

The Sermon of Mina, Al- 'Imam al Husayn's Everlasting Message to Religious Leaders

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In the year 60/680, al-'Imam al-Husayn (A) stayed for about three months at Makkah in the course of his movement against the succession of Yazid, the degenerate son of Mu'awiah, to the Caliphate. Yazid had assumed the leadership of the Islamic world on Mu'awiah's death in Rajab 60/ March 680. his way of life was representative of the common among the youth of the Umayyad aristocracy during 'Jahiliyyah'.

His un-Islamic conduct and practices were well known throughout the Muslim world and had earned for him contempt and disfavour amongst the religious. Nevertheless, Mu'awiyah's arrangements, ensured the succession of his son.

In order to secure undisputed possession of the Caliphate, the first task undertaken by Yazid was to order al-Walid ibn 'Utbah, the governor of al-Madinah, to exact allegiance (bay'ah) from the refractory, especially from al-Husayn ibn 'Ali and Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr, who were among the few who had refused to recognize Yazid's heir apparencey during Mu'awiyah's life. In his letter to the governor, Yazid gave strict orders that they should not be allowed to delay, and if they refused al-walid should beheaded them at once.

Al-'Imam al-Husayn (A) avoided the demand for bay'ah for two days and finally left for Makkah at night with his family and most of the Hashimites. It was at al-Madinah that al-'Imam al-Husayn (A) received repeated appeals and hundreds of letters sent by the kufans, pledging support to him in his movement against Yazid's rule. He also received reports that the government had sent some soldiers disguised as pilgrims to assassinate him in the sacred precincts of Makkah during the rituals of hajj, which was drawing near.

On 8 Dhu -al-hijjah/10 september 680, al-'Imam al-Husayn left Makkah for Kufah, after performing

umrah, foregoing hajj in order to safeguard the sanctity of the haram of Makkah and to avoid bloodshed in the holy precincts.

Makkah was at the time full of pilgrims, who were pouring in from all parts of the Muslim world . There, at Mina, he delivered the famous sermon addressing the people, especially the learned in religion. This sermon is recorded in “Tuhaf al 'uqul “, a collection of sermons and aphorisms of the Imams (A) compiled by al-Hasan ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn Subah al Harrani (d. 381/ 991).

The above sermon besides being an eye-opener for all of us, who should study the contemporary scene around us in the light of the genuine teachings of Islam, also reveals the sorry state of affairs that prevailed in the Muslim society of those days, just a generation after the holy Prophet (S) and his committed Companions had established a just Islamic society after a lifetime of unimaginable hardship and struggle. The following points emerge from this noble sermon:

1. It shows the state of Muslim society during and after Muawiyah's twenty-year rule, a matter which prompts every concerned muslim to study and investigate how it came to prevail in the not too long a period, a single generation or nearly fifty years, after the demise of the Noble Messenger (S).
2. It shows that 'ulama' then, as today, enjoyed the people's respect and veneration, but having aligned themselves with the rulers they neglected their duties with respect to God and His laws and in regard to the people and their divine duty to strive to protect their rights.
3. It shows the state of the common people, especially the society's poor and weak, who lived in complete neglect on the part of the rulers, contrary to the Prophet's practice and his great concern for their welfare and rights.
4. The 'Ulama ' were not only silent vis-à-vis the oppression of the people, they failed to speak out against the anti-Islamic conduct of the rulers or to condemn their propagandists who misguided the people from their pulpits in every town.
5. It shows the people's indifference in regard to the Prophet's Ahlul Bayt (A) and their obliviousness to the Prophet's earnest and oft repeated advice and persuasions regarding them . It was this general indifference towards the Ahl-ul Bayt (A) and the common ignorance regarding their sublime station in Islam that emboldened a profligate like Yazid to kill the Prophet's only living grandson in such a barbaric manner and to imprison the women and children of his noble family. History shows that this indifference had causes that lay in the past.
6. Had it not been for the heroic struggle of al-'Imam al-Husayn (A), nothing would have remained of the genuine teachings of Islam, even Yazid, with the help of hired historians, would have gone into history as a respectable Islamic ruler and as a deserving successor of the Messenger of Allah (S). Of course, some court historians and fuqaha tried to justify even the blackest crimes of Yazid as errors of ijtiḥad. But such justifications did not succeed in convincing honourable or aware Muslim. All that such

historians and fuqaha could succeed in achieving was everlasting ignominy for themselves.

Al-Imam al-Husayn (A) through his tragic martyrdom revived Islam and preserved its authentic teachings from the hands of tyrants. Hence the Islamic world is indebted to this brave son of Fatimah al-Zahra (A) and shall remain indebted to him to the Day of Resurrection.

Imam Khomeini, a true son of al-Imam al-Husayn (A), in the course of his lectures on the topic of wilayat al-faqih, which were published in the form of a book with that name, expounds this hadith in the context of the tradition-based part of his discussion about the responsibilities of the scholars of religion.

