

Letter 104

Rabi' al-Thani 15, 1330

I. A Few Incidents When the Imam Argued

1) The Imam used to be quiet in publicizing the texts pertaining to him, without using them for personal gains against his opponents out of his own concern about the safety of Islam and to safeguard the strength of Muslims.

He often used to defend his silence and reluctance to demand it, in such circumstance, by saying: "A man is not blamed if he takes his time in obtaining what is his; the blame is on that who takes what does not belong to him."¹ He used to apply certain methods crowned with manifest wisdom in disseminating the texts in his honour.

Have you noticed what he did in the incident of the Rahba, when he gathered people during his caliphate to celebrate the Ghadir Day? He said to them: "I ask each Muslim of you who heard the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him and his progeny, say on the Ghadir Day what he said to stand and testify to what he had heard, and nobody should stand except those who have seen him;" thirty companions, including twelve participants in the battle of Badr, testified to what they had heard of the Ghadir hadith as we have indicated above in Letter No. 56.

This is the maximum that he could do under such critical circumstances due to 'Uthman's murder, and the mutiny in Basra and Syria. It is, indeed, the peak of wisdom in such publicity in those days, and what a praiseworthy effort that revived the Ghadir tradition from its tomb and brought it to life after it was almost buried for good! The crowds at the Rahba were reminiscent of those who witnessed the Prophet (S) on Ghadir Khumm day taking 'Ali (as) in his own eminent hand and addressing a hundred thousand or more of his nation to convey to them the message that he would be his successor.

Thus, the Ghadir tradition is one of the most reliable among consecutive traditions; so, observe the Prophet's wisdom when he exhorted him in front of such thronging crowds, and be mindful of the wisdom of the *wasi* on that Friday when he asked them to testify, thus highlighting the truth in a quiet manner

dictated by circumstances, and by a peaceful method the Imam preferred.

Thus was his method in disseminating the covenant and publicizing for the tradition. He was the type of person who would attract the attention of the unaware through means which did not require making a lot of noise or creating bad feelings among people.

Consider what the authors of books of traditions have quoted of his own hadith, peace be upon him, during the incident of the feast arranged by the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him and his progeny, at the house of his uncle, the most dignified man among the people of Mecca, when he warned his near in kin. It is a lengthy and sacred tradition people have always considered as one of the proofs of Prophethood and the miracles of Islam due to its inclusion of the Prophetic miracle of feeding a large number of people with very little food.

We have already quoted it in Letter No. 20. It concludes by stating that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him and his progeny, took 'Ali (as) by the neck and said: "This is my brother, *the* executor of my will, and my own successor; so, listen to him and obey him." He used quite often to tell how the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him and his progeny, said to him: "You are the *wali* of every believer after me," and he also quite often used to narrate this statement of the Prophet (S): "Your status to me is like that of Aaron to Moses, except there will be no Prophet after me," and, reminiscing of Ghadir Khumm, "Do not I have more authority over the believers than the believers themselves have?" They said: "Yes, indeed." He then said: "To whomsoever I have been a wali, this ('Ali (as)) is his wali," in the words of Ibn Abu 'sim, as we explained at the conclusion of Letter No. 23, in addition to many such irrefutable texts. They have been publicized by the most trustworthy and reliable traditionists. This is all that he was able to do during those circumstances. ["Purposeful wisdom; so, how can the *nuthur* be of any use?"]

On the Day of Shūra, he discharged his responsibility and warned others, sparing none of his own attributes or feats without using it as an argument. During the days of his caliphate, he often complained about the gross injustice done to him, painfully announcing his complaint from the pulpit, saying: "By God, that person vested it upon himself, knowing that my place from it was like the axle from the quern: From me does the stream of knowledge flow, and birds do not soar higher; so, I lowered against it my curtain and kept aloof therefrom. I had to opt between either fighting with an amputated arm, or be patient about a blind calamity in which the grown-ups become elderly and the youngsters grow gray hair, one wherein a *mu'min* sweats till he meets his Lord. I decided that to be patient was wiser; so I became patient while seeing eye sores, tongue-tied, witnessing my inheritance being plundered," to the end of his *shaqshaqi* sermon, which is *khutba* 3 in *Nahjul Balaghah*, page 25, Vol. 1.

