

ومن خطبة له (عليه السلام) وفيها ينبه أمير المؤمنين على فضله وعلمه ويبين فتنة بني أمية

About the annihilation of the Khārijites, the mischief mongering of Umayyads and the vastness of his own knowledge [1]

أَمَّا بَعْدُ، أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ فَإِنِّي فَقَاتُ عَيْنَ الْفِتْنَةِ، وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لِيَجْتَرِءَ عَلَيَّ أَحَدٌ غَيْرِي بَعْدَ أَنْ مَاجَ غِيْبُهَا، وَاشْتَدَّ كُلُّهَا فَاسْأَلُونِي قَبْلَ أَنْ تَفْقِدُونِي، فَوَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ لَا تَسْأَلُونِي عَنْ شَيْءٍ فِيمَا بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَ السَّاعَةِ، وَلَا عَنْ فِتْنَةٍ تَهْدِي مِائَةَ وَتَضِلُّ مِائَةَ إِلَّا نَبَأْتُكُمْ بِنَاعِقِهَا وَقَائِدِهَا وَسَائِقِهَا، وَمَنَاخَ رِكَابِهَا، وَمَحَطَ رِحَالِهَا، وَمَنْ يَقْتُلُ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا قَتْلًا، وَمَنْ يَمُوتُ مِنْهُمْ مَوْتًا.

So now, praise and eulogy be to Allah, O people, I have put out the eye of revolt. No one except me advanced towards it when its gloom was swelling and its madness was intense. Ask me before you miss me, [2] because, by Allah, who has my life in His hands, if you ask me anything between now and the Day of Judgement or about the group who would guide a hundred people and also misguide a hundred people I would tell you who is announcing its march, who is driving it in the front and who is driving it at the rear, the stages where its riding animals would stop for rest and the final place of stay, and who among them would be killed and who would die a natural death.

وَلَوْ قَدْ فَقَدْتُمُونِي وَنَزَلَتْ كِرَائَتُهُ الْأُمُورَ، وَحَوَازِبُ الْخُطُوبِ، لَأَطْرَقَ كَثِيرٌ مِنَ السَّائِلِينَ، وَفَشَلَ كَثِيرٌ مِنَ الْمَسْئُولِينَ، وَذَلِكَ إِذَا قَلَصَتْ حَرْبُكُمْ، وَشَمَرَتْ عَنْ سَاقٍ، وَضَاقَتْ الدُّنْيَا عَلَيْكُمْ ضَيْقًا، تَسْتَطِيلُونَ أَيْامَ الْبَلَاءِ عَلَيْكُمْ، حَتَّى يَفْتَحَ اللَّهُ لِبَقِيَةِ الْأَبْرَارِ مِنْكُمْ.

When I am dead hard circumstances and distressing events would befall you, many persons in the position of asking question would remain silent with cast down eye, while those in the position of replying would lose courage. This would be at a time when wars would descend upon you with all hardship, and days would be so hard on you that you would feel them prolonged because of hardship till Allāh would give victory to those remaining virtuous among you.

إِنَّ الْفِتْنَ إِذَا أَقْبَلَتْ شَبَّهَتْ، وَإِذَا أَدْبَرَتْ نَبَّهَتْ، يُتَكْرَنُ مُقْبِلَاتٍ، وَيُعْرَفْنَ مُدْبِرَاتٍ، يَحْمَنُ حَوْمَ الرِّيَّاحِ، يُصِيبُ بَلَدًا وَيُخْطِئُ بَلَدًا.

When mischiefs come they confuse (right with wrong) and when they clear away they leave a warning. They cannot be known at the time of approach but are recognized at the time of return. They blow like the blowing of winds, striking some cities and missing others.

