A Lecture on Martyrdom of Imam Husayn

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A Lecture on Martyrdom of Imam Husayn preceded by an overview of his personality, character and lineage giving a brief introduction of the life and character of his father Imam 'Ali (as) and his grandfather, Prophet Muhammad (S).

Category:

Imam al-Husayn and Karbala [4]

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Before I start with the subject matter of this afternoon's discourse which is the Martyrdom of Husayn, I should like to give in the very beginning that is here, the briefest possible summary of Imam Husayn's character and the circumstances and society by which he was surrounded.

Summary of Imam Husayn's Character

To arrive at a just estimate of renowned man's character one must judge it by the standards of his time, not ours. Judged by the standards of one country, the noblest characters of an earlier one lose much of their lustre, judged by the standards of today, there is perhaps no illustrious man of four or five centuries ago, whose character could meet the test at all points. But the character of Imam Husayn is unique and unparalleled. It *can* and *may* be and *should* be measured by the standards of all times without misgiving or apprehension as to the result. Judged by *any* of them, judged by *everyone* of them, judged by *all* of them, it is still flawless, it is still ideally perfect, and intensely attractive in its deep pathos, it still occupies the loftiest place possible to human attainment, a loftier one than has been reached by any other mortal, let him be a hero or a saint.

With the advent of Islam, the morals of the people of Arabia had improved vastly. And I most gladly

assert here that, judged even from the point of view of inexorable justice and superhuman equity, our Prophet, Muhammad, has taught and practiced the highest form of mercy and toleration at a time when the people of Arabia had got habituated to the most brutal, the wickedest, and the most rotten practices through long centuries of constant usage and iteration. Therefore, we are lost in wonder at the miracle of such overwhelmingly noble and extra-ordinarily trustworthy a man as our Prophet, in such an age and such a soil. The contrast between him and his times is the contrast between day and night. He was truthful when lying was the common speech of men; he was honest and sincere when honesty and sincerity were becoming lost virtues. He was a keeper of promises and trust – a Mighty Ameen – when the keeping of the promise or the equitable discharge of a trust was expected of no one, and hence and thus did he captivate the heart of the rich Christian Sayyida Khadijah or Khudaijah.

He gave his great mind to great thoughts and great purposes when other minds were occupied with petty fancies and poor ambitions and could not rise above the turmoil of the local dispu7tes and contests of pagan Arabia. He was modest and fine and delicate when to be loud and coarse and sinful might be said to be universal. he was steadfast when stability of character in good things was almost unknown, and honourable in an age which had forgotten what honour was. But after the death of this Prophet, this Grand Man of all times, intensely human and pre-eminently sympathetic towards his followers as he was, the extra-ordinary wave of his action brought in its wake the hollow of reaction and though he left behind him *perfect* specimens of his own character in his cousin and son-in-law, Ali and his wife and their two sons, yet by the demise of all these except one, the world was left with only Husayn – the Rock of Firm Conviction – nay, the Rock of Ages – of all Futurity and of all Eternity to come.

He was unfailingly true in an age w3hich was false to the core. he contained his personal dignity unimpaired in an age of fawning and servilities. He was of dauntless courage had perished all round him. He was spotlessly pure in mind and body when society in the highest places was foul in both. He was all these things in an age when crime was the common business of nobles and princes and when the highest personages in Islam were able to astonish even that infamous era of reaction, and make even that group of scoundrels who flourished in that age, stand against at the spectacle of their atrocious lives, black with unimaginable treacheries, and butcheries, and when each of such worthies competed with his compeers to excel in the enormity of his crimes and the monstrousness of his iniquities.

Husayn is one of the few entirely unselfish people whose names have a permanent place in the world's history. No vestige or suggestion of self-seeking can be found in any word or deed of his. When Yazid – the ostensible caliph of Islam – demanded absolute allegiance of him, he haughtily refused it and proposed three honourable lines of action for him, all of which were denied to him, for Yazid really wanted to destroy this noble scion of the noble House of the Prophet whose existence was itself a menace to his profligate and dissolute life, hence, the mortal conflict between Husayn and Yazid – between Islam and all that is signified, and non-Islam and wickedness and iniquity.