He often said: "O Lord! I seek Thy assistance against Quraysh and those who support them, for they have cut my flesh, demeaned my status, and disputed with me about what is mine, then they said: 'It is only right that we take it, and that you should abandon it.'" Refer to either *khutba* 167 or page 103, Vol. 2, of *Nahjul Balaghah*.

In the same *khutba*, someone said to him: "You seem to be so much concerned about this matter." The Imam (as) answered: "No; by God you are more concerned about it than I am. I have demanded one of my own rights, while you have stood between it and my attaining thereof."

He, peace be upon him, has also said: "By Allah, since the time when Allah took the life of his Messenger, peace be upon him and his progeny, till today, I have always been pushed away from my right, while others are preferred over me," as in *khutba* 5, page 36, Vol. 1, of *Nahjul Balaghah*.

He, peace be upon him, said once: "We have a right; if we do not attain it, we will have to mount old camels even if the journey is lengthy."² He, peace be upon him, said in a letter he wrote to his brother 'Aqil: "May the One who affects justice retaliate on my behalf against Quraysh who have separated me from my own kin and deprived me the support of my own maternal brother," as stated in epistle 36, page 67, Vol. 3, in *Nahjul Balaghah*. He, peace be upon him, quite often used to say: "I looked around and found no supporter other than my Ahl al-Bayt whom I preferred to protect against death, overlook against my wish, and I remained patient, containing my anger though it is more bitter than colocynth [*Citrullus Colocynthis*]," as in *khutba* 25, page 62, Vol. 1, of *Nahjul Balaghah*.

Some of his friends asked him once: "How did you keep your folk away from that post knowing that you have more right to it than anyone else?" He, as stated on page 79, Vol. 2, of *Nahjul Balaghah*, statement 157, answered: "O fellow of Banu Asad! You are disturbed by such a mysterious matter to the extent that you ask your question awkwardly. Yet we are obligated to you due to our kinship, and you have the right to ask such a question. You have asked, so be informed that as regarding some people oppressing us in this regard, while they know that we are superior in lineage to them, and stronger in blood ties to the Messenger of Allah (S), this came due to the selfishness of certain people who were supported by others. The government is only to Allah, and the return is unto Him on the Day of Judgment; so, do not ask me about the usurpation called for even inside his [Prophet's] own chambers..."

He, peace be upon him, has also said: "Where are those who claim that they are more deeply rooted in knowledge than we are? They tell lies about us and flagrantly oppress us though Allah has raised our status and lowered theirs, granted us and deprived them, and permitted us to enter while ordering them out, and through us has He taken them out of the darkness of blindness into the light of guidance.

The seeds of imamate have been planted in the wombs of the descendants of Hashim of Quraysh; it suits nobody else, and caliphate is appropriate for nobody other than them..." to the conclusion of statement 140, on page 36 and the succeeding pages, Vol. 2, of *Nahjul Balaghah*.

Consider his statement in one of his sermons: "When the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him and his progeny, passed away, some people turned back [in their covenant to him], aiming to take various paths [rather than just one Right Path], relying on treachery, favouring those who were not his kin, abandoning the path they were ordered to take in order to please him, thus moving the foundation stones of Islam from their places, using other sinful substances in the building of its structure.

They have entered into Islam through the doors of those who follow their own inclinations, going to extremes in their bewilderment, distracted like drunkards, following the sunnah of the descendants of Pharaoh, worshippers of this life, those who have deliberately abandoned their religion." Refer to this statement, which is cited at the beginning of page 25; it concludes sermon 2, Vol. 1, of *Nahjul Balaghah*, which he delivered after receiving the oath of allegiance, for it is one of the greatest. In it, he says: "Nobody can be compared with the progeny of Muhammad, peace be upon him, from all the members of this nation, and nobody can be the peer of those who have received His blessing. They are the cornerstones of the faith, the pillars of conviction; through them does the extremist return to moderation, and through them does the one who has left knowledge behind him retract; they possess the characteristics of those who deserve to rule, and in them lie the covenant and the legacy. Now right has returned to its people and transferred back to its appropriate place." Add to this his statement cited in the context of sermon 84, page 145, Vol. 1, of *Nahjul Balaghah* in which he wonders about those who oppose him: "How amazed I am to see the error of these groups, disputing in their arguments about their religion, neither following in the footsteps of the Prophet (S), nor the example of his *wasi*...!"

