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Yazeed's Allegiance and the Tragedy of Karbala'

When Muawiyah died, there was no one in Syria and Hijaz who could oppose the succession of Yazeed to his father's seat of Caliphate. Muawiyah had arranged the Caliphate of Yazeed in his own lifetime. Thus, Yazeed, at last, occupied the throne of Caliphate. Damascus, which is presently in Syria, was at that time the Capital of the Islamic Kingdom. After the Righteous Caliphs, Muawiyah had named it the seat of Government. It remained that seat of government for all Bani Umayyah rulers. All the offices from Medina were shifted to this city.

During the reign of the Abbasids, the same were transferred to Baghdad. After the rule of Bani Abbas, the Arab Kingdom itself was finished and even Baghdad became an ordinary city like Damascus and Medina from the political aspect. Anyway, Yazeed became the Caliph of the time and began to take allegiance from the masses. It was not a difficult matter in other cities of Syria. Thousands in Medina also paid allegiance at the hands of Yazeed, but he was not assured regarding Imam Husayn (a.s.), so he ordered Walid bin Uqba, the governor of Medina, to take allegiance from Imam Husayn (a.s.) on his behalf. Also, that if Imam Husayn (a.s.) refused, his head should be cut off and sent to Damascus.

Walid continued to shun this extreme step, but Marwan was always nagging him to execute Yazeed's orders. This is the same Marwan, who was ordered by the Holy Prophet (S) to be externed from Islamic territories, he was also the son-in-law of Uthman and he belonged to Bani Umayyah. When Uthman became the Caliph, Marwan was recalled to Medina. ¹ The text is as follows: "Marwan Ibn Hakam was banned in Medina by the Holy Prophet (S) but Uthman recalled him and appointed him as his scribe." The reason for his being recalled is that he was a close relative of Uthman and Uthman had called him to act on Quranic verses that exhort us to be kind to relatives and orphans.

Marwan was mischief personified and a perfect example of his clan. Now he came to Medina and became the close confidant and adviser to Uthman. But he gave such advices to the Caliph that at last he had to wash his hands off his life. When the crow is a leader of a people, it is very likely that they shall be doomed to perdition. In any case, Marwan resided in Medina during the Caliphate of Uthman and continued even after Uthman was killed. When the orders from Yazeed reached Imam Husayn

(a.s.), Marwan always tried to see that the orders of the Caliph are carried out, but Walid did not like to cut off the head of Imam Husayn (a.s.) and Imam Husayn (a.s.) safely departed for Mecca. The going away of Imam Husayn (a.s.) to Mecca was not detrimental to him. He had at least escaped the mischievous hands of Marwan.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) went from Medina to Mecca on Friday night, 4th Shaban in 60 A.H., taking his family and children with him and he finally reached Mecca, where the people showed a lot of support for him. The governor of Mecca, Saad bin Aas saw this and ran away to Medina. On reaching Medina, he wrote a letter to Yazid: Imam Husayn (a.s.) has come to Mecca and the people of Mecca are supporting him. This letter was sent to the Caliph in Damascus. When the Caliph learnt of this, he deposed Walid from the governorship of Medina because he had failed to deal with Imam Husayn (a.s.) and in his place appointed Ibnul Ashdaq. Although the people of Mecca had shown their support to Imam Husayn (a.s.) initially, Mecca was not beyond the control of the Caliph.

The command to take allegiance for the Caliph reached here too. In case he didn't give allegiance, it was commanded to cut off his head. Now his opponents began to taunt and tease and were ready to attack in any way they could. It was very likely that Mecca would become the battlefield of Karbala'. In such a condition, Imam Husayn (a.s.) did not consider it suitable to complete the rites of Hajj. He changed his Hajj into Umrah (lesser pilgrimage) and left Mecca as soon as possible. During this time, many letters had arrived from the people of Kufa. So Imam (a.s.) decided to head towards Kufa. But consultations were held and it was decided that first the Imam's cousin, Muslim Ibn Aqeel, should go to Kufa and study the situation, only after this should the Imam (a.s.) himself proceed.

Muslim reached Kufa after a lot of difficulties with his two young sons. The people of Kufa welcomed Muslim and more than forty thousand people gave oath of allegiance to him. Seeing this, Muslim wrote a detailed letter to Imam Husayn (a.s.) that he could come to Kufa from Mecca. More than a hundred and fifty letters from the people of Kufa had already reached Imam Husayn (a.s.), so there was nothing, which should hold back Imam Husayn (a.s.) from Kufa.

