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On Imam Husayn (a.s.)'s intention on proceeding towards Makkah (from Madina) and the letters addressed to him by the people of Kufa

When Imam Husayn (a.s.) intended going towards Makkah, Abdullah bin Muti' came to meet him and said, "May I be your ransom! Where do you intend going"? Imam replied,

"Presently I have decided to go to Makkah, after that I shall seek consultation from the Almighty."

Abdullah said, "May Allah destine goodness for you! You may go to Makkah, but lest you go to Kufa for it is an ill-omened city. Your father was assassinated therein and your brother was rendered helpless, was forsaken and wounded by a spear and it was near that he would succumb to that wound.

You may remain attached to the Ka'bah for you are the Master of the Arabs and the people of Hijaz (region of West Arabia, the barrier land, running parallel to the Red Sea and wherein lies the dual holy cities of Makkah and Madina) do not regard anyone else as your equal. The people therein will exert themselves to hasten to your aid, may I be your ransom, for if you are killed we shall be enslaved and conquered after you."

Shaikh Mufeed says that Imam Husayn (a.s.) proceeded towards Makkah taking the main roads reciting the following verse of the Qur'an:

"So he went forth in fear, apprehending." (***Surah al-Qasas, 28:21***)

Someone told him, "It would be better if we take a crooked road as Abdullah bin Zubayr and avoid the

main road, so that those in our pursuit might not reach you." Imam replied,

"No by Allah! I shall not forsake this road, until Allah commands me further."

Imam Husayn (a.s.) entered Makkah on Friday the third of the month of Sha'ban reciting the following verse:

"And when he (Prophet Moosa) turned his face towards (the land of) Madyan, said: Maybe my Lord will guide me in the right path." (Surah al-Qasas, 28:22)

When Imam Husayn (a.s.) settled in Makkah, the people therein and those who had come for the Hajj (Annual Pilgrimage to Makkah), and people from other towns came to meet him. Abdullah bin Zubayr too was in Makkah and had taken asylum near the Ka'bah and prayed and circumambulated it. He too accompanied by other people came to offer his salutations to Imam Husayn (a.s.) once in every two days consequently or often more.

Imam's presence in Makkah made him uneasy, for he knew that till the time Imam remained in Makkah, the people therein would not pledge their oath of allegiance to him (for he too eyed the Caliphate). Because they held the Imam dear and considered him more worthy to rule over them."

As regards the people of Kufa, when they received the news of the death of Mu'awiyah they started vilifying Yazid. Besides they were informed that Imam Husayn (a.s.) had refused to swear the oath of allegiance to Yazid and had gone to Makkah. While Abdullah bin Zubayr too had fled to Makkah with him and competed with him.

The followers (Shi'ah) of Imam gathered at the house of Sulayman bin Surad Khuza'i and discussed about the death of Mu'awiyah and praised and glorified Allah. Sulayman arose and said,

"Mu'awiyah is dead, and Imam Husayn (a.s.) has refused to swear the oath of allegiance to Yazid and has proceeded towards Makkah. You are his and his father's followers (Shi'ah), then if you desire assisting him and fighting his enemies, write to him and inform him about it. But if you fear lest you would turn sluggish and retreat, then do not betray him (by inviting him here)."

Everyone unanimously swore that they would support him and fight his enemies under his command and offer their lives for sacrifice. When Sulayman heard this he invited them to write letters addressing to the Imam and they wrote as follows:

Letters of the people of Kufa to Imam Husayn (a.s.)

"In the name of Allah the Beneficent, the Merciful. To Husayn bin Ali (a.s.) from Sulayman bin Surad, Musayyab bin Najabah, Rufa'ah bin Shaddad, Habib bin Mazahir and other followers from the citizens of Kufa, the believers and Muslims. Peace be upon you! We praise and glorify Allah before you, besides

Whom there is no other Deity. Now then!

Praise be to Allah that He has destroyed your obstinate enemy. The one (*referred to Mu'awiyah*) *who had leapt upon the Islamic nation and snatched their affairs into his own hands and grabbed their booty and seized control of it without their consent. He killed the virtuous and spared the wicked ones. And he scattered the wealth of Allah among the tyrants and the wealthy people, thus he was annihilated as* (*the people of*) *Samood were destroyed, and we have no Imam left with us* (*except you*)*.*

We request you to come to us so that Allah may unite us upon the truth. Nu'man bin Basheer is alone present in the palace, but we do not gather with him on the Friday (*Prayers*)*, nor do we go to him on the day of Eid. If we learn that you have proceeded to come to us, we shall drive him out from here until we pursue him to Syria, Allah willing. Allah's Peace and Blessings be upon you."*

They gave this letter to Ubaydullah bin Musme' Hamadani and Abdullah bin Wal Taymi and told them to hasten. They rushed until they reached Makkah on the tenth of the month of Ramazan. Then the people of Kufa waited for two days and again sent Qays bin Mus–hir Saydawi, Abdul Rahman bin Abdullah bin Shaddad Arhabi, and Ammarah bin Abdullah Saluli with hundred and fifty letters written by one, two, three or four people.