Now, before I proceed to the larger topic of today which is the Martyrdom of this Husayn, I cannot do

better than append here a few short quotations from sources specified. First and foremost I want to quote4 Maulana Khawaja Mo‘inuddin Chishti who says:

شاہ است حسین بادشاہ است حسین

دیں است حسین دیں پناہ است حسین

سر داد نداد دست در دست یزید

حقا کہ بنا لا الہ است حسین

“King is Husayn and also an Emperor
Religion is Husayn and also its shelter
His bead he took but not his hand – Yazid
Husayn’s the founder of the Muslim Creed.”

And this reminds me of the famous lines of the equally famous Mr. Muhammad Ali, B.A. (Oxon) of “Comrade” fame.

قتل حسین اصل میں مرگ یزید ہے

اسلام زندہ ہوتا ہے ہر کربلا کے بعد

“The death of Husayn does the death of Yazid hide,
And after ever Karbala, Islam is revivified.”

And in this connection I might read out my own sonnet composed several years ago and not published yet:

To Husayn (**Our Imam**)

Oh thou the greatest of all heroes of all land,
Noblest Husayn could I but die for thee!
The most supreme martyr he, who made to stand
Both thirst and hunger, would not yield, would he
To Yazid's wicked will. Oh when so ruthlessly
Accursed Shimr slew him with murd'rous hand
Bravest of the brave, the boldest that could be!
Compare him with Christ 'twould be a grand
And inexcusable parody. He's the star of God's own Throne,
The Redeemer of all men. Oh! What a thick array!
Children and brother's son and all his own,
All, all, he sacrificed for God and in God's way,
And last of all he gave himself. Will not God atone
For his sad death on Ashura's dismal day!

I want to finish reading out this exordium of mine by finally quoting the famous *takhmees* of the late Syed Abdul Haleem Sahib 'Asim, an Indian, but a great Persian scholar, long ago deceased and unknown to fame and reputation. I quote it here along with the translation into English verse of the above *takhmees*, by me:

تخمیس بر غزل اول خواجہ حافظ

I

غریبان حرم چون در سفر بستند محملها

مقیامان مدینه بر زمین افتاده بسملها

دو چشم آبی و می آمد همین فریاد ازدلها

الایا ایها الساقی ادر کاسا و ناولها

که عشق آسان نمود اول ولے افتاد مشکلها

The holy travellers when, they did their litters tie,
The dwellers of Medina, like half slain ones did lie.
The two eyes watery, from hearts came forth the sigh,
Cup bearer ho! The wine cup, now let it circulate,
Love smooth appeared at first, but obstacles await.
II

ز قتل قاسم ناشاد بانگ از چرخ می آید

ز خونش خود خداوند تعالی دامن آلاید

جناب زینب و کلثوم بی تابانه فرماید

ببوئی نافه کاخرصبزان طره بکشاید

زتاب جعد مشکینش چه خون افتاد درد لها

Of Qasim's mournful death, the sky now doth complain,
Does God His skirt Divine, with life blood not stain,
Zainab and Kulsum wail, beyond themselves with pain,
By th' musk-pod smell of th' lock which the breeze disentagl's
[indeed,
From th' curl of th' musky ringlet all hearts *did* but bleed.

III

چو اکبر قتل شد سجاد اذن ازشاه می جوید

که بهر جنگ سوئے لشکر بیدادگر پوید

ندادش شاه اذن و گفت و روئے از اشک مشوید

بمے سجاده رنگین کن گرت پیر مغان نوید

کہ سالک بی خبر نبود زراه و رسم منزلها

When after Akbar's death, to's sire Sajjad goes,
And asks leave of him for, fighting, exchanging blow,
Leave is refused, and tear on his sad face now flows,
Dye prayer sheet with wine if so the Magian says,
Because the guide must know the stages and their ways.

IV

حسین ابن علی چون شد شہید خنجر قاتل

شده احوال اهل بیت مثال طائر بسمل

سکینہ سوئے یثرب یک نگاه کرد و گفت ازدل

شب تاریک و بیم موج و گرداب چنین هائل

کجا دانند حال ما سکسران ساحلها

When Ali’s son, Husayn, the murder did slay,
The resident of the House, like half-slain birds where they,
At Yathrib gazed Sakinah and from her heart did say,
Dark night, obstructive eddy, fearful billows’ roar,
What do they know our plight, light coursing men ashore.
V

