The Sermon of Imam Sajjad (A.S.) in Kufa

The fourth Imam addressed the people of Kufa and delivered a sermon before them. After making a sign to them to keep silent, he said: "O people! Whoever knows me knows me, and he, who does not know me, should know that I am the son of that person, who was dishonored and whose entire belongings were looted and plundered, and whose women and children were made prisoners..... "

Of course, if the fourth Imam had not mentioned the plundering and maltreatment by the enemy, and had not revealed openly the details of the event one or two days after it had taken place, when the agents of the regime were still jubilant on account of their apparent success, and did not know that they had dug their grave with their own hands, it was not unlikely that the matter might have been given a different color in the history of Islam, and it might have been said that the Ahlul Bayt were taken to Kufa and Syria with a view to showing them honor and consoling them, and no constraint or force was involved. However, the fourth Imam depicted the true scene of the tragedy of Karbala in the very first sentence of his sermon and imprinted it on the hearts of the people. Eventually these very speeches and writings were recorded in the third century in reliable Islamic history books and it became impossible even for the succeeding Ummayyad dynasty to change even one line of it, in spite of all their power, or at least to delete from the pages of history the incident of the plundering of the tents and stripping the body of the Imam. They could not make the Muslims forget these shameful deeds.

The Ahlul Bayt (family) of the Imam, who had been made prisoners, deprived Bani Umayya of even this power, and performed such a glorious deed that it not only became impossible for the enemy to tamper with the facts, but minute details of the hideous acts of the murderers of the Imam were also recorded in history.

Have not Shaykh Mufid and Tabari written that whatever dress was there on the body of the Imam was plundered after his martyrdom?

The Imam's shirt was removed from his body by Ishaq bin Haiwa. His vest was taken away by Bahr bin Ka-b Tamimi. His turban was taken by Akhnas bin Marthad. His sword was taken by a man belonging to the tribe of Bani Da-rm. Qays bin Ashath bin Qays took possession of his Qatifa (mantle). Qays was later known in Kufa as Qays of Qatifa. The Imam's shoes were removed from his feet by a man named Aswad, who belonged to the tribe of Awd. Then they made a rush on the tents and plundered everything including clothes and camels. They

displayed their utmost meanness by removing even the head-dresses of women. Who wrote and recorded these detailed historical facts? It was these very speeches and addresses of Ahlul Bayt which transferred the true facts of A-shura clearly and explicitly to the pages of history. History has not only recorded that Ibn Ziyad gave orders to Ibn Sa-d to let the body of the .Imam be trampled upon by the horses, but has also given full details of this proceeding. Shaykh Mufid, Tabari and other historians have written that Ibn Sa-d reached the tents, when some persons wanted to kill the fourth Imam. He, however, ordered that none should molest the ailing person or inconvenience the bereaved women in the tents. And when it was brought to his notice that the tents had been plundered he ordered those who had taken away something from them to return it. However, not a single person returned anything. Then to comply with Ibn Ziyad's orders, Ibn Sa-d called the volunteers to trample upon the sacred body of the Imam. He was perhaps also cautious in the matter and he did not himself nominate some persons to carry out the orders lest they should decline to undertake such a shameful act. However, this precaution was unnecessary and the possibility was quite remote. As said by great historians ten persons volunteered themselves for the purpose. They mounted their horses with great enthusiasm and performed the job according to his wishes. What is surprising is that the names of these heartless bastards have also been recorded in history and the Islamic historians have mentioned the names and particulars of all of them. Tabari and Mufid have mentioned their names only and recorded that one of the aforesaid ten persons was Ishaq bin Haiwa Hazrami who looted the shirt of the Imam and the other was Akhnas bin Murthad, who took away his turban from his head.

If Imam Sajjad had kept quiet on account of his illness, fatigue caused by the journey, captivity and dejection, and had not proclaimed in the bazaar of Kufa what he had seen on the day of A-shura, and if Umme Kulsum and Zaynab, daughters of Imam Ali and Fatima and daughter of Imam Husayn had also not spoken in the bazaar of Kufa, and had not checked the enemy of an opportunity to tamper with history, how could Bani Umayya permit that the story of their indelible shame and disgrace should form a part of the history of Islam and Bani Hashim should expel their rival for ever from the field of humanity, virtue and piety.