The sermon of al-Imam al-Husayn (A) is last of the traditions discussed by him in that context. The entire exposition has as its backdrop the conditions of Iran during the rule of the Shah in early 1970's.

The Sermon of Mina

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O people, take lesson from the counsel God gave to His friends when He rebuked the rabbis by saying:

“Why do the scholars and rabbis not forbid their sinful talk and consumption of what is unlawful? Truly what they have done is evil.” (5:63)

And God says:

“Cursed by the tongue of David and Jesus, son of Mary are those among the Children of Israel who disbelieved on account of their rebellion and transgression. They did not prevent each other from committing vile and corrupt acts; surely what they did was abominable” (5:78-79).

God reproached them because they saw with their own eyes the oppressors committing vile and corrupt acts, but did not stop them, out of love for the favours they received from them as well as fear of persecution and injury. However, God says:

“Fear not men, but fear Me.” (5:44)

And He says:

“The believing men and women are friends and protectors to each other; they enjoin the good and forbid the evil; they perform the prayer, and pay the alms, and obey God and His messenger. Upon them God shall have mercy; God is Almighty, All-wise.” (9:71)

God mentions the duty of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil (al-'amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar) before all other duties, because He knows that if it is performed and is established in the society all other duties, the easy and the difficult, will also become established.

The reason for this is that al-'amr bi al ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar means summoning people to Islam, as well as resistance against injustice, opposing and struggling against oppressors, and endeavoring to ensure that public wealth and income derived from war are distributed in accordance with the just laws of Islam, and that taxes are collected, levied and expended in due and proper form.

O scholars, who are celebrated and enjoy good repute on account of your learning! You have achieved a good name in society because of your good will. It is on account of God that men venerate you and stand in awe of you, so that even powerful fear you and the weak honour you, and those who are not subject to you and over whom you hold no authority grant you favours they deny themselves . When the people do not receive their due. they seek your intercession, and you walk in the street with the majesty of kings and princes.

Have you not earned all this respect and prestige because of the people's hopes that you will implement God's laws, even though in most instances you have failed to do so?

You have taken lightly your duties as leaders. You have neglected the rights of the oppressed and the lowly, but have assiduously pursued what you regard as your personal rights. You have not spent your money or risked your life for the sake of the One Who gave you life, nor have you fought against any group or tribe for the sake of God.

Nevertheless, you desire – and regard it as your due – that He should grant you paradise, the company of the prophet, and security from chastisement in the hereafter. You have such expectations of God, I fear that the full weight of His wrath descend upon you, for although it is by His might and glory that you have achieved high rank, you show no respect to those who truly know god, while you yourselves enjoy respect among God's creatures on His account.

(I am also afraid for you for another reason:) you see the covenant enacted with God being violated and trampled under foot, yet you show no anxiety, when it comes to the covenants enacted with your fathers, you become greatly disturbed and anxious if they are only violated in part, but the pledges you have given to the most noble Messenger are a matter of complete indifference to you.

The blind, the dumb, and chronically ill everywhere lack protection in towns and no mercy is shown them. But you neither behave in accordance with your function and rank, nor you support or pay any regard to those who do. You purchase your safety from the oppressive ruling powers with flattery cajolery, and compromise.

All these activities have been forbidden you by God, and He has, more over, command you to forbid each other to engage in them, but you pay no attention.

The calamity that has befallen you is greater than what has befallen others, for true rank and degree of “Ulama” has been taken away from you. The administration of the country and the issuing of decrees and ordinances should actually be trusted to religious scholars who are guardians of God's ordinances

concerning what is permitted and what is forbidden. But your position has been usurped from you, for no other reason than that you have abandoned the truth (al-haqq), and have disagreed about the nature of the sunnah, despite the existence of clear proofs.

Had you the forbearance to endure adversities and hardships for the sake of God, then all proposed regulations (God's affairs) would be brought to you for your approval and for you to issue; authority would lie in your hands. But you allowed the oppressors to take away your functions and God's affairs (i.e. government) to fall into their hands, so that they administer them by resorting to ambiguities and make arbitrariness and the satisfaction of lust their consistent practice.

What enabled them to gain control of government was your fleeing in panic from (inevitable) death and your love of life, which shall in all certainty depart from you. As a consequence of that mentality, you have delivered the powerless masses into the clutches of the oppressors.

While some cringe like slaves under the yoke of oppressors, and others have been reduced to destitution in regard to their livelihood, the rulers run the affairs of the government in accordance with their whims, earning ignominy and disgrace for themselves with their licentiousness, following evil counselors, and showing impudence toward God.

One of their appointed spokesmen mounts the pulpit (minbar) in each city. The country is defenseless before them, and their hands grab freely whatever they want of it. The people are their slaves and are powerless to defend themselves. One of the governors is a dictator by nature, malevolent and rancorous; another represses to recognize either God or the Day of Resurrection!

