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Relating to the events of the night before Ashura' (the tenth of Muharram)

(Irshad) Imam Husayn (a.s.) gathered his companions at night. Imam Ali Zainul Abedeen (a.s.) says that: I went closer to them so as to hear what they said, and at that time I was unwell. I heard Imam telling his companions that,

"I glorify Allah with the best glorification, and praise him in times of prosperity as well as misfortunes. O Allah! I praise You that You have likened Prophethood to be bestowed in our family, You taught us the Qur'an thus making us intellectuals in Religion, and conferred upon us the faculty of hearing and foresight and an enlightened heart. Thus enter us among the fold of your grateful servants.

Now then! I have not known any companion who are more faithful and devout than you, nor have I known any family who is more considerate, affectionate, favorable, and amiable than my family. Thus may Allah reward you well on my behalf. And I presume that the enemy will not spare even a single day, and I permit all of you to go away freely while I validate this for you.

I lift up from you the responsibility of the allegiance and oath (which you have sweared at my hands). The darkness of the night has enveloped you, thus free yourself from the whirlpool (hiding) in the waves of darkness. Then each of you may catch hold of the hand of each of my family members and disperse into the villages and cities, until Allah bestows relief upon you. For these people desire me only, and after having laid their hands upon me, they shall not pursue anyone else."

Hearing this his brothers, sons, nephews and the sons of Abdullah bin Ja'far said, "We shall never do this so as to remain alive after you. May Allah never cause this to happen." Hazrat Abbas bin Ali (a.s.) preceded in the declaration and others followed suit.

Then Imam turned towards the sons of Aqeel bin Abi Talib and said,

“The sacrifice of Muslim is sufficient for you, hence I permit you to go away.”

They replied, “Glory be to Allah! What will the people say? They will say that we have forsaken our chief, master and a cousin who was a best cousin. And that we did not shoot arrows alongside him, thrust spears and did not strike our swords besides him, and we would not know what to do (regarding this accusation). By Allah! We shall never ever do this. In fact we shall sacrifice our lives, wealth and our family for you. We shall fight alongside you until we reach the fate besides you. May life be ugly after you (if we remain alive).”

Then Muslim bin Ausaja arose and said, “Shall we forsake you? Then when we go to the presence of the Almighty, what excuse shall we present to Him regarding the fulfillment of your rights? No, By Allah! I shall pierce this lance of mine in the hearts of the enemies, and shall strike them with my sword until it’s hilt remains in my hands, and if no weapon remains with me to fight with them, I shall attack them with stones. By Allah! We shall not lift our hands off you, until it is proved to Allah that we have honored the regard of the Prophet in respect of you. By Allah! Even if I know that I shall be killed and then made to rise again and then killed and burnt and my ashes be scattered around, and this shall happen seventy times, even then I shall not forsake you until I am killed in your obedience. Then how should I forsake this when I know that death is to come only once, after which a great blessing awaits me.”

Then Zuhayr bin Qayn arose and said, “By Allah! I hold dear that I should be killed then made to arise and again killed, and this should happen to me a thousand times, and thus Allah, the Mighty, the Sublime, may defend you and your family from being killed.”

Then all the other companions unanimously repeated the same. (Tabari) They said, “By Allah! We shall not abandon you, in fact our lives shall be sacrificed for your life. We shall defend you with our necks, faces and hands. Then we all shall die while having performed our duty.”

The following couplet best suits their discourses: “O my Master! Even if the throne of my greatness reaches the empyrean, I shall remain your servant and a beggar at your door, if I lift my heart and it’s love from you, then whom should I love and where should I take my heart”? May Allah reward them favorably with respect to Imam Husayn (a.s.)

Then Imam Husayn (a.s.) returned back to his tent.

“May Allah reward the youth who bore patiently, they being unique any where in the world. They were embodiment of excellent character and not bowls of milk blended with water, which can later turn into urine.”

Sayyid Ibn Tawoos relates, that it was said to Muhammad bin Bashar Hazramee that, “Your son has been arrested at the border of Ray.” He replied, “I leave him to Allah’s accountability. By my life! I do not like being alive after his arrest.” Imam Husayn (a.s.) heard his words and said,

“May your Allah have mercy upon you! I lift up the pledge of allegiance from you, you may go and attempt the release of your son.”

He replied, “If I separate from you, I will fall prey to the beasts”, to which the Imam replied,

“Then send these Yemeni garments with your other son, so that he may release him in lieu of these.”

And he handed over five garments costing a thousand gold dinars (An Islamic gold currency varying in weight, equivalent to approximately 20 dollars) to Muhammad bin Bashar.

