

## Let them mourn

A stranger is sitting in a corner of the world, away from the people, in a state of extreme anguish. He is sitting alone and his loneliness weighs heavily on him.

He is a stranger although he is living among his people, but he is extremely grieved on account of them. Time did not recognize him, although he had pervaded it.

The earth did not recognize him, although his sweet and wise sayings continued to ring in it and it saw with its own eyes his great feats.

This stranger used to spend everything he possessed on others but did not seek anything from them. He was subjected to great oppressions, but he never thought of taking revenge. He forgave his enemies after gaining victory over them. He never did any injustice to his enemies and never performed any unlawful act for the sake of his friends. He was the helper of the weak, the brother of the indigent, the father of the orphans and a kind friend of those who were fed up with their lives. They always approached him for the solution of their problems and hoped sympathy from him in all difficulties.

He was erudite, and was extremely forbearing. However, his heart was full of grief. His majesty and loftiness were resounding in all the mountains and deserts. He cut off the heads of big giants but was himself overcome by love and kindness. During daytime he administered justice and enforced the divine laws and in the darkness of night he wept bitterly for the sake of the indigent and the helpless.

He was a stranger whose thundering voice made the oppressors tremble as and when any oppressed person approached him with a complaint. Whenever a man complained to him his sword flashed like lightning and consumed the darkness of the deceitful. Whenever a deprived person called him, love and kindness began to flow from his heart which quenched the thirst of everything dry and famine stricken.

He was a stranger on the face of the earth whose every word was true and correct. He wore coarse dress and walked meekly and whenever the people went downwards he kept his face high. He was a stranger and a lovely person who suffered all sorts of hardships so that the people might remain happy.

Who was this unique and brave stranger who knew everything and kept his eyes towards all sides? Who

was he who sought the welfare of the people in this world as well as in the hereafter although they always grieved and harmed him?

Who was this unique and angelic person whose enemies denied his virtues on account of their envy and avarice and whose friends deserted him on account of fear? He fought alone against corruption and destruction. His behaviour towards the people was constantly based on truth and sincerity. He was never enamoured of victory and was never disheartened by defeat. He was an embodiment of truth and never cared for anything other than truth, whether some persons denied his virtues and some others feared him.

Who could this unique person be except Ali, the vexed and distressed Commander of the Faithful with whose blood a wicked and impure man was going to besmear his hands so that it might serve as dowry for an impure and wicked woman?

It was a dark and terrible night. The sky was overcast. At times the lightning flashed and spread light on all sides.

The eagles were sitting in their nests with their heads cast down, because on the following day their feathers were going to fall and they were to go in mourning for the chief of the world.

The Imam was awake and his eyes were sleepless, because the people were groaning on account of oppression; some people indulged in luxuries and were ready to revolt. The powerful people were extremely tyrannical towards the weaker ones. His enemies in collusion with one another were creating mischief and planning to revolt. Among them there were some evil-doers who professed love for one another.

Some of his own followers had also forsaken truth and refrained from helping one another. All this was very painful to Ali. That night he reviewed his entire past life. He recollected that from his very boyhood his sword had made the Quraysh tremble and he did his best to spread Islam. His people considered his activities to be childish, but he remained steadfast and rendered all possible assistance to the Prophet to make his mission a success.

He also remembered the night of migration when he slept in the bed of the Prophet under the shadow of the swords of the Quraysh with the hope that Abu Sufyan and other polytheists would be mistaken and would not be able to do any harm to the Prophet.

He remembered the battles in which he defended the Prophet and Islam against the enemies. He could visualize the infidels scattering like the locusts which are scattered by a dust storm. He visualized the Prophet embracing him with ardent love and saying: "This is my brother".

He remembered the time when the Prophet came to his house one day while he was asleep. Fatima wanted to awaken him but the Prophet said: "Let him sleep, because after me he will be deprived of

sleep for a long time”. And thereupon Fatima wept bitterly.

He recollected the time when the Prophet had said: “O Ali! God has adorned you in the best manner. He has endowed you with the love for the poor and the helpless. They will be happy to make you their Imam and you will be pleased to see them as your followers”.

He also remembered the time when the Prophet cast this last look on his face and then breathed his last. He as well recollected the grief of Fatima which made her pass away forty days after the death of her father.

He also recollected the faces of the companions of the Prophet who used to say: “During the time of the Prophet we could identify the hypocrites because of their enmity with Ali”.

