

The Pursuit of Martyrdom

The pursuit of martyrdom has always been one of the core concepts within military education during the Islamic era. Alongside study of weaponry, strategy and tactics, the pursuit of martyrdom was regarded as a key concept to study, understand and build as a disposition. The pursuit of martyrdom is what gave vigor to the Islamic armed forces in their battles, allowing them to achieve that which others would consider unachievable to the point that they would not even try. Whilst generals of the armies of kufr were constrained by their troops clinging to this life, restricted to devising military operations that minimized casualties, the generals of the armies of Islam were blessed with troops who saw death on the battlefield as the door to greatest prizes possible for any soul to aspire to.

The pursuit of martyrdom allowed Muslim troops to stand their ground, without so much as flinching, before armies many times their size and ultimately overwhelm them. The officers of the Islamic era did not see serving in the armed forces merely as having a secure job, a means to securing transport, housing and education for their children as has come to prevail over the officers of the armed forces in the Muslim states today. No, their eyes were firmly fixed on rewards far greater than this world could offer, for far longer than this short life.

In our era, after the abolition of the Islamic ruling, the Muslims' desire for martyrdom has both fascinated the Western military strategists and frustrated them. The motivation of achieving martyrdom has come to be regarded as a force multiplier of sorts. It has allowed Muslims, without being a well-prepared military force, to consistently inflict huge losses on occupying forces, as has been seen in Afghanistan and Occupied Kashmir. It has imposed upon the West the need to study closely the subject of asymmetric warfare, in which their awe of a Muslim soldier's desire for martyrdom is evident. And it fills the Western power elite with dread at the thought of one of the Muslims armed forces being mobilized against them, which is inevitable upon the return of the Khilafah (Caliphate) on the Method of Prophethood.

Martyrdom is a key concept in Islam and defines a major characteristic of the Ummah of Islam. Allah (swt) said, **«وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ - فَرِحِينَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَيَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوا بِهِمْ مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ أَلَّا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ»** **“Think not of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord; They rejoice in the bounty provided by Allah. And with regard to those left behind, who have not yet joined them (in their bliss), the (Martyrs) glory in the fact that on them is no fear, nor have they (cause to) grieve.”** [Surah Aali Imran 3:169-170]. Here Allah (swt) categorically states that even though the martyrs were killed in this life, their souls are alive and receiving provisions in the Dwelling of Everlasting Life. In his Sahih, Muslim recorded that Masruq said, **«We asked `Abdullah about this Ayah, وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ** **“Think not of those as dead who are killed in the way of Allah. Nay, they are alive, with their Lord, and they have provision.”** He said, **«أَرْوَاهُمْ فِي جَوْفِ طَيْرٍ خَضِرٍ، نَسْرُحُ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ حَيْثُ شَاءَتْ، ثُمَّ تَأْوِي إِلَى تِلْكَ الْقَنَادِيلِ، فَاطَّلَعَ إِلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ إِطْلَاعَةً فَقَالَ: هَلْ تَشْتَهُونَ شَيْئًا؟ فَقَالُوا: أَيْ شَيْءٍ نَشْتَهِي وَنَحْنُ نَسْرُحُ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ حَيْثُ شِئْنَا؟ ففَعَلَ ذَلِكَ بِهِمْ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ، فَلَمَّا رَأَوْا أَنَّهُمْ لَنْ يَتْرَكُوا مِنْ أَنْ يُسْأَلُوا، قَالُوا: يَا رَبِّ نُرِيدُ أَنْ تَرُدَّ أَرْوَاحَنَا فِي أَجْسَادِنَا حَتَّى نُقْتَلَ فِي سَبِيلِكَ مَرَّةً أُخْرَى، فَلَمَّا رَأَى أَنْ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ حَاجَةٌ، تَرَكُوا»** **“Their souls are inside green birds that have lamps, which are hanging below the Throne (of Allah), and they wander about in Paradise wherever they wish. Then they return to those lamps. Allah looks at them and says, ‘Do you wish for anything?’ They say, ‘What more could we wish for, while we go wherever we wish in Paradise.’ Allah asked them this question thrice, and when they realize that He will keep asking them**

until they give an answer, they say, 'O Lord! We wish that our souls be returned to our bodies so that we are killed in Your cause again.' Allah knew that they did not have any other wish, so they were left.)”