Getting such a letter from Muslim, Imam Husayn (a.s.) packed the baggage for the journey and with relatives and family members left for Kufa on 9th Zilhajj, Tuesday, 60 A.H. All his family members and friends who had accompanied him in this journey were but a few people. And if there were more, they gradually left the company of Imam Husayn (a.s.).

Finally, on reaching Karbala', very few people were left with the Imam. Then, on the day of martyrdom only seventy-two remained and if at all they were more, they could not have been more than eighty-two. When on his way, he reached Ramalah, he sent a letter to the people of Kufa through his foster brother. But Ibn Ziyad already knew that Imam (a.s.) was heading for Kufa. That is why he had already arranged to waylay him. The foster brother was arrested and Ibn Ziyad martyred him.

It should be clear that after Muslim wrote the letter to Imam Husayn (a.s.), calamities began to befall

him. Ibn Ziyad wreaked strange cruelties on Muslim and his sons and from one aspect he did not do any wrong because after all he was following the 'commands' of the 'Caliph' of that time!

Anyway, according to the views of Shias, after facing torture, Muslim was martyred and both his sons also achieved martyrdom at the hands of a Kufaiter. Although in the beginning, the Kufaites had welcomed Muslim, but when the severity of the Caliph's officers weighed on them they could not support Muslim and that is why the affair did not come about as was expected. The government is all-powerful and the common people cannot confront the government. In brief, Muslim did not get a chance to inform Imam Husayn (a.s.) about the changed behavior of the Kufaites and the oppression of the rulers.

Thus, Imam Husayn (a.s.) gradually moved closer to Kufa. When he reached Thalebiya, Bakr Asadi who was coming from Kufa, informed Imam Husayn (a.s.) about the real situation and the havoc that Ibn Ziyad had wreaked. He broke the tragic news of Muslim and his sons. The martyrdom of Muslim was on the day when he had started from Mecca to Kufa. When Imam Husayn (a.s.) heard this tragic news, he was shocked. The companions advised that he should return to the hometown.

Now, first of all, what left for him in the home country? It was also under the rulership of Yazid. Secondly, the relatives of Muslim asked what was there to live for, till they do not take revenge of Muslim from the Kufaites. Keeping this in mind, Imam Husayn (a.s.) again headed for Kufa. On the way, he came across Hurr Ibn Rihab who was sent by Ibn Ziyad to stop Imam (a.s.). He intercepted Imam Husayn (a.s.) but could not bring himself to arrest him; but since he was helpless before the command of Ibn Ziyad, he led Imam Husayn (a.s.) to Kufa. Hurr had told Imam Husayn (a.s.) that when the caravan halted for the night he should go away in any direction he liked. When it was night, Imam Husayn (a.s.) quietly moved away. But at daybreak he was forced to halt at the land of Karbala'.

The Imam pitched his tents there and to defend them dug a trench around them. Soon Ibn Ziyad's army also arrived and camped at a distance from the tents of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). First there were talks of reconciliation between Imam (a.s.) and Ibn Ziyad. But without allegiance to Yazid there was no possibility of peace and hence Imam (a.s.) prepared to lay down his life. When fighting ensued, one by one all, from the Imam's side were martyred hungry and thirsty, except Imam Zainul Aabideen (a.s.). Imam Husayn (a.s.) bore every kind of atrocity but did not agree to pledge allegiance to Yazid. Before his very eyes, his brother, Abbas, nephew, Qasim, his son, Ali Akbar, his nephews, Aun and Muhammad, Ali Asghar, his infant son, all of them were martyred. Hurr also repented and came to the side of Imam (a.s.) and finally attained martyrdom in the way of Allah.

Only Imam Zainul Aabideen (a.s.), who was ill at that time, survived. He accompanied the women and children and they were taken as prisoners to the Caliph at Damascus. This incident tells us of the extraordinary qualities of Imam Husayn (a.s.). It tells us that he had no attachment or expectation from the world and this life. There was nothing, which could equal his patience and steadfastness. Doubtlessly, he had all those qualities that are necessary in an infallible Imam and the successor of the Prophet. Let the enemies of the Progeny of Muhammad (S) say whatever they like, but the fact is that

his praiseworthy qualities themselves tell us that he was a rightful successor of the Messenger of Allah (S).

Here, we call your attention to an incident with Hurr that shows the astounding perfection of the selflessness of Imam Husayn (a.s.). When Hurr stopped Imam (a.s.) from moving to Kufa, Hurr and his entourage were almost dying of thirst. Hurr requested Imam (a.s.) for water. Imam (a.s.) had sufficient stocks of water that was offered to Hurr and his entourage. After that, Imam (a.s.) said the horses of Hurr were also thirsty and they should also be watered. Some people from his group suggested they exercise restraint in using the stocks of water, because it was a scarce commodity and there might be shortage in near future. Imam (a.s.) said that it was not a right thing that human beings should drink water and animals remain thirsty.

