

ومن كلام له (عليه السلام) يريد به بعض أصحابه

About a companion who passed away from this world before the occurrence of troubles.

لِلَّهِ بِلَادُ فَلَانٍ، فَلَقَدْ قَوْمَ الْأَوْدِ، وَدَاوَى الْعَمَدِ، وَأَقَامَ السُّنَّةَ، وَخَلَّفَ الْفِتْنَةَ! ذَهَبَ نَقِيَّ الثَّوْبِ، قَلِيلَ الْعَيْبِ، أَصَابَ خَيْرَهَا، وَسَبَقَ شَرَّهَا، أَدَّى إِلَى اللَّهِ طَاعَتَهُ، وَاتَّقَاهُ بِحَقِّهِ، رَحَلَ وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِي طَرُقٍ مَتَشَعِبَةٍ، لَا يَهْتَدِي بِهَا الضَّالُّ، وَلَا يَسْتَقِينُ الْمَهْتَدِي.

May Allāh reward such and such man 1 who straightened the curve, cured the disease, abandoned mischief and established the sunnah. He departed (from this world) with untarnished clothes and little shortcomings. He achieved good (of this world) and remained safe from its evils. He offered Allāh's obedience and feared Him as He deserved. He went away and left the people in dividing ways wherein the misled cannot obtain guidance and the guided cannot attain certainty.

Footnote :

[1] Abi'l-Ḥadīd has written (in Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah, vol. 14, pp. 3-4) that the reference here is to the second Caliph 'Umar, and that these sentences have been uttered in his praise as indicated by the word 'Umar' written under the word 'such and such' in as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī's own hand in the manuscript of Nahj al-balāghah written by him. This is Abi'l-Ḥadīd's statement, but it is to be seen that if as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī had written the word 'Umar' by way of explanation it should have existed, as other explanations by him have remained, in those versions which have been copied from his manuscript. Even now there exists in al-Mūṣil (Iraq) university the oldest copy of Nahj al-balāghah written by the famous calligraphist Yāqūt al-Musta'ṣimī; but no one has afforded any clue to this explanation of as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī. Even if the view of Abi'l-Ḥadīd is accepted it would be deemed to represent the personal opinion of as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī which may serve as a supplementary argument in support of an original argument but this personal view cannot be assigned any regular importance.

It is strange that two and a half centuries after as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī namely in the seventh century A.H., Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd makes the statement that the reference here is to Caliph 'Umar and that as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī himself had so indicated, as a result of which some other annotators also followed the same line, but the contemporaries of as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī who wrote about Nahj al-balāghah have given no such indication in their writings although as contemporaries they should have had better information about as-Sayyid Ar-Raḍī's writing. Thus, al-'Allāmah 'Alībn Nāṣir who

was a contemporary of as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī and wrote an annotation of Nahj al-balāghah under the name of A'lām Nahj al-balāghah writes in connection with this sermon:

Amīr al-mu'minīn has praised one of his own companions for his good conduct. He had died before the troubles that arose after the death of the Prophet of Allāh. This is supported by the annotations of Nahj al-balāghah written by al-'Allāmah Quṭbu'd-Dīn ar-Rāwandī (d. 573 A.H.). Abi'l-Ḥadīd (vol. 14, p. 4) and Ibn Maytham al-Bahrani (in Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah, vol. 4, p. 97) have quoted his following view. By this Amīr al-mu'minīn refers to one of his own companions who died before the mischief and disruption that occurred following the death of the Prophet of Allāh.

al-'Allāmah al-Ḥājj al-Mirzā Ḥabību'llāh al-Khū'ī is of the opinion that the person is Mālik ibn al-Hārith al-Ashtar on the ground that after the assassination of Mālik the situation of the Muslim community was such as Amīr al-mu'minīn explains in this sermon.

al-Khu'i adds that:

