

Revolutionary Sermon of Syedah Zainab(S), In the Court of Yazid: A Historical & Political Vision

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In the aftermath of Karbala, Syedaat Fatemiyaat (Women of Ahl al Bait) including Imam Ali Zain al Abidin, who were not killed in the massacre, were taken captive and paraded in a humiliating and degrading manner from Karbala to Kufa. The womenfolk and children of the family of Rasulullah(S) with the sole surviving male member Imam Ali ibn al Husain Zain al Abidin, were bounded and chained. The Caravan of the Mazlum paraded through the most difficult conditions, underwent the most unbearable pain, and afflicted with the greatest of tortures. They were then finally brought to Damascus, Syria and presented before the Umayyad Emperor Yazid ibn Muawiyah. There they were taunted and abused by the low grade people.

Shimar ibn Zil Jawshan presented the sacred Head of Abi Abdillah Imam al Husain to his lord Yazid, who graciously granted permission to the natives of Damascus to visit his palace and observe his so called accomplishment over the Ahl al Bait. The Yazidi police tied all the captives with a single rope, beginning with the neck of Imam Zain al Abidin, to Syedah Zainab, up to the last child, Abi Jafar Imam Mohammad al Baqir. The joy and happiness of Yazid was noticeable.

It was here, in the very stronghold of Yazid, that the light of Truth sparkled through the dark veils of ignorance of Shait'an and thrown over the eyes of the Muslim Ummah. It was here, under the eternally cruel eyes of the tyrant Yazid, that Syedah Zainab, the daughter of the ever victorious Lion of Allah, Ali ibn Abi Talib, delivered an unparalleled and fundamental sermon. This awoke the people of Damascus from their deep sleep of negligence and shook the foundation of the Umayyad Dynasty, sending it crumbling to the ground.

It was first of the month of Safar, when the voice of Zainab thundered and pierced across the nook and corner of the court breaking the hostile atmosphere. A dreadful silence prevailed in the court. Syedah Zainab stepped forward and responded to the Firoon of that time Yazid. She added a new chapter to the history of the so-called Khilafah of Bani Umayyah. She boldly challenged Yazid and established the Dawah of Tawhid: [1]

Sermon of Syedah: "All praise is due to Allah, Lord of the Worlds. Blessings of Allah be upon His Rasul and his entire progeny. Allah's words are true Who says:

“Then the end of those who committed evil was that they disbelieved in the Signs of Allah, and they were insulting them” [2]

Annotations: To deny the sign of Allah is contempt, and to recite verses with joy on the assassination of the children of Rasulallah (S) is the practice of infidels. This same act was demonstrated on the assassination of Hamzah in the Uhud. The enemies of Islam had declared in Uhad with joy, that they had taken revenge from Rasulallah (S).

Sermon of Syedah: (O Yazid) Do you think that you have blocked all opportunities on earth and the scope of the universe for us, and driven us as prisoners---and assumed that we have been degraded in the sight of Allah and that you are respectful in His eyes and have acquired an important and lofty position near Allah due to this and now have the impurity look down upon us and become arrogant, jubilant, when you see the world has turned towards you? You presume that your task is planned, while your power and command pleases you? Have you forgotten the words of Allah?

“Do not regard those who disbelieved that we grant them good for themselves? We only give them a respite so that they may increase their sins, and for them there is a humiliating and disgraceful torment”. [3]

Annotations: In the first part of her sermon, the daughter of Fatimah called Yazid by name, just like an ordinary person, while all addressed him as Amir al Muminin. She clarified to Yazid not to think of himself as noble, after snatching power and command from the hands of Aale Mohammad. Syedah Zainab warned Yazid through the above Ayah that he has lost the chance of Taubah, therefore Jahannam is his final destination. The burning fire of Hell is awaiting him. The character of Yazid is an open fact; he was a drunkard, monkey player, a lover of filthy songs, adulterer and a chess player, which was declared prohibited by Ali Ibn Abi Talib. In short he was a person who considered Har'am as Halal acts. Their purity is doubtful who have soft corner for Yazid.

