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Imam al-Husayn's Flight to Makka

The Holy Qur'an says:

إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْقَصَصُ الْحَقُّ

Surely this is an account of Truth. (3:62)

Historical records tell us that after Mu'awiya's death, Yazid, his invalid issue, occupied the station of caliphate and wrote to his governor in Madina to force Imam al-Husayn ('a) among others to pay the oath of allegiance to him, or else execute him.

When the Imam ('a) is asked to pay his oath of allegiance to Yazid, he presents a rational exposition, worthy of consideration. He first introduces himself and then Yazid, and thereafter says:

مِثْلِي لَا يُبَايِعُ مِثْلَهُ

'My example [who is utterly submissive to Allah] cannot give his hand to the like of Yazid [who is an open sinner]'

In short, he ('a) says:

Premiss 1: I am a manifestation of truth.

Premiss 2: Yazid is a manifestation of falsehood.

Premiss 3: A manifestation of truth cannot unite with a manifestation of falsehood.

Conclusion: Hence I cannot agree to pay the oath of allegiance to him.

The interesting point here is that the Imam ('a) does not merely say "I will not pay the oath of allegiance to Yazid". Rather he says 'anyone like me (mithli) does not/cannot pay¹ the oath of allegiance to anyone like Yazid (mithlahu)".

Therefore, this statement is not a personal issue, but a universal lesson for all times and all places. It is a direction for every truth-seeker and informs the wrongdoers that a truth-seeker will never yield to falsehood.

Thereafter Imam al-Husayn ('a) resolves to leave Madina for Makka with his noble family members. This forms the basic anecdote of this short treatise. It is a move of truth towards Truth from the champion of truth (haqq) itself.

It is narrated in al-Irshad² that:

فسار الحسين (عليه السلام) إلى مكة و هو يقرأ " فَخَرَجَ مِنْهَا خَائِفًا يَتَرَقَّبُ قَالَ
رَبِّ نَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ) و لزم الطريق الأعظم

Then al-Husayn ('a) journeyed to Makka while he recited the following verse [of the Qur'an]: 'And he left the place in the state of fear and apprehension; he said: **'O Lord, save me from the oppressors'** (28:21) and he [the Imam] adhered to the main highway.

The above verse speaks of Prophet Musa ('a)'s escape from Egypt when fleeing from Fir'awn, but is also applicable for Imam al-Husayn ('a) too. Just as Musa ('a) flees from Fir'awn and his comrades, al-Husayn ('a) flees from the Fir'awn of his time.

The 'state of fear' in the verse however should not be mistaken for 'fear of death' for infallible leaders are far from such states. The fear in this verse perhaps was from any event that would hamper his path from fulfilling his mission of awakening the slumbering folk and reviving Islam in their hearts and minds of the Muslims. Thus he did not want to be martyred before he fulfills his mission.

Then when Imam al-Husayn ('a) reaches the outskirts and sees its mountains, he recites³ the following verse of Qur'an:

و لَمَّا تَوَجَّهَ تَلْقَاءَ مَدْيَنَ قَالَ عَسَى رَبِّي أَنْ يَهْدِيَنِي سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ

And when he turned his face towards Midian he said: 'maybe my Lord will show me the right

way.' (28:22)

This verse also pertains to Prophet Musa (‘a) when he enters the city of Midian. Imam al-Husayn (‘a) by reciting the verse perhaps sought Divine help to carry out his mission of conveying his message and stance to all the Muslims of the world in the proper way. He seeks guidance so that he may fulfill his mission in the best possible manner.

The decision taken by Imam (‘a) to come to Makka reveals his timely move and extreme astuteness. He would have gone to other places suggested by his companions, as a result of which he would be safe from the calamities and able to adopt a life of repose.

However, he had a loftier mission, and the only way to carry out the same was to go to a place where he would get a global audience who would be able to communicate to their people the pathetic state of the government, so that every committed Muslim rises for the truth.

1. Here la yubay'u can be both narrative of the reality and informative as well. Thus by this statement one can inform his addressee the reality that (1) truth never unites with falsehood, and (2) truth will not unite with falsehood.

2. Shaykh Mufid, Kitab al-Irshad, v. 2, p.33

3. Ibid.

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