It is not strange – how can one think it strange, that society is the clutches of a cunning oppressor whose tax collectors are oppressors and whose governors feel no compassion or mercy towards the believers under rule.

It is God who will judge concerning what is dispute among us and deliver a decisive verdict concerning all that occurs among us.

O God! You know that everything we did was not prompted by rivalry for political power, nor for a search for wealth and abundance; rather it was done to demonstrate to men the shining principles and values of Your religion, to reform the affairs of Your land, to protect and secure the indisputable rights of Your oppressed servants, and to act in accordance with the duties You have established and the norms, laws, and ordinances You have decreed.

So (O scholars of religion!) You are to help us reach this goal, win back our rights from those powers who have considered it acceptable to wrong you and who have attempted to put out the light kindled by your Prophet. God suffices us, upon Him do we rely, to Him do we return, and to Him shall we return.

Imam Khumayni's Exposition

The tradition consists of two parts. The first is a tradition transmitted by Imam Husayn (peace be upon him) from the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali (peace be upon him), and concerns the enjoining of the good and the prohibition of the evil.

The second part is the speech of Imam Husayn concerning the governance of the faqih and the duties that are incumbent upon the fuqaha' such as the struggle against oppressors and tyrannical governments in order to establish an Islamic government and implement the ordinances of Islam. In the course of this celebrated speech, which he delivered at Mina, he set forth the reasons for his own jihad against the tyrannical Umayyad state.

Two important themes may be deduced from this tradition. The first is the principle of the governance of the faqih, and the second is that the fuqaha' by means of jihad and enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, must expose and overthrow tyrannical rules and rouse the people so that the universal movement of all alert Muslims can establish Islamic government in place of tyrannical regimes.

This is the tradition. Imam Husayn (upon whom be peace) said:

O people, take heed of the counsel God gave His friends when He rebuked the rabbis by saying,

"Why do their scholars and rabbis not forbid their sinful talk and consumption of what is forbidden [*that is, such talk and consumption on the part of the Jews*]? Truly what they have done is evil' (5:63).

Again God says:

'Cursed by the tongue of David and Jesus, son of Mary, are those among the Children of Israel who have failed to believe on account of their rebellion and transgression. They did not prevent each other from committing vile and corrupt acts; what they did was abominable!' (5:78-79).

God blamed and reproached them because they saw with their own eyes the oppressors committing vile and corrupt acts, but did not stop them, out of love for the income they received from them as well as fear of persecution and injury. However, God orders us to fear Him, not men, and He says:

The believing men and women are friends and protectors to each other; they enjoin the good and forbid the evil. (9:71).

We see that in this verse, in the course of enumerating the attributes of the believers, the attributes that indicate mutual affection, solicitude and the desire to guide each other, God begins with enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, considering this the prime duty.

For He knows that if this duty is performed and is established within society, performance of all other duties will follow, from the easiest to the most difficult.

The reason for this is that enjoining the good and forbidding the evil means summoning people to Islam, which is a struggle to establish correct belief in the face of external opposition, while at the same time vindicating the rights of the oppressed; opposing and struggling against oppressors within the community; and endeavouring to ensure that public wealth and the income derived from war are distributed in accordance with the just laws of Islam, and that taxes [zakat and all other forms of fiscal income, whether compulsory or voluntary] are collected, levied, and expended in due and proper form.

O scholars, you who are celebrated and enjoy good repute on account of your learning! You have achieved fame in society because of your devotion, the good counsel you impart, and the guidance you dispense. It is on account of God that men venerate and stand in awe of you, so that even the Powerful fear you and feel compelled to rise respectfully before you, and men who are not subject to you and over whom you hold no authority willingly regard themselves as your subordinates and grant you favours they deny themselves.

When the people do not receive their due from the public treasury, you intervene and act with the awesomeness and imperiousness of monarchs and the stature of the great. Have you not earned all these forms of respect and prestige because of men's hopes that you will implement God's laws, even though in most instances you have failed to do so?

You have failed to enforce most of the rights you were entrusted to preserve. You have neglected the rights of the oppressed and the lowly, squandered the rights of the weak and the powerless, but pursued assiduously what you regard as your personal rights. You have not spent your money or risked your lives for the sake of the One who gave you life, nor have you fought against any group or tribe for the sake of God.

You desire, and regard it as your due, that He should want you paradise, the company of the Prophet, and security from hellfire in the hereafter. You who have such expectations of God, I fear that the full weight of His wrath will descend upon you, for although it is by His might and glory that you have achieved high rank, you show no respect to those who truly know God and wish to disseminate their knowledge while you yourselves enjoy respect among God's bondsmen on His account.

I am also afraid for you for another reason: you see the covenants enacted with God being violated and trampled underfoot, yet you show no anxiety. When it comes to the covenants enacted with your fathers, you become greatly disturbed and anxious if they are only violated in part, but the pledges you have given to the Most Noble Messenger are a matter of complete indifference to you.