The Prophet had said not once but many times: “O Ali! Only a hypocrite will be inimical towards you”.

At this moment he recollected his comrades who had performed jihad along with him during the lifetime of the Prophet. They were united, helped one another, and had maintained the ties of brotherhood. But later, during his own time, some of them joined him whereas others opposed him. Some who had wished to become rulers or to acquire worldly gains had died and others were still alive. Those noble-minded companions who were determined to promote truth and justice (May God bless them!) were strangers in this world. They laid down their lives in the path of justice and fidelity and the oppression of the enemies buried them in the depths of the earth.

One of them was Abu Dharr Ghifari – the distinguished companion of the Prophet who could not tolerate that human life should be insulted and, therefore, stood up to oppose oppression and injustice. He was a great man who had no friend left on account of his truthfulness except Ali and who met a very tragic end. Ali recollected the time when Abu Dharr was in the presence of the Prophet wearing a worn-out cloak and placed himself at the disposal of the Prophet for any service whatsoever. From that time onwards he remained a staunch supporter of truth, so much so that during the time of Uthman he opened a campaign against Bani Umayyah in support of the oppressed and the helpless.

As a consequence of this he was exiled by Marwan and Uthman to a barren place called Rabazah, where his children met death before his very eyes. His wife was herself seeing them dying and was praying that she might die before Abu Dharr so that she might not survive after him, for otherwise it would be her double death. Abu Dharr died of hunger, whereas Bani Umayyah had the entire wealth of the earth at their disposal. He also remembered his pious and faithful brother Ammar Yasir who was martyred during a similar night a few days earlier by a rebellious and oppressive group in the Battle of Siffin.

Yes! Where were those faithful brothers of Ali who were the followers of the right path – those who neither indulged in idle talk, nor slandered anyone nor practised fraud and deceit? All those righteous men had departed from the world one after the other and only Ali was left to fight a fierce and dreadful

battle against the oppressive and wicked persons. If God had granted victory to Ali over the rebels he would have put an end to rebellion and dealt with the rebels in an appropriate manner.

It was a battle in which truth was alone on one side although previously it had many supporters.

It was a battle in which he was opposed by the people whose children were misguided, whose young men were murderers and whose old ones were not used to order others to do good and prevent them from doing evil. They feared only that person, whose tongue could do them harm and respected only him from whom they hope to get something. If he had let them go their way they would not have left him, and if he had pursued them they would have attacked him all of a sudden. They were companions in perversion and slandered one another when they separated.

The battle which Ali was forced to fight against his will was like the wave of a sea which does not care whether a person gets drowned or not, or like a flame of fire which burns anything and reduces it to ashes.

It was a battle between Ali, who wished others to enjoy the bounties of the world, and those persons who wanted to eject their subjects from the fertile lands and throw them into barren deserts and scorching wind.

Oh! What a life Ali led! His life was spent either in performing jihad or in suffering hardships.

Oh! How noble and righteous persons there were in the world! They passed away one after the other and left Ali alone. After their departure the world was filled with tyranny and injustice.

This unique stranger visualized the following day, whose darkness would last longer than the darkness of the nights of the indigent, and which would be colder than the conscience of those who are unfaithful to their promises. It would tread heavily on the unfortunate only. The following day on which those persons who would become the rulers by deceitful means would not attach any importance to their subjects. Only the flatterers, slanderers and mischief-mongers would gain the favour of those rulers. That will be the day on which the unjust and cruel persons would be made the chiefs and only those persons, who are base and shameless, would lead a peaceful life.

Ali was visualizing the state of affairs on the next day with his heart and intellect. It was going to be a very sad day. After that night none of the persons in position would prefer truth to falsehood, if falsehood was more profitable to him. After that night there would be no ruler who should be like a father to the people and should love truth in spite of all the hardships which he might suffer leaving all the pleasures emanating from falsehood.

After that night there would exist no such heart and intellect as treats the people justly and follows truth even though the mountains tremble and the earth splits.

Alas! The following is the day when an ignorant person was going to commit the most heinous crime till

a boastful tyrant king would come to rule, and the noble man was going to meet death and destruction while fighting against the injustice of the tyrants.

The Commander of the Faithful drew his hand on his beard and kept weeping for a long time.