Sermon of Syedah: Is it the custom of justice, O accursed son of the 'Released persons', that you keep your ladies and concubines behind the veils (with respect), and at the same time you captivate and parade the helpless daughters of Rasulallah(S) as prisoners? You snatched their veils and exposed their faces, and displayed them from one land to another, being viewed by those at watering places as well as those who guarded your forts, with their faces exposed to the looks of everyone---near or distinct, low or elite, having none of their men with them nor any of their protectors?

Annotations: In the second part of her sermon, the daughter of Ali selected the conquest of Makkah her topic and argued. Syedah Zainab reminded Yazid of the day of the conquest of Makkah, which took place in 8 (A.H) Rasulallah (S) extended his generosity on the arch enemies of Islam, ancestors of Yazid, and set them free. Yazid himself was a descendant of those 'Released persons'. His father Muawiyya, grandfather Abu Sufiyan and grandmother Hind were among those who were set free at the time of the conquest

of Makkah. On that day Rasulullah (S) very magnanimously set all of them free irrespective of what they had committed in the past and declared:

“Go! All of you are free”.

Syedah Zainab reminded Yazid for humiliating Nabavi Haram as prisoners of war. While it was Rasulullah(S) who freed Yazid’s family on the day of conquest of Makkah, while they were under the swords of Ahl al Bait. Instead of thanking Rasulullah(S) who saved you and your family from slavery of the generations Yazid you have rewarded the Ahl al Bait very brutally. As Ali Ibn Abi Talib with his single stroke of the sword Zulfiq’ar sent Marhab to the Hell, his lion hearted daughter Zainab also smashed the towering personality of the Syrian monarch with a single word “Yab-nat-Tuluqa”- O son of the ‘Released persons’. History, from Karbala to Syria is very painful. Syedah Zainab communicated the message of ‘Modest Dress’ to the coming generation of the Muslim women. She condemned the brutal actions of snatching the Hij’ab of the women of Ahl al Bait by the forces of this Shait’an. Those who cry and weep on the tragic event, when veils were snatched from the heads of women of Ahl al Bait, and the travel account of Syedaat, from Karbala to Syria, should learn this lesson of Zainab and always follow the dress code of Islam, which she taught in the hostile atmosphere of the Syrian Court.

Sermon of Syedah: What can be expected from the one descended from those whose mouths chewed the livers of the purified ones and whose flesh grows out of the blood of the Shuhada?

Annotations: Here Syedah Zainab reminded the famous episode which occurred immediately after the Gazwah Uhud, when Hind, grandmother of Yazid, attempted to chew the Liver of Syedna Hamzah bin Syedna Abd al Mutalib, but in vain. Hind recited following couplets in joy:

**“Shagaiytu Min Hamzata Nafsi Beahdin
Hatta Baqartu Yatnahu Anil Kabadi”**

I have cooled my heart in Uhd from Hamzah; even I have pierced his stomach and took out his liver

**“Shafaiytu Nafsi Wa Qazaytu Nazri
Shafaiyta Wahshiyun Ghalilu Sadri”**

For whole life I will be grateful to Wahshi; until my bones dissolve in the grave
Not only Muslim Historians but also Orientals, like Gibbon, have labeled her “the Liver Eater”. She mutilated the body of Hamzah, while later on; her descendants desecrated the graves of Hamzah & Ahl al Bait in the graveyard of Jannat al Baqee (Madinah). Rasulullah (S) used to turn his face away in aversion whenever he saw Hind’s face. [4] Syedah Zainab referred to Yazid’s grandfather Abu Sufiyan, who spent his life in Anti Dawah activities. Syedah Zainab not forgetting Yazid’s father, who executed spotless Muslims and ignored rulings.

