

After Martyrdom

Sisters and brothers!

Now the martyrs have died, but we dead are alive. The martyrs spoke their words and we remain deaf to their advice. They were brave enough to choose death when they were no longer able to remain alive.

They have left but we shamelessly remain. We have remained for hundreds of years. It is conceivable that people will laugh at us; that we, manifestations of abjectness and humility, are crying for Husayn ('a) and Zainab, manifestations of glory and greatness.

It is another one of the oppressions of history that we humiliated cry and mourn for those noble, great, dear honoured ones. Today the martyrs proclaim their message with their blood. They sit opposite us in order to invite those seated to arise.

In our culture, in our religion, in our Shi'ite history, humanity has created the most powerful life-giving germs that give life and excitement to history and divine lessons which teach man how to arise and reach God, heirs of all of the dear, divine assets are in the hands of the abject and humble and yet they are hidden.

We are heirs to the dearest savings which have been gathered by jihads, martyrdoms and the sacrificing of the noblest values of humanity.

We are heirs to all of these and we are responsible to be an example of a Community' (*ummah*) for humanity. As we are told in the Quran, "We made you, the modest community, in order for you to bear witness to other people as the messenger bears witness to you." So we are responsible, with this precious inheritance, to our martyrs, warriors, leaders, commanders, faithful and our Book, to make a model community in order to bear witness to the people of the world and be the messengers to bear witness to this.

Such a mandate is a heavy one. The mandate of giving life, living and causing movement in humanity

has been given to us, we who are unable to carry out our ordinary lives. Oh, my God! What wisdom is hidden in this? We who are drawn into foulness and our routine animal-like life, should we mourn and arrange lamentation ceremonies for men, women and children who in Karbala have proven martyrdom and who bear witness in history, in the presence of God and in the presence of freedom, forever?

Oh, God! What type of oppression is once more being committed against Husayn's ('a) family? The martyrs have finished their jobs. Now, in the middle of the night we are mourning for them and announce the end of their task. And you see, under the shelter of crying for Husayn ('a) and love of Husayn ('a), how we co-operate with Yazid who also wished to see this story end. The martyrs have finished their task and are silent but every one of them played their role perfectly.

The teacher, the person who calls out the time of prayer, young people, children, women, master and servant can all be representatives of a class who select a living death. These martyrs performed two jobs – from Husayn ('a)'s child to his brother – from his servant to himself – from the reciter of the Quran to the teacher of the Kufa children – from the one who calls out the time of prayer to those related or strangers to one another – from the nobles and respected ones of society to the ordinary man who held no respect in society – all stood as brothers, equal before martyrdom in order to teach all the men, women, children, old and young of history: How they should live if they could and how they should die if they could not.

Any one of these martyrs is a representative of his own class and yet showed another aim. They bore witness with their blood not with their words. They condemned the ruling system in the court of human history which determines the history of man, a system which employs policy, economics, religion, art, philosophy, thought, feelings, ethics and humanity in such a way as to sacrifice its people for the sake of its system. They condemn, by their martyrdom, all groups of people and human values which are used to build a support system for an oppressive and criminal government.

There is one ruler over history, one oppressor who rules history, one executioner who creates martyrs. Throughout history many have been the sacrificed of this executioner. Many women have been silenced by the whips of this executioner. At the price of much blood, desolate places have flourished. The hungry, the slaves, women and children have been massacred as well as men, heroes, servants, teachers throughout all ages and all generations.

Now, Husayn ('a), with everything he owns in the world, beside the Forat River, has come to bear witness in the presence of history to the oppressed of history, to all of the condemned of this executioner who rules history.

He has come to bear witness with his son, Ali Akbar, as to how this executioner, Zahhak, has eaten the brains of youth throughout history.

He has come to bear witness as to how a hero dies in a criminal regime and the regime of criminals by sacrificing himself. He has come to bear witness with his sister, Zainab, to a system which has ruled throughout history, that women should either select slavery and thus remain in harems or by choosing freedom, they should remain as martyrs and thereby lead the caravan of the captured.

He has come to bear witness with his small child, Ali Asghar, that the oppressive and criminal regime and the oppressive executioner does not even show mercy towards suckling children.

Husayn ('a) has come with his whole existence in order to bear witness in the criminal court of history on behalf of those who have been martyred and have died defenceless and in silence.

Now the court has ended with the martyrdom of Husayn ('a), with his sacrificing all of his dearest property and any possibility which he possessed. He has performed his great divine mission.

