

FRIDAY SERMON OF IMAM ZAFRULLAH DOMUN

30 NOVEMBER 2012

After reciting the *Tashahhud*, the *Ta'uz* and the first chapter *Al Fatiha* of the Holy Quran Imam Zafrullah Domun said:

These days, in the world of Islam, Muslims remember the courage and fortitude in adversity, the fearlessness in the face of death, the love for truth, and the defiance to an iniquitous so-called Muslim authority exemplified by Imam Hussein, grandson of the Holy Prophet Mohammad^{saw}. His head was cut off and mingled with dust but his memory lives on and on for as long as there will be Muslims on this earth. As you know poets are those people who have a gift with words and they use their gift to express some really noble sentiments. The death of Imam Hussein has been the subject of many poems throughout these almost 14 centuries after his death. Last week I gave some quotations from prose writers but today I will share with you what some poets have said.

Most of the extracts that I am giving you today comes from an article written in *Al-Serat*, Vol XII (1986) by Lynda Clarke, from the University of Toronto. This article is freely available on the net. My purpose in presenting some of the translation of these poems here are only to help readers and listeners to understand the impact that the death of Imam Hussein made on all these people who knew how to use words. In these poems usually known as elegies, the poet usually describes the virtues of the deceased and describes the loss of the mourner. Such an event then provides an opportunity to dwell on the pathos of this transitory life in the face of fate, always unalterable. Often the mourner curses the enemy and calls for vengeance. These poems were written on the same pattern as they used to write in presislamic times. One such poem is attributed to Imam Hussein's wife whose name was Rabab. She says:

He who was a light, shining, is murdered;

Murdered in Karbala', and unburied.

Descendant of the Prophet, may God reward you well;

May you be spared judgement on the day when deeds are weighed:

For you were to me as a mountain, solid, in which I could take refuge;
And you treated us always with kindness, and according to religion.
O who shall speak now for the orphans, for the petitioners;
By whom shall all these wretched be protected, in whom shall they take refuge?
I swear by God, never will I wish to exchange marriage with you for another;
No, not until I am covered; covered in the grave."

It was a custom for people to gather together where poets were invited to write and read poems in praise of the family of the Holy Prophet ^{saw}. On one such occasion someone read a poem as follows:

"He who weeps for Husain might well weep for Islam itself,
For the principles of Islam have been destroyed, and used unlawfully:
On the day when Husain became the target of spears,
When swords drank from him, busy with their work.
And corpses, scattered, were abandoned in the desert.
Great birds hovering over by night and by day ..."

As once I told you Imam Shafi who is considered as the founder of Islamic Jurisprudence because he was the person who put in book form the principles by which one should judge the prohibitions and allowances in Islam. He was born in Syria around 772AD and he died around 826AD and he is buried in Egypt. He was a very pious and educated person and besides his understanding of Fiqh he has bequeathed to the Muslim world some wise verses of poetry. Lamenting the death of Imam Husain he says:

"My heart sighed, for my innermost being was in dejection;
Sleep no longer came, and sleeplessness was bewildering.
O who shall be the bearer of a message from me to Husain,
(Though the hearts and minds of some may disapprove!)
Slaughtered, though without sin himself,
His shirt as if dyed through with crimson.
Now the sword itself wails, and the spear shrieks,
And the horse which once only whinnied, laments.
The world quaked for the sake of the Family of Muhammad;
For their sake, the solid mountains might have melted away.
Heavenly bodies sunk, the stars trembled,

Oh veils were torn, and breasts were rent!
He who asks blessing for the one sent from the Tribe of Hashim,
But attacks his sons; truly, that is strange!
And if my sin is love of the Family of Muhammad:
Then that is a sin which I do not repent."

Since he was a Sunni, speaking so eulogiously about Imam Hussain could run him into trouble and would have associated him with nascent Shiaism. So in reply to such objections he wrote:

They said, 'You are a Rafidi!', and I said, 'But no,
Nor is my religion nor are my beliefs of that kind ...
'But if love of the vicegerent of God be Rafidism,
Then I am the most Rafidi of the servants of God!'

In fact during the early days what we know as Shi'aism today was known as Rafida.

Similarly there was the Persian poet of the twelfth century known as Sanai who was not a Shia but who has left us a very moving poem about the martyrdom of Husain. He says:

How excellent Karbala'! And that honour it received,
Which brought to mankind the odour of Paradise as if on a breeze;
And that body, headless, lying in clay and dust,
And those precious ones, hearts rent by the sword.
And that elect of all the world, murdered,
His body smeared with earth and blood;
And those great oppressors, those doers of evil,
Persistent in the evil they do.
The sanctity of religion and the Family of the Prophet
Are both borne away, both by ignorance and inanity;
Swords are red like precious ruby with the blood of Husain,
What disgrace in the world worse than this!
And Mustafa, his garments all torn,
And 'Ali, tears of blood raining from his eyes.
A whole world has become insolent in its cruelty;
The cunning fox has become a roaring lion.
But still unbelievers at the start of the battle,
Were reminded of the stroke of *Dhu'l-Fiqar*.

Yes, from Husain they sought satisfaction for their rancour, but that was not to be;
They had to be content with their own malice and disgrace.
And know that any who speak ill of those dogs [those murderers of Husain]
Will be kings in the world to come!"