Sermon of Syedah: Why should not Yazid be malicious against us; it is he, who looks at us with hostility. You without imagining do not know that you are committing a sin”: by reciting couplets:

“Perhaps my ancestors, who were killed in Badar,
Had they been present here today, then they would make Tahlil and say in delight,
May your hands, O Yazid, never be paralyzed!”

Annotations: Syedah Zainab counters Yazid’s couplets in which he wished his forefathers who were slaughtered by the hands of Ali and Hamzah, during Ghazwah Badar. She assured Yazid courageously that he will face the same fate which his ancestors had faced.

Sermon of Syedah: How dare you strike the lips of Imam Husain with your stick! These are the same lips which Rasulullah(S) used to kiss. You have done what you wanted to do and have destroyed the roots of piety and virtue! You have shed the blood of the son and family of Rasulullah (S) and have hidden the brilliant stars on the earth from amongst the descendants of Abd al Mutallib, under the clouds of cruelty and brutality. However, you shall appear before Allah soon. You shall meet your ancestors and shall also move to their place. At that time you will wish that perhaps you had been blind and dumb, and regretted what you said, that it was a day of rejoicing for your ancestors”.

Annotations: it was agonizing for Zainab, and tears rolled down from her eyes, and her heart burned, when she saw Yazid insulting the sacred head of Husain by hitting the sacred lips of Husain with his stick.

Sermon of Syedah: O Allah! Take away our rights from them and seek revenge from all those who oppressed us, and send Your wrath upon those who have shed our blood and killed our protectors! Wallah! You have burnt only your skin and cut only your own flesh. You will soon appear in the presence of Rasulullah (S.) and will see with your own eyes that his children are in the Jannah. It will be the day when Allah will deliver the descendants of the Rasulullah (S) from the state of being scattered and will bring all of them together in the Jannah. This is the promise, which Allah has made in the Qur’an. He says:

“Do not think of those who are slain for the cause of Allah as dead. They are alive with their Lord and receive Rizaq from Him.” [5]

Sermon of Syedah: “O Yazid! Allah is sufficient as a judge upon you, and Muhammad will be your enemy as the Petitioner, supported by Jibrael. All those who instigated you to do what you did and all your organs will give evidence against you and your father, who appointed you as the Ruler of the Muslims, and set forth this worldly kingdom for you to rule upon the neck of Muslims. You will then realize what an evil place awaits the tyrants. On that day it will become known what penalty the dictators earn, whose position is worse and whose army is more feeble and degraded.

Annotations: Syedah Zainab taught a lesson to the coming generations that if a tyrant becomes their ruler they must resist against his tyranny, whosoever he may be. The grand daughter of Rasulullah(S) demonstrated how to perform “Jih’ad al Akbar” before a tyrant ruler like Yazid, even as a prisoner. Heresy of Yazid is not hidden; he never believed in

Allah, His Rasul and in Qur'an. His creeds and deeds are crystal clear evidence. Due to the heretic approach of the ruler, people were also inclined towards heresy. In such an atmosphere, Syedah Zainab reminded them of their forgotten lessons of Islam.

Sermon of Syedah: O enemy of Allah! Although calamities have forced me to speak to you, I consider you to be degraded and not fit even to be reprimanded and reproached. But what am I to do? I find your verbal attacks great and I regard your rebuke too much to bear, but our eyes are shedding tears, our hearts are burning. What is even stranger is that the noble party of Allah were slaughtered by the army of the 'Released once'---force of Shait'an.

Our blood is dripping from their hands and our flesh is falling down from their mouths.

Annotations: Syedah Zainab introduced her pious family 'Hizbullah' (party of Allah) and called the family of Yazid 'Hizb ush Shait'an'(party of devil). The sermon of Zainab was the culmination of Abi Abdillah Imam al Husain's 'Divine Revolution', and one of the most remarkable and excellent revolutionary speeches in Islam. Through her selected precise words, Syedah Zainab smashed the despotism of Yazid. The voice of Syedah Zainab resounded in the Syrian Court so much that its echo is still heard today even after a lapse of centuries, and would continue to resound till the Day of Qiyamah.