چو از بهر سفر گشتند ارکان حرم باہم

بسوئے روضہ پاک نبی رفتند دل و پرغم

فغان برداشت زینب بادل صد چاک و چشم و نم

مرادر منزل جانان چہ امن و عیش چوں ہردم

When of the Holy House, its members chose to go
Up to the Prophet’s Tomb, sadness from hearts did flow,
With eyes bedew’d, heart rent, then Zainab cried in woe,
What peace and solace for me, in the beloved’s abode,
Tinkles the bell each minute, tie up the camel’s load.
VI

کمر بستند تاراج نبی را کوفیان یکسر

فریب بندگی کردند با سالار بحر و بر

پس آنگهہ گفت بایاران یزید شوم بداختر

همه کارم زخود کامی به بدنامی کشید آخر

نہان کے ماند آن رازے کزوسازند محفالها

On plundering the Prophet, the Kufis did embark,
To Lord of Earth and ocean this was their allegiance – Mark!
Then to his friends Yazid did make the sad remark,
All my affairs alas! Have led to ill-repute,
These secrets, lie they hidden which assemblies constitute.
VII

خدارا پدر ره ایزد پرستی کج مرو حافظ

بیان درد اهل بیت را دائم شنو حافظ

بسوئے کربلا عاصم صفت از سر بدو حافظ

حضوری گر ہمی خواہی از او غافل مشو حافظ

متی ما تلق من تهوی دع الدنیا وا مہلہا

Oh Hafiz, in God's way, do not a wrong path wend,
Oh Hafiz, to this tale of woes, thy ear lend,
Oh Hafiz, to Karbala thy steps like 'Asim bend,
If Hafiz wants his presence, he shouldn't neglect a bit,
If meetest what though wantest, leave the world and all in it.

I cannot better begin the disquisition of this evening than by inquiring in a general way as to what Nature is. What is Nature? As I am just now addressing an enlightened and cultured audience, more or less of a scientific turn of mind, I shall, therefore, proceed in a more or less scientific way, too. The dictionary definition of Nature is "The universe of things or the causes working in the material world." But this meaning given in English dictionaries does not shut off the existence of the unseen or spiritual world, of which, a little later. Now, the words "things" and "causes" imply forces. Forces again have two states, though they are seen or experienced within ourselves or in external nature. We *can* understand to some extent, no doubt, the causes and effects of some groups of forces but we cannot interfere with them, i.e. we cannot create them or destroy them. This is one state. The other state is this. There are other forces of nature which are absolutely unintelligible to us, i.e. where we do not understand anything at all and feel despondent at sight of such an incomprehensible thing or unsolved riddle as a particular group of forces before us.

It may be further mentioned here that it is barely possible that in the light of greater knowledge and culture, and advancement in the methods of investigation of the civilized and educated, we might perhaps one day solve a portion for a few of these stupendous riddles or enigmas, but our experience, or rather the accumulated human experience of all the past ages, as recorded either in the memory of man or in something more permanent, viz, books or scripts teaches us and hence we are bound to be dead sure, that we should be even then absolutely powerless to create or destroy any causes or effects or in other words any forces of Nature!! take for illustration's sake one or two examples from any of the sciences, i.e. Nature herself. Let it be chemistry. Is there any power on Earth which can stop nitric acid from dissolving copper whenever the latter is brought into contact with the former?

Or is there any power known to man or within his command to stop sulphur from joining with mercury, or redness being produced by a mixture of powdered turmeric and quicklime? Similarly, with all the other sciences which are equally the fields of operation of the forces of Nature. Gentlemen, the *net* conclusion derivable from all this observation and experiment is simply this, man can or may understand just a bit, perhaps the lest little bit, as to how natural phenomena take place but does not in the least know or understand *why* they do happen or take place at all, in that way and not otherwise. These natural phenomena over which man has got no power whatsoever, and cannot create or destroy them, are surely due to Natural Laws or the Laws of Nature. Now we come back again to nature, the very object of

our immediate inquiry and with which inquiry we started this evening's discourse.

When Man contemplates over this stupendous, nay, infinite Universe of God, and mediates deeply, he sees such wonderful sights and such marvellous scenes which he really gets stunned and feels perfectly dazed and amazed. In short, he is forced to the conclusion in which this universe is a Big Book of His immutable and Unchangeable Laws, and quite possibly this is what is called in Islam the *"Lauh-i-Mahfue,"* or the Preserved or Protected Tablet of Book (of God). I might, in this connection, place before your mind's eye a pair of such extremes as exist in Nature, God's created nature, and which would probably sharpen the point of your intellect and inward sight. First of all, pray try to picture to yourself, however faintly, it does not matter, those many, nay, innumerable, huge, and enormous celestial bodies at exceeding remote distances, in fact, at such distances which the brain of man is absolutely powerless to comprehend them, and fatigued and tired, it calls them infinite, which are revolving and forever revolving in their own orbits.

