

Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s.) defeats Umayyad propaganda: Incident of the Nasibi

The Battle of Karbala was the enactment of the age old maxim “might is right”. This is when the ruler of the day calls all the shots and anyone who stands in the way is crushed mercilessly. Depending on the personality who was eliminated, the ruler launches his propaganda machinery to show that he was on truth and his adversary falsehood.

This is exactly what Yazid the accursed did to justify killing Imam Husain (a.s.), the only difference being that this propaganda was set in motion with the ascent of Muawiyah Ibn Abi Sufyan as ruler of Syria. More than 20 years of intense campaign of misinformation and distortion saw the Bani Umayyah assume the status of chiefs and saviours of Islam with the Bani Hashim – the real and divinely appointed chiefs of Islam – reduced to being rebels and even heretics (we seek refuge in Allah!).

Yazid the accursed reckoned that by killing Imam Husain (a.s.) in Karbala, he had secured his position and seat of power. However, he failed to take into consideration that while the battle had concluded, the war was far from over as evidenced in the ensuing journey undertaken by Imam Husain’s (a.s.) indisposed, innocent children and his womenfolk from Karbala to Syria en route Kufa.

While it is not our objective in this treatise to delve in the details of the humiliation suffered by Ubaydillah Ibn Ziyad (may Allah curse him) and Yazid the accursed in Kufa and Syria respectively, we will only highlight an interesting conversation involving Imam Ali Ibn Husain Zainul Abideen (a.s.) in the market of Syria on the way to Yazid’s court.

Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s.) converts the Syrian Nasibi

An aged Syrian approached the captives from Imam Husain’s (a.s.) household, while they were detained near the Syrian mosque and said – Praise be to Allah Who has killed and destroyed you and extinguished the fire of revolt (Allah forbid!) and continued abusing and cursing them.

Imam Ali Ibn Husain (a.s.) replied – *Just like I have heard you out until you have said what you had to say and made evident your enmity and sentiments, you must listen to what I have to say.*

Syrian – Say

Imam Ali Ibn Husain (a.s.) – *Have you read the Book of Allah?*

He replied in the affirmative.

Imam (a.s.) – *Haven't you read the verse –*

قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَى

“Say: I don't ask you any reward for my prophethood except the love of my closest relatives.”

(Surah Shura (42): Verse 23)

He – Yes

Imam (a.s.) – *We are those closest relatives.*

Then Imam Ali Ibn Husain (a.s.) asked him – *Have you read in the Book of Allah about a right that was exclusive for us to the exception of other Muslims?*

Syrian – No

Imam (a.s.) – *Haven't you read the verse –*

وَ أَنْتَ ذَا الْقُرْبَى حَقَّهُ

“And give the close relatives their right...”

(Surah Bani Israel (17): Verse 26)

Syrian – Yes

Imam (a.s.) – *We are the ones about whom Allah has ordered His Prophet (s.a.w.a.) that he must honour their rights.*

Syrian – You are the ones?

Imam (a.s.) – Yes

Then Imam Ali Ibn Husain (a.s.) asked him – *Haven't you recited this verse –*

وَ اعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ لِلَّهِ خُمُسَهُ وَ لِلرَّسُولِ وَ لِذِي الْقُرْبَى

‘And know that whatever thing you gain, a fifth of it is for Allah and for the Apostle and for the near of kin...’ (Surah Anfaal (8): 41)

Syrian – Yes

Imam (a.s.) – *We are the ‘near of kin’.*

Thereafter, **Imam Ali Ibn Husain (a.s.)** asked him – *Haven't you found in Surah Ahzab a right for us to the exception of other Muslims?*

Syrian – No

Imam (a.s.) – Haven't you recited this verse – –

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيراً

'Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O people of the House, and to purify you (a thorough) purification.' (Surah Ahzaab (33): Verse 33)

The Syrian raised his hands towards the skies and supplicated – 'O Allah I turn to you in repentance' and he repeated it thrice. Then he said – O Allah I seek repentance from you for enmity of the progeny of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) and I distance myself from those who killed the Ahle Bait (a.s.) of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.). Surely, I have been reciting the Holy Quran since ages but I never realized all this until today.

- Al-Ehtejaaj of Shaikh al-Tabrisi (r.a.), vol. 2 pp. 307-308
- Behaar al-Anwaar of Allamah Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi (r.a.), vol. 45 p. 166

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