The blind, the dumb, and the chronically sick everywhere lack protectors and no mercy is shown them. You do not behave in accordance with your function and rank, nor do you support or pay any regard to those who do so behave and who strive to promote the standing of the religious scholars. You purchase your safety from the oppressive ruling powers with flattery, cajolery, and compromise.

All these activities have been forbidden—by God, and He has, more over, commanded you to forbid

each other to engage in them, but you pay no attention. The disaster that has befallen you is greater than what has befallen others, for the true rank and degree of 'ulama' has been taken away from you.

The administration of the country, the issuing of judicial decrees, and the approving of legislative programmes should actually be entrusted to religious scholars who are guardians of the rights of God and knowledgeable about God's ordinances concerning what is permitted and what is forbidden. But your position has been usurped from you, for no other reason than that you have abandoned the pivot of truth, the law of Islam and God's decree, and have disagreed about the nature of the Sunnah, despite the existence of clear proofs.

If you were true men, strong in the face of torture and suffering and prepared to endure hardship for God's sake, then all proposed regulations would be brought to you for your approval and for you to issue; authority would lie in your hands.

But you allowed the oppressors to take away your functions and permitted government, which is supposed to be regulated by the provisions of the Shari'ah, to fall into their hands, so that they administer it on the shaky basis of their own conjectures and suppositions and make arbitrariness and the satisfaction of lust their consistent practice.

What enabled them to gain control of government was your fleeing in panic from being killed, your attachment to the transitory life of this world. With that mentality and the conduct it inspires, you have delivered the powerless masses into the clutches of the oppressors. While some cringe like slaves under the blows of the oppressors, and others search in misery and desperation for bread and water, the rulers are entirely absorbed in the pleasures of kingship, earning shame and disgrace for themselves with their licentiousness following evil counselling, and showing impudence toward God. One of their appointed spokesmen mounts the *minbar* in each city.

The soil of the homeland is defenceless before them, and they grab freely whatever they want of it. The people are their slaves and are powerless to defend themselves. One ruler is a dictator by nature, malevolent and rancorous; another represses his wretched subjects ruthlessly plundering by imposing on them all kinds of burdens; and still another refuses in his absolutism to recognize either God or the Day of Judgment!

Is it not strange, how can one not think it strange, that society is in the clutches of a cunning oppressor whose tax collectors are oppressors and whose governors feel no compassion or mercy toward the believers under their rule?

It is God Who will judge concerning what is at dispute among us and deliver a decisive verdict concerning all that occurs among us.

O God! You know that everything we did [that is, the struggle in Which they had recently engaged against the Umayyads] was not prompted by rivalry for political power, nor by a search for wealth and

abundance; rather it was done in order to demonstrate to men the shining principles and values of Your religion, to reform the affairs of your land, to protect and secure the indisputable rights of Your oppressed servants, and to act in accordance with the duties You have established and the norms, laws, and ordinances You have decreed.

So, O scholars of religion! You are to help us reach this goal, win back our rights from those powers who have considered it acceptable to wrong You and who have attempted to put out the light kindled by your Prophet. God the One suffices us, upon Him do we rely, to Him do we turn, in His hands lies our fate, and to Him shall we return.

When Imam Husayn said at the beginning of this sermon:

'O people, take heed of the counsel God gave His friends when He rebuked the rabbis,

his address was not restricted to a particular group of people, those present in the assembly, the inhabitants of a certain city, town, or country, or even all people alive in the world at the time. Rather it embraces all who hear the summons at whatever time, for it begins with the expression "O people" (ya ayyuha al-nas), which occurs in the Qur'an with the same universal meaning.

When God rebukes the rabbis, the Jewish scholars, and condemns their behaviour, He is at the same time addressing His friends (awliya') and advising them. The word awliya means here those who have set their faces toward God and hold responsible positions in society, not the Twelve Imams.

God says in the verse we are examining: "Why do their scholars and rabbis not forbid their sinful talk and consumption of what is forbidden? Truly what they have done is evil." Thus He reproaches the rabbis and Jewish religious scholars for failing to prevent the oppressors' sinful talk, a term that includes lying, slander, distorting the truth, and so forth, and consumption of what is forbidden. It is obvious that this reproach and upbraiding is not confined to the scholars of the Jews, nor for that matter to those of the Christians; it applies also to the religious scholars in Islamic society, or indeed, any other society.

If the religious scholars of Islamic society are silent, therefore, in the face of the policies of the oppressors, they too are reproached and condemned by God; and here there is no distinction between scholars of the past, present, and future, they are equal in this regard. Imam Husayn (upon whom be peace) made reference to this verse of the Qur'an so that the religious scholars of Islamic society would take heed, awaken and no longer neglect their duty of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil or stay silent in the face of the oppressive and deviant ruling classes.

