

Chapter 10: Why the Imam rejects to take the oath?

Now let us see as to why Imam Husayn did not take the oath of allegiance to Yazid and preferred, instead, to lay down his life and be martyred.

Some writers have given a very flabby and incorrect answer to this question. They say that the Imam came to the conclusion that he would be killed whether he took the oath of allegiance or not. In no case would Bani Umayya spare him. He considered it preferable to be killed honorably and to lay down his life for the sake of Allah.

This answer appears to be very superficial and insufficient. The martyrdom of Imam Husayn is much above that it may be said that when he realized that he would inevitably be killed he sacrificed his life saying to himself: 'Now that I am going to be killed let me be killed honorably and achieve martyrdom in the path of Islam'.

However, this is not the case, and it is necessary that the conditions prevailing in the Muslim society at that time should be studied more carefully and the sermons and addresses of the Imam himself should also be understood more accurately so that the facts may become clear.

Taking into account all the developments which had been taking place for thirty years Imam Husayn concluded correctly that at that time i.e. in the year 60 A.H. the Muslim ummah had deviated to such an extent that its deviation could not be remedied merely by means of speeches, preaching and writings and by delivering religious sermons and discourses.

Of course, if the deviation of the caliphate and the people of that time had been only superficial it would have been possible to reform it easily and the deviated ones might have been brought to the right path. However, the deviation existed in 60 A.H. was so acute and critical that it was affecting the very basic and political foundations of the Muslim society.

Furthermore, it was a general and collective deviation and not of some individuals so that it could be

reformed by preaching and exhortation. Corruption had penetrated into the entire society and could not be eradicated by these means. Imam Husayn, therefore, concluded that a severe and quick rising was necessary to obtain a final and decisive result from the elementary work done by the Commander of the Faithful and Imam Hasan, and the effects of the conditions created by Bani Umayya before the conquest of Makkah as polytheists and thereafter in the garb of Muslims could not also be eliminated without taking an earnest and energetic stand.

Of course, Imam Husayn can explain for us better than anyone else the causes of his rising, and he has actually done so. We therefore, propose to study the sermons of the Holy Imam and find out as to what he says about the causes of his rising and how he commences the event and where he ends it.

If the sermons and writings of the Imam are taken into account, especially in their chronological order, it appears that in the beginning he did not make an open announcement of his movement but when he began to advance towards his goal gradually he made the spirit of his movement and the causes of his rising known to the people. Commencing with the testament which he wrote in Madina for his brother Muhammad bin Hanafiya till the last speech which he delivered before Hurr bin Yazid Riyahi and his companions at the halting place named Bayzah, he gradually told the Muslims as to why he took that step and also that he had no other alternative. He made it clear that the grave corruption that had taken place in the Islamic Caliphate in the first instance and had then affected all social aspects of the Muslim society could not be remedied without earnest rising, self-sacrifice and martyrdom.

When the Governor of Madina pressed the Imam to take the oath of allegiance, Imam Husayn visited the grave of the Holy Prophet for two consecutive nights and offered prayers there. During the second night after he had paid homage to the sacred grave, he performed a few rakats of prayers and then said: "O Almighty Allah! This is the grave of Your Prophet and I, too, am the son of the daughter of Your Prophet. O Lord! You know with what predicament I am faced".

It is possible that some persons may imagine that the Imam meant to say that the enemies wanted to kill him and it was immaterial whether he surrendered to them or not.

However, we are sure that no Muslim will conceive from Imam's invocation that he was in danger of being martyred in the path of Allah and could not ward off this danger and live in peace along with his wives and children and, therefore, lamented and showed weakness and lack of self-possession, and also introduced himself to Allah saying that he was the son of His Prophet's daughter.

This is a very strange interpretation. Was not the Holy Prophet poisoned and killed? Were not Imam Ali and Imam Hasan martyred? Then why should Imam Husayn have moaned for fear of being martyred and complained against being killed? The Muslims who had received training at the hands of the Holy Prophet for a few years or at times for a few months and even for a few days did not complain against martyrdom in spite of the fact that previously they were idolaters and polytheists.