Amīr al-mu'minīn has praised Mālik repeatedly such as in his letter to the people of Egypt sent through Mālik when he was made the governor of that place, and like his utterances when the news of Mālik's assassination reached him, he said: "Mālik! who is Mālik? If Mālik was a stone, he was hard and solid; if he was a rock, he was a great rock which had no parallel. Women have become barren to give birth to such as Mālik." Amīr al-mu'minīn had even expressed in some of his utterances that, "Mālik was to me as I was to the Holy Prophet." Therefore, one who possesses such a position certainly deserves such attributes and even beyond that. (Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah, vol. 14, pp. 374-375)

If these words had been about Caliph 'Umar and there was some trustworthiness about it Abi'l-Ḥadīd would have recorded the authority or tradition and it would have existed in history and been known among the people. But here nothing is found to prove the statement except a few self-concocted events. Thus about the pronouns in the words "khayraha" and "sharraha" he takes them to refer to the caliphate and writes that these words can apply only to one who enjoys power and authority because without authority it is impossible to establish the sunnah or prevent innovation. This is the gist of the argument he has advanced on this occasion; although there is no proof to establish that the antecedent of this pronoun is the caliphate. It can rather refer to the world (when Amīr al-mu'minīn says, "He achieved good [of this world] and remained safe from its evils.") and that would be in accord with the context. Again, to regard authority as a condition for the

safeguarding of people's interest and the propagation of the sunnah means to close the door to prompting others to good and dissuading them from evil, although Allāh has assigned this duty to a group of the people without the condition of authority: And that there should be among you a group who call (mankind) unto virtue and enjoin what is good and forbid wrong; and these are they who shall be successful. (Qur'ān, 3:104)

Similarly it is related from the Prophet:

So long as people go on prompting for good and dissuading from evil and assisting each other in virtue and piety they will remain in righteousness.

Again, Amīr al-mu'minīn, in the course of a will, says in general terms: Establish the pillars of the Unity of Allāh and the sunnah, and keep both these lamps aflame.

In these sayings there is no hint that this obligation cannot be discharged without authority. Facts also tell us that (despite army and force, and power and authority) the rulers and kings could not prevent evil or propagate virtue to the extent to which some unknown godly persons were able to inculcate moral values by imprinting their morality on heart and minds, although they were not backed by any army or force and they didn't have any equipment save destitution. No doubt authority and control can bend heads down before it, but it is not necessary that it should also pave the way for virtue in hearts. History shows that most of the rulers destroyed the features of Islam. Islam's existence and progress has been possible by the efforts of those helpless persons who possessed nothing save poverty and discomfiture.

If it is insisted that the reference here should only be to a ruler, then why should it not be taken to mean a companion of Amīr al-mu'minīn who had been the head of a Province such as Salmān al-Fārisī for whose burial Amīr al-mu'minīn went to al-Madā'in; and it is not implausible that Amīr al-mu'minīn might have uttered these words after his burial by way of comments on his life and way of governance. However, to believe that they are about Caliph 'Umar is without any proof. In the end, Abi'l-Ḥadīd has quoted the following statements of (the historian) aṭ-Ṭabarī in proof of his hypothesis:

"It is related from al-Mughīrah ibn Shu'bah that when Caliph 'Umar died Ibnah Abī Ḥathmah said crying. 'Oh 'Umar, you were the man who straightened the curve, removed ills, destroyed mischief, revived the sunnah, remained chaste and departed without entangling in evils.' (According to aṭ-Ṭabarī) al-Mughīrah related that 'When 'Umar was buried I came to 'Alī and I wanted to hear something from

him about ‘Umar. So, on my arrival Amīr al-mu’minīn came out in this state that was wrapped in one cloth after bathing and was jerking the hair of his head and beard and he had no doubt that the Caliphate would come to him. On this occasion he said, “May Allāh have mercy on ‘Umar.” Ibnah Abi Ḥathmah has correctly said that he enjoyed the good of the Caliphate and remained safe from its evils. By Allāh, she did not say it herself but was made to say so’.” (aṭ-Ṭabarī, vol. 1, p. 2763; Abi’l-Ḥadīd, vol. 12, p. 5; Ibn Kathīr, vol. 7, p. 140)