Husayn bin Hamadan Hazeeni has related through his chain of authorities from Abu Hamza Sumali, while Sayyid Bahrani has related without quoting his chain of authorities from him, that he says that I heard from Imam Ali Zainul Abedeen (a.s.) that he said:

“On the night preceding his Martyrdom, my father gathered his family and companions and said, “O people of my family and my Shi’ah! Consider this night, which has come to you as a mounting Camel and save yourselves, for these people do not desire anyone else except me. Then after having killed me, they shall not pursue you. May Allah have mercy upon you! Save yourselves. Verily I lift the responsibility of the allegiance and pledge which you have taken at my hands.”

Hearing this his brothers, relatives and companions unanimously said, “By Allah O our Master! O Aba Abdillah! We shall never betray you, so that people may say that we had abandoned our Imam, our chief and master until he was martyred. Then we would seek excuses between ourselves and Allah. And we shall not leave you until we ransom ourselves upon you.”

Imam said, “Verily I shall be killed tomorrow and everyone from among yourselves too shall be killed with me, and none among you shall be spared.” To which they replied, “Praise be to Allah, that He has bestowed grace upon us to assist you, and has offered distinction to us to get martyred along with you. Then do we not like that we should be along with you in your elevated station (in Paradise) O son of the Prophet of Allah”?

Imam replied, “May Allah reward you favorably” then he prayed for them. When it dawned all of them were martyred.”

Then Qasim bin Hasan (a.s.) asked, “Am I too included in the list of the martyrs”? Hearing this Imam was moved and said,

“O my dear son! How do you consider death (martyrdom in the way of Allah) to be near you”?

Qasim replied, “It is sweeter than honey.” Imam said,

“Verily, by Allah! May your uncle be your ransom! You are one of them, who shall be martyred along with me after having fallen prey to a severity, and my (infant) son Abdullah (Ali Asghar) shall be martyred

too."

Hearing this Qasim asked, "O dear uncle! Then will the enemies reach the womenfolk so as to kill the suckling child Abdullah"? Husayn replied,

"Abdullah will be killed at that time when I, absorbed in intense thirst, will come back to the tent and ask for water or honey and nothing will be available. Then I will request my child to be brought to me so that I may kiss his lips (and thereby find relief). The child will be brought and placed in my hands, and a lewd man (from among the enemies) will shoot an arrow upon his neck and the child shall raise a cry. Then his blood will get filled in my palms and I shall raise my hands to the heavens and say: O Allah! I forebear and leave the accountability to You. The lances of the enemies will then be hurriedly thrown at me, while the fire in the trench dug behind the tents shall be roaring. Then I will attack them, the moment being the most bitter of my life. Then whatever Allah wills shall come forth."

Saying this Imam started weeping and we too could not control our tears, the voice of lamenting arose from the tents of the Progeny of the Prophet of Allah (S).

Qutubuddin Rawandi relates from Abu Hamza Sumali that Imam Ali Zainul Abedeen (a.s.) said that I was along with my father (Imam Husayn) on the night preceding his martyrdom. Then he addressed his companions thus,

"Consider this night to be an armor for yourselves, for these people desire me and after having killed me they will not turn towards you, while you are pardoned and are capable."

They replied, "By Allah! This shall never ever happen."

Imam said,

"All of you will be killed tomorrow and no one will be spared."

They replied, "Praise be to Allah who has bestowed grace upon us to be martyred along with you." Then Imam prayed for them and told them to lift up their heads. They did so and saw their status in Paradise, and Imam showed them one after the other their places therein. Thus every one was forwarding his face and chest facing the swords, so as to enter the status in Paradise.

It is related in the Amali of Shaikh Saduq from Imam Ja'far as Sadiq (a.s.), who says that after the discourse of the Imam with his companions, he ordered a trench to be dug around his army. The trench was dug and filled with firewood. Then Imam ordered his son Ali Akbar (a.s.) to fetch water, accompanied by thirty horsemen and twenty-foot soldiers, while they were in the state of severe fright and Imam was reciting the following couplet:

"Time, shame on you as a friend, at the day's dawning and the sun's setting, how many a companion or seeker will be a corpse, time will not be satisfied with any substitute, the matter will rest with the Mighty

One, and every living creature will have to journey along my path."