He looked towards the sky and saw in that dark night the patches of the clouds and the stars which were reflecting light on the palaces of the capitalists and the huts of the poor alike, and were hiding the corruption and mischief of the wicked as well as the afflictions of the righteous. He looked at the world and addressing himself to it said: "O world! Deceive someone else and not me".

The time passed on and the night grew darker and darker. Ali felt himself alone in the world. What a lonely, dreadful and strange place the world is!

He went to sleep for a short while with all the remembrances fresh in his mind. While sleeping he had a dream in which he saw the Prophet and said to him: "O Prophet of God! I have suffered much at the hands of your followers and have had to face acute opposition from them". The Prophet said: "Call down curses upon them". Ali said: "O Lord! Provide me better companions than these people and impose on them, in my place, the worst ruler".

When it was dawn light air was blowing and the sky was shedding tears. Ali ibn Abi Talib proceeded to the mosque slowly as if his feet were conversing with the earth and telling it the story of those gloomy moments. The birds were also grieved. He had not yet reached the courtyard of the mosque when the ducks ran towards him and began to cry. Simultaneously with them the cold morning winds also began to moan.

Those who had come to offer their prayers stepped forward and tried to turn away the ducks. However, they neither went away nor stopped crying.

Similarly the wind also continued producing a rustling sound. It would appear that the ducks and the wind had already come to know that the Commander of the Faithful was proceeding towards his last calamity.

The Commander of the Faithful heard the cries of the ducks very attentively and then turning to the people said: "Do not turn them away, for they are mourning".

With these words the Commander of the Faithful foretold the impending calamity which was to befall him.

Why should these ducks not have mourned? Why were the people endeavouring to prevent them from crying? And why should the Commander of the Faithful not have looked upon them with love and affection? He had already seen thousands of mornings but this morning carried in its bosom a secret, which other mornings did not. On that day he was feeling something which he had never felt before. Was this great man not entitled to hear his elegy in the form of the cries of the ducks and the moaning of

the winds? Did he not possess the right to say good bye to the sun and the shadow which he was not likely to see again?

Was he not entitled to cast his last look on the places, where he lived a life of indigence to make others well-to-do? These places had seen many sights of his bravery and courage, manifestations of his awe-inspiring personality, and many a hard suffering and tribulation which he had to bear. They had also seen the long long nights which he passed weeping in submission to God.

If the inhabitants of the world had stuck to truth and justice he would not have felt sad on leaving its days and nights. What pained him was that the world had become overfilled with wicked and treacherous people.

The world was groaning under the pressure of those people and its inhabitants had fallen prey to despair. The deprived persons in Iraq, Hijaz and Syria were leading very burdensome lives. The hypocrites were making immense profits.

Of course, the world had lost nothing if it had allowed Ali to take one or two more steps to bring about a change in the state of affairs then prevailing. Unfortunately the world does not like that a change should be brought about in the prevailing conditions.

This great person possessing a celestial soul felt that his feet were making him proceed on a long journey. He stopped at the gate of the mosque for a short while and looked at the mourning ducks. Then he turned to the men who were standing at a distance from him and uttered this sentence a number of times: "Do not turn them away, for they are mourning".

Ali arrived in the mosque and prostrated himself before the Almighty God. Abdur Rahman ibn Muljam also entered the mosque carrying with him a sword with a poisoned blade. He dealt such a blow on the head of the Imam that, as said by him (ibn Muljam) if it had been dealt on the heads of all the residents of the city, none of them would have survived. May the malicious criminal be subjected to divine vengeance and may the curse of God and of all His creatures befall him! May he suffer the severest torture in Hell!

Violent winds began to blow and everything turned topsy-turvy. Dust storms rose from all sides and caused a havoc. The bright day became dark like a moonless night. It was a terrible sight. The birds wept and the trees trembled. The followers and admirers of Ali were shocked and burst into tears. The lovers of truth and justice will continue to weep over this tragedy till the Day of Judgment.

Everything in the world became broken-hearted and sad except the face of Ali which was perfectly cheerful. He did not express any desire for revenge nor did he express any anger. The people were gathered at the gate of his house with extremely sad faces and were praying to God for his speedy recovery. They attacked Abdur Rahman ibn Muljam and captured him. When he was brought before the Commander of the Faithful he said: "Give him good food and a soft bed".

