



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Nahj al-Balagha

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Lesson: 16

Topic: Sermon #3: Shiqshiqiyya

- One of the most famous sermons in Nahj al-Balagha sheds light on the injustice Amir al-Mu'minin عليه السلام suffered. Imam عليه السلام very clearly and with strong terms announces that he is the most rightful for the caliphate. This sermon is one of the rarest instances in which the Imam عليه السلام is straightforward about this sensitive point.
- The truth has to be said. The unity shouldn't be preserved at any cost. Unity means to coexist peacefully without compromising our beliefs. In fact, the first people in history to cause disunity were the prophets عليهم السلام.

﴿كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّنَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ﴾

Mankind was a single community on their disbelief and kufr; then Allah sent the prophets عليهم السلام as bearers of good news and warners. (2:213)

- It was never the intent of Allah to make unity a sacred goal. The goal is to guide people.
- Unity but not at the cost of losing the truth. Amir al-Mu'minin عليه السلام had to say the sermon, and the history had to document it not to let anyone say there were no problems between any of the companions.

Often, we forget our history. Many say don't open historical files. This will create tension. To answer:

1st. The Quran teaches us to open historical files.

2nd. Forgetting history makes us like a person who has amnesia. We cannot make proper decisions if we lose that memory in history.

Why is it called *Shiqshiqiyya*? It is taken from the last paragraph of the speech. Imam عليه السلام was saying these hot words till someone interrupted him. Ibn Abbas asked Imam عليه السلام to continue, but he refused and used this word.

Imam عليه السلام said refusing Ibn Abbas:



«تِلْكَ شِقْشِقَةٌ هَدَرَتْ ثُمَّ قَرَّتْ»

“O’ Ibn ‘Abbas it was like the foam of a Camel which gushed out but subsided.”

«شِقْشِقَةٌ» (shiqshiqah): a noise that a camel makes when it is fired up when it is energetic and excited, and then it comes down.

- This sermon was delivered during the apparent caliphate of Amir al-Mu'minin عليه السلام in *rahbat al-Kufa*, which is said to be a court in Masjid al-Kufa, and he judged people there or an open area around Kufa.
- It is stated in the late 38 or early 39 AH after three main civil battles.

The authenticity of the sermon:

- Many non-Shias reject the sermon due to its content, which puts them in a difficult spot. So, they say that Sharif al-Radi has made it up.

Investigating the sources shows that the sermon existed in Sunni sources. Among them are:

1. Sibte ibn al-Jawzi in *Tazkirat ul-Khawass*. He narrates parts that are not mentioned in *Nahj al-Balagha*. It shows that Sibte had a source other than *Nahj al-Balagha*.
2. Ibn Meysam al-Bahrani (a 7th-century Shia scholar with a commentary on *Nahj al-Balagha*) talks of two sources that pre-date Sharif al-Radi.
3. Ibn Abi al-Hadid al-Mu'tazili (a Sunni and author of one of the most critical commentaries on *Nahj al-Balagha*) narrates from his mentor *Musaddiq al-Wasiti* from Ibn al-Khashshab that al-Radi wasn't that strong to compose such a sermon. For sure, it is from Ali.
 - Ibn al-Khashshab claimed he had seen sources predating Sharif al-Radi's birth. In fact, sources go back 200 years before al-Radi.
4. In the Encyclopedia of al-Ghadir, Allamah Amini has listed 28 sources for *Shiqshiqiyya* sermon.

- The sermon was pretty well-known; many people memorized it, and Imams عليهم السلام would encourage people to memorize it.

Starting sentence: «أَمَّا وَاللَّهِ لَقَدْ تَقَمَّصَهَا فُلَانٌ / ابن أبي قحافة»

- Imam عليه السلام used to start with an opening passage praising Allah and other things, but we can assume that Sharif al-Radi might have omitted it or the source he had didn't include it.



Two versions: ابن أبي قحافة / فلان

- Ibn Abi Quhafa has taken the caliphate. Abu Quhafa was the title of Abu Bakr's father. So, his son is Abu Bakr himself.
- «تَقَمَّصَ» comes from the word «قميص» which means garment or shirt. *Taqammus* is when you put on a shirt.
- So, Imam عليه السلام says he swears by Allah that Abu Bakr has taken the caliphate as a garment.

Taking a position resembles putting on a garment because:

1. A garment adorns you. A political position does adorn you.
2. A shirt surrounds and shields you. The caliphate does the same to you and keeps you in power.

- Amir al-Mu'minin عليه السلام describes the problem in this way that Abu Bakr did it while knowing that the relationship between the Imam عليه السلام and the caliphate is like the relationship between a hand mill and its axis. Without an axis, a mill doesn't function—Imam عليه السلام says that the relationship between him and the caliphate is like that axis to a mill. The caliphate revolves around him.
- In fact, the caliphate is not a shirt that you wear. It has been pre-ordained by Allah. You have to fit that position just like an axis how it fits the mill.
- Ahlulbayt عليهم السلام are like the axis to the mill of the caliphate. Without this axis, the caliphate is dysfunctional.
- One of the rare instances that the humble Imam عليه السلام starts to describe his lofty status is because he finds it compelling to tell the people the truth.