On the other hand, try to think of the minute organism or bacteria, or say, even atoms. We find the human mind equally incapable of comprehending the stupendous mystery of these atoms composed of countless electrons which are forever revolving in their orbits, but absolutely invisible to us, and not possible to become visible to us. man, on seeing these Laws of Nature working in the Universe, in the Infinite Universe open to our view, gets so exceedingly astonished and humbled, his conscience compels him, nay, absolutely urges him on to admit and confess in which there *must* be some *Creator* of the Laws of Nature by whose command they have their being, and exist, and flourish. That Creator, that Great Being is called by humankind in various languages by different names, surely, and without even the least shadow of a doubt we do *not* know the real nature – the *"Ding-an-sich,"* thing as such, of thing by itself, i.e. its inner nature – of this great, Divine Nature.

And what wonder? We have just seen we know very little of the natural laws and all their ultimate causes and effects and very little indeed of the beginning or end of things. This was in the domain of Nature, the physical external world or universe of the common sense man. Can we, therefore, ever hope, or perhaps aspire to hope and understand, even the least little bit of the real nature of the Creator of the whole universe or physical nature which we saw just now itself baffled our attempt to understand it. Should we entertain any hope of understanding Him as he is free from the colour of the senses, and once again repeat, can we hope to understand Him? Impossible, when we the existence of a Law maker and His laws, then we see "man," i.e. man as he is found, in other words, the whole conglomeration of individual human beings, also a store of Divine Laws governing them, viz. seeing, smelling, tasting, touching, feeling an appetite, a desire for answering the calls of Nature like defecation and maturation, feeling thirsty, being born small, and undeveloped, and growing up and getting developed, the cutting of teeth, the lengthening of the hair, etc.

Or take another instance of this sort of natural law, viz. the inclination of a male being towards a female, and his attempt to flee from all pain, and strive for pleasure or enjoyment or delectation or comfort. The

originating causes and the true and real Nature of these conditions and state of affairs which we find and see in man are also hidden from us and we do not know them all. Therefore, we interpret them thus; the Great Law Giver gave them to the whole Realm of nature, whose commands are unavoidably obeyed by the universe, whether in the mineral, the vegetable, or the animal kingdom. For example, the stones, as all other matter, obey the law of gravitation, the plants cannot but grow in the way they *do* grow, and the animals cannot but display the characteristics which they *do* display, and even man unconsciously obeys God's natural laws and this is why he *does* ear for he *must* eat and this is why he *does* defecate, and that is why his blood *must* circulate in his veins, and this is why he *must* breathe and in this way perform all the operations of nature required of him by Nature, and ultimately by Nature's Law–giver God.

Among other laws of nature there is also this law, which man demands or likes pleasure or comfort and flees from pain and discomfort. Not simply man, but even minerals, plants, and all other animals also surely act upon this principle though we may not ordinarily be able to perceive it perhaps. These Laws, gentlemen, are in the last analysis, the Laws of Nature or the Faith of God (Deenullah, or *Khuda ka deen*).

The Nature of Islam

And this is Islam itself for Islam, as I understand it, means to obtain *salamati* or safety and to obey and act upon such Laws as conduce to our preservation or safety, and can be secured only faithfully acting, upon such laws. For example, breathing is law of Nature which man among other animals *must* obey. If breathing is stopped, the individual ceases to exist, and for this reason, gentlemen, do we fly from all congested places where suffocation is likely to arise and resort to places of pure air, to hilltops and similar places. Even this desire to preserve one's self is really and essentially nothing more or less than following might Islam, and the practice of every such operation, the laws of nature, by which a human being may be preserved, is also Islam.

Here another point arises viz. such being the case as aforesaid, the destruction of any of the many causes which to support or preserve human life is most clearly an offence against God. For example, if we close the nostrils of a breathing creature, he will die or if we do not give any food to a hungry man he also will expire, though later perhaps. Hence, destroying a human being is a great crime and because it is against his *salamati* or safety, that the step or destruction is taken and the attempt against his life made, it is therefore against Islam itself and for this very reason, the destruction of one's own self by oneself is a grave offence and is against Islam, for one destroys and disobeys the law of his *salamati* and therefore steps beyond the pale of Islam. Similarly, the drinking of water at the proper time, i.e. when one feels thirsty, is also the satisfaction of the working of a law of Nature or Natural law which *has* to be obeyed or fulfilled and whoever acts or attempts to act against this natural law by acting against safety, really and virtually acts against Islam.