There are two points to which he draws attention by citing this verse. First, the religious scholars' neglect of their duties is more harmful than the failure of others to perform their normal duties. If a bazaar merchant, for example, does something wrong, it is only he who suffers the harm that results.

But if the religious scholars fail in fulfilling their duties, by keeping silent, let us say, in the face of tyranny,

Islam itself suffers as a result. But if, on the contrary, they act in accordance with their duty and speak out when they should, eschewing silence, then Islam itself will benefit.

Secondly, although all things contrary to the Shari'ah must be forbidden, emphasis has been placed on sinful talk and consumption of what is forbidden, implying that these two evils are more dangerous than all others and must therefore be more diligently combated.

Sometimes the statements and propaganda put forth by oppressive regimes are more harmful to Islam and the Muslims than their actions and policy, endangering the whole repute of Islam and the Muslims. God reproaches the religious scholars, therefore, for failing to prevent the oppressors from uttering dishonest words and spreading sinful propaganda. He says in effect:

Why did they not denounce the man who falsely claimed to be God's vicegerent on earth and the instrument of His will, who claimed to be enforcing God's laws in the right way and to have a correct understanding and practice of Islamic justice, even though he was incapable of comprehending what justice is? Claims like these are a form of sinful talk that is extremely harmful to society. Why did the religious scholars not prevent them from being made? The tyrants who uttered this nonsense committed treason and brought evil innovations into Islam; why did the religious scholars not stand in their way and make them desist from these sins?

If someone interprets God's ordinances in a way displeasing to Him, thus introducing an evil innovation in Islam, or executes laws that are anti Islamic, claiming to be acting in accordance with the requirements of Islamic justice, it is the duty of the religious scholars to proclaim their opposition. If they fail to do so, they will be cursed by God, as is apparent both from the verse under discussion and from this tradition:

When evil innovations appear, it is the duty of the scholar to bring forth his knowledge [by condemning them]; otherwise, God's curse will be upon him.

In such cases, the expression of opposition and the expounding of God's teachings and ordinances that stand in contradiction to innovation, oppression, and sin are also useful in themselves, for they make the masses aware of the corruption of society and the wrongdoing of the treacherous, sinful, and irreligious rulers.

The people will then rise up in revolt and refuse to collaborate any longer with the tyrants or to obey corrupt and treacherous ruling powers. The expression of opposition by religious scholars is a form of "forbidding the evil" on the part of the religious leadership, which creates in its wake a wave of broad opposition and "forbidding the evil" on the part of all religiously inclined and honourable people.

If the oppressive and deviant rulers do not bow to the wishes of such an oppositional movement by returning to the straight path of Islam and obedience to God's laws, but attempt to silence it by force of arms, they will, in effect, have engaged in armed aggression against the Muslims and acquired the

status of a rebellious group (fi'ah baghiyah). It will then be the duty of the Muslims to engage in an armed jihad against that ruling group in order to make the policies ruling society and the norms of government conform to the principles and ordinances of Islam.

It is true that at present you do not have the power to prevent the innovative practices of the rulers or to halt the corruption in which they are engaged. But at least do not stay silent. If they strike you on the head, cry out in protest!

Do not submit to oppression; such submission is worse than oppression itself. In order to counteract their press and propaganda apparatus, we must create our own apparatus to refute whatever lies they issue and to proclaim that Islamic justice is not what they claim it is, but on the contrary, has a complete and coherent programme for ordering the affairs of the family and all Muslim society.

All these matters must be made clear so that people can come to know the truth and coming generations will not take the silence of the religious readers as proof that the deeds and policies of the oppressors conform to the Shari'ah and that the perspicuous religion of Islam allows them to "consume what is forbidden," or in other words, to plunder the wealth of the people.

Since the range of thought of some people is confined to the mosque we are now sitting in and is incapable of extending any further, when they hear the expression "consumption of what is forbidden," they can only think of some corner grocer who is (God forbid) selling his customers short.

They never think of the whole range of more important forms of "consuming what is forbidden," of plunder. Huge amounts of capital are being swallowed up; our public funds are being embezzled; our oil is being plundered; and our country is being turned into a market for expensive, unnecessary goods by the representatives of foreign companies, which makes it possible for foreign capitalists and their local agents to pocket the people's money.

A number of foreign states carry off our oil after drawing it out of the ground, and the negligible sum they pay to the regime they have installed returns to their pockets by other routes. As for the small amount that goes into the treasury, God only knows what it is spent on. All of this is a form of "consumption of what is forbidden" that takes place on an enormous scale, in fact on an international scale. It is not merely an evil, but a hideous and most dangerous evil.

Examine carefully the conditions of society and the actions of the government and its component organs, and then you will understand what hideous "consumption of what is forbidden" is taking place now. If an earthquake occurs in some corner of the country, it too becomes a means for the ruling profiteers to increase their illegal income: they fill their pockets with the money that is supposed to go to the victims of the earthquake.