Criticism: Imam Ali عليه السلام was so humble that he never praised himself. Nobody praises himself.

Answer:

Sometimes you have to praise yourself for showing the truth. Many people then didn't appreciate his status or know who he was.

Imam عليه السلام describes himself as:

«يُنْحَدِرُ عَنِّي السَّيْلُ وَلَا يَرْقَى إِلَيَّ الطَّيْرُ»

"The floodwater flows down from me, and the bird cannot fly up to me."

- Imam عليه السلام likens himself to a very high mountain that the floodwater comes down from him, and no bird can reach the peak of that mountain. This is



the lofty position of Imam عليه السلام, so how people preferred and compare others to him?!

- Some commentators: Imam is talking about his knowledge. He was overflowed with knowledge.

Another reason why Imam عليه السلام likens himself to a mountain:

The mountains stabilize the crust of the earth. Through Ahlulbayt عليهم السلام there will be stability.

Now, Imam عليه السلام talks about his reaction to what happened:

«فَسَدَلْتُ دُونَهَا ثُوبًا وَ طَوَيْتُ عَنْهَا كَشْحًا»

I put a curtain against the caliphate and I kept myself detached from it.

Amazing technical words:

«سَدَلٌ» (sadala) means put a cloth on something to cover it.

«كَشْحٌ» (kashh) refers to side, waist, or flank: when you twist your waist or flank to look the other way, this is the meaning of «وَ طَوَيْتُ عَنْهَا كَشْحًا». This signifies that you are not interested.

Although the caliphate was Amir al-Mu'minin عليه السلام's divine right, he abandoned it because he was between two tough choices:

1. Fighting by an amputated arm « وَ طَفِقْتُ أَرْتِي بَيْنَ أَنْ أَصُولَ بِيَدٍ جَدَاءَ »

- The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم told the Imam عليه السلام in his will that the caliphate would be usurped from him, and if he wouldn't find any supporters, he must keep patient.

2. «أَوْ أَصْبِرُ عَلَى ظُخْيَةِ عَمِيَاءَ» or be patient in blinding darkness of tribulations.

Description of those dark tribulations:

- If you are old, it makes you feeble and old.
- If you are young, you become old.
- A believer who works to satisfy Allah, his test became much harder those days.

Imam عليه السلام was very direct that what happened was a grave injustice.

What Imam عليه السلام chose:

«فَرَأَيْتُ أَنَّ الصَّبْرَ عَلَى هَاتَا أَحَبِّي»

He said he did calculations and found patience being a wiser decision.

«فَصَبْرْتُ»: He said he exercised his right to be patient. He urges that patience is not easy, and now he says how painful it is.

This is the symbol of patience that says these words:



«فَصَبْرْتُ وَفِي الْعَيْنِ قَدَى وَفِي الْحَلْقِ شَجَا»

I was patient like a thorn was in my eyes and a bone (thorn) in my throat.

- In addition to the pain of this patience, Imam عليه السلام tells the reason: to save Islam: Muslim ummah had just been established, Persian and Roman Empires on the sides, hypocrites, mushriks, etc., who want a destroyed Islam.

How can we digest what happened after the Prophet ﷺ? We need to look at the previous nations as well as other sects' books and history:

Discussions here:

1. How did most of the companions disobey the Prophet ﷺ? Any precedents?
2. What exactly happened in Saqifa?
3. How did the companions change overnight?

- Turning on the heels of previous nations: the story of Israelites and how after seeing so many signs, they followed Samiri and started worshiping the golden calf.
- Prophet Musa عليه السلام asked Allah: Who allowed the calf's voice to be generated? God answered: I; when I saw their belief shaky, I decided to test them.
- Musa عليه السلام said to God that this is Your trial, and You have a purpose: To guide the one You wanted and misguide others.
- In Sahih Bukhari, it is narrated from the Prophet ﷺ that you will follow the path of those who came before you in a way that if they would go to a hole, you would too.
- Musa عليه السلام's nation disobeyed him the second he was out of sight. So, this would happen for the companions of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ; esp. when the holy Quran clearly states that the companions would flip. (3:144)
- An instance where Muslims flipped and objected: In the Battle of Hunayn, when the Prophet ﷺ sent back a big bunch of war-spoils to Meccans
- Bukhari narrated from the Prophet ﷺ that he is at the pool of Kawthar, seeing a group of his companions being deterred from drinking and going to Paradise. The Prophet ﷺ says O My Lord! My companions. It'll be told to him do you know that after you, they flipped?
- The Prophet ﷺ says I see only a handful of my companions who join me.