Such being the case, what opinion can you form of that group of people who called themselves Muslims,

and yet who *most* flagrantly transgressed the laws of Islam, by prohibiting and denying water to the Prince of Martyrs, Imam Husayn, who, for three days, on the burning, sandy plain of Karbala, lived a life of excessive and indescribable thirst, and his enemies assuredly transgressed a most important law of nature, and therefore, they could not be called Muslims, call them by whatever other name you like. Nay, we human beings, as a rule, are *not* ordinarily cruel by nature and therefore is it we are very careful of want of others, and especially as regards appetite and thirst, to which man is subject. We make elaborate arrangements for revealing the hunger and thirst of not only man, but also of lower animals and among them, even of birds. We generally see in hot climates, earthen pots filled with water, hanging from trees in the hot weather, for quenching the thirst of birds.

But poor Husayn, call him the lowest of mankind if you please, and even a political or moral criminal if you so like, this poor desolate Husayn, surely did not deserve the cruel treatment which was extended to him at Karbala, when his enemies transgressed one of the most important laws of nature, i.e. God, by stopping from him all water, and by deliberately encompassing his death thereby destroying his safety and thus these said enemies of his, stepped beyond the pale of Islam.

A brief Survey of the Prophet of Islam

Now, to pass the topic of Husayn. But to understand Husayn properly, we must speak a few words respecting our Prophet, Muhammad the Great, who, we, as Muslims, believe to have been the best of prophets and the real purport of the creation of God. Now, what was the object of God in creating this universe, and keeping it in existence as a manifestation of His Divine Wish and Power? Very different, varying, and I am afraid, clashing, are the views held by different philosophers of different countries and different ages. But instead of spending my time and breath in giving you a succinct resume of all the most important views held on the matter in question I shall content myself by giving a very short account as absolute unanimity which the first thing God created was the light of Muhammad.

I do not want to enter into details regarding this first Creation of God. But, now, our Prophet Muhammad was undoubtedly the first object of creation. There was no third then. No angel or archangel, sun or earth, tree or animal, or germ, nebula or any other thing was created simultaneously with our Prophet. Only the Great God and he were there. And out of this Superior And Supreme Light which constituted the Prophet on the First morn of the First Creation, fully one half became ultimately separate by the order of God to constitute his cousin and successor Ali. So in ages gone by, beyond the power of human conception, as to when, and before this visible cosmos came into existence and before the angels themselves were created, two individualities were present as one viz. as the light of Muhammad.

Whatever that be, there can be no doubt, all the sects of Islam completely agree in assigning to Muhammad the position of the Supreme Master and Lord of all Creation. Gentlemen, I must confess before I proceed further at all, I do not possess the capacity even if I possessed the time or opportunity to do so, to enlighten your souls, with glowing descriptions of the Supremely High Position occupied by

the Arabian Prophet and His Family and how the Arabs of his time, the so-called Muslims, the most treacherous and dishonourable wretches, excepting only a few, that ever encumbered the surface of Earth, behaved towards the holy land sacred Family, after the demise of the head thereof, viz. the Prophet, who frequently warned people – his followers – he was leaving among them after his demise two things whom nothing on Earth or in Heaven could separate until they meet again openly on the Hauz-i-Kauther in Paradise. Now, this tradition is accepted as true and incontestably authentic by all the sects of Islam. This tradition is recorded in the religious books of all the sects of Islam with slight variations in the wording but I quote here the sum and substance, nay, the substratum of them all which is this:

إني تارك فيكم الثقلين- كتاب الله وعترتي أهل بيتي

"Verily I leave among you two heavy things, the Book of God and my Family."

Now, a question which plainly arises here is this. If the Prophet *has* really affirmed that nothing on Earth or in Heaven could separate two things viz. his holy Family and the Holy Book of God, then surely along with the Book of God that does exist nowadays amongst us (in, however imperfect a form it might be, it does not matter) then where is the Family of the Prophet or any surviving member thereof now existing to bear out the tradition or the Prophet must have spoken something which cannot be regarded as strictly true. Gentlemen, for this reason do we the Shias hold – the last of the holy Imams, all of whom were of the Family of the Prophet and each one sufficiently represented it, disappeared more or less 1000 years ago, still exists, and is alive as the living but hidden argument of God, amongst us, and but for whose existing and existence amongst us, though hidden and unknown, this world of ours could not and would not have existing today at all.