However, the cheerfulness of his face was more saddening than all the calamities of the world. At that time his face resembled the face of Socrates when the ignorant and stupid people made him drink a cup of poison. It resembled the face of Jesus Christ when the Jews scourged him. It resembled the face of the Prophet of Islam Muhammad when the ignorant persons of Taif showered stones at him and did not know that they were stoning the greatest human being ever born.

The best physicians of Kufa were called for the treatment of the Imam. Athir bin Amr bin Hani who was the most proficient among them examined very carefully the wound on Ali's forehead and said with extreme grief and despair: "O Commander of the Faithful! You had better make a will whatever you wish to, because the blow dealt by ibn Muljam has penetrated into your brain.

The Imam was not offended by the physician's remark nor did he utter any word of complaint. He resigned himself to the will of God.

Ali called his sons Hasan and Husayn and made some recommendations to them. He also insisted upon them that they should not cause any disturbance nor resort to bloodshed on account of his assassination. As regards the assassin he said: "If you forgive him it will be nearer to piety".

Some of the recommendations made by Ali to his sons Hasan and Husayn were as follows:

- I put you on an oath in the name of God that you shall have regard for your neighbours.
- I administer to you an oath in the name of God that you shall take care of the needy and the indigent and make them share your sustenance and income. And as ordered by God you shall talk mildly with everyone and say something good whenever you speak and shall not abandon ordering others to do good and restraining them from doing evil.
- It is your duty to have good and kind relations among yourselves. You should behave informally and observe simplicity. You should neither sever relations with one another nor live separately.

After a short time he turned to the people and said: "Till yesterday I was your ruler, today I am the means of your taking a lesson from me, and tomorrow I shall leave you. May God forgive all of us!"

Ali received a wound on his head on Friday morning. After that he spent two days in great agony, but he did not complain of pain or inconvenience. He continued to seek God's assistance and to recommend to the people to do good to the needy and the helpless. He breathed his last during the night of the 21st of Ramazan 40 A.H.

That great and unique man, who suffered at the hands of his enemies as well as his friends, passed away. It was that magnanimous person who was a martyr during his life-time and the father of the martyrs at the time of his death.

The martyr of the path of steadfastness, uprightness and sympathy, was dead. The martyr of purity and

magnanimity, who never showed the least laxity in the matter of truth and sincerity, departed from the world.

That great man passed away. It is very unfortunate that he did not get an opportunity to establish a government which might have served as a model for the future governments, and the common people might have led peaceful lives with the blessing of his name, and subjected the mischief-mongers to humiliation and disgrace.

He left the world and left behind a family every member of which met martyrdom in the path of truth. He left behind his grief-stricken daughter Zainab to bear hardships and the people of the world behaved towards her with unprecedented cruelty and meanness. He left behind Hasan and Husayn to the tender mercies of his sworn enemies like the son of Abu Sufyan and others.

The first period of conspiracies against Ali and his children came to an end. It was followed by many other periods which were replete with more dreadful and severe hardships for them.

Consequent upon the martyrdom of the Commander of the Faithful the lofty palaces shone like mirages in barren deserts. The water springs became dry. The fields became waste lands. The government of the rebellious and the deceitful got strengthened. Those persons, who considered treachery and deceit to be permissible for a ruler, became active immediately after Ali's martyrdom. How sinister are the governments whose foundations are laid on the assassination of those who are entitled to reverence!

What a great disappointment the admirers of Ali must have felt owing to the calamity which befell them as a result of his tragic assassination. How grieved the righteous persons must have been for a long time on account of this dreadful event. What a great calamity, for it was due to it that the whole of Arabia remained a theatre of disturbances and corruption for centuries. How great was the grief which continued to increase and became firmly-rooted with the lapse of time and eventually destroyed the power of the tyrant rulers and their supporters. Of what use was the government which was founded on the tears which the oppressed and helpless were shedding to mourn the assassination of Ali son of Abu Talib?

Ali used to console the people. He was kind to the needy and the helpless like a father. The entire wealth of the world and all its treasures could not equal the lace of his shoe. All the oppressive caliphs and their wealth are simply farcical in the face of a sentence of Nahj al-Balaghah and the views that he has expressed in it. They are worthless even before a drop of his tear.

That great and magnanimous person passed away and those who considered themselves to be great without any justification remained behind. One man died and was honoured, and a nation remained alive and proved to be mean and despicable.

The Imam left his enemies alive in the world, but their life was as good as destruction.

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