In brief, Imam (a.s.) gave plenty of water to the enemies and their beasts, and he did not deprive them in view of his future needs. O Allah! What an occasion that within a few days, the same Imam Husayn (a.s.) and his followers very subjected to sanction against water. Why shouldn't it be so? He was an infallible Imam. Who other than an infallible can act in this way? The fact is that it behoved him to act in this manner and his enemies had to act in the opposing manner. The same situation had occurred with the father of Imam Husayn (a.s.), Ali al-Murtadha' (a.s.). It is when Ali (a.s.) had to face Muawiyah in battle, a situation arose when the army of Ali (a.s.) had no access to water.

The Euphrates was under Muawiyah's control. Ali (a.s.) tried to seek the permission of the enemies to draw water from Euphrates. Muawiyah who never knew to be kind to his opponent, rejected this request of Amirul Mo-mineen (a.s.). After this, Ali (a.s.) inflicted military defeat to Muawiyah's army and gained the control of Euphrates. Then Muawiyah helplessly requested Ali (a.s.) for access to water. Amirul Mo-mineen (a.s.) at once issued the permission and said: "River is such a thing in which the beasts and birds all have the right to fulfill their needs. No one can be restrained from it."

People of justice can very well conclude from this action of Ali (a.s.), how aloof he was from the material world. He had never confronted Muawiyah for gaining any material benefit. Doubtlessly, such an action could only be possible by an infallible person. Such situations that were encountered by Imam Husayn (a.s.) and his father do not have any equal in the world. And these are such situations that clearly present the infallibility of the Imams of the family of the Prophet.

O Allah! Bless Muhammad and the Progeny of Muhammad.

What a pity that Imam Husayn and Imam Ali (a.s.) acted so benevolently but an opposite stand was taken by their respective opponents, Yazeed and Muawiyah. These situations present the vast difference between an infallible and a non- infallible person. Thus, when Imam Husayn (a.s.) supplied water to the foe's army, it is not surprising. He was following the example of his respected father. If he had not acted in this way, what else could he have done? Indeed, how can Bani Umayyah or other people compare with the Ahlul Bayt of the Prophet? They are exact opposites.

The Ahlul Bayt of Prophet performed such feats at every step, pondering on which we could realize that Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) are very much different from others. The difference between an infallible and fallible is at once obvious. In order to realize this difference, we need a clear heart. But those whose hearts are filled with animosity of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) could not discern this.

At this time, there are thousands of defective people whose eyes cannot perceive the merits of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). Each one to his own fortune. O Allah! What Providence! Hurr was also from this same group of oppressors. But when he realized the truth, he gave up all the material wealth and position and walked the path to martyrdom and salvation.

Yet Ibn Ziyad, Ibn Saad, Khuli and Hurmala continued to be blind to this reality. They fell into the chastisement of Hell like blind people. The fact is that a person can become a devotee of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) only when the Almighty bestows him with good sense (Taufeeq) of this devotion. The writer himself remembers his own time when during his student days, he considered Imam Husayn (a.s.) a traitor against the Caliphate.

And since Allah gave divine good sense to him, he began to believe in the Imamate of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) after considering them infallible. Allah gave this great divine sense (Taufeeq) to him in the same way as Hurr was given. The situation of the writer was more serious, because although he was a descendant of Bani Hashim and yet he harbored enmity with the Progeny of the Prophet. Curse be on such education, which does not allow one to realize the rights of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.).

Praise be to Allah and Praise once again that Allah gave us the good sense to research facts on the basis of which we were prevented from being counted among Bani Umayyah and their cohorts.

Indeed, the tragedy of Karbala' was an astounding occurrence and Islam was very much in need of it. This incident has proved the veracity of Islam. It has shown how the Quranic teachings of patience and contentment could be transformed into actions. How we can be away from material greed that is criticized in the Quran. Many of the merits of the Holy Quran were unveiled by this incident. It has shown what is religiousness and how it is different from worldly matters. It has shown that religiousness is such a courage that cannot be in the share of a materialist. It has shown us that pulling out the sword in the way of Allah is different and arranging rows in greed for kingdom is different.

The same incident has shown how a man of the world can remain steadfast on the way of Allah. How he prefers the will of Allah and how he considers the life of this world worthless.

In brief, Imam (a.s.) has expounded the merits of the Holy Quran. Now if some evil-minded person has not realized it, it is his misfortune.

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