The relater of this event is al-Mughīrah ibn Shu‘bah whose adultery with Umm Jamīl, the Caliph ‘Umar’s saving him from the penalty despite the evidence, and his openly abusing Amīr al-mu’minīn in Kūfah under Mu‘āwiyah’s behest are admitted facts of history. On this ground what weight his statements can carry is quite clear. From the factual point of view also, this story cannot be accepted. al-Mughīrah’s statement that Amīr al-mu’minīn had no doubt about his Caliphate is against the facts. What were the factors from which he made this guess when the actual facts were to the contrary. If the caliphate was certain for any one, it was ‘Uthmān. Thus, at the Consultative Committee ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf said to Amīr al-mu’minīn: “O ‘Alī! do not create a situation against yourself for I have observed and consulted the people and they all want ‘Uthman.” (aṭ-Ṭabarī, vol. 1, p. 2786; Ibn al-Athīr, vol. 3, p. 71; Abu’l-Fidā’, vol. 1, p. 166)

Consequently, Amīr al-mu’minīn was sure not to get the caliphate as has already been stated on the authority of aṭ-Ṭabarī’s History, under the sermon of the Camel’s Foam (ash-Shiqshiqiyah), namely that on seeing the names of the members of the Consultative Committee, Amīr al-mu’minīn had said to al-‘Abbās ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib that the caliphate could not be given to anyone except ‘Uthmān since all the powers had been given to ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf and he was ‘Uthmān’s brother-in-law (sister’s husband) and Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ was a relative and tribesman of ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān. These two would join in giving the caliphate to him.

At this stage, the question arises as to what the reason was that actuated al-Mughīrah to prompt Amīr al-mu’minīn to say something about ‘Umar. If he knew that Amīr al-mu’minīn had good ideas about ‘Umar, he should have also known his impression; but if he thought that Amīr al-mu’minīn did not entertain good ideas about him then the purpose of his asking Amīr al-mu’minīn would be none other than that whatever he may say he would, by exposing it, create an atmosphere against him and make the members of the Consultative Committee suspicious of him. The views of the members of the Consultative Committee are well understood

from the very fact that by putting the condition of following the conduct of the first two Caliphs in electing the caliph they had shown their adherence to them. In these circumstances when al-Mughīrah tried to play this trick Amīr al-mu'minīn said just by way of relating a fact that 'Umar achieved the good (of this world) and remained safe from its evil. This sentence has no connection with praise or eulogy. 'Umar did in his days enjoy all kinds of advantages while his period was free from the mischiefs that cropped up later. After recording this statement Abī'l-Ḥadīd writes: From this event the belief gains strength that in this utterance the allusion is towards 'Umar.

If the utterance means the word uttered by Ibnah Abī Ḥathmah about which Amīr al-mu'minīn has said that they are not her own heart's voice but she was made to utter them, then doubtlessly the reference is to 'Umar, but the view that these words were uttered by Amīr al-mu'minīn in praise of 'Umar is not at all established. Rather, from this tradition it is evidently shown that these words were uttered by Ibnah Abī Ḥathmah. Allāh alone knows on what ground the words of Ibnah Abī Ḥathmah are quoted and then it is daringly argued that these words were uttered by Amīr al-mu'minīn about 'Umar. It seems Amīr al-mu'minīn had uttered these words about someone on some occasion, then Ibnah Abī Ḥathmah used similar words on 'Umar's death and then even Amīr al-mu'minīn's words were taken to be in praise of 'Umar. Otherwise, no mind except a mad one can argue that the words uttered by Ibnah Abī Ḥathmah should be deemed a ground to hold that Amīr al-mu'minīn said these words in praise of 'Umar. Can it be expected, after (a glance at) the sermon of the Camel's Foam, that Amīr al-mu'minīn might have uttered these words. Again, it is worth consideration that if these words had been uttered by Amīr al-mu'minīn on 'Umar's death, then at the Consultative Committee when he refused to follow the conduct of the (first) two Caliphs it should have been said to him that only the other day he has said that 'Umar had established the sunnah and banished innovations, so that when his conduct was in accord with the sunnah what was the sense in accepting the sunnah but refusing to follow his conduct.