When these speeches were being delivered and these addresses were reaching the ears of the people it was the speakers themselves who knew very well what they were saying and doing, and they made no mistake in assessing the value of their words. Other people could not, however, realize as to what power the speeches of Ahlul Bayt, which were being delivered at times in the bazaars, at the doors and in general gatherings and at times in the masjids, would give to the tragedy of Karbala and to what extent they would change the thinking of the people

in the course of time. Most of the people did not understand more than that the persons, whose father had been killed, and who were bereaved, were telling the tale of their woe, crying and shedding tears owing to the calamity which had befallen them. They had no idea that the Ahlul Bayt were in fact performing their part in the Divine mission of this rising.

The task undertaken by the Imam could not be completed without the explanation and interpretation which was being given by them.

There wa a real danger that this Divine campaign which had been led by the most sacred personalities of Islam might, at a later stage, be made to appear a material movement prompted by worldly motives and the factual position might be concealed from the Muslims and their future generations for ever, leaving them with a few pages of history containing fabricated tales. It was for this reason that Ali bin Husayn ignored his illness and mourning, and lady Zaynab, her sister, and nephew also forgot their captivity and bereavement. Instead of assuming the posture of helpless and bereaved persons or flattering the enemy, they commenced their mission of informing the people of the true facts with perfect determination, and I availed of even the smallest opportunity to achieve their end. So much so that even if anyone abused them on account of ignorance or perversion, they considered it to be a valuable opportunity I and made it an excuse to talk with him. By this means they changed the heart of the reviler in such a way that he repented immediately, became a supporter of Ahlul Bayt and expressed regret for what he had said.

The Ahlul Bayt acted so intelligently that they benefited even from the abuses hurled upon them. Even if someone addressed them slanderously or tauntingly they considered it an opportunity to talk to him and to remove misunderstandings from the minds of the people.

After mentioning the misconduct of the enemy in a few words which were recorded in history , Imam Sajjad said thus while addressing the people of Kufa: "I am the son of the man who was beheaded on the bank of the Euphrates although he had not shed the blood or usurped the right of anyone. (i.e. he was killed without any offence committed by him). I am the son of the man who was attacked by a huge number of people and martyred when he was no longer capable of fighting and had fallen on the ground owing to weakness. This is sufficient honor for us". By uttering these words the fourth Imam obliged the people to make more investigations about the heart-rending martyrdom of Imam Husayn, because merely being killed cannot be reckoned to be an honor, particularly an honor in the presence of which no other honor should be needed. Imam Zaynul 'Abidin said:

"It is a sufficient honor for us that our blood was shed, our property was looted, we were insulted and our women and children were made prisoners". The Imam wanted the people to

ponder as to what the object of this rising was, what its leader desired, and what he did. If he wanted to become the ruler, and as another person had attained to this office he was unhappy, and sacrificed his life and property in an effort to achieve his object, being killed in this way can never be a source of pride, rather it would be a matter of shame. Then how could the fourth Imam feel proud of it and say: "This honor is sufficient for us?"

On hearing these words the people must have wondered as to how this event could be a source of pride. They might have thought: '

Are people not killed? Are there no casualties in political wars? Is there little loss of property and life in social disturbances? What sort of honor is it that one's property is looted, his tents are set on fire and his near ones are killed. These are afflictions but not a source of pride'. But the words of Imam Sajjad obliged the people to make a deeper study and investigation to assess the importance and value of this rising in the history of Islam and to find out what these persons were saying and what weight their words carried and why they were not calm and quiet like other people and why they were not willing to accept any offer made by the ruler in power. What was the harm if Imam Husayn had taken the oath of allegiance to Yazid and lived honorably among the Muslims with- out losing his friends and his own life? These very expressions of the fourth Imam prepared the people to hear, stimulated their thoughts and roused them from slumber. Possibly many persons might have been saying: "It is good that these people have been killed, life has returned to normal, the roads to Iraq which were blocked for some days have been re-opened and the traffic and transportation which had become difficult has returned to its usual course'.