Sermon of Syedah: The sacred bodies of the Shuhada have been placed at the disposal of the wolves, hyenas and other carnivorous animals (wild beast) of the desert and are dirtied by the brutes. If you feel you have gained something today by this beastly act, by killing and arresting to be booty, then, you will certainly be a loser on the Day of Qiyamah. On that day nothing but your deeds will count. On that day you will send Lanah on Ibn Marjanah and in turn he will throw Lanah upon you.

"And your Lord never treats His servants unjustly". [6]

Wallah! I do not fear anyone except Him and do not complain to anyone else, and rely upon Him Alone.

You may utilize your treachery, traps and disloyalty (with Islam), but I swear Wallah! That the shame and disgrace, which you have earned by the treatment meted out to us, can not be eradicated. You shall never be able to wipeout our memories, and inspiration from the midst, nor will you ever be able to wipe off the disgrace of this episode. Your opinion is erroneous, and your days are numbered, and your wealth wasted on the Day when the caller will announce:

"Beware! (Now) Verily the Lanah of Allah is on the oppressors & unjust" [7]

Annotations: People who are blind by faith, and whose hearts are sealed by Allah can deny the victory of the blood of Husain over the sword (of Yazid). The Dua of Zainab was answered and after two years and a few months only, Yazid left this world to the Jahannam. Even today none in the Muslim world loves to be called as a descendent of Yazid, but hundreds of thousands are living around the world who proudly claims their lineage from Abi Abdillah al Imam al Husain. The name of Yazid has now become a curse,

while Zikar al Husain has become a source of ultimate liberation. Enmity of Husain is such a sin that waters of the seven oceans can not wipe out its blackness. Syedah Zainab announced that Yazid and his supporters shall remain in Jahannam and there was no way of their salvation. Through her precise but compound wordings of sermon, she refreshed the minds of the audience of the unique manner of oration of her father Ali ibn Abi Talib, and the memory of the matchless sermon of her mother Fatimah, which she delivered at the court of the then ruler.

Sermon of Syedah: I thank Allah, Who sealed the life of our early ones with felicity upon our beginning with forgiveness, and Who destined Shahadah for our conclusion with blessings and accommodated them in the Jannah. I offer Dua that may Allah elevate their status and complete His reward upon them, and increase it further, and to turn with fairness their succession upon us, for He is Merciful and a Friend. [8]
"Allah is (quite) sufficient for us and the most excellent Protector is (He)". [9]

Annotations: Hearing the resounding words of Syedah Zainab, everyone was spellbound. This courageous bold sermon not only frightened those present but it also produced a chilling effect on Yazid, Firoon of the era, who began to shiver, and made him speechless. Hearing the sparkling sermon of Syedah Zainab, the celebration of the joy turned into a gathering of shock. The declaration of Aqidah and Dawah of Tawhid for an uncompromising justice made Yazid extremely frightened. By the arguments of Syedah Zainab, Yazid was afraid that he would be unable to hold the reins of power more, if such speeches continued to be delivered. Syedah Zainab crushed the political strategy of the Court of Damascus, whose sole purpose was defaming Islam, as a result, her performance would remain a beacon of light till the world lasts.

Concluding Annotations: An artist can not paint the picture, nor the pen of an eloquent writer describes the reality of Yazid's superiority, pleasure, and excitement for having the world, described in superb words by Syedah Zainab. The brave daughter of Ali snatched the veil from the ugly face of the enemies of the institution of Tawhid and informed the Ummah that this 'Military Operation' was short term. Let the enemies of Allah enjoy the bliss of this world so that their sins will multiply and, therefore, have a painful perpetual punishment.

