

Chapter 28: Exhortation of Imam Ali

Imam Ali says: "O people! Your behavior with people should be in such a way that if you die and depart from the world others should mourn your death and weep on account of, your absence and in case you are alive and exist amongst the people, they should be enamored of you and love you" i.e. by means of good behavior and sociability based on good morals one can win the favor and affection of the people.

"It is only by means of goodness and decent behavior that one can attract the people to oneself and captivate their hearts".

Who could act better on this sublime moral precept of Imam Ali than his honorable son Imam Husayn and who could succeed like him in making the people love him during life and after martyrdom?

In the month of Muharram 61 A.H. an event took place in Iraq on the bank of the Euphrates and some highly magnanimous and virtuous persons were martyred. Most of the people in those days did not consider this event to be greater than other historical events. They perhaps imagined that after the passage of a few years this event would also be buried in the inner folds of history books and find its place along with hundreds of other old and forgotten historical events and none would remember it except as a story and an adventure.

However, they were not aware that the personality of Husayn bin Ali would assume an immortal position. His rising would also be an eternal event of history and would not become old or get obliterated with the passage of time.

Perhaps most of the people in those days considered that the murderers of the Imam had succeeded in achieving their object and not only the event relating to these martyrs had been settled but none would be able to oppose Bani Umayya in future, and the name of Imam Ali and his descendants would no longer be mentioned in the history of Islam with glory and respect.

It was also imagined that with the passage of time the wounds sustained by the friends of Ahlu Bayt owing to the martyrdom of the Imam and his honorable companions would heal up and this calamity would also be forgotten like many other historical tragedies. However, history proved later that most of

the people were mistaken. They considered the event of Karbala as an ordinary political campaign and did not understand the sacred object which the Imam had in view in this rising, and were not acquainted with its spirit.

The difficulty which usually misleads the people is that they cannot differentiate between similar words and deeds although they may be quite different from each other. People have seen very often that some persons rise in the name of truth and also make sacrifices but eventually the step taken by them leaves no impression whatsoever, or some persons preach forcefully, support truth and side with the oppressed, and ask the people to remember Allah and the Day of Judgment, but neither the people nor history have recognized them as good and pious persons.

It is for the reason that very often the people consider the words and deeds of the godly persons also to be prompted by personal and material interest and do not pay heed to their Divine motives. They cannot differentiate between those who rise for the sake of Allah and those who are preoccupied with personal interests and carnal desires.

However, it is a matter of great pleasure that if the people make mistakes history does not, and the passage of time eliminates the causes of misunderstanding. It is history which has recorded the sayings of Imam Ali as the best religious counsels, but has ignored and forgotten the lengthy and insipid lectures of many other caliphs. As an example of this we draw the attention of the readers to the counsels recorded by an Abbasid ruler named Mansur Dawaniqi for his son Mahdi Abbasi. Ibn Wazeh Ya'qubi has narrated it thus: "After the death of Abu Ja'far Mansur his son Mahdi read out his will before the people. The following is the will:

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

This is the will of the slave of Allah the Commander of the Faithful, for his son Muhammad Mahdi, the crown prince of the Muslims. The Commander of the Faithful has nominated him as his *wasi* and successor over all the Muslims, the Zimmis, the sanctuary of Allah and the public treasury. The land belongs to Allah and He makes its heir who O Lord! Why have you given me so short a time?" Never! When the time of your death has come you will not be given any respite. And he also wants you (before you say): "O Lord! Send me back to the world. It is possible that I may perform good deeds". At that time your family will forsake you and only your deeds will be with you.

Then you will see what you have done with your hands and to what place you have gone with your feet, and what you have said with your tongue and how your limbs have assisted you in your actions; and what your eyes have seen and also what has entered your brain. Thereafter you will be fully rewarded for your good deeds and punished for the bad ones. Hence, you should always fear Allah and obey His orders. Ask Allah for His assistance in the matter of piety and seek His proximity by means of faith.

Call yourself to account and do not surrender yourself to passions and desires. Do not insist on doing bad deeds. None is more heavily burdened, more sinful, more afflicted and more mournful than you,

because your sins have accumulated and your acts have been stored. As Allah has made you the guardian of your subjects so that you may arbitrate between them, even in respect of an atom, He will call you to account, and you will be punished for the misdeeds of your oppressive agents. Allah says: You will die and others too will die and then all of you will quarrel with one another in the presence of your Lord. It seems as if I can see that you have been detained before the Omnipotent Lord.

Your friends have deserted you. Your adherents have surrendered you to accountability and punishment. Your offences are lying at your door and your sins have involved you into difficulties. Fear has taken hold of you and weakness and helplessness have ruined you. Your logic has been spoiled and you have lost the remedy. The people have taken their rights from you and have avenged themselves.

All this will happen on the day which will be very dreadful and hard. It will be a day on which the eyes will be dazzled, the hearts filled with anger will reach the throats and the oppressors will have neither a relative nor an intercessor who might hear their entreaties. What will then be your position on the day on which the people will quarrel with you and their rights will be demanded from you!

It will be the time when there will be no relatives to assist or support you. It will be the day on which all deeds will be rewarded; intercession will not be accepted; the balance of justice will be set up and final orders will be given.

Allah has said that on that day injustice will not be done to anyone and He will settle the accounts of all very soon. It is necessary for you to get ready for that day and endeavor to achieve deliverance. Free yourself from sins. Make the most of the opportunity available at present and fear the Day of Judgment.

Keep the world away from you, for it is deceitful and will destroy you. You should keep your mind directed towards Allah and seek the fulfillment of your needs from Him. It is necessary that your justice is extensive and widespread. The people should be immune from injustice. Arbitrate between your subjects on the basis of equality and make efforts to please Allah.

Select our friends and associates from amongst the pious persons. Give the Muslims their due share from their wealth. Give them without stint that to which they are entitled out of the revenue and the booty. Pay them their pension regularly and pay their monthly and annual dues immediately at the proper time. Develop the cities and regions by reducing the taxes. Reform the people by means of good behavior and sound policy.

The most important task for you is to protect your surroundings and guard the frontiers. You should dispatch the army immediately when necessary. Seek Allah's assistance in the path of jihad and for the defense of His religion and destruction of His enemies. It is Allah who grants victory to the Muslims and makes them free and contented with the religion.

You should sacrifice your life, dignity and wealth in this path. Look after your army constantly and keep

information about the military station of horsemen and the camps of the soldiers. You should know that refuge, movement, and power are from Allah and you should depend on Him only, because it is He Who is sufficient for you, Who makes you independent and helps you, and His help and support is enough".

This is a specimen of the didactic sayings and writings of an Abbasid ruler. It is very expressive and eloquent from the point of view of phraseology and style. However, it cannot be counted among the religious sermons and celestial wisdom. In spite of all their wealth and power Bani Umayya and Bani Abbas could not compile a Nahjul Balaghah or a Sahifa Sajjadiya with the help of such insipid testaments and speeches, nor could they prepare a book like Tuhaful 'Uqul which is a collection of the sermons delivered by the Holy Prophet and the Imams.

On account of the special power and insight which history possesses to assess the personalities and their words it makes some sermons: speeches and letters everlasting, whereas it ignores some other speeches which apparently resemble them but have no worth at all. This is the task that is performed by history with the passage of time and not by the contemporary persons who cannot usually make a correct assessment of the facts.

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