

FRIDAY SERMON OF IMAM ZAFRULLAH DOMUN

23 NOVEMBER 2012

After reciting the *Tashahhud*, the *Ta'uz* and the first chapter *Al Fatiha* of the Holy Quran Imam Zafrullah Domun read verse 155 of chapter 2 in Arabic and then he said:

There are some people in the world whose actions are so laudable that even after their death they are remembered and their memories are cherished. In the first ten days of Muharram each year for almost fourteen centuries Muslims in general but particularly Shias Muslims have been commemorating the tragic death of the grandson of the Holy Prophet ^{saw}, Hussein Ibn Ali Ibn Abu Talib (626-680). In previous years several times we have recounted these tragic events. Those who are interested may read the previous sermons. Today we will speak generally about this unspeakable crime that so-called Muslims in power committed against sincere Muslims who did not recognize their authority.

During the early days of Islam the idolaters of Mecca wanted to eliminate the prophet and his companions. But by Allah's Grace they were unable to do so and eventually all those who fought the Holy Prophet ^{saw} in Arabia had to surrender themselves and embrace Islam. So within a period of ten years after the emigration of the Holy Prophet ^{saw} to Medina his Jamaat was triumphant in the whole of Arabia and the precinct of the Kaaba was cleared of all idols. But unfortunately, once the prophet died the seed of revolt sprouted again and it had to be crushed by Hazrat Abu Bakr ^{ra}. However there were still some unruly elements in the Muslim society and someone would not hesitate to kill Hazrat Umar ^{ra}. Soon after people will show some dissatisfaction with the way Hazrat Osman ^{ra} was running the affairs of the Muslims and they would assassinate him. Consequently Hazrat Ali, the cousin and son in law of the Holy Prophet ^{saw} become caliph in 656AD and Muawiya, the son of Abu Sufian, the leader of the Meccan aristocracy which fought against the Holy prophet would try to assert himself and wrest the leadership from Hazrat Ali. But Hazrat Ali would be ready to fight him and eventually he backed down. Unfortunately in 660AD someone would kill Hazrat Ali and Muawiya will take over the caliphate from Hazrat Ali's son Hassan who abdicated in his favour because he did not want Muslims to fight amongst themselves.

Now just think about this: within 28 years after the death of the Holy Prophet Muhammad ^{saw}, three caliphs have been murdered and Muslims have fought two battles amongst themselves, one was the battle of the camel which pitted Hazrat Ali against Hazrat Ayesha and Talha and Zubair in December 656. The other was between Hazrat Ali and Muawiya in May 657AD known as the battle of Siffin. Eventually there was a sort of truce but Muawiya and his schemers would not stop from creating trouble for Hazrat Ali. Eventually a plan was hatched by those known as the Khawarij, the seceders to kill both Ali and Muawiya and Amr bin Aas. Hazrat Ali was mortally wounded and Muawiya was wounded but did not die and Amr bin Aas escaped miraculously from the assassins.

It is quite interesting to hear what some who have studied this matter say about Hazrat Ali. For example in the Encyclopedia Britannica we read: "he was the last and worthiest of the primitive Muslims, who imbibed his religious enthusiasm from companionship with the Prophet himself, and who followed to the last the simplicity of his example." Similarly professor Nicholson, in his book "The literary history of the Arabs" says: "Ali was a gallant warrior, a wise counselor, a true friend and a generous foe. He excelled in poetry and in eloquence. He had however no talent for the stern realities of statecraft, and was overmatched by unscrupulous rivals who knew that was a game of deceit. On the other hand he exerted an influence only second to that of the Prophet himself."(History of Islam by Professor Masudul Hasan Page 139).

With the death of Hazrat Ali as leader of the then Muslim world, people elected Hazrat Hassan as caliph but within six months the latter abdicated in favour of Muawiya because he did not want to spill the blood of the Muslims. Muawiya ruled the Muslim world for almost twenty years. But before he died he appointed his son Yazid of ill repute as his successor. At that time Imam Hussein was living in Medina among his people. As soon as he became caliph Yazid asked all the governors to obtain the oath of allegiance of all the people to him. In Medina Hazrat Hussein and Abdullah bin Zubair did not take the oath because it was their opinion that Yazid did not qualify as a caliph. So they escaped to Mecca without professing any allegiance to Yazid.

While he was at Mecca, Imam Hussein received invitation from the people of Kufa to the effect that if he came to Kufa they would support his caliphate. Remember that Kufa was in present-day Iraq and Yazid was in Syria. Imam Hussein sent his cousin Muslim b Aqil to Kufa. The people welcomed him and about 12,000 took the oath of allegiance with Imam Hussein through Muslim. The journey from Mecca to Kufa took about three weeks. En route they understood that Yazid was undoing the movement in his favour. They killed Muslim bin Aqil and several others. Imam Hussein decided to stay on course to Kufa. Eventually they arrived at a place called Karbala and Imam Hussein was given the choice to accept the caliphate of Yazid or face death. He and his

seventy companions chose death instead of making allegiance to someone they knew was not qualified for this position.

The tragedy of Kerbela has since then shaken the foundations of Islam. For the past fourteen hundred years this great tragedy has cast its dismal shadow over the Muslim world for ever. In all ages there have been poets, statesmen, revolutionaries, intellectuals and historians who have in their own ways commented upon this tragedy and have praised the courage of Imam Hussein in the face of despotism. Professor Hitti, in his book "History of the Arabs" says: "the blood of Hazrat Hussein even more than that of his father proved to be the seed of the Shiite sect. Kerbela gave the Shiite a battle cry which ultimately led to the downfall of the Umayyad." Another historian Gibbon, in his book "Decline and fall of the Roman Empire" says: "the tragedy of Kerbela was so overwhelming that through ages and every clime it has continued to awaken the sympathy of the coldest reader. The day of the martyrdom of Hazrat Hussein is observed throughout the Muslim world with great mourning." Yusuf Ali, the translator of the Holy Quran in English says "The Imam chose the path of danger with duty and honour, giving up his life freely and bravely. His story purifies our emotion." And Maulana Muhammad Ali, the great political leader of Indo Pakistan said in a very beautiful verse "*Qatl-e-Hussain asl main marg-e-Yazid hai, Islam zindaa hota hai har Karbala ke baad*" which means "in the murder of Hussein, lies the death of Yazid, for Islam resurrects after every Karbala".

