

Chapter 35: Imam Ali's Sermon on Divine Law

Imam Ali has said: "By Allah I think that these enemies of yours will soon gain a victory over you because in spite of their falsehood they are united whereas you, in spite of your being right, are dispersed and separate from one another. They obey their leader in the false path whereas you disobey your ruler in the path of Truth. They behave towards their leader honestly whereas you are treacherous towards your leader. They safeguard the interests of their land and do not do anything that may be harmful to it whereas you do harm to your own country and commit crimes. How can I work with you people, for if I entrust a wooden bowl to anyone of you I really fear that he would remove its handle". (Nahjul Balagha)

It may be said that with these words Imam Ali explained all these Qur'anic verses and pointed out that it is not possible to disobey the Divine laws and traditions. Imam Ali wanted to tell his companions: 'You will not be victorious only because your Imam is Ali and your opponent will not be defeated only because a bad man rules them. This has not been the Divine law in the matter of victory and defeat of the nations.

It is not so that every party whose leader is a good and just person should be victorious and successful, although its members may not be united, may disobey their leader,¹ commit treachery with him and commit crimes in their land. It is also not the "Divine law that the group of persons whose leader is oppressive should not succeed and should not achieve their object and come into power although they may obey their leader and behave towards him sincerely and may be good, useful and honest in their mutual dealings.

According to the Divine system the first group would be defeated in spite of their good leader and lose their power and sovereignty because it is not possible to maintain these things in the presence of dispersion, differences, disobedience, treachery and dishonesty. And in spite of their oppressive leader the second group would succeed and snatch power from the hands of others, because according to the Divine law advancement, victory, domination and acquisition of power are the necessary outcome of unity, obedience, submission, sincerity and honesty".

Ali did not want to elate his companions and tell them falsely: "Because of your having an Imam like Ali

you should remain contented, for in any case the present as well as the next world belong to you. It does not matter that you are not united, because your Imam is Imam Ali. There is no harm if you are treacherous because your Imam is Ali. There is nothing to worry even if you do not obey your Imam and do not listen to his words, because you have an Imam like Ali.

If you are bad persons in your mutual relations and as the citizens of your city and country, and pull down your house with your own hands, and are mischievous and corrupt, no harm will come to you, because an Imam like Ali is your ruler. On the contrary as your enemies are ruled by a tyrant they will always remain wretched and humble and will always be defeated by you even though they may be more united and more honest than you and may be more obedient to their ruler and more useful for themselves and their country than you are. Imam Ali did not tell his companions and his followers any such false things all of which are against the Divine law, and reminded them on all occasions that Allah's laws are unalterable.

However, the supporters of Imam Ali said these false things to themselves and possibly most of them imagined and still imagine that in fact the system and methods of Allah can be changed and it is possibly to derive good results from those things from which all other human beings have derived bad results, and to become honorable, powerful and happy by doing things which have made others base, humble and degraded and ruined their honor, power and happiness.

In another sermon Imam Ali says about jihad: "If a person turns away from jihad considering it to be disagreeable, Allah humiliates him. He is overtaken by calamities. He loses authority and does not receive justice".

Here also Imam Ali has not spoken about the spiritual reward for performing jihad for the sake of Allah and defending the frontiers of one's country and one's religion. He has also not said that, if a person does not perform jihad and a nation forgets the duty of jihad and defense of the country and sits quietly till the enemy launches an attack, will be awarded such and such punishment in the next world.

He wants to draw the attention of the people to one of the Divine laws and methods i.e. when a nation abandons the duty of jihad and defense and does not care to protect its frontiers from the attacks of the enemy, it will become humble and degraded, and will suffer affliction and abjectness even though its Prophet may be the last of the Prophets and its Imam may be Imam Ali. Its people will lose wisdom and intelligence.

As a result of the abandonment of the duty of jihad and defense they forfeit their right, and authority is transferred to others. Such a nation is branded with disgrace and no one deals justly and equitably with it. It appears that considering that the people could not be prompted to perform jihad by rousing their religious sentiments, Imam Ali appealed to their national sentiments and said to them that if they did not perform jihad to earn spiritual reward and did not fear the punishment to be awarded in the Hereafter on account of giving up jihad they should at least fear its evil effects on their present life and should beware

of the Divine laws which are unalterable.

In other words he said to them: 'Even if you are not desirous of spiritual reward in the Hereafter you should at least get up to preserve your honor and independence and should protect the frontiers of your country from the attacks of the enemy. You should not jeopardize your position and honor amidst the various nations and should not make yourselves afflicted and helpless by remaining confined to your homes and providing an opportunity to the enemy'.

Then Imam Ali says: "I have been telling you openly and in private during day and night to fight against the people of Syria and your enemies and to attack those rebels, and advance before they invade you and come upon you unawares, because there has never been a nation which sits in its house till the enemy makes a rush on it and plunders its frontiers one after the other and then fighting takes place in the center of the country of that nation and it is not humiliated and defeated.

However, you ignored what I said, on one pretext or another, and discouraged one another in the matter of jihad. Consequently, according to the Divine system, the enemy crossed your frontiers and plundered and snatched away a region from you every day". (Nahjul Balagha)

The Holy Qur'an has said repeatedly that Allah does not alter His system for anyone and there are many verses in it which make this fact clear. The Holy Qur'an says thus about the Jews who were contemporary with and inimical towards the Holy Prophet:

They (the Jews) say: 'Even if we go to Hell we shall not remain there save for a certain number of days'. (O Prophet of Allah) ask them: 'Have you received a covenant from Allah? Then truly He will not break His covenant or do you speak against Allah that which you know not? (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:80)

That means: 'Has Allah given you an undertaking that when the deeds of the people are taken into account on the Day of Judgment, He will deal with you differently as compared with other sinners and whereas they will remain in Hell for ever, you will be subjected to torture for a few days only? Has Allah really made such a confidential promise with you or are you associating with Allah that of which you are not aware?'

Then the Holy Qur'an refers to the aforesaid Divine law and Says:

Certainly, the evildoers who are engulfed in sins are the companions of Hell-Fire wherein they will live forever. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:81)

Here the Jews have been told that they, too, will be punished according to the general law and that law is that whosoever is involved in sin and polytheism and does not leave it till his death shall remain in Hell forever.

In the following verse the same thing has been said in a more clear and comprehensive manner: 'It (i.e.

reward and punishment and good and bad consequences of deeds) will not be in accordance with your desires (i.e. desires of the Muslims) nor the desires of the people of the Scripture i.e. the Divine law will not be changed either for the Muslims or for the people of the Scripture and that law is:

Whoever commits evil will be punished accordingly and no one besides Allah will be his guardian or helper. And whoever does good deeds, whether male or female, and is a believer will enter Paradise and they will not be wronged in the least. (Surah an-Nisa, 4: 123 - 124)

1. For example, the Muslims were defeated in the Battle of Uhud owing to the disobedience of some persons (although they were Muslims and they believed in Allah, the Prophet, Islam and the Qur'an and their opponents were the enemies of Allah and His Prophet).

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