Timeless Testimony

O’ God! Make the beginning of this day of mine righteousness, its middle prosperity, and its“ end success! I seek refuge in You from a day (of Judgement) whose beginning is fright, whose middle is anxiety, and whose end is pain!…

O God, I pray forgiveness from You for every vow I have vowed, every promise I have promised, and every pledge I have pledged and then failed to keep for You. I ask You concerning the complaints of Your servants against me: If there is a servant from among Your servants or a handmaid from among Your handmaids, who has against me a complaint because I have wronged him in respect to himself, his reputation, his property, his wife or his child; evil words I have spoken about him in his absence;

an imposition upon him through inclination, caprice, scorn, zeal, false show, bigotry, whether he be absent or present, alive or dead, such that my hand has fallen short and my capacity has been too narrow to make restitution to him or to annul my obligation to him; I ask You, O’ He Who owns all objects of need - which are granted by His will and hasten to His desire - that You blessed Muhammad and the Household of Muhammad, make (the one I have wronged) satisfied with me in the manner that Thou willest…

O’ God! Grant me on every Monday two favors from Thee:

the felicity to obey Thee at its beginning and the favor of Thy forgiveness at its end!… O’ Most Merciful of the merciful!” The above passage is part of a highly emotive supplication. It is a humble petition for divine favors. It is an earnest request to the Creator for making not only the day a success but also the whole life fruitful, so that the soul could serenely sail towards salvation in afterlife. It mirrors the mercy of the Most Munificent, for attaining of which, a person ought to diligently observe the rights of others.

What a wonderful definition and delineation of human rights! Did the petitioner to the hallowed court of the Almighty, merely utter such words without practicing them or did he set a practical precedent for posterity to follow? Who was he and what response did his phrases and personality evoke?

Although it would be very simple to say that the sublime supplicant was none other than the Survivor of the Sanguine Tragedy of Karbala, a couple of cases of the rapturous response received by Imam Zain al-Abedin (AS) at the Holy Ka’ba – God’s symbolic house in Makkah Mukarramah – will not be out of context, in view of the fact that today (Muharram 25) happens to be his martyrdom anniversary, after 34 years of highlighting the epic of Ashura.

Once when the throngs of pilgrims respectfully gave way for Imam Zain al-Abedin (AS) to kiss the Hajar al-Aswad (the Sacred Black Stone) whenever the 4th Imam approached that particular corner of the Holy Ka'ba, an exasperated Hesham ibn Abdul-Malik, the Umayyad governor of Makkah (later to be caliph), unable to go near the blessed spot because of the huge multitude, asked in a disdainful manner fully knowing the identity of the person in question: Who is he? The great Arabic poet, Farazdaq, who happened to be nearby gave the following prompt reply to the haughty tyrant: "It is someone whose footsteps are known by every place And it is he who is known to the Bayt (Ka'ba) in Makkah the most frequented sanctuary;

It is he, who is the son of the best of all men of God, And it is he who is the most pious and devout, the purest and most unstained, the most chaste and the most righteous, a symbol (for Islam) This is Ali (the son of Husain), whose (great) grandfather is the Prophet This is the (grand) son of Fatima, if you do not know who he is;

Whosoever recognizes his God knows also the primacy and superiority of this man, because the religion (Islam) has reached nations through his House."

This was not the only instance of the confirmation of the God-given authority of the 4th Imam beside the Hajar al-Aswad, an extraordinary stone that on the Day of Judgement will testify to God of the faith in the hearts of believers and of the disbelief in the hearts of the pagans, the atheists, the hypocrites, etc. No wonder, God had sent this stone to Adam to be installed at the Ka'ba. It was re-installed by Prophet Abraham when he rebuilt the Ka'ba. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) placed it in its original position at the renovation of the Ka'ba years before the formal declaration of Islam. In the days of Imam Zain al-Abedin (AS) it busted the schism of the Kaysania when some misled persons thought of nominating Imam Ali's (AS) son Muhammad al-Hanfiya as the successor to Imam Husain (AS) after the tragedy of Karbala, in spite of the fact that the Imamate is an exclusively God-given authority above the petty politics of elections, selections and nominations.

Although Muhammad al-Hanafiya knew that he was not the Imam and was not descended from the Prophet, in order to demonstrate a definitive proof of the Wilayah (divine authority) vested by God Almighty in his nephew Imam Zain al-Abedin (AS), he agreed to stand by the verdict of the Hajar al-Aswad. First the uncle approached the Sacred Black Stone and addressed it on the question of Imamate but found no response.

Imam Zain al-Abedin (AS) then stepped forward, prayed to Allah and asked the Hajar al-Aswad to declare in clear Arabic as to who was the Wasi (Testamentary Legatee of the Prophet) and Imam after Imam Husain (AS). To the surprise of the viewers, there was a motion

in the Sacred Stone and by God’s permission it said in a clear tone: "O Allah, verily Wisayah and Imamah, after Husain ibn Ali is for Zain al-Abedin Ali ibn al-Husain, son of Ali ibn Abi Talib and the Prophet’s daughter Fatima." (refer to al-Ihtijaj of Tabrasi, al-Kafı of Kulaini, Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. XI of Majlisi).

The 4th Imam who used to say: "Why should I not cry, when my father was denied the water which was free to the beasts and animals,” has left lasting legacies in the form of Sahifat as-Sajjadiyah the prayer manual from which supplication mentioned above has been quoted and the Risalat al-Huqouq or Treatise of Rights, that is a more complete charter of human rights than the UN has been able to draft.