I told you once before, I repeat it again, I have *neither* the capacity nor the time to discourse to you on the Supreme Superiority of the House of the Prophet, and the unparalleled grandeur and majesty of those embodiments of Holiness, Piety and Justice – his descendants. It is conceivable, brethren, and does it stand to reason such a noble Family whose every member was a star of the first magnitude revolving round the Throne of God – I use metaphorical language, of course – and everyone of whom was a sign of God and a guidance and blessing to all the universes which there are – I shall not detain you by quoting to you the actual words of the tradition, should be maltreated, tortured and no requital or compensation for it, be granted by the supremely Great and just God on the Day of Judgment? I refer to my own sonnet on Imam Husayn, composed as already stated a few years back, and which I read to you a little while ago.

Gentlemen, truly has Meer Anees sung and spoken of those holy beings and I cannot help quoting him briefly. Meer Anees quoted:

وہ سر بلند خیمہ زنگاری امام

جس میں خدا کے عرش کے تاروں کا تھا مقام

کم تھا نہ اسکا خانہ کعبہ سے احترام

قدسی طواف کرنے کو آتے تھے صبح و شام

جلوہ تھا اس میں برج امامت کے ماہ کا

دربان تھا جبرئیل اسی بارگاہ کا

“Reared up th’ Apostle’s tent, its head and greenish showed,
Wherein th’ illustrious stars of God’s own throne abode,
Not less than Ka‘ba was of sacredness its share,
Arch–angels, morn and eve, on pilgrimage came here;
In splendour shone therein, the moon of Imamate’s sign
E’en Gabriel was the poster of such a holy shrine.”

Yes, such was really the rank and status of the tent of the Apostle of God, but this very tent, my dear friends and listeners was set on fire and looted and ravaged by those marauders and cut throats who formed the army of Yazid and who called themselves Muslims, too. But more of that hereafter. When, nowadays we hear of the house of even a non–Muslim looted or a robbery committed upon any family, we stand up in righteous indignation and denounce the gang of freebooters or robbers and unmistakably show our sympathy for the inured party. Such being the case would it be too much for me to ask of you the same sympathy *not* necessarily to be shown by weeping or loud wailing, or copious tears, for the *Noblest Family* of God’s creation which was looted and ravaged, robbed and pillaged and its place of shelter viz. the tent, finally set on fire and burnt.

All this was by the way. Now to come back to my theme. What was it? It was the Supreme Superiority of the House of the Arabian Prophet, the great Muhammad, whom all and everyone of the Muslim theologians of every sect and creed unanimously agree in calling the Beloved of God. Gentlemen, it would be quite outside the scope of the work of this evening for me even to try to form an estimate of the super-human character of the noblest martyr who suffered humility and indignity and died a cruel death but leaving the richest and greatest heritage for and to all humankind and for all time to come.

Gentlemen, countless volumes could be written on this exceedingly interesting, nay, fascinating and tragic topic if I, or any other human being had the capacity to execute the task, so I would (a) content myself with only the briefest possible summary of all what I could gather during many years of silent research and patient investigation, (b) to elucidate this summary of mine I shall append quotations from one or two famous European authors of the greatest eminence and (c) all but conclude my onerous task of this evening by placing before your mind's eye a vivid description of the pitiful plight of our Imam, the noble Husayn – on Ashur's dismal day, and invite your sympathy, if not tears, for that ghastly and lurid scene. Until then, I crave your kind attention and indulgence.

Gentlemen, it may be safely premised by me in this assembly, an overwhelming majority of which are Muslims, which Muhammad was the greatest of prophets, and the sole purport and ultimate cause or object of God's Creation. Such being the case, his issue cannot be regarded as a worthless human being who in this case happened to be a daughter named Fatimatuzzahra. She could not have been given in marriage by the greatest being, to a worthless individual.