My dear friends! In the Shi'ism which we see where anyone who discusses the pure, aroused and awakened Shi'ite, prior to being defeated by the enemy, is sacrificed by friends, there exists an important and great teaching and message as well as great and divine values. He is a valuable resource which gives a living spirit to society, nations, race and history.

One of the most important life-giving sources which exists in the history of Shi'ites is martyrdom. As Jalal al-Ahmad has said, "We have forgotten the tradition of martyrdom and have changed into those who are only guarding at the cemeteries of martyrs. We are bearers of the black death."

Instead of being Ali, Husayn ('a) and Zainab's Shiites, that is, followers of martyrs, we have remained in everlasting mourning. How intelligently we have altered the message of Husayn ('a) and his great, dear and everlasting friends. This message is addressed to all men.

What does it mean when Husayn ('a) who sees all of his dear ones are killed and there is no one in front of him except the hated and plundering enemy, cries out, "is there anyone who can help me?" Does he not know that there is no one who can help him? He has asked this question before the future history of man. This question is addressed to the future and to us. This question expresses what Husayn ('a) expects from his lovers. With this question, he announced his invitation to all who respect martyrdom and martyrs.

But we diminished this invitation, his expectation of assistance, the message of Husayn ('a) who asks Shiites and his followers in every age and generation for help. Instead, we announce to the people that Husayn ('a) needs tears and weeping and has no other message. He has died and requires only lamentation and is not a martyr who bore witness, a person who requires followers at all times and in all

places. Yes, they have told us to continue saying, "No."

Every revolution has two visages. The first visage is blood and the second is a message. Martyrdom means bearing witness. Those who themselves select the red–death in order to show their love of the truth which is being destroyed and which is the single weapon for jihad are the values which are diminishing.

It is to be present, alive, a witness not only in the presence of God but in the audience of the people and in every age, century, time and place. Those who bear humility in order to remain alive are silent and the dirty dead of history. But those who select their own death and with generosity have come with Husayn ('a) to be slaughtered, while hundreds of religious arguments permit them to remain alive, they made no arguments and died. Are they alive or those who left Husayn ('a) and accepted abjection and inferiority in obeying Yazid in order to remain? Which ones are still alive? They are alive who do not consider life to be a moving body. They are alive who feel the existence of Husayn ('a) and who bear witness to his existence with all of their own being. They are alive who see those who remain humble in order to remain alive as being dead.

They show and martyrs show, teach and bear the message that being unable does not release your duty to stand against oppression and injustice. Martyrdom does not accept the argument that victory is only in conquering the enemy. A martyr is a person who when unable to conquer the enemy gains victory with his own death and if he cannot defeat the enemy, he disgraces him.

A martyr is the heart of history. In the same way that the heart gives blood to the body, a martyr gives it to history. In a society which is dying, in a society where its.. people are losing their faith, in a society which is involved with gradual death, in a society which accepts surrendering, in a society where responsibility is ignored, in a society where the belief of being human has been forgotten, in a society which ceases in its productivity, and movement, a martyr, as a heart, gives blood to the dry dead and motionless corpses of society.

The most important miracle of his martyrdom is that he gives a new faith to a generation. Thus a martyr is ever present and ever–lasting!

Who is absent? Husayn ('a) has taught us another more important lesson than his martyrdom and that is that he does not finish his Pilgrimage but puts his being martyred even before it. He does not finish the Pilgrimage which is a renewal of his ancestor's struggle – the struggle of his grandfather and his father. He does not finish the Pilgrimage but chooses martyrdom. He does not finish the ceremony of the Pilgrimage in order to teach all of the pilgrims of history, in order to answer all of the prayers of history, addressing all of the faithful followers of –Abraham if there is no imamate or leadership, if no goals exist, if no Husayn ('a) exists but Yazid exists, circumambulating around the House of God is equal to

circumambulating around a house of idols.

When Husayn ('a) interrupted his Pilgrimage ceremonies and left for Karbala, those who continued their circumambulation in the absence of Imam Husayn ('a) are equivalent to those who circumambulate around the Green Palace of Mo'awiyah because a martyr is one who is present. He is present in all areas of truth and falsehood, in all jihads between oppression and justice. He is present and the intention of his presence is to give this message to all men: if you are not present on the battlefield of truth and falsity, it makes no difference where you are. If you do not bear witness to the battle between truth and falsity during your age, it makes no difference what you are doing. Whether you be at prayer or you be drinking it is the same thing.