On the contrary, while leaving their houses they prayed that they might not return alive and might attain

to the Divine blessing of martyrdom. Now how could it be that the son of the Holy Prophet, the spirit of Islam, and the off-spring of towering personalities like Imam Ali and Lady Fatima the daughter of the Holy Prophet should be afraid of martyrdom and beseech Allah and His Prophet to protect him from this calamity and let him remain alive?

Amr bin Jumuh who was a Muslim and resident of Madina was previously an idolater and the custodian of an idol-temple in Madina. He remained steadfast in idol-worship and notwithstanding the fact that Islam had spread in Madina he continued to bow down with perfect devotion before an idol, which he had in his house. For many consecutive nights it so happened that the young men of the family of Bani Salma stole his idol and threw it in some well or dirty pit of Madina. In the morning this old man went in search of his god, retrieved it from dirt, washed and perfumed it and then stood before it with great meekness and apologized to it, said: "If I had known as to who treats you like this I would have seen him, but you should believe me that I don't know that person and should, therefore, be excused".

The young men of Bani Salma did not give up the practice and persisted in the matter till one day the dormant nature of Ibn Jumuh became enlightened. On that day he found his deity in a well, tied in a rope with the dead body of a dog, and said to it: "Had you been a god you would not have been lying in a well along with a dog". He returned to his house very much dejected and disappointed and gave up idol-worship. Possibly he embraced Islam on that very day.

This man was an idolater previously. However, when he became a Muslim, Islam elevated his spirit so much that, with the Islamic training of about a year or two, the level of his thinking became so high that in the month of Shawwal 3 A.H. he got ready to participate in the Battle of Uhud. His four sons were already accompanying the Holy Prophet.

They and his other relatives dissuaded him from participating in the jihad saying: "You are an old and disabled man and also limp. Furthermore, your four sons are already accompanying the Holy Prophet. You should, therefore, remain at home and should not expose yourself to trouble". Amr got agitated on their suggestions.

Then he approached the Holy Prophet and said: "O Prophet of Allah! Don't withhold Paradise from me. I shall walk into it with this limping foot". When he got ready to leave his house he raised his hands in prayer and said: "O Lord! Let me be destined to be killed in this journey and to attain martyrdom. Let it not be that I may return home from this journey being despaired of martyrdom".

Now the point for consideration is that if a Muslim, who had spent his past life in worshipping idols, and embraced Islam under the pressure of the youths of his tribe, could be elevated so much spiritually by Islam that he considered returning alive from the battlefield to his wife and children to be privation and bad luck, and sincerely prayed to Allah that he might not return to his home alive, how could it be that Imam Husayn who was an embodiment of nobleness and virtue and the offspring of the Holy Prophet and the Commander of the Faithful, should complain of the danger of death and say to his grandfather:

"O Prophet of Allah! Come to my help as the enemies are going to kill me!" No. This is not the position, and the sentence: "You know with what predicament I am faced" should not be interpreted to mean this, because this meaning will degrade his eternal movement and make it seem superficial.

In his supplication to Allah the Imam says: "O Lord! You know with what predicament I am faced". Predicament means the condition which the Holy Imam mentioned clearly in his sermons, letters and discourses. It is the very assessment made by Imam Husayn. It is the same deplorable state of affairs and the serious deviation which had developed in the Muslim society at that time. Predicament means that after careful study of the conditions prevailing in the Islamic territories and the activities of the Umayyad Caliphate and the ways and manners adopted by the people, Imam Husayn came to the conclusion that the Muslim society could not be saved from the danger of serious deviation without rising, self-sacrifice and martyrdom.

Then the Imam said: "O Lord! You know that I like good deeds and hate indecent deeds". With these words the Imam mentioned his object to some extent, but not so clearly that the common people might understand as to what he meant to say.

Then he said: "O Almighty Lord! I beseech You in the name of this grave and the master of this grave to show me the path by means of which You as well as Your Prophet may be pleased with me".

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