II. The Argument of al-Zahra' (as)

2) Al-Zahra', peace be upon her, delivered very wise arguments in this regard. Two of her own statements were in wide circulation among Ahl al-Bayt (as), so much so that they used to require their children to memorize them just as they required them to memorize the entire text of the Holy Qur'an. They deal with those who "moved the foundation stones of the faith from their bases" and built them somewhere else. She said:

"How dare they? Where have they moved it [caliphate] to, building it somewhere else other than at the haven of the Message, the foundations of Prophethood, the place where the faithful spirit [Gabriel] descends, the one who is the authority about secular as well as religious matters? This, indeed, is the manifest loss. Why do they hate al-Hasan's father so much?"

By Allah, they hate the strength of his sword, his might and astounding deeds, and his extra-ordinary effort in supporting the religion of Allah. By Allah, had they all yielded to his leadership,³ he would have taken them to the easy path, without harming anyone. He would have brought them to an overflowing fountain of goodness, advised them in secrecy and in public, neither filling his belly with their own sustenance, nor satisfying his thirst nor hunger out of their own toil.

The gates of mercy of the heavens and the earth would have been widely opened for them. Allah will punish them for the sins they were committing; so, come and listen to the story, and so long as you live, be amazed, and when you are amazed, the incident bemuses you... Where have they gone, and which nitche have they clung to? What an evil guardian they have taken, and what an evil bunch! How evil is the end of the oppressors who traded the tails for the hoofs, and the rumps for the chests!

So, dusted are the noses of those who think that they have done well; they are the ones who fill the

world with corruption without knowing it. Woe unto them! 'Isn't that who guides to the truth more worthy of being followed than the one who does not guide? What is the matter with you? How do you judge?'"⁴

Up to the conclusion of her sermon which is a specimen of the speech of the purified progeny in this regard, and you may judge the rest by this one, Wassalam.

Sincerely,

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- ¹. This statement is a short one dealing with his noble objective, and it is included in Nahjul Balaghah. Refer to what the Mu'tazilite scholar has said while explaining it on page 324, Vol. 4, of his Sharh Nahjul Balaghah.
- ². This statement is number 21 of his statements in the chapter dealing with "choice gems of his wisdom," page 155, Nahjul Balaghah. Sayyid al-Radi has commented on it in a very valuable commentary, and so has Shaykh Muhammad 'Abdoh. Both deserve the attention of any scholar.
- ³. The reins passed on to him by the Messenger of Allah are those of governing the nation in the matters pertaining to its religion as well as the daily life. The meaning is that had they all been in consensus in submitting to such a government, yielding to such a leader, they would have been protected from harm.
- ⁴. This is quoted by Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn 'Abdul-'Aziz al-Jawhari in his book Al-Saqifa and Fadak, from a chain of narrators including Muhammad ibn Zakariyya, Muhammad ibn 'Abdul-Rahman al-Muhallabi, 'Abdullah ibn Hammad ibn Sulayman who quotes his father, 'Abdullah ibn al-Hasan who quotes his mother Fatima bint Husayn, ending with al-Zahra', peace be upon her. It is also narrated by Imam Abul-Fadl Ahmad ibn Abu Tahir, who died in 280, on page 23 of his book Balaghat al-Nisa' through Harun ibn Muslim ibn Sa'dan, from al-Hasan ibn Alwan from Atiyyah al-'Awfi who narrated this khutba from a chain of narrators including 'Abdullah ibn al-Hasan from his mother Fatima bint al-Husayn, from her grandmother al-Zahra', peace be upon her. Our own fellows narrate this khutba from Suwayd ibn Ghafilah ibn Awsajah al-Ju'fi from al-Zahra', peace be upon her. Al-Tibrisi has quoted it in his book Al-Ihtijaj, and al-Majlisi in his book Bihar al-Anwar, and it is narrated by many other trustworthy narrators.

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