So Ali was not a worthless individual but quite worthy of being the husband of such a daughter of Eve. I am not going to plunge headlong into the sea of traditions in which Islamic theology is so rich, so I will confine myself to what is or may be called the region of clear reason and intellect as opposed to the *obiter dicta* of religious dogmatism and fanaticism. So examined, in the light of pure and clear reason, if Fatimatuzzahra was a worthy daughter of a most worthy father and truly and really worth being called سيدة النساء العالمينthe Princess of the ladies of the Universes, then surely her husband must have been her mate, nay her very lord and commander.

An Estimate of the Character of Ali

And who was this Prince of princes in all the Worlds created by the Great God, well, no one else but that peerless and fearless warrior among all the famous knights and strongest weights of Arabia, that brave and most stipend lion among all the lions of all times, past, present, and future, that supreme Hand of the Great God, from which there is or can be no escaping, that *most* learned among the learned philosophers of all ages and every epoch, that truest and sincerest of human beings, the greatest of Chieftains, that most exalted of Princes, that sinless Commander of the Faithful, the Apostle of the God fearing ones, the victorious and infidelity destroying lion of God, Ali the son of Abu Talib. If such be the characteristics of two individuals of opposite sexes, I ask of you all, most seriously, and in the name of

sanity and common sense, can the issue or issues proceeding from them be of a kind vastly different from the parents?

And who were the issues of such parents? Only two, in the male line at least, who were both of them Imams and Commanders of the Faithful viz. Imam Hassan, the eldest child and Husayn, the second son and the hero of a thousand and one legends like his father, and the immediate object of my present discussion. Now, as already stated by me elsewhere, Ali was not a weak minded individual as maintained by his adversaries, but on the contrary, he was supremely strong willed with a will of iron and adamant, and at the same time overwhelmingly God fearing and pious. And in every respect equal to his illustrious father, was his illustrious son Imam Husayn.

Husayn and His Position

His will was also of adamant and steel and yet he was the most kind hearted of people – like his father again. So, however much his adversaries might speak ill of him, we must not lose sight of the fact that he, Imam Husayn, had no mere political motive in refusing to "yield to Yazid's wicked will" and accepting that dissolute wretch as the caliph of God and the Leader of the Faithful, but only the loftiest considerations of religion and piety forbade him from doing so, because he feared, and rightly so, if he, the lawful descendant and the true representative of the lawful successor of the Prophet and therefore *the Vicegerent of God should yield to the wicked will of the embodiment of all wickedness Yazid* – and regard him as the Caliph of Islam, then goodbye to the religion of his grandfather and God!

And this was the only condition on which one's life or safety for such a being as Imam Husayn, who had at stake not to his own life and safety or even of his immediate descendants and near relations but of Islam itself and of all the followers of his grandfather Muhammad, not only then flourishing and living but sure to come into existence during the centuries to come forever and ever up to the Day of Judgment itself.

Therefore, crushed and quashed lies that silly and thoughtless objection sometimes urged by equally silly people against the alleged folly of Husayn in pitting himself against that great power of evil and yet the ostensible Caliph of Islam – the wicked Yazid!

What could poor Husayn do? He could not – could he? – submit or yield to Yazid's wicked will, and he had implicitly relied on the promised allegiance of the people of Kufa, that ancient stronghold of faithlessness and deceit not a single one from among the inhabitants of that faithless city, chose to go over to the side of the Imam.

they never meant to do so and their promises were naught. So their perfidy should not excite our wonder or even our wrath so much. Brethren I have wasted a good deal of your time already, so I would hurry on with the performance of the task I have laid down for myself today. I, therefore, subjoin here a faithful quotation from the pen of that renowned historian M. Marbin. He writes thus:

M. Marbin Quoted: “Husayn was openly speaking of his approaching martyrdom, after the death of his father, by the sword of the murder. And ever since he left Medina, he was loudly proclaiming to the whole world, he was going to be killed. And for the sake of leaving no loophole of escape, he openly said to his followers they should desert him or leave him if they cared for money or safety of their limbs or lives. Further, this point should also be noted that if Husayn had not resolved to lose his life after the deepest meditation and though, then how was it he did not make the faintest preparation of meeting the enemy by collecting men or soldiers to fight for him. On the contrary, he advised even the handful of followers which he had, to quietly leave him if they at all cared for their lives or limbs and of which permission and advice, many took advantage and left the Imam with only a few, very few men, indeed.”