Then he commanded his companions,

"Drink the water which is your last sustenance in this world, and perform your ablutions and take a bath. Wash your clothes, for these shall be your shrouds."1

(Irshad) Imam Ali Zainul Abedeen (a.s.) says that on the night preceding the martyrdom of my father, I was awake while my aunt Hazrat Zaynab (a.s.) was attending to me. My father was alone in his tent, while Jaun, the retainer of Abu Zarr Ghifari, was with him and was preparing his sword and putting it right. My father was reciting the following couplets:

"Time, shame on you as a friend, at the day's dawning and the sun's setting, how many a companion or seeker will be a corpse, time will not be satisfied with any substitute, the matter will rest with the Mighty One, and every living creature will have to journey along my path."

He repeated it twice or thrice and I understood what he meant and sorrow befell me but I bore it silently and realized that a calamity had befallen us. My aunt Zaynab (a.s.) heard it too, sensitiveness and anxiety being the qualities of women, she could not control herself and tearing her clothes ran bareheaded towards my father and said, "Woe unto this tragedy! I wish death overtakes me. Today my mother Fatima (a.s.), my father Ali (a.s.) and my brother Hasan (a.s.) have departed from me. O successor of the departed ones! O source of hope for the alive ones!"

Imam turned towards his sister and said,

"O dear sister! Do not let Shaitan take away your forbearance."

His eyes became full of tears and then he said,

"If a sand grouse (a type of a bird) is freed at night, it will sleep in peace."

Then she said, "Woe! Then will you be violently and helplessly killed? While this hurts my heart and is severe upon my life." Then she started beating her face and tore off her collar and fell unconscious. Then Imam arose and sprinkled water [refer Note No. 52] over her face and said,

"O dear sister! Control yourself and desire consolation from Allah alone. And know that everyone upon the earth shall die, while the dwellers of the heavens too shall perish, except the Face (Self) of Allah. Allah who has created with His power, and will make them alive again, and they shall all return to Him, while Allah is Unique. My grandfather was better than me, my father was better than me, and my mother was better than me. It is obligatory upon me and all Muslims to follow the example of the Prophet of Allah (S)."

Then he consoled her with similar words and said,

“O dear sister! I request you on oath that when I am martyred, do not tear off your collar, nor beat your face or lament upon me.”

Then he brought Hazrat Zaynab (a.s.) and made her sit near me and then went to his companions. Then he commanded them to fasten their tents closer to one another and tie the tent-pegs together so as form a circle around them, and block the enemies entrance from three sides so that they could not confront them except from the front. Then Imam returned back to his tent and spent the entire night in Prayers, supplications and repentance in Allah’s Audience, and his companions followed his example too and started supplicating.

It is narrated that the voices of their supplication sounded like the humming of the bees. They were engrossed in genuflexion (Rukoo’ or bowing in Prayer), Sujood (prostration), standing and sitting. While this was the normal practice of Imam Husayn (a.s.), abundance of Prayers, the excellence of morals etc. Imam was similar to what has been quoted by Imam al Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) in Ziyarate Nahiyah:

“The deliverer of the Holy Qur’an, and the arms of the nation (ummah),

And the one who endeavored in the way of (Allah’s) obedience,

Protector of the oath and covenant,

You hated the path of the transgressors,

A Bestower upon those in trouble,

One who prolonged the Rukoo’ and Prostration,

(you remained) Abstinent from the world,

You always viewed it with the sight of the one who has to leave it soon.”

Abu ‘Amr Ahmad bin Muhammad Qurtubi Marwani narrates in his book Iqdul Fareed, that people inquired from Imam Ali Zainul Abedeen (a.s.) as to why his father had a few children. To which Imam replied,

“I am astonished as to even how could such a few children have been born, when he would recite a thousand units of Prayers daily, where had he got the time to visit his wives”?

(Manaqib) It is related that when the time of Sahr came, Imam Husayn (a.s.) reclined his head upon a bed and dozed off. Then he awoke and said,

“Do you know what I just dreamt”?

People replied, “O son of the Prophet! What have you seen”?

Imam replied,

"I saw that some dogs have attacked me, while a pie-bald dog among them is more severe towards me. And I presume that the one who will kill me will be a leper among this nation. Then I saw my grandfather the Prophet of Allah (S), along with the group of his companions. He addressed me: O my dear son! You are a Martyr of the Progeny of Muhammad (S). The dwellers of the heavens and the heavenly Angels give glad tidings to you. Tonight you shall break your fast with me, thus hasten and do not delay. These Angels have come from the heavens so as to collect your blood and preserve it in a green bottle. Verily I have derived that my end is near and it is time to depart from this world, while there is no doubt in it."