While the people were thinking on these lines the fourth Imam cried suddenly: "They killed us and plundered whatever we had and this is a sufficient honor for us". This interpretation gave a jerk to the people and created in them a desire to make further investigations.

Then Imam Sajjad said: "O people! I put you on your oath to tell me in the name of Allah, whether you know that at one time you wrote letters to my father and then deceived him. You made firm promises with him and then rose to fight against him. May Allah destroy you, may you reap the harvest of your misdeeds in both the worlds, and may you be disgraced for the indecent policy which you have adopted. How will you face the Prophet of Allah when you are brought before him on the Day of Judgment and with which eyes will you look at him? At that time the Holy Prophet will tell you: "You have killed my children and behaved towards me dishonorably. You are not my followers".

These few sentences of the Imam changed the thinking of Ii the people of Kufa and the smiling faces of those persons who had mostly come to see the prisoners blushed with shame. They

tried to control themselves but could not do so. At last the groanings and lamentations of the people could be heard from different sides. They began reproaching one another. One of them said: "What an evil thing you have done! You annihilated yourselves". Another replied: "But what can we do now?"

While the people were weeping and sighing the Imam addressed them once again in these words: "May Allah bless those, who accept my advice and put into practice my recommendations about their duty to Allah, the Prophet of Allah and the Progeny of the Prophet, for it is incumbent upon us to follow the Prophet of Allah".

This brief address brought about such a turn in the minds of the people that they cried: "O son of the Prophet of Allah! All of us will hear what you say and obey your orders. We will honor the promises made with you. We will not forsake you and will not side with anyone else. We are ready to act upon whatever you say. We will fight with him, against whom you fight, and will make peace with him, with whom you make peace. We are prepared even to take steps to arrest Yazid. We hate those who oppress you".

It would appear from these statements of the people as quoted by Ibn Tawus that they had not yet understood the object of the Imam. They perhaps thought that he intended to fight and wished to mobilize an army for the purpose. They did not know that part of the movement which involved armed rising and martyrdom had already been completed, and there was no need any longer of warfare and bloodshed. What remained to be accomplished were these very speeches, sermons and addresses which were the only means of reflecting the events of A-shura in the history of Islam and in the minds of the Muslims. Moreover, the promises, which they were making with the fourth Imam, and the assurances, which they were giving him, were not dissimilar to the assurances and promises, which they had held out to Imam Husayn. As such the assurances given by them had no value and could not be relied upon. They fell in the category of the oath of allegiance taken by them to Muslim bin Aqil and the letters written by them to Imam Husayn.

Hence, Imam Sajjad said: "O unfaithful and inconstant people! You will never succeed. Do you want to be have towards me in the same manner in which you behaved towards my forefathers? N O, it cannot be so. I swear by Allah that the wounds of my heart have not yet healed up. Yesterday my father and his companions met martyrdom. I have not yet forgotten my being bereaved of the Holy Prophet, my father and my brothers have not overcome this grief. What I want you to do is that you should neither support us nor oppose us. Husayn bin Ali's being martyred is also not surprising. Was not his father Ali better than him and was he not assassinated? O Kufians! It was you, who killed Ali. May I be sacrificed for my father who

was martyred on the bank of the Euphrates. The punishment for his killers is Hell".

Then he added: "We shall be perfectly satisfied with you if you give up the practice of siding with us on one day and opposing us on another day".

The fourth Imam did not speak more and could not get an opportunity to speak till the Ahlul Bayt were brought one day before Ibn Ziyad in a public assembly. There also he availed of the opportunity to speak. By uttering a few sentences though they were brief, he impressed the gathering.

Source:

"A Probe into the History of Ashura" By: Dr. Ibrahim Ayati