Another poet known as As sayyad Muhsin AlAmin in recent time, in 1934 wrote a poem about this great tragedy and he said:

"O Karbala', you have brought upon us great sorrow;
You have excited sadness and grief.
Now the eye must let its tears flow
To water the grave of one who died thirsty in al-Taff.
Glory, O Abu Fadl, brother of Husayn, for your ways have become
A lesson to the courageous; an example to the brave.
Your way, yes *this* is the way of brothers
(May the one not live who betrays his brother!)
Glory to you, O tribe of Hashim, for you offered your lives freely
And your lives were sacrifice for the religion of God.
On that day you bought glory dearly:
Your precious lives were the price of glory!
You gave your lives for little for the sake of the religion of Mustafa, and by this
The measure of your lives is become more precious still - and who can equal your deeds
after this?
You left your family and your children, despite your love for them;
And you exchanged them for the maidens and the youths of Paradise.
Though kings set on their heads crowns of gold,
Yet it is glory which you wear as your crown.
No sword or spear is truly unsheathed, after you;
No, after your deeds, no weapon has found a hand worthy!
Glory itself submitted to your loftiness, it dared not come near;
And others never attained your station: they did not even approach it.
In excellence all mankind is below you, without exception,
And they who called you low, have ended in shame."

Al-Durr al-Nadid fi Marathi al-Sibt al-Shahid(Karbala', n.d.), pp. 339-340

All these verses give us an idea how the tragedy of Kerbela has been lamented throughout the ages. The last poem that I will present to you now is from Mohammad Iqbal (1878-1936). In Jamaat Ahmadiyya much is not made of the contribution of Iqbal to the development of the Muslim consciousness in India during the first 30 years of the last century. Usually he is downplayed saying that he is just a poet. But any unprejudiced mind who examines his writings cannot but marvel at what he has written. Many of his poems have been translated into English and French but only those who are endowed with understanding read them. He was very close to Hazrat Molvi Nuruddin^{ra} and they used to correspond with one another . He worked with the second caliph on the problems of the Muslims of Kashmir. However he wrote that there cannot be any prophet after the Holy Prophet ^{saw} but he said that the revelations of the Promised Messiah need to be examined by experts in mind science in order to understand where they came from. Anyhow he strived with his pen to help a Muslim to understand what is his place and mission in this world. He says:

“And when the Caliphate first snapped its thread
From the Quran, in Freedom’s throat was poured
A fatal poison, like a rain-charged cloud
The effulgence of the best of peoples rose
Out of the West, to spill on Kerbala,
And in that soil, that desert was before,
Sowed, as he died, a field of tulip-blood.
There, till the Resurrection, tyranny
Was evermore cut off; a garden fair
Immortalizes where his lifeblood surged.
For Truth alone his blood dripped to the dust,
Wherefore he has become the edifice
Of faith in God’s pure Unity. Indeed
Had his ambition been for earthly rule,
Not so provisioned would he have set forth
On his last journey, having enemies
Innumerable as the desert sands,
Equal his friends in number to God’s Name.
The mystery that was epitomized
In Abraham and Ishmael through his life
And death stood forth at last in full revealed.
Firm as a mountain-chain was his resolve,

Impetuous, unwavering to its goal
The Sword is for the glory of the Faith
And is unsheathed but to defend the Law.
The Muslim, servant unto God alone
Before no Pharaoh casteth down his head.
His blood interpreted these mysteries,
And waked our slumbering community.
He drew the sword *There is none other god*
And shed the blood of them that served the lie;
Inscribing in the wilderness *save God*
He wrote for all to read the exordium
Of our salvation. From Husain we learned
The riddle of the Book, and at his flame
Kindled our torches. Vanished now from ken
Damascus might, the splendour of Baghdad,
Granada's majesty, all lost to mind;
Yet still the strings he smote within our soul
Vibrate, still ever new our faith abides
In his *Allahu Akbar*, Gentle breeze,
Thou messenger of them that are afar,
Bear these my tears to lave his holy dust."

Unfortunately I cannot convey the forcefulness of these words as they have been expressed neither in the original Persian nor in the translated English. But one thing I should say is that Iqbal has expressed a very deep thought here in this poem when he links the life of Imam Hussein to the sacrifice of Hazrat Ibrahim and Hazrat Ismail. In another poem written later on he said that the history of the Kaaba is defined by the two sacrifices, that of Ismail at the beginning, and that of Husayn b. 'Ali in the end. There is a meaning in this for those who would take the time to think about it. The great sacrifice "*zibhin azim*" which is mentioned in the Holy Quran was symbolic with Hazrat Ibrahim but it became real for the Holy Prophet^{saw}. It is a thought that makes one ponder. But you know poets sometimes do use their poetic license but what he says impels us to think. On some other occasion I may speak more about this poem of Iqbal.

I will end with a note for our enemies(our brothers of yore) from Ahmadiyya mainstream Jamaat. The Ahmadiyya caliph, in his lastweek's sermon spoke about the need for Muslims to

show mercy to one another and not to fight with one another . He was of course speaking about what is going on in Syria. But I wonder how come he could say such words when we know the unrelenting campaign of social boycott and visible hatred that some Ahmadis in Mauritius have taken upon themselves to show towards members of Jamaat Ahmadiyya Al Mouslemeen. His words are hollow when he condones his representatives in Mauritius to wage a campaign of intimidation against those who are friendly to us. Through this sermon I want to make it clear to him and to all those who follow him that following in the footsteps of Imam Hussain we will never bow down to those who do not stand for truth. May Allah make our steps firm and protect all of us wherever we may be. Ameen!