Whenever our oppressive, anti-national rulers enter into agreements with foreign states or companies, they pocket huge amounts of our people's money and lavish additional huge sums on their foreign

masters. It is a veritable flood of forbidden consumption that sweeps past us, right before our eyes.

All this misappropriation of wealth goes on and on: in our foreign trade and in the contracts made for the exploitation of our mineral wealth, the utilization of our forests and other natural resources, construction work, road building, and the purchase of arms from the imperialists, both Western and communist.

We must end all this plundering and usurpation of wealth. The people as a whole have a responsibility in this respect, but the responsibility of the religious scholars is graver and more critical. We must take the lead over other Muslims in embarking on this sacred jihad, this heavy undertaking; because of our rank and positions we must be in the forefront.

If we do not have the power today to prevent these misdeeds from happening and to punish these embezzlers and traitors, these powerful thieves that rule over us, then we must work to gain that power. At the same time, to fulfill our minimum obligation, we must not fail to expound the truth and expose the thievery and mendacity of our rulers. When we come to power, we will not only put the country's political life, economy, and administration in order, we will also whip and chastise the thieves and the liars. They set fire to the al-Masjid al-'Aqsa. We cry out:

Leave the al-Masjid al-'Aqsa half-burned to the ground, do not erase all traces of the crime!

But the Shah's regime opens an account, sets up a fund, and starts collecting money from the people supposedly to rebuild the al-Masjid al Aqsa, but really to fill the pockets of our rulers while also covering up the crime committed by Israel.

These are the disasters that are afflicting the nation of Islam and that have brought us to our present state. Is it not the duty of the scholar, of Islam to speak out about all this? "Why do their rabbis not forbid their consumption of what is forbidden?" Why do our Muslim scholars not protest? Why do they say nothing about all this plundering? To return to the sermon of Imam Husayn (upon whom be peace), he continues with a reference to the verse:

"Cursed are those among the Children of Israel who have failed to believe" (5:78).

This is not relevant to our present discussion. Then he says: "God reproached and blamed them [the rabbis] because they saw with their own eyes the oppressors committing vile and corrupt acts but did not stop them." According to Imam Husayn, their silence was due to two factors: greed and baseness.

Either they were covetous persons who profited materially from the oppressors, accepting payment to keep quiet, or they were faint-hearted cowards who were afraid of them. Consult the traditions referring to enjoining the good and forbidding the evil. There the conduct of those who constantly invent excuses in order to escape from doing their duty is condemned and their silence is considered shameful.

God says:

'Do not fear men, but fear Me' (2: 150).

This verse means roughly: 'Why do you fear men? Our friends (awliya') have given up their lives for the sake of Islam; you should be prepared to do the same.' "Elsewhere in the Qur'an God also says:

The believing, men and women, are friends and protectors to each other; they enjoin the good and forbid the evil; ... they establish the prayer, pay the zakat, and obey God and His messenger' (9:71).

In this verse, God mentioning the duty of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil first because He knows that if this duty is correctly performed, all other duties, whether easy or difficult, will fall into place. For enjoining the good and forbidding the evil means summoning men to Islam while at the same time remedying oppression, opposing the oppressor, making just distribution of the ghanam, and levying and spending taxes in just and due form."

If the duty of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil is properly performed, all other duties will automatically fall into place. If the good is enjoined and the evil forbidden, the oppressors and their agents will be unable to usurp the people's property and dispose of it according to their own whims; they will be unable to squander the taxes taken from the people.

For he who enjoins the good and forbids the evil actively calls men to Islam by remedying injustice and opposing the oppressor.

Enjoining the good and forbidding the evil has been made a duty primarily for the sake of accomplishing these high aims. We have restricted it, however, to a narrow category of affairs where harm is suffered chiefly by the individual who is guilty of a sin by deed or by omission.

We have the idea firmly, in our heads that the instances of evil we are called upon to combat (munkarat) are only the things we encounter or hear about in every day life. For example, if someone plays music while we are riding on the bus, or the owner of a coffee house does something wrong, or someone eats in the middle of the bazaar during Ramadhan. And, we regard all these things as instances of evil we must denounce. Meanwhile, we remain totally oblivious to far greater evils.

Those who are destroying the welfare of Islam and trampling on the rights of the weak, it is they whom we must force to desist from evil. If a collective protest were made against the oppressors who commit an improper act or crime, if several thousand telegrams were sent to them from all the Islamic countries telling them to desist, to relinquish their errors, they certainly would desist.

If every time a step were taken or a speech given against the interests of Islam and the welfare of the people, those responsible were condemned throughout the country, in every single village and hamlet, they would be obliged to retreat. Could they possibly do otherwise? Never! I know them; I know what kind of people they are. They are very cowardly and would retreat very quickly. But if they see that we

are more gutless than they are, they will give themselves airs and do whatever they want.

When the 'ulama' of Qumm met and banded together on one occasion, and the provinces supported them by sending delegations and delivering speeches to show their solidarity, the regime retreated and cancelled the measure we were objecting to.

