imam.

The Imam continued his address till he said: "By Allah I will not swear allegiance to these people like weak and mean persons and will not flee the battlefield like slaves while fighting against the rascals. I seek refuge in Allah from the mischief of you people and of every arrogant person who does not believe in the Day of Judgment".

In the meantime the preliminaries of the battle began to take place gradually. Umar bin Sad drew his bow, shot an arrow towards the companions of Imam Husayn and said: "You should bear witness before Ibn Ziyad (the governor) that I have started the battle earlier than everyone else".

Severe fighting continued till about noon. Most of the companions of the Imam were killed. The Imam offered the noon prayers along with his surviving companions in the form of emergency prayer (Salatul Khawf) i.e. he offered two rakats. The fighting continued after the prayers till all the young men of Bani Hashim were killed. They met martyrdom one after the other. Even young children and sucklings had also the honor of being martyred. Gradually the moment arrived which changed the course of the history of Islam and recorded the honor of martyrdom for them in the pages of history. It is definitely so and there is no tragedy like the tragedy of Imam Husayn.

The exact number of the persons who were martyred on the day of Ashura is not known. It is usually said that seventy two persons were martyred with Imam Husayn. Tabari writes that seventy two companions of the Holy Imam were martyred. Shaykh Mufid writes that Amr bin Sad sent the head of Imam Husayn to Ibn Ziyad on the very day of Ashura and ordered the heads of his companions and Ahlul Bayt to be severed from their bodies and these heads were seventy' two in number.

Furthermore, in the homage (Ziyarat) which has been quoted in Iqbal of Sayyid bin Tawus the names of 72 martyrs of Karbala have been mentioned. This Ziyarat, the date of issue of which is 252 A.H. from the sacred region of Samarra (Iraq), must have been issued by Imam Hasan Askari and not by Imam Mahdi because in that year i.e. 252 A.H. Imam Mahdi was not born and his father Imam Hasan Askari remained alive for another eight years i.e. till 260 A.H. In this Ziyarat the names of seventeen members of the family of Bani Hashim followed by the names of fifty five other companions of the Imam have been mentioned.

In fact it is necessary to study the performance of these seventy two persons more minutely so that we may understand how this small group could bring this marvelous and eternal movement into existence. If

Imam Husayn and his companions had a worldly motive and had they been killed like ordinary persons in order to achieve a material objective it would not have been possible for them to acquire such greatness in the world.

Moreover, the very shape of this movement shows that it was not a material rising tainted by worldly and personal motives. The importance which this movement acquired in the history of Islam, rather in the history of the world, was for those very reasons which have already been mentioned and explained i.e. the conditions of the world of Islam of that time had cast a responsibility on the Imam. He assessed that he must rise and sacrifice his life, as the safety of Islam depended upon his rising.

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