As I said before, living about 14 centuries after these events, what happened in Kerbela is a blot on Islamic history. We can appreciate what it meant when we hear what those who are in the know of these events say about it. To end this sermon I will give you some more quotes on this tragedy and I hope it will help you to put this tragedy in perspective and understand its significance.

Thomas Carlyle, a Scottish historian and essayist says:

"The best lesson which we get from the tragedy of Cerebella is that Husain and his companions were rigid believers in God. They illustrated that the numerical superiority does not count when it comes to the truth and the falsehood. The victory of Husain, despite his minority, marvels me!"

Edward G. Brown, a Professor at the University of Cambridge says :

"a reminder of that blood-stained field of Karbala, where the grandson of the Apostle of God fell, at length, tortured by thirst, and surrounded by the bodies of his murdered kinsmen, has been at anytime since then, sufficient to evoke, even in the most lukewarm and the heedless, the deepest emotion, the most frantic grief, and an exaltation of spirit before which pain, danger, and death shrink to unconsidered trifles." (A Literary History of Persia, London, 1919, p.227)

Sir William Muir, a well known Scottish orientalist says:

“The tragedy of Karbala decided not only the fate of the Caliphate, but also of Mohammadan kingdoms long after the Caliphate had waned and disappeared.” (Annals of the Early Caliphate, London, 1883, p.441-442)

Ignaz Goldziher, a Hungarian orientalist says:

Weeping and lamentation over the evils and persecutions suffered by the ‘Ali & family, and mourning for its martyrs: these are things from which loyal supporters of the cause cannot cease. ‘More touching than the tears of the Shi’is’ has even become an Arabic proverb.” (Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law, Princeton, 1981, p.179).

Dr. K. Sheldrake says:

“Of that gallant band, male and female knew that the enemy forces around were implacable, and were not only ready to fight, but to kill. Denied even water for the children, they remained parched under the burning sun and scorching sands, yet not one faltered for a moment. Husain marched with his little company, not to glory, not to power of wealth, but to a supreme sacrifice, and every member bravely faced the greatest odds without flinching.”

Antoine Bara, a Lebanese writer says :

“No battle in the modern and past history of mankind has earned more sympathy and admiration as well as provided more lessons than the martyrdom of Husain in the battle of Karbala.” (Husain in Christian Ideology)

Washington Irving, an American author, essayist, biographer and historian

"It was possible for Hussein to save his life by submitting himself to the will of Yazid. But his responsibility as a reformer did not allow him to accept Yazid's Caliphate. He therefore prepared to embrace all sorts of discomfort and inconvenience in order to deliver Islam from the hands of the Omayyads.

Under the blazing sun, on the parched land and against the stifling heat of Arabia, stood the immortal Hussein.”

AlFakhri, a famous Arab Historian says:

"This is a catastrophe whereof I care not to speak at length, deeming it alike too grievous and too horrible. For verily, it was a catastrophe than that which naught more shameful has happened in Islam...There happened therein such a foul slaughter as to cause man's flesh to creep with horror.

And again I have dispersed with my long description because of its notoriety, for it is the most lamented of catastrophes."

Josh Malihabadi known as *Shaayar-e-Inqilaab* or The Revolutionary Poet says: *Insaan ko bedaar to ho lene do, har qaum pukaraygi hamare hain Hussain*” “
(Let humanity awakens and every tribe will claim Hussain as their own.)

Allama Iqbal , the famous Pakistani poet says :

"Imam Hussein uprooted despotism forever, till the day of Resurrection. He watered the dry gardens of freedom with a surging wave of his blood, and indeed he awakened the sleeping Muslim nation. If Imam Hussein (a.s) had aimed at acquiring the worldly empire, he would not have travelled the way he did. Hussein weltered in blood and dust for the sake of truth. Verily, therefore he becomes the foundation of Muslim creed. '*La Ilaha Illallah*', meaning there is no deity but Allah (God)."

Unfortunately in all epochs, we witness the clash between the Yazidis (the partisans of Yazid) and the Husseinis (those who stand for what Imam Hussein stood for) within Islam. This battle has been going on for ages now. The Yazidis think that the exercise of power is their birthright. In order to exercise their right they are ready to murder truth, persecute and murder those who stand for it. But Allah has proven it time and again that in the battle between the likes of Hussein and Yazid, Allah will always stand where Hussein stood even if his head was chopped off because as Allah has said in the verse that I quoted in the beginning: "And say not of those who are killed in the cause of Allah that they are dead; nay, they are living; only you perceive not." [2:155]. Imam Hussein died together with his brave companions on the battlefield in Kerbela but his spirit lives on and will never die. Whenever people like Yazid assume temporal power in this world and they try to impose their will on Allah's servants, Allah will raise people like Hussein who would always be ready to lose all but they would never bow down to such Yazids. This is the lesson that we learn from Kerbela and this is the spirit that should motivate us to confront all those who display their Yazid-like ugly character from time to time. In this battle those who display the spirit of Hussein and his companions will always be triumphant. May Allah help all of us to develop the spirit of Imam Hussein and his companions and that we never show any weakness in fighting the likes of Yazid wherever they raise their head. Ameen!