

Hazrat Ibrahim-Friend of Allah

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The earlier times speak to us through history. However it is a different matter that we do not listen to them.

They announce loudly that great historical revolutions have occurred only when a courageous youth had come forward with a strong and unwavering decision to do something important. On the other hand the weak-hearted, who are unable to make any change in their mode of life can never change the course of history. Worse than that, if timid and selfish people gather around the oppressor ruling class an atmosphere is created wherein common masses submit to every unjust calamity as their destiny and turn superstitious. But when this situation becomes too troublesome to be tolerated any more, Almighty God raises from those masses an epoch-making character who changes the future of his community; who draws his people out of the alleys of misguidance, making them march ahead on the path of truth.

In ancient times, in Iraq, there were two big cities called "Kildan" and "Babel" which were ruled upon by King Nimrod. He was a merciless and very oppressive ruler who had made his people live very painful life for a long time.

People in his kingdom had no rights whatsoever and were not allowed to make any demand or complaint. This miserable condition had made people so demoralized that they were like walking corpses. Nimrod was becoming more and more merciless day by day and none in his kingdom could do anything but obey him without having any hope of salvation.

King Nimrod, like his people was an idol-worshipper who considered idols worthy of worship; and trustworthy objects; and their temples the holiest and most sacred places. So, Nimrod also was taking every care of those old and worn out idols, knowing well that this idol-worship was the biggest testimony of his people's ignorance and intellectual poverty.

For quite a long time, Nimrod continued to observe that the residents of Kildan were losing every iota of their intelligence to such an extent that they were considering a pearl a pebble and vice versa: that they were thinking that those lifeless objects were the molders of their destiny. So, Nimrod took undue benefit of his people's dark ignorance and told them that he himself was 'God'.

The renegade Nimrod saw that not a single person objected to his claim of divinity. He was all the more glad to see his weak, demoralized and courageless community prostrating before his pomp, glory and royal grandeur and accepting him as God.

The citizens of Babel were also compelled to, besides worshipping all the idols, to consider

Nimrod as possessor of divine powers and one who could give life and take life. With the passage of time this situation subjected them to further fearfulness, mindlessness, restlessness and ever-increasing corruption and demoralization, because they were deifying both, the idols and King Nimrod. Their former gods were dumb while the latter vocal. No family had escaped the tortures and oppression of Nimrod.

In such a dark and fearful atmosphere, Almighty Allah, the most merciful God, commanded His intelligent and wise youthful servant, Ibrahim (a.s) to announce his messengership and prophethood. His father, Tarukh, had expired before Ibrahim was born. So he was nourished and brought up by his maternal grandfather Azar.[1]

Accordingly Ibrahim (a.s) arose and took steps against King Nimrod and all the misguided unbelievers so that he could propagate the oneness of Only One God, and making them aware of his message, awaken them from their sleep of ignorance.

Ibrahim knew well that he was alone as his community was quite courageless; while against him was the powerful army of Nimrod and hence he must very careful. So Ibrahim (a.s) started his missionary work from his own house, thinking that if his family members agree with him, he would go ahead in his work slowly.

Therefore, addressing his maternal grandfather, Azar very politely, he tried to convince him with his logical arguments and said, "You are a wise man. Have can you consider these lifeless idols gods? I can see that you are, along with your community, advancing on the path of sheer ignorance." In this way, Almighty God removed all the curtains which were in front of the nature of Ibrahim so that he could see the angels (forces) in the skies and on the earth and could observe God's might and His innumerable creations in the unending space and so that Ibrahim's faith may become solid.[2]

Ever since Ibrahim (a.s) became intelligent enough and began to recognize the people of his community he used to look abhorrently at the stagnant and lifeless idols and at the throngs of people who rushed to worship them on the basis of their self-imagined attributes. He remained very unhappy at this condition.

In view of all these conditions, he moved forward to remove the difficulties and hindrances, which were likely to confront him first. His maternal grandfather, Azar, who besides being an idol-worshipper was also a well-known idol-maker, became his foremost roadblock. So Ibrahim started the work of his messengership on him. In order to reform him, he said very politely and affectionately:

O my father! Why do you worship what neither hears nor sees, nor does it avail you in the least?
O my father! Truly the knowledge has come to me, which has not come to you, therefore follow

me, I will guide you on a right path.