Then again after a lapse of two days they sent Hani bin Hani Sabee'i and Sa'eed bin Abdullah Hanafi with a letter whose contents were as follows:

"In the name of Allah the Beneficent, the Merciful. To Husayn bin Ali (*a.s.*) *from his followers, believers and Muslims. Now then! Make haste, for people are awaiting you and hold no other opinion, hence hasten, hasten. Peace be upon you."*

Another letter was written by Shabas bin Rab'ee, Hajjar bin Abjar Ajali, Yazid bin Haris bin Ruwaym Shaybani, Urwa bin Qays Ahmasi, 'Amr bin Hajjaj Zubaydi, and Muhammad bin 'Amr Tamimi which read as follows:

"Now then! The gardens have turned green and the fruits have ripened. If you desire, you may arrive here, the army is ready to defend you."

When all the messengers gathered together, Imam read the letters and inquired from them about the people.

Sayyid ibn Tawoos says that Imam Husayn (a.s.) arose and recited Prayers between Rukn and Makan (in the Ka'bah) and desired goodness from the Almighty. Then he called for Muslim bin Aqeel bin Abi Talib (a.s.) and apprised him about the situation and wrote a letter in reply to the people of Kufa.

Shaikh Mufeed says that Imam Husayn (a.s.) sent the following reply with Hani bin Hani Sabee'i and Sa'eed bin Abdullah Hanafi, who were the last messengers (from Kufa):

"In the name of Allah the Beneficent, the Merciful. From Husayn bin Ali to the noblemen among the Muslims and believers.

Now then! Hani and Sa'eed have brought me your letters, they being your last messengers. I have realized your opinions through them and your judgment is that: There is no Imam over us. You come towards us, perhaps Allah will unite us through you upon the truth and righteousness.

I send to you my cousin, my brother and a trustworthy person from among my family Muslim bin Aqeel. And I have instructed him to inquire about your affairs and write to me regarding it. And if he writes to me that your elders, the wise and the learned men hold the same opinion as your messengers have conveyed to me and as written in your letters, then I shall come to you quickly, Allah willing.

I swear by my life, that he is not an Imam and guide except he who judges in accordance to the Book of Allah, and establishes justice, and professes the True Religion and dedicates himself to the will of Almighty Allah. Greetings."

Then Imam Husayn (a.s.) called Muslim bin Aqeel bin Abi Talib (a.s.) and dispatched him to Kufa with Qays bin Mushir Saydawi, Ammarah bin Abdullah Arjee and Abdul Rahman and Abdullah, the sons of Shaddad Arhabi. He enjoined them with fear of Allah to conceal their mission, besides advising them to be merciful, and that if they find people to be firm and resolute then they should immediately inform him.[1]

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1. Imam Husayn (a.s.) sent his representative to Kufa declaring his authority to be assured of the seriousness of the Kufans. Any opposition or support to his representative would be considered an opposition or support to the Imam himself. Only after that, would their claims and pleas come to light, for they had invited him, pledged to support him and had literally blackmailed him saying that, "We have no Imam left with us (except you)..."

This representative had to be a man of great trust, faith, and steadfastness. In addition he had to have a powerful personality capable of executing this important obligation. This was not a mission of secondary importance but involved representation from a revolutionary leader, who was also a guardian of Religion, upholder of faith and a refuge for humanity. It needed a man of great foresight and experience with complete grasp of the political situation of the time as well as the principles of the sacred teachings of Islam. It needed a man of firm moral standing and integrity, who would be a true representative from such a sacred person as Husayn bin Ali (a.s.).

Imam Husayn (a.s.) chose Muslim bin Aqeel (a.s.), his cousin and brother in law, the husband of his sister Ruqayya, the daughter of Imam Ali (a.s.) through his marriage with Ummul Baneen (mother of Abbas), for this important mission. In the eyes of Husayn, Muslim possessed all those requisite qualities that were desirable for such an assignment. He was a man of great courage who would not lose himself in times of victory and would remain steadfast and patient at times of defeat and opposition, a man of all seasons.

Thus, those who would assist him (like Hani bin Urwah) would be the ones firm in their faith and obedience to Islam and Imam, while those who would not be able to help him for whatsoever reason, although being ardent believers (like Habib bin Mazahir, Muslim bin Awsaja, Abu Samamah), they would hasten to assist the Imam at Karbala in compensation for being unable to defend his envoy (Muslim). While those who would deliberately and impotently withdraw their support of Muslim, but would prefer to remain silent spectators, their faltering faith and hypocrisy would be apparent; hence it would

act as a litmus test for faith and steadfastness.

Muslim would communicate the Imam's objectives to the people and prepare them for the ultimate occurrence, as can be observed, that after the martyrdom of Muslim, many Kufans hastened to Karbala to assist the Imam, thus proving the success of Muslim's mission. Muslim's attachment and obedience to the Imam is apparent through his will (made to Umar bin Sa'ad) apprising Imam of the treason of the Kufans and stopping him from coming there besides dispatching his two infant sons towards Imam to convey the message.

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