أَلَا وَإِنَّ أَخْوَفَ الْفِتَنِ عِنْدِي عَلَيْكُمْ فِتْنَةُ بَنِي أُمِيَّةٍ، فَإِنَّهَا فِتْنَةٌ عَمِيَاءُ مُظْلَمَةٌ: عَمَتِ خُطُوتُهَا، وَخَصَّتْ بَلِيَّتُهَا، وَأَصَابَ الْبِلَاءُ مِنْ أَبْصَرٍ فِيهَا، وَأَخْطَأَ الْبِلَاءُ مِنْ عَمِيٍّ عَنْهَا. وَإِيمَ اللَّهُ لَتَجِدَنَّ بَنِي أُمِيَّةٍ لَكُمْ أَرْيَابَ سُوءٍ بَعْدِي، كَالذَّابِ الضَّرُوسِ: تَعْدُمُ فِيهَا، وَتَخْطِ بِبَيْدِهَا، وَتَزِينُ بِرِجْلِهَا، وَتَمْنَعُ دَرَهَا، لَا يَزَالُونَ بِكُمْ حَتَّى لَا يَتْرَكُوا مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا نَافِعًا لَهُمْ، أَوْ غَيْرَ ضَائِرٍ بِهِمْ، وَلَا يَزَالُ بَلَاؤُهُمْ حَتَّى لَا يَكُونَ

إِنْ تَصَارَ أَحَدُكُمْ مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا مِثْلُ إِنْتِصَارِ الْعَبْدِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ، وَالصَّاحِبِ مِنْ مُسْتَصْحَبِهِ، تَرِدُ عَلَيْكُمْ فِتْنَتُهُمْ شَوْهَاءَ مَخْشِيَةٍ، وَقِطْعًا جَاهِلِيَّةً،
لَيْسَ فِيهَا مَنَارٌ هَدَى، وَلَا عِلْمٌ يَرَى.

Beware that the worst mischief for you in my view is the mischief of Banu Umayyah, because it is blind and also creates darkness. Its sway is general but its ill effects are for particular people. He who remains clear-sighted in it would be affected by distress, and he who remains blind in it would avoid the distress. By Allāh, you will find Banu Umayyah after me worst people for yourselves, like the old unruly she-camel who bites with its mouth, beats with its fore-legs, kicks with its hind legs and refuses to be milked. They would remain over you till they would leave among you only those who benefit them or those who do not harm them. Their calamity would continue till your seeking help from them would become like the seeking of help by the slave from his master or of the follower from the leader. Their mischief would come to you like evil eyed fear and pre-Islamic fragments, wherein there would be no minaret of guidance or any sign (of salvation) to be seen.

نَحْنُ أَهْلُ الْبَيْتِ مِنْهَا بِنَجَاةٍ، وَلَسْنَا فِيهَا بِدُعَاةٍ، ثُمَّ يُفَرِّجُهَا اللَّهُ عَنْكُمْ كَتَفْرِيجِ الْأَدِيمِ: بِمَنْ يَسُومُهُمْ خَسْفًا، وَيَسُوقُهُمْ عُنْفًا، وَيَسْقِيهِمْ
بِكَأْسٍ مُصْبِرَةٍ، لَا يُعْطِيهِمْ إِلَّا السَّيْفَ، وَلَا يَجْلِسُهُمْ إِلَّا الْخَوْفُ، فَعِنْدَ ذَلِكَ تَوَدُّ قُرَيْشٌ - بِالْدُنْيَا وَمَا فِيهَا - لَوْ يَرَوْنِي مَقَامًا وَاحِدًا،
وَلَوْ قَدَرُ جَزْرٍ جَزُورٍ، لِأَقْبَلَ مِنْهُمْ مَا أَطْلَبَ الْيَوْمَ بَعْضُهُ فَلَا يُعْطُونِيهِ!

We Ahlu'l-bayt (the Household of the Prophet) are free from this mischief and we are not among those who would engender it. Thereafter, Allāh would dispel it from you like the removal of the skin (from flesh) through him who would humble them, drag them by necks, make them drink full cups (of hardships), not extend them anything but sword and not clothe them save with fear. At that time Quraysh would wish at the cost of the world and all its contents to find me even only once and just for the duration of the slaughter of a camel in order that I may accept from them (the whole of) that of which at present I am asking them only a part but they are not giving me.