So let the Muslim officer consider the status of his brothers in arms who embraced martyrdom in Uhud. Let him contemplate carefully the message they left for him through the ages. Imam Ahmad recorded that, Ibn `Abbas said that the Messenger of Allah said, «لَمَّا أُصِيبَ إِخْوَانُكُمْ بِأَحَدٍ، جَعَلَ اللَّهُ أَرْوَاحَهُمْ فِي أَجْوَابِ طَيْرٍ خَضِرٍ، تَرُدُّ أَنْهَارَ الْجَنَّةِ، وَتَأْكُلُ مِنْ ثَمَارِهَا، وَتَأْوِي إِلَى قَنَادِيلَ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ فِي ظِلِّ الْعَرْشِ، فَلَمَّا وَجَدُوا طَيْبَ مَشْرِبِهِمْ وَمَأْكَلِهِمْ، وَحَسَنَ مُقْلَبِهِمْ قَالُوا: يَا لَيْتَ إِخْوَانَنَا يَعْلَمُونَ مَا صَنَعَ اللَّهُ لَنَا، لِنَلَّا بِزَهْدُوا فِي الْجِهَادِ، «When your brothers were killed in Uhud, Allah placed their souls inside green birds that tend to the rivers of Paradise and eat from its fruits. They then return to golden lamps hanging in the shade of the Throne. When they tasted the delight of their food, drink and dwelling, they said, 'We wish that our brothers knew what Allah gave us so that they will not abandon Jihad or warfare.' Allah said, 'I will convey the news for you.' Allah revealed these and the following Ayat, «وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ» “Think not of those as dead who are killed in the way of Allah. Nay, they are alive, with their Lord, and they have provision.”

Thus, an officer of the Islamic era would not only long for the reward of Tahajjud and praying in the Masjid, he would have tear-filled eyes and hold his arms aloft in earnest Dua, longing for achieving martyrdom. Indeed, the Dua of the Muslim officer or soldier is not merely for houses, means of transport and good education, it is for martyrdom. Mu'adh bin Jabal (ra), the great military strategist who advised RasulAllah (saaw) in the Battle of Badr, narrated that RasulAllah (saaw) said, «مَنْ سَأَلَ اللَّهَ الْقَتْلَ فِي سَبِيلِهِ صَادِقًا مِنْ قَلْبِهِ أَعْطَاهُ اللَّهُ أَجْرَ الشَّهِيدِ» “Whoever asks Allah to be killed in His cause sincerely from his heart, Allah shall give him the reward of martyrdom.” [Tirmidhi].

The Muslim officer cares not for status and honor in this life but seeks the lofty status of martyr and the honor that it brings. Imam Ahmad recorded that Anas said that RasulAllah (saaw) said, «مَا مِنْ نَفْسٍ تَمُوتُ، لَهَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ، يَسْرُهَا أَنْ تَرْجِعَ إِلَى الدُّنْيَا، إِلَّا الشَّهِيدُ، فَإِنَّهُ يَسْرُهُ أَنْ يَرْجِعَ إِلَى الدُّنْيَا» “No soul that has a good standing with Allah and dies would wish to go back to the life of this world, except for the martyr. He would like to be returned to this life so that he could be martyred again, for he tastes the honor achieved from martyrdom.” Martyrdom is the one act which would induce a person to leave Jannah for the opportunity to die again, when even the whole world's wealth would fail to induce him. It has been narrated on the authority of Anas b. Malik RasulAllah (saaw) said, «مَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ يُحِبُّ أَنْ يَرْجِعَ إِلَى الدُّنْيَا وَأَنْ لَهُ مَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ غَيْرِ الشَّهِيدِ فَإِنَّهُ يَتَمَنَّى أَنْ يَرْجِعَ فَيُقْتَلَ عَشْرَ مَرَّاتٍ لِمَا يَرَى مِنَ الْكَرَامَةِ» “Nobody who enters Paradise will (ever like to) return to this world even if he were offered everything on the surface of the earth (as an inducement) except the martyr who will desire to return to this world and be killed ten times for the sake of the great honor that has been bestowed upon him.” [Muslim].

The Muslim officer does not set his sights merely on providing financial stability for his family, he aspires to be the means for them to enter the abode of Jannah, with its luxuries that have no end. Narrated by Abu al-Darda', RasulAllah (saaw) said, «يُشْفَعُ الشَّهِيدُ فِي سَبْعِينَ مِنْ أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ» “The intercession of a martyr will be accepted for seventy members of his family.” [Abu Dawud]. The Muslim officer does not fret over amassing huge wealth so that his dependents can thrive after his death, for he knows his martyrdom is of greater benefit for his dependents. Abu Bakr Ibn Marduwyah recorded that Jabir bin `Abdullah said, “The Messenger of Allah looked at me one day and said, 'O Jabir! Why do I see you sad?' I said, 'O Messenger of Allah! My father was martyred and left behind debts and children.' He said, «أَلَا أُخْبِرُكَ؟ مَا كَلَّمَ اللَّهَ أَحَدًا قَطُّ إِلَّا مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ، وَإِنَّهُ كَلَّمَ أَبَاكَ كِفَاحًا. قَالَ سَلْنِي أُعْطِكَ. قَالَ أَسْأَلُكَ أَنْ أَرُدَّ إِلَى الدُّنْيَا فَأُقْتَلَ فِيكَ» “Should I tell you

that Allah never spoke to anyone except from behind a veil However, He spoke to your father directly.” He said, ‘Ask Me and I will give you.’ He said, ‘I ask that I am returned to life so that I am killed in Your cause again.’ The Lord, Exalted He be, said, ‘I have spoken the word that they shall not be returned back to it (this life).’ He said, ‘O Lord! Then convey the news to those I left behind.’”

