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Chapter 25: Journey of Ahlul Bayt to Kufa and Damascus

The history of the sacred movement and rising of Imam Husayn is one of the most glorious chapters of the history of Islam. Although this period of less than a year was very short and transient from the point of view of length of time, it was very forcible and everlasting from the point of view of quality and the results which it produced.

This short historical period may be reckoned to have commenced in the last days of the month of Rajab of 60 A.H. i.e. with Imam Husayn's departure from Madina to Makkah and may also be treated to have ended with the return of the Ahlul Bayt to Madina, although the date of the arrival of the Ahlul Bayt to their house is not known and we are not aware for how many months they stayed in Damascus, when they left Syria for Madina, and how much time was spent in their journey from Syria to Madina.

In short, it may be said with certainty that a year had not yet passed since the departure of Ahlul Bayt from Madina in the month of Rajab when the fourth Imam returned to Madina along with his Holy Family after spending the period of captivity. They came from Damascus to Madina direct or via Karbala.

However, as regards the incident that Ahlul Bayt came from Syria to Iraq and reached Karbala on the 20th of Safar is entirely incredible and no reliable evidence is available to support this historical myth. The Ahlul Bayt went from Madina to Makkah in the month of Rajab of the year 60 A.H. and proceeded from Makkah to Iraq in the same year in the month of Zil-Haj.

In the month of Muharram of the year 61 A.H. they were taken to Kufa as prisoners after the martyrdom of Imam Husayn and his illustrious companions. After they had remained in Kufa for quite some time they were sent to Syria in compliance with the orders received from Yazid. They remained there for a period which is not exactly known, and then returned to Madina.

The fact is that the dates of the departure of Ahlul Bayt from Kufa for Syria, their arrival in Damascus, the period of their stay in the capital of Yazid, the dates of their departure from Damascus and arrival in Madina are not exactly known. It may, however, be said on the basis of probability and guess and not

with certainty that after the family of Imam Husayn arrived in Kufa on the 12th of Muharram of the year 61 A.H. they remained imprisoned in Kufa for about a month i.e. till after the middle of the month of Safar and were sent to Syria a day or two before the 40th day of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn and his companions.

As written by some historians they reached Damascus in about the middle of the month of Rabiul Awwal. It cannot be said as to how long they remained in Damascus; when they departed from there and on which date they arrived in Madina. If reliable evidence had been available to the effect that the Ahlul Bayt came to Karbala at the time of the Arba'in (40th day) of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, it could be said that this happened when they went to Syria and not at the time of their return from there.

This is so because if, as stated by some historians, the Ahlul Bayt were sent to Syria, on receipt of orders from Yazid, within about three days after the first half of the month of Safar, it does not seem impossible that they went via Karbala where they paid homage to the sacred resting places of their dear ones and martyrs on the 20th of Safar and then proceeded to Damascus. However, we do not have any reliable evidence even for this statement and only some sporadic evidences in this behalf can be culled from history.

It is not possible to believe that the Ahlul Bayt reached Syria on the day of Arba'in or left Damascus for Madina or reached Madina on such a day. It is, therefore, advisable that such baseless matters should not be mentioned in connection with Ashura and Arba'in and one should content oneself with only those things which are reported from reliable sources.

Neither Imam Sajjad came from Syria to Iraq, nor the Ahlul Bayt came to Karbala on their return from Syria, nor did Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari and Atiyya bin Sad bin Junada Awfi meet the fourth Imam and the Ahlul Bayt when they went to perform pilgrimage to Karbala on the day of Arba'in. In the narrations related to homage by Jabir and Atiyya it has not at all been mentioned that they met Imam Sajjad or Ahlul Bayt. This story has been invented by the story-tellers.

Only Sayyid bin Tawus has written in Luhuf, contrary to the historical and geographical evidence, that on return from Damascus the Ahlul Bayt proceeded to Iraq when they reached the parting of the ways to Iraq and the Hijaz (a place which is not identified even by the geographers) and on the 40th day of the Ashura they reached Karbala. Sayyid bin Tawus was, no doubt, a great person. Allama Hilli has acknowledged that he performed unusual feats and there is no denying the fact that he enjoyed high status.

However, it is not possible to attach any value to this statement of his from the historical viewpoint and it is not known whether he himself believed in this narration which is not based on any authority. In any case this matter needs investigation and research.

As a matter of principle it is opposed to common sense that everything should be accepted without any investigation, study and comment. Even if Sayyid bin Tawus had been our contemporary we would not

have approached that great scholar in this particular matter, and his remark in a book, which according to the researchers was written in his youth, would not have carried any historical value for us. It is a vulgar and foolish way of thinking that whatever is said by anyone or is written in any book should be accepted as correct and free from errors.

The path of research and criticism is always open to the intelligent persons and research scholars of history. According to the Muslims of the world in general there is only one person whose remarks cannot be erroneous in the least and he is the Holy Prophet. According to the Shi'ah school, however, this distinction is enjoyed by the Holy Prophet as well as by Lady Fatima Zahra and the twelve Imams whose infallibility is proved by reason as well as by narrations.

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