'Naeba'tiz Zahra', 'Sharikat'il Husain', Zainab had shown her courage, first in the Court of Kufa, and later in the Court of Damascus. She had convinced and communicated fully that those killed by the order of Yazid were in reality the Moon and Stars of the galaxy of Nubuawah. It was the tremendous efforts of Zainab, through the institution of Az'a, Buk'a, Nuha and Awil on Husain, that the message of Islam attained an eternal life. In the terminology of wisdom, this effort, bold oration and demonstration of bravery of Syedah Zainab ascertained the Dawah of "Maruf". She unveiled the ugly face of the supreme symbol of "Munkir". Her efforts destroyed the propaganda of the "Official Media", who alleged Imam Husain to be a rebel. The efforts of Syedah Zainab showed that not only can a citizen be charged as a rebel but even the ruler could be charged as a rebel of Islam.

“Zainab” means Zin’ah (prestige) of father, Rasulullah(S) had chosen this name for this brave daughter who communicated the message of the Shahadah, and became the pride of the Nabavi family. In the shimmering episode of Karbala, which is everlasting history of Islam, the name of Zainab remains shining. Her Shrine is in Qahera, Egypt. [10]

As devotees of Ahl al Bait, to keep the message of Husain and Zainab alive, it is the need of the time to teach Religious Education to younger generation who will take our place. The responsibilities of the devotees should not be confined to Majlis and Buka, but speaking and resisting against injustice, and getting ready to sacrifice ourselves and our loved ones for Islam.

Lanah of Allah upon Yazid and upon all those who have soft corner for him

Salaam upon you O Grand Daughter of Rasulullah(S)

O daughter of Fatimah & Ali my parents be sacrificed upon you

Grant us by the power of Allah our wishes and help us in trial

Bibliography & Notes:

[1] Arabi is an eloquent and a lucid language, it is usually impossible to translate certain sentences and words or phrases in to any other language, hence comprehensive sense of the original Sermon of Syedah Zainab can not be transmitted from Arabi to English

[2] Surah ar Room 30: Ayah 10

[3] Surah Aale Imran 3: Ayah 178

[4] “Sirah Ibn Hisham”, vol. 2, p.75. “Hind the Liver Eater”, Orientals recognize grand mother of Yazid with this title. “Shareh Nahj al Balagha”, Ibn Abil Hadid al Mutazalai and author of “Tarikh Asam Kufi” recorded that she was amongst Zarqa, Nabigha and Humamah, who put flags on their tents.

[5] Surah Aale Imran , Ayah 169

[6] Surah al Haj-41: Ayah 46

[7] Surah al Hud-11: Ayah 18

[8] Sermon of Syedah Zainab is documented on p. 21 of “Balaghat al Nisa”, Najafi edition, Vol. 2, of al Khawarizmi’s book: “Maqatal al Husain”, & on Badr Shahin’s book: “Lady Zainab”, Qum, Iran.

[9] Surah Aale Imran- , Ayah 173

[10] In his book: “al Tarikh”, Ibn Asakir records: “Syedah Zainab resided in Egypt where she expired and was buried. The Syedah buried in Damascus is her sister, ‘Zainab al Wusta’-Umm-e-Kulsum”. Rulers of Egypt, such as Kafur al Akhshidi, Ahmad Ibn Tawlaun & Bani Fatemah also visited her Shrine, Muqsurah of Syedah Zainab bint Ali (S) presented by 52nd al Dai al Fatemi of the Ismaili Musta’alavi Dawoodi School, Syedna Mohammad Burhanuddin. On birthday night of Syedah Zainab-tens of thousands of Egyptians (from the Fellahin, Al-Saeed, Nuba and the deserts beyond) and many hundred thousands from different countries gather there. Sunni's, Shi'as and Sufi's gather at her Atabat (grave) fulfilling her rites of Ziyarah, earning the pleasure of the Nabi (S) at his grand daughter's doors and securing the pleasure of Allah.

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