Tabari relates from Azdi, who relates from Abdullah bin Asim, who in turn relates from Zahhak bin Abdullah Mashriqi, who says that on the night of the tenth (of Muharram), Imam Husayn (a.s.) and all his companions spent the entire night in Prayers, repentance, supplications and lamenting. He says that a contingent of guards passed by us when Imam Husayn (a.s.) was reciting the following verse of the Qur'an:

"Let not those who disbelieve think that our giving them respite is good for their selves, We only give respite to them that they may increase in sins, and for them is a disgraceful chastisement. It is not for Allah to leave the believers in the state in which you are, until He has distinguished the wicked from the fair ones." (***Surah aal-'Imran, 3:178-179***)

When one of the horsemen guarding us heard this verse, he said, "By the Lord of the Ka'bah! Verily we are the fair ones (referred to in the above verse), who have been distinguished from you." Zahhak says that I recognized that man and then asked Burayr bin Khuzayr whether he recognized him. He replied in the negative. I said, "He is Abu Harb Sabee'i Abdullah bin Shahr. He is a jester, a profligate while being of a noble descent, brave and a slayer. Sa'eed bin Qays had arrested him due to some crime of his." Burayr bin Khuzayr turned towards him and said, "O evil-doer! (do you assume that) Allah has included you among the fair ones"?

He asked him as to who he was, to which Burayr revealed to him his identity. He said, "Verily we are Allah's and verily unto Him shall we return. Thus I have perished O Burayr!" Burayr replied, "Do you repent over the great sin of your's? By Allah! We all are the fair ones, while you all are the wicked ones." He replied, "I too verify the truthfulness of your words." Zahhak says that then I told him, "Then will not this intelligence of yours benefit you"? He replied, "May I be your ransom! (if I do so) Then who will accompany Yazeed bin Azrah Anzee, who is presently with me." Hearing this Burayr said, "May Allah spoil your view and your policy! For verily you are a futile man in everything." Zahhak says that then Abu Harb returned back and our guard that night was Azrah bin Qays Ahmasi, who was the commander of the horsemen.

Sayyid ibn Tawoos says that on that night twenty-two men from the ranks of Umar bin Sa'ad joined the companions of Imam Husayn (a.s.).

It is related in Iqdul Fareed regarding Imam Husayn (a.s.)'s request to Umar bin Sa'ad to accept one out of the three proposals, hearing which thirty two Kufans, who were in the ranks of Umar bin Sa'ad, told him, "The grandson of the Prophet of Allah is asking you one out of the three options, and you disagree." Saying this they left his rank and came over to the Imam and fought along with him until all of them were martyred.

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1. The above narration cannot be relied upon due to some basic reasons:

(1) There are numerous traditions which confirm that Imam Husayn (a.s.) and his companions were martyred thirsty, while majority of Shi'ah Ulema and historians have acknowledged that access to water was stopped since the seventh of Muharram.

(2) In the above report Imam Husayn (a.s.) commands his companions to drink the water as well as perform ablutions, take a bath and wash the clothes. It seems quite strange that Imam should have commanded thus, although the children and womenfolk were thirsty, while according to the Islamic law, during scarcity of water, it is obligatory for one to save oneself and others, rather than purify.

(3) If there was water available in the tents of Imam Husayn (a.s.), then dispatching Hazrat Abbas (a.s.) to fetch water on the day of Ashura and his subsequent martyrdom seems illogical, while Imam Husayn (a.s.) taking his infant babe Ali Asghar (a.s.) to the battlefield requesting for water would also seem incredible.

(4) According to certain reports it is narrated that on the night of Ashura, Burayr bin Khuzayr Hamadani, a loyal companion of Imam Husayn (a.s.), tried to fetch water after a fierce fight with the enemies. He, accompanied by only three others, had to face the powerful contingent of Yazid's forces deputed to guard the river. A single water skin was finally brought to the tents and all the children crowded around it frantically trying to quench their thirst. Some were pressing themselves upon it while others falling upon it and suddenly the mouth of the water skin flung open and all the water flowed out on the earth. All the children started weeping and Burayr too could not control his tears. (Ref. Me'atayn fil Maqtalal Husayn – Allamah Gulam Hasnain Kantoori).

(5) In the above report of Shaikh Saduq, Imam commanded his companions to drink water, perform ablutions, have bath and wash clothes, but there is no direct reference that the companions finally did it or succeed in getting the water. Shaikh Muhammad Mahdi Mazandarani, in his book Ma'aliyas Sibtayn refutes the claim that there was water available. Thus it can be concluded that there was no water available in the tents of Imam Husayn (a.s.) since the seventh of Muharram. Allah knows best.

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