O my father! Serve not the Satan; surely the Satan is disobedient to the Beneficent God.
O my father! Surely I fear that a punishment from the Beneficent God should afflict you so that
you should be a friend of the Satan.[3]

Thereafter Ibrahim went to Azar and addressed the ignorant idol-worshippers as mentioned by
God Almighty in this manner:

And certainly we gave to Ibrahim his rectitude before and we knew him fully well. When he said to his father and his people: "What are these images to whose worship you cleave? They said: we found our fathers worshipping them. He said: certainly you have been, (both) you and your fathers, in manifest error. They said: have you brought to us the truth, or are you one of the triflers? He said: Nay! Your lord is the lord of the heavens and the earth, who brought them into
existence, and I am of those who bear witness to this.[4]

When Azar and his people heard these strange words from Ibrahim (a.s) they became extremely angry with his courageous movement. Azar, besides being himself an idol-worshipper, was also afraid that if Nimrod were to hear this and comes to know that Ibrahim (a.s) was mocking the community and its gods and criticizing them, first of all, he would be asked (by Azar) why did he not took the son of his daughter (Ibrahim) to task and allowed him
so much liberty? So he frowned terribly and addressed Ibrahim in these harsh words:
Do you dislike my gods, O Ibrahim? If you do not desist I will certainly revile you, and leave me
for a time. [5]

Though Ibrahim (a.s) had got up to pull down the palace of idol-worship and superstition, when he observed that both Azar and all his community became so much enraged in the first instance, he thought that it was not advisable to push the matter further for the time being. However, what happened in the first stage of Ibrahim's call was that the ears, which were unable to hear any good or truthful words, could hear his voice and also a part of the rust on their hearts was erased to some extent. So he left his people in that condition for a while that
their anger may cool down and then people may be able to think with a cool heart and mind...
The call of Ibrahim declared the truth, gradually the news reached the residents of Urr, another city of Kildan. Ibrahim's message spread speedily all around and some intelligent and wise people agreed with him. They gave up the worship of gods having shapes, bodies and figures. They also began to advise others to abandon the wrong deed. They warned the people about
the anger and punishment of the only true God if they disobeyed Him.

The people of his community used to celebrate an annual feast, when all the residents used to go out of the city and make merry in the open. On one such occasion the entire city had

become empty of people leaving only Ibrahim there, as he mostly remained aloof and was fed up with the meaningless old rituals of his community and used to laugh at them indignantly.

Considering this an opportunity he took yet another step in his missionary work. Ibrahim was a youth with God-given strength and capability. His arms were strong, chest wide and eyes bright. He took up an axe in his strong hands and moved calmly towards the temple where people of the town worshipped man-made idols. He broke down all idols with his axe and also disfigured all the indecent images drawn on temple walls. He left only the biggest idol untouched with a hope that he might then be able to call his people to worship only one God. And by Allah! I will certainly do something against your idols after you go away, turning back.

So he broke them into pieces, except the chief of them, that haply they may turn to it.^[6] Ibrahim (a.s) collected the broken limbs etc. of the idols and kept them aside; and when he was satisfied that he had rooted out the mindlessness and ignorance of polytheism, returned home to take some rest. He was awaiting a hue and cry from people after their return from the annual feast. The people used to cook food articles and gift them to the idols in the temple before going to celebrate. After returning from the feast they brought back the articles home to eat them as sacred benediction. They believed that being pleased by their offer those gods would grant increase in their livelihood.

But this time when they returned from the feast they witnessed a very strange event; that all the idols were lying broken except the big one. The limbs of all the idols lay in a heap at one place. They were so shocked and spellbound that they could not utter a word for quite some time. Finally when they came out of the shock they began to speak and talk with one another as to who has oppressed their gods so much. Whoever it might be, his offence was definitely intolerable!

Someone mentioned the name of Ibrahim (a.s) saying that there lived in that town a man called Ibrahim who spoke ill of these idols. He must have done this deed. All agreed on this point and were convinced that only Ibrahim was responsible for this escapade. The people were so enraged that they summoned Ibrahim at once for questioning.

Accordingly a committee of judges was formed which appointed a court to which Ibrahim (a.s) was summoned. He was charge-sheeted for the said offence of breaking down their idols so mercilessly. All the people of the town gathered at the court. It must have been a scene worth seeing indeed. There was commotion all around. Ibrahim was then produced before this court for committing a crime of idol breaking.

The huge audience was on their toes, eager to see the outcome of the trial. On one side was Ibrahim (a.s) and on the other, a heap of broken limbs of their gods made of stone and wood.

The judges were red hot in anger. At last they shouted, "O Ibrahim! Have you brought this calamity on our gods?" The representative of monotheism replied calmly in a single sentence, which woke the sleeping consciences and he turned the tables calling people to his mission. He said, "This must be the deed of this biggest idol. What happened later may be inquired from him if he is able to speak."