Afterwards they were able to cool our enthusiasm and weaken us; they divided us up and invented a separate "religious duty" for each of us. As a result of the differing opinions that appeared among us, they grew bold again, and now they do whatever they want with the Muslims and this Islamic country of ours.

Imam Husayn (upon whom be peace) speaks of 'summoning men to Islam while at the same time remedying oppression and opposing the oppressors'; it is for the sake of these great aims that enjoining the good and forbidding the evil has been made a duty. If some poor grocer does something wrong, he has not harmed Islam, but only himself. In performing our duty of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, we must pay closest attention to those who harm Islam and those who, under various pretexts, plunder the people's means of livelihood.

On occasion we read in the paper, sometimes it is stated humorously, some times seriously, that many of the items collected for the victims of floods or earthquakes are picked up by our rulers for their own use. One of the 'ulam'a' of Malayer told me that the people had wanted to send a truckload of shrouds for the victims of some disaster, but the police refused to let them through and even tried to confiscate the load! "Enjoining the good and forbidding the evil" is most imperative in such cases.

Now let me ask you, were the subjects mentioned by Imam Husayn in his sermon addressed only to his companions who were gathered around him listening to his words? Does not the phrase "O people, take heed" address us too? Are we not included in "people"? Should we not profit from this address of Imam Husayn? As I stated at the beginning of this discussion, the subjects contained in the sermon of Imam Husayn were not intended for a single group or class.

His address was more in the nature of a circular directed to all commanders, ministers, rulers, fuqaha', in short, to the whole world, particularly those who are alive and fully conscious. The circulars he issued belong together with the Qur'an in the sense that they demand our obedience until the Day of Resurrection.

The verse referred to in the address speaks only of the Jewish scholars and rabbis, but its purport is universal. The Jewish scholars and rabbis were condemned by God because fear or covetousness made them keep silent in the face of the misdeeds of the oppressors, where as if they had spoken or cried out in protest, they could have prevented oppression from occurring. If the 'ulama' of Islam likewise fail to rise up against the oppressors and remain silent instead, they too will be condemned.

After addressing the people in general, Imam Husayn then turns to a particular group, the 'ulama' of

Islam, and tells them:

You enjoy prestige and standing in society; the nation of Islam respects and venerates you. You are held in awe and have high standing in society because you are expected to rise up against the oppressors in defence of the truth and to compel the oppressor to enforce the rights of the oppressed. Men have placed their hopes in you for the establishment of justice and the prevention of transgression by the oppressors.

Thus you have reached a certain station and rank. But you have failed to perform the duties of your station. If some harm were to befall the father of one of you, or if, God forbid, someone were to insult him, you would be greatly distressed and would cry out in protest. But now that God's covenants are being violated before your very eyes and Islam is being dishonoured, you keep silent and are not distressed even in your hearts, for if you were distressed, you would be bound to raise your voices in protest. The blind, the dumb, and the bed-ridden are being destroyed and nobody shows any concern; no one is concerned for the wretched, barefooted people.

Do you imagine all that pompous propaganda being broadcast on the radio is true? Go see for yourself at first hand what state our people are living in. Not even one out of every two hundred villages has a clinic. No one is concerned about the poor and the hungry, and they do not allow the measures Islam has devised for the sake of the poor to be implemented.

Islam has solved the problem of poverty and inscribed it at the very top of its programme: "Sadaqat is for the poor." Islam is aware that first, the conditions of the poor must be remedied, the conditions of the deprived must be remedied. But they do not allow the plans of Islam to be implemented.

Our wretched people subsist in conditions of poverty and hunger, while the taxes that the ruling class extorts from them are squandered. They buy Phantom jets so that pilots from Israel and its agents can come and train in them in our country. So extensive is the influence of Israel in our country, Israel, which is in a state of war with the Muslims, so that those who support it are likewise in a state of war with the Muslims, and so great is the support the regime gives it, that Israeli soldiers come to our country for training!

Our country has become a base for them! The markets of our country are also in their hands. If matters go on this way, and the Muslims continue to be apathetic, the Muslims will lose all say in the commercial life of the country.

To return to the address of Imam Husayn (upon whom be peace):

You have not made proper use of your station. Not only do you do nothing yourselves; you fail to support the person who does want to do his duty. The only source of concern and satisfaction for you is that you have the support and respect of the oppressor, that he addresses you as 'Noble Shaikh'!

What the nation suffers at the hands of the government is of no concern to you. The disaster that has befallen you is greater than what has befallen others for the true rank and degree of 'ulama' have been taken away from you. The administration of affairs and the implementation of law ought to be undertaken by those who are knowledgeable concerning God and are trustees of God's ordinances concerning what is permitted and what is forbidden. But that rank has been taken away from you.