Footnote :

[1] Amīr al-mu'minīn delivered this sermon after the battle of Nahrawān. In it mischiefs imply the battles fought in Baṣrah, Ṣiffīn and Nahrawān because their nature was different from the battles of the Prophet. There the opposite party were the unbelievers while here the confrontation was with those who had veils of Islam on their faces. So people were hesitant to fight against Muslims, and said why they should fight with those who recited the call to the prayers and offered the prayers. Thus, Khuzaymah ibn Thābit al-Anṣārī did not take part in the Battle of Ṣiffīn till the

falling of ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir as martyr did not prove that the opposite party was rebellious. Similarly the presence of companions like Talhah and az-Zubayr who were included in the “Foretold Ten” on the side of ‘Ā’ishah in Baṣrah, and the prayer signs on foreheads of the Khārijites in Nahrawān and their prayers and worships were creating confusion in the minds. In these circumstances only those could have the courage to rise against them were aware of the secrets of their hearts and the reality of their faith. It was the peculiar perception of Amīr al-mu’minīn and his spiritual courage that he rose to oppose them, and testified the saying of the Holy Prophet :

You will fight after me with the breakers of allegiance (people of Jamal), oppressors (people of Syria) and deviators (the Khārijites). (al-Mustadrak alā aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥayn, al-Hākim, vol. 3, pp. 139,140; ad-Durr al-manthūr, vol. 6, p. 18; al-Istī‘āb, vol. 3, p. 1117; Usd al-ghābah, vol.4, pp.32,33; Tārīkh Baghdād, vol. 8, p. 340; vol. 13, pp. 186,187; at-Tārīkh, Ibn ‘Asākir, vol. 5, p.41; at-Tārīkh, Ibn Kathīr, vol.7, pp. 304, 305, 306; Majma‘ az-zawā‘id, vol.7, p.238; vol.9, p.235; Sharḥ al-mawāqib, vol. 3, pp. 316-317; Kanz al-‘ummal, vol. 6, pp. 72, 82, 88, 155, 319, 391, 392; vol. 8, p. 215).

[2] After the Holy Prophet, no one save Amīr al-mu’minīn could utter the challenge “Ask whatever you want to.” Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr in Jāmi‘ bayān al-‘ilm wa faḍlihī, vol. I, p. 58 and in al-Istī‘āb, vol. 3, p. 1103; Ibn al-Athīr in Usd al ghābah, vo. 4, p. 22; Ibn Abi’l-Ḥadīd in Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah, vol. 7, p. 46; as-Suyūṭī in Tārīkh al-khulafā’, p. 171 and Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī in aṣ-Ṣawā‘iq al-muḥriqah, p.76 have written that “None among the companions of the Holy Prophet ever said ‘Ask me whatever you want to’ except ‘Ali ibn Abi Tālib.” However, among other than the companions a few names do appear in history who did utter such a challenge, such as Ibrāhīm ibn Hishām al-Makhzūmī, Muqātil ibn Sulaymān, Muqātil ibn Sulaymān, ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān (Ibn al-Jawzi) and Muh[?]ammad ibn Idrīs, ash-Shāfi‘ī etc. but everyone of them had to face disgrace and was forced to take back his challenge. This challenge can be urged only by him who know the realities of the Universe and is aware of the happenings of the future. Amīr al-mu’minīn the opener of the door of the Prophet’s knowledge as he was, was the only person who was never seen being unable to answer any question on any occasion, so much so that even Caliph ‘Umar had to say that “I seek Allāh’s protection from the difficulty for the solution of which ‘Alī would not be available.” Similarly, the prophesies of Amīr al-mu’minīn made about the future proved true word by word and served as an index to his vast knowledge, whether they be about the devastation of Banū Umayyah or the risings of the Kharijites, the wars and destruction by the Tatars or the attacks of the English, the floods of Baṣrah or the ruination of Kūfah. In short when these events

are historical realities there is no reason why this challenge of Amīr al-mu'minīn should be wondered at.