These words of Ibrahim (a.s) affected the hearts of people so much that all put their fingers between their teeth. No one was able to respond. The judges spoke to one another: It was our fault that we did not appoint anyone to look after and protect our gods in our absence. All looked down and then said, "When you know that they cannot speak why you ask such a meaningless question?"

Ibrahim was waiting only for this response, so he said fearlessly, "You people call on and worship these gods who can neither give profit nor any loss. Why do you not understand and worship the only one God, Who is Almighty? Why do you not think upon this?"

Those who were seated on the chairs of justice became dumb on hearing these true words from Ibrahim. When they could not reply they became restless and pronounced the judgment: Light up a huge fire and fling Ibrahim in it by means of a big catapult so that he may be burnt to ashes. Help your gods in this way to make them pleased with you.

But the Most Merciful and Beneficent Allah made the fire cool (with His perfect Power) and Ibrahim came out of it safe and sound.

In the words of the Holy Quran:

They said: Who has done this to our gods? Most surely he is one of the unjust. They said: We heard a youth called Ibrahim speak of them. Said they: Then bring him before the eyes of the people, perhaps they may bear witness. They said: Have you done this to our gods, O Ibrahim? He said: Surely (some doer) has done it; the chief of them is this, therefore ask them, if they can speak. Then they turned to themselves and said: Surely you yourselves are the unjust; Then they were made to hang down their heads: Certainly you know that they do not speak. He said: What! Do you then serve besides Allah what brings you not any benefit at all, nor does it harm you? Fie on you and on what you serve besides Allah; what! Do you not then understand? They said: Burn him and help your gods, if you are going to do (anything). We said: O fire! Be a comfort and peace to Ibrahim; and they desired a war on him, but We made them the greatest losers.[7]

The story of idol breaking by Ibrahim (a.s) and defeat of the judges in the court of Nimrod spread in the entire community like wild fire. Ibrahim's (a.s) success became the talk of the town. A big group of people sided with Ibrahim (a.s) and, convinced by his logical arguments

began to worship only one God and thus through the messengership of Ibrahim (a.s) became Muslims.

On the other hand, all those idol-worshippers whose hearts had become crooked and who were eating the bones thrown to them by Nimrod and thus had become his slaves shamelessly and meekly continued to oppose the truth which had become manifest and stuck to their false beliefs.

When Nimrod who was the God of their gods heard about all this he was enraged. He ordered that young Ibrahim (a.s) should be brought before him so that he could see the one who had dared to perform such a big adventure disregarding his pomp and power. When Ibrahim (a.s) entered the royal court of Nimrod he found Nimrod sitting on his throne with such pomp that his courtiers could not look at him and were trembling due to his awe. But Ibrahim (a.s) was the representative of monotheism. He stood straight before Nimrod quite fearlessly. Nimrod looked at him and said, "Why did you do this dangerous deed which created turmoil in the entire town? I am the God of these people and their lord; and their destiny is in my hands. Have they any other God than myself?" Ibrahim (a.s) replied, "Yes, He is my God Who is the creator of the entire universe. Whenever He wishes he takes back the lives of His creation." Nimrod retorted, "This is not a thing, which I cannot do. I allow my servants to live freely when I wish and I am able to kill them when I wish to do so and thus their life and death is in my hands."

When Ibrahim (a.s) saw that this fellow was boasting too much on the basis of his kingship, he took a step further and said, "I worship the God who raises the sun from the east. If you have any power, let us see whether you can bring it out from the west." This argument of Ibrahim (a.s) fell on Nimrod's head like a big rock and he became speechless, spellbound and defeated: Have you not considered (Nimrod) who disputed with Ibrahim (a.s) about his lord, because Allah had given him the kingdom? When Ibrahim (a.s) said: my lord is He who gives life and causes to die, he said: I give life and cause death. Ibrahim (a.s) said: so surely Allah causes the sun to rise from the east, then make it rise from the west: thus he who disbelieved was confused: and Allah does not guide aright the unjust people.[8]

This is the story of a young man whose name was Ibrahim (a.s), the friend (Khalil) of Allah. God chose him for fetching out people from the darkness of ignorance and misguidance. It was the result of Ibrahim's rising youthfulness and the accompanying unlimited capabilities that he defeated the material powers and false arguments making the truth manifest and bright.

[1] This is what the original Persian writer of thisbook says, though it is generally believed that Azar was an uncle of ProphetIbrahim-God knows best. (Translator)

[2] Surah Anam 6:74-75

[3] Surah Maryam 19:41-45

[4] Surah Anbiya 21:51-56

[5] Surah Maryam 19:46

[6] Surah Anbiya 21:57-58

[7] Surah Anbiya 21:59-70

[8] Surah Baqarah 2:258