The Imam (upon whom be peace) could have said at this point: "What is my right has been taken away from me, but you do not come to my aid," or, "The rights of the Imams have been taken away, but you have kept silent." Instead, he spoke of those "knowledgeable concerning God" (al-*ulama* bi Allah'), meaning the religious scholars, (*rabbaniyyun*) or leaders.

Here he is not referring to the philosophers or mystics, for the person knowledgeable concerning God is the one who is learned in God's ordinances. It is such a person who is designated a religious scholar (*ruhani* or *rabbani*), naturally on condition that spirituality (*ruhuniyyat*) and orientation to God Almighty be fully apparent in the Imam went on:

But your position has been usurped from you for no other reason but that you have abandoned the pivot of truth and have disagreed about the nature of the Sunnah, despite the existence of clear proofs, But if you were to show strength in the face of hardship and suffering for God's sake, then the conduct of affairs, as willed by God Would be restored to you; command and authority would be yours.

If you were to act correctly and perform your duty, you would see that the conduct of affairs would be bound over to you. If the form of government willed by Islam were to come into being, none of the governments now existing in the world would be able to resist it; they would all capitulate.

But unfortunately, we have failed to establish such a government. Even in the earliest age of Islam, its opponents hindered its establishment and prevented government from being entrusted to the person chosen by God and His Messenger precisely in order to prevent what has happened. "You allowed the oppressors to take away your functions."

When you failed to perform your duties and abandoned the task of government, it became possible for the oppressors to take over the position that was legitimately yours. "You allowed the affairs of God to fall into, their hands so they came to conduct them on the basis of their suppositions and arbitrary desires.

What enabled them to win this control was your panic stricken flight from being killed, and your attachment to the life of this world. You have delivered the powerless into their clutches, so that Some of the people are now subjugated like slaves and others are deprived of even their livelihood." All of this applies to the age we live in; in fact, it applies more fully to the present than to the time of the Imam (upon whom be peace).

The rulers are entirely absorbed in the pleasures of kingship, earning shame and disgrace for

themselves with their licentiousness, following evil counsellors, and showing impudence toward God One of their appointed spokesmen mounts the *minbar* in each city to tell lies.” In those days, preachers would praise the oppressors it from the *minbar*. Today, radio stations fill the air with propaganda on their behalf and maliciously misrepresent the ordinances of Islam.

“The earth is defenceless against them.” Now, too, the oppressors can freely exploit the earth, without any obstruction; there is no one to stand in their way, “They grab freely whatever they want [of the earth]. The people are their slaves and are powerless to defend themselves. One ruler is an obstinate tyrant, while another represses his wretched subjects ruthlessly, and still another refuses in his absolutism to recognize God as the beginning and end of all things. Is it not strange how could one not think it strange, that the world is in the clutches of cunning tyrants, oppressive tax collectors, and governors who have no compassion for the believers under their rule?

It is God Who will judge concerning what is at dispute among us, and deliver a decisive verdict concerning all that occurs among us. O God! You know that everything we did was not prompted by rivalry for political power, nor by desire for the chattels of this world. Rather it was done in order to demonstrate the signs of Your religion, to reform the affairs of Your land, to protect the oppressed among Your servants, and to act in accordance with the duties, norms, and ordinances You have established. So, O scholars of religion! Help us reach our goal and obtain our rights. The oppressors will wax strong in their efforts against you and will attempt to put out the light kindled by your Beloved [the Prophet] . But God suffices us; upon Him do we rely, to Him do we turn, and to Him is our journeying.

As we said, the entire address from beginning to end is addressed to the 'ulama'. There is no indication that the persons intended by the expression “those knowledgeable about God” are the Imams (upon whom be peace). They are the scholars of Islam, the rabbaniyyun. The designation rabbani refers to one who believes in God, fulfils God's ordinances, and is knowledgeable concerning those ordinances, as a trustee of God's decrees concerning what is permitted and what is forbidden.

When the Imam (upon whom be peace) said that the conduct of affairs belongs to the 'ulama', he did not mean to restrict this function to a period of ten or twenty years, or simply to the city and people of Medina. It is apparent from the whole speech that his meaning was more universal, that he had in mind a vast community that would undertake the establishment of justice.

If the 'ulama', who are the trustees of God's decrees concerning what is permitted and what is forbidden and who possess the two characteristics of knowledge and justice as set forth above, if they were to implement God's ordinances, to execute the penal provisions of the law, and generally to conduct and administer the affairs of the Muslims, the people would no longer be hungry and wretched and the laws of Islam would no longer be in abeyance.

The tradition containing this noble speech, then, is part of the evidence supporting our thesis, the governance of the faqih. Were its chain of transmission not weak, we could cite it as a direct proof. Even

as it stands, we might say that the content of the tradition, being veracious, bears witness that it was uttered by one of the Masumeen.

Topic Tags:

Speech [3]

Mina [4]

Karbala [5]

Category:

Imam al-Husayn and Karbala [6]

Person Tags:

Imam Husayn (a) [7]

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[5] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/karbala>

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