He was really resolved to show to the world forever and ay his death was the most pitiable one in which the human imagination could or can conjecture or even God Himself could or can permit and take place. I cannot help once again quoting from the same author: “After the murder of Husayn, the wicked secrets of Bani Umayyah...revealed...and revolution began brewing against the caliphate of the Umayyads and Yazid...and then they understood the true spirit of Islam and began to look upon the Bani Hashim as too much oppressed and tortured but fit for the caliphate and the true spirit of Islam was intuitively understood by them all as if the Muslims attained a fresh lease of life and a new period of existence, and new lustre was imparted to the fading glory of Islam and revived the Muslims from the stupor into which they had fallen, and from the moral torpor which had overtaken them.”

This is what M. Marbin says. Now, gentlemen, I must be very brief. I, therefore, finally ask you to picture yourself a sand desert of Arabia, grown intensely hot with the savage rays of the sun in a cloudless sky, from earliest dawn until about midday in the month of September, and in such a hot and heated desert the tents of Imam Husayn were lying pitched, and all his supply of water had been exhausted for the previous three days. There was not a single drop to drink anywhere. Access to the river was forbidden by Muslim soldiers acting under the orders of a so-called Muslim general. Several warriors of the tent of Husayn hade vainly attempted to bring water to the family of the Imam and his whole family were fasting with dried lips and parched throats, of Husayn no less than others. But the thousand and one wounds on his body, almost innumerable as they were, had quenched his thirst somewhat.

So he decided to make a final appeal to the so-called Muslims who were opposed to him, not on his own behalf, not on behalf of anybody else who could be considered guilty of any crime, call it insubordination, mutiny, or political blunder, but on behalf of an infant, his own infant – barely six months old! He took that infant on his open palms and went towards his enemies and asked them if that little infant could be considered guilty of any offence – and that poor little infant was almost in his death gasp and through excessive thirst, a thirst unquenchable by even the mil of his mother for the mild had dried up in her breast owing to the want of water from which she was herself was suffering. So when Husayn exposed this little infant on the palms of his hands and asked the opposing soldiers for some consideration, for some pit, for some mercy to be shown to this little human being, the cruel and stony hearted wretches *did not* (for they *could not*) give any answer, for they felt dumbfounded.

But there was a brute amongst them all, who was the cruelest of humankind and he aimed an arrow at the throat of that poor babe, whose throat was already rattling with the gasp of death, and that cruel dart, true to its aim, extinguished the innocent little life forever. How brave Imam Husayn must have been to have borne this calamity too, with the most unflinching coolness, for he thanked God and uttered, “For God we have been created and to God do we return.{“ The two hands of the Imam, of the father of the child, was filled with gushing blood of the innocent babe, and tradition asserts the Imam wanted to fling the blood towards the sky, but the sky implored him not to do, so he thought of throwing it to the earth, but the earth was equally reluctant. As the Urdu poet says:

انکار آسمان کو ہے راضی زمیں نہیں

اصغر تمہارے خون کا ٹھکانا کہیں نہیں

“Thy sky is quite unwilling and the Earth is reluctant too.
Thy blood oh little Asghar, cannot rest without ado.”

So the Imam felt compelled to smear that life blood of his child on his own face and beard. And with these few words, and thinking you all for your deep attention, I stop my mournful tale.

I may here subjoin on elegy on Hazrat Ali Asgar, composed by me in a mood of religious sadness.

Rabab’s Wail for the Baby Martyr of Karbala

1. Cried out on Ashoor’s Day, Rabab, “My sweetest, dearest Asghar, Ho! Thou stoodst in need of water but no drop was here that I do know,

2. The baby lips are parted now and are with thirst quire perched and dried,

3. Thou so pure and innocent but could they, did, ever reach, the climax of thy sinlessness which did the enemies well teach,

4. To be considerate and not cruel in cases like this poor soul’s.! Oh the arrows and the lances which produced such numerous holes!

5. On the bodies and the breasts of all the martyrs lying here! There they lie, full bathed with blood without reproach and with no fear!

6. Whom will I now in the cradle swing – it lies deserted there, can I, oh my darling Asghar now thy

separation bear!

7. Oh those sweetest infant rosy lips which used to cope with glee, where shall I go and find them, cursed by cruel Destiny!

8. Oh my angel, better than an angel, th' apple of my eye, the milk within my breast did dry up, and you therefore chose to fly!

9. Who will love thee now, in the secluded little grave! May cruel Hurmula be cursed for slaying thee with well-aimed dart!

10. My God avenge the cruelties inflicted on us now freely, and may He – Just and Equitable – ne'er forgive thy enemy!

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