

The Fifth Journey – Shaam to Medina

After seven days of majaalis in Damascus, Bibi Zainab asked Imam Zain ul 'Abideen whether they could now proceed to Karbala'. Preparations for the journey began. Mehmils with black curtains were arranged for the ladies.

Imam Zain ul 'Abideen and Bibi Zainab helped the ladies to mount the mehmils. Suddenly Bibi Zainab noticed that Bibi Rubaab was missing. For a moment there was a panic but soon Bibi Zainab said, "I know where Rubaab is!" Accompanied by Imam Zain ul 'Abideen Bibi Zainab went to the prison. There, with her face on Bibi Sakina's grave, was Bibi Rubaab. Bibi Zainab said to her, 'Rubaab, let us go home!' 'Home?' replied Bibi Rubaab, 'My husband lies at Karbala', my Asghar lies there also. At least he has his father to look after him. Who will look after my Sakina? Khuda Hafiz, Bibi. You go, I will stay here. '

Bibi Rubaab is the lady whose world had been totally shattered. It was after great persuasion she got up to go, She walked slowly to the door supported by Imam Zain ul 'Abideen, all the time looking at the grave. Finally she said "Khuda Hafiz my Sakina!!"

So began the fifth and the last journey of tears. This was to take them first to Karbala' and then back home to Madina. How different is this journey from that first journey from Madina to Mecca? How many had left Madina and how many are going back? Where are all those children who at every stop would gather around Hazrat Abbas? There were over fifty children in the caravan then. Now barely twenty are returning to Madina. The rest lie in Karbala' or along the route Karbala' to Kufa and Kufa to Shaam.

And where is Bibi Sakina with her chatter and smile? She is on everyone's mind. Zain ul 'Abideen tearfully says farewell to the prison where lies buried his darling sister.

Of course, unlike during their journeys from Karbala' to Kufa and Kufa to Shaam, this time the ladies are not bare headed nor are they mounted on unsaddled camels. They are at last going to Madina but that very thought frightens them. Bibi Zainab thinks: 'What shall I say when they ask where is everyone?' Bibi Rubaab every so often screams out: "Oh Sakina! Oh Asghar! What shall I say to Fatimah Soghra?"

Who then is the hero and who is the heroine of this journey? Yes, this journey has no hero and heroine.

It has memories, fears, night-mares and tears. Few words are said. The thoughts which crowd in every mind are too heart rending to be spoken out.

They arrive at Karbala! You can well imagine of the suffering of Imam Zain ul 'Abideen, Bibi Zainab and all the ladies when they arrived at Karbala'. Every grave had a lady weeping for the one buried there, every grave save two. Bibi Zainab spent all her time on Husayn's grave and it was young Muhammad Baqir who wept on the graves of Aun and Muhammad.

Bibi Zainab took out a tiny bundle. She lovingly opened it and placed Bibi Sakina's earrings on the grave saying: "Brother, do forgive me! This is all that is left of your darling Sakina!!" The ladies were weeping and wailing and Imam Zain ul 'Abideen was consoling them. He knew that a very difficult situation was yet to come! The first meeting with Bibi Fatimah Soghra!

The journey to Madina was slow. When the city came within sight from the hills surrounding Madina, Bibi Kulthum was heard to recite a poem which means:

*"Oh the city of our grandfather, the Holy Prophet,
how can you accept us at all?
We were so many when we left you,
only to return having at Karbala' lost them all!"*

Bibi Zainab went up to Imam Zain ul 'Abideen and said, "My son, pray that Allah grant me courage to face Soghra! How shall I answer her questions?" Imam Zain ul 'Abideen replied, "May Allah grant you the patience of Fatimah Zahra and the courage of Ali."

Imam Zain ul 'Abideen instructed the companions who were with him to go to Madina and erect two huge tents on the outskirts of the city. Very early on the following morning they entered the tents. Imam Zain ul 'Abideen sat in one, and the ladies in the other. Now a messenger was sent to tell the people of Madina that Imam Zain ul 'Abideen and the daughters of Ali had arrived. The people ran from their houses to the two tents.

The people of Madina had, of course, already heard of the tragedy of Karbala'. They did not, however, know of all the details or that young children had also been killed. The men of Madina came to Imam Zain ul 'Abideen and the ladies went to the tent where Bibi Zainab and the other ladies were. There was so much weeping and wailing that it could be heard miles away.

Suddenly someone spotted Bibi Fatimah Soghra coming. She was supported on one side by Umme Salmah and on the other by Ummul Baneen. Bibi Zainab prayed to Allah for courage. she put on her chaadar and went out to meet Soghra. Neither could utter a word. Bibi Zainab put her arms around Bibi Fatimah Soghra and brought her inside the tent. Soghra looked around searching every corner."Where is my sister Sakina?" she cried, "Sakina come over, let your older sister embrace you and give you condolences!" At this there was renewed weeping and wailing. Who could possible have the courage to

tell Soghra where Bibi Sakina was?

Oh God! Soghra now looked at the lap of Bibi Rubaab, She did not find there whom she was looking for! Then she looked at the lap of each of the other ladies. She could not see what she was looking for. Then she looked outside lest the young child she was looking for had crawled out! Frightened of what Soghra might ask, Bibi Zainab asked for Imam Zain ul 'Abideen to come over. Our fourth Imam came. He put his arms around Soghra. In between sobs he said, "Soghra, Oh my dear sister, have patience! Asghar is lying in a grave in Karbala'."

Bibi Fatimah Soghra stared at her elder brother in absolute disbelief! And then she screamed and fell unconscious!

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