The Muslim officer is mindful of his final destination, the painful pangs of death, the punishment in the grave and the intense fear of not being forgiven on the Day of Judgment. So, he looks to the great favors of Allah (swt) in this regard should he acquire cherished martyrdom. It was narrated from Abu Hurairah that the Messenger of Allah (saaw) said, «مَا يَجِدُ الشَّهِيدُ مَسَّ الْقَتْلِ إِلَّا كَمَا يَجِدُ أَحَدُكُمْ مَسَّ الْفَرَصَةِ» **“The martyr does not feel anything more when he is killed than one of you feels if he is pinched (by a bug).”** [Ibn Maajah]. It was narrated from Rashid bin Sa'd, that a man among the Companions of the Prophet said, “O Messenger of Allah, why will the believers be tested in their graves except the martyr?” He (saaw) said, «كَفَى بِبَارِقَةِ السُّيُوفِ عَلَى رَأْسِهِ فِتْنَةً» **“The flashing of the swords above his head is trial enough.”** [an-Nisai]. RasulAllah (saaw) said, «يُغْفَرُ لِلشَّهِيدِ كُلُّ ذَنْبٍ إِلَّا الدَّيْنَ» **“Allah forgives every sin of a martyr, except his debt.”** [Muslim]. And it was narrated from Miqdam bin Ma'dikarib that the Messenger of Allah (saaw) said, «لِلشَّهِيدِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ سِتُّ خِصَالٍ يُغْفَرُ لَهُ فِي أَوَّلِ دَفْعَةٍ مِنْ دَمِهِ وَيَرَى مَقْعَدَهُ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ وَيَجَارُ مِنْ عَذَابِ الْقَبْرِ وَيَأْمَنُ مِنَ الْفَرَعِ الْأَكْبَرِ وَيَحَلِّي خُلَّةَ الْإِيمَانِ وَيَرْوِجُ مِنَ الْحُورِ الْعِينِ وَيُشْفَعُ فِي سَبْعِينَ إِنْسَانًا مِنْ أَقَارِبِهِ» **“The martyr has six things (in store) with Allah: He is forgiven from the first drop of his blood that is shed; he is shown his place in Paradise; he is spared the torment of the grave; he is kept safe from the Great Fright; he is adorned with a garment of faith; he is married to (wives) from among the wide-eyed houris; and he is permitted to intercede for seventy of his relatives.”** [Ibn Majah].

And the outstanding Muslim officer, truly worthy of praise and being envied, is the one whose strong character is built by Islam, with the peak of it being the fervent desire for martyrdom. So, let him consider the powerful words of Umar al-Farooq (ra), who appointed general after general, who achieved victory after victory. Imam Malik narrated from Yahya ibn Saeed that Umar ibn al-Khattab (ra) said, «كَرُمَ الْمُؤْمِنُ تَقْوَاهُ وَدِينُهُ حَسْبُهُ وَمُرُوءَتُهُ خُلُقُهُ وَالْجُرْأَةُ وَالْجُبْنُ غَرَائِزُ يَضَعُهَا اللَّهُ حَيْثُ شَاءَ فَالْجَبَانُ يَفِرُّ عَنْ أَبِيهِ وَأُمِّهِ وَالْجَرِيءُ يُقَاتِلُ عَمَّا لَا يُؤُوبُ بِهِ إِلَى رَحْلِهِ وَالْقَتْلُ حَتْفٌ مِنَ الْخُتُوفِ وَالشَّهِيدُ مَنْ اخْتَسَبَ نَفْسَهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ» **“The nobility of the *mu'min* (believer) is his taqwa. His Deen is his noble descent. His manliness is his good character. Boldness and cowardice are but instincts which Allah places wherever He wills. The coward shrinks from defending even his father and mother, and the bold one fights for the sake of the combat not for the spoils. Being slain is but one way of meeting death, and the martyr is the one who gives himself, expectant of reward from Allah.”** [Muwatta]

What pleasures and favors lie ahead for the Muslim officer who pursues martyrdom! Behind him is the humiliation of his Ummah at the hands of the hateful kuffar in lands both near and far, the Blessed Land - Palestine, Afghanistan, Occupied Kashmir, Myanmar (Burma), Syria, East Turkestan and Iraq. Between him and martyrdom, is the revival of the Islamic era, when the lions will again be unleashed, setting upon the cowardly enemies, who will flee like hyena before them. And immediately in front of him is his Nussrah for the re-establishment of the Khilafah (Caliphate) on the Method of Prophethood (saaw) so that he can seek one of the two Husnain, victory or martyrdom.

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