Martyrdom bears witness to the permanent battlefield of history between the truth and falsity and absence? All of those who left Husayn ('a) alone and were not present and did not accompany him in martyrdom are all equal –whether they be those who left Husayn ('a) alone and went to Yazid and worked as his agents or whether–they be those who, in expectation of paradise, went to altars of prayer with security and peace and left Husayn ('a) alone, who in order to avoid the troubles of conflicts between truth and falsity, ran away to corners of the altars or houses only to pray to God or those who kept silent because they were frightened.

Where Husayn ('a) is present – and he is present in every century and in every age – anyone who does not stand beside him, whether they be believers or atheists, criminals or virtuous peoples – they are all equal.

According to a principle of Shi'ite ideology, the nature of each act depends upon imamate, leadership and governorship. Without it, everything is meaningless and we see that it is meaningless.

Now, Husayn ('a) has announced his presence to all ages, against all generations, in all battles, in all jihads, upon all of the battlefields of the earth and of the age. He has died in Karbala in order to cause all ages and generations to arise.

And you and I – we must cry in our misery that we are not present. Every revolution has two visages: blood and a message. Husayn ('a) and his companions undertook the first mission of blood.

The second mission of martyrdom, the burden of bearing the message which is announced to the world is given to Zainab – a woman whose courage is something for all to learn from. The mission of Zainab is heavier and more difficult to bear than her brother's mission. Those who have the courage to select their own death have simply made a great choice, but the responsibility of those who remain is most difficult. Zainab has remained. The caravan of slaves follows behind her. The ranks of the enemy are in front of her. The announcement of her brother's mission rests solely upon her shoulders. She enters the town.

She is coming from the battlefield. She has left behind a red garden of martyrdom and the perfume of the red flowers spreads from her skirts. She enters the criminal city, the capital of power, oppression and execution.

With peace, she victoriously announces to the powers and cruel people, the enslaved agents, executioners, the remnants of colonialization and dictatorship: "Thank you God for all the generosity and greatness which you gave to our family: the honour of prophecy and the honour of martyrdom!"

Zainab bears the responsibility of announcing the message of those who bore witness but are silent because she had remained and must now speak for the martyrs, whose tongues have been silenced by the executioners.

If blood has no message, it will remain unspoken in history. If blood does not extend its message to all generations, the executioner will imprison it in a certain time and age. If Zainab does not announce the message of Karbala to history, Karbala will remain silent and those who need such a message will fail to receive it. The message of those who speak with their blood will reach no one.

This is why the mission of Zainab is so heavy and difficult. The message of Zainab is for all human beings, to all of those who cry for the death of Husayn ('a), to all who incline their heads towards the threshold of Husayn ('a)'s faith, to all of those who believe as Husayn ('a) that 'life is nothing but faith and jihad'.

Zainab's message – "Any of you who are related to or committed to this family – anyone who is faithful to the mission of Muhammad – you must think and select – in every age, every generation, in whatever land you may be., you must listen to the message of the martyrs of Karbala who said:

'Those can live well who can die well.'

"You who believe in the message of divine unity and the Qur'an as well as the way of Ali and his family and you who will come after us, the message of our family to humanity is the art of how to live well and how to die well.

"If you are religious, you have a responsibility to your religion. A liberated person also has a responsibility towards human liberty. Witness your time. Witness the conflict between the truth and falsehood of your age. Wherever our martyrs bear witness, they are aware and alive and always present. They are a symbol and bear witness to the truth and falsity, the destiny and fate of humanity."

A martyr embraces all of these. Each revolution has two visages: blood and a message. Anyone who has chosen the responsibility of accepting truth, anyone who knows what a Shi'ite's responsibility means,

anyone who understands the responsibility of the freedom of humanity, must know that in the permanent battle of history –,everywhere and everyplace, all fields – are Karbala, all months are Muharram, all days are Ashura and thus one must choose: either blood or bearing the message, to be either Husayn ('a) or Zainab, to die like Husayn ('a) or remain like Zainab, if he does not want to be absent and always wants to have presence.

I sincerely apologize to the audience. Time has passed and there is no further opportunity. There is so much to be said. How can. one completely express the miracle of Husayn ('a) in one lecture and Zainab who completed it. What I want to say is a long story but in summary, the mission of Zainab after martyrdom is:

Those who died committed a Husaynic act.

Those who remain must perform a Zainabic act.

Otherwise, they are Yazids.

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