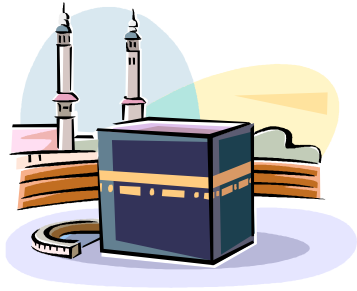


The Last Sermon of Mohammed



The kabaa is the most sacred building in Islam. One corner of it is the Black Stone, that was a traditional object of pilgrimage in pre-Islamic days. It lay in Mecca; all Muslims pray in its direction.

It was there that he, while sitting on his camel, delivered his sermon in a loud voice to his people. Rabi'ah ibn Umayyah ibn Khalaf repeated the sermon after him sentence by sentence. He began by praising God and thanking Him, and then turning to the people, he said:

"O Men, listen well to my words, for I do not know whether I shall meet you again on such an occasion in the future. O Men, your lives and your property shall be inviolate until you meet your Lord. The safety of your lives and of your property shall be as inviolate as this holy day and holy month. Remember that you will indeed meet your Lord, and that He will indeed reckon your deeds. Thus do I warn you. Whoever of you is keeping a trust of someone else shall return that trust to its rightful owner. All interest obligation shall henceforth be waived. Your capital, however, is yours to keep. You will neither inflict nor suffer inequity. God has judged that there shall be no interest and that all the interest due to `Abbas ibn `Abd al Muttalib shall henceforth be waived.

Every right arising out of homicide in pre-Islamic days is henceforth waived. And the first such right that I waive is that arising from the murder of Rabi'ah ibn al Harith ibn `Abd al Muttalib.

O Men, the devil has lost all hope of ever being worshipped in this land of yours. Nevertheless, he still is anxious to determine the lesser of your deeds. Beware of him, therefore, for the safety of your religion.

O Men, intercalation or tampering with the calendar is evidence of great unbelief and confirms the unbelievers in their misguidance. They indulge in it one year and forbid it the next in order to make permissible that which God forbade, and to forbid that which God has made permissible. The pattern according to which the time is reckoned is always the same. With God, the months are twelve in number. Four of them are holy. Three of these are successive and one occurs singly between the months of Jumada and Sha'ban.

O Men, to you a right belongs with respect to your women and to your women a right with respect to you. It is your right that they not fraternize with any one of whom you do not approve, as well as never to commit adultery. But if they do, then God has permitted you to isolate them within their homes and to chastise them without cruelty. But if they abide by your right, then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Do treat your women well and be kind to them, for they are your partners and committed helpers. Remember that you have taken them as your wives and enjoyed their flesh only under God's trust and with His permission.

Reason well, therefore, O Men, and ponder my words which I now convey to you. I am leaving you with the Book of God and the Sunnah of His Prophet. If you follow them, you will never go astray. O Men, harken well to my words. Learn that every Muslim is a brother to every Muslim and that the Muslims constitute one brotherhood. Nothing shall be legitimate to a Muslim which belongs to a fellow Muslim unless it was given freely and willingly. Do not, therefore, do injustice to your own selves. O God, have I conveyed Your message?"

As the Prophet delivered his speech, Rabi'ah repeated it sentence by sentence and asked the people every now and then whether or not they had understood the Prophet's words and committed them to memory. In order to make sure that the people understood and remembered, the Prophet used to ask his crier to say: "The Prophet of God asks, `Do you know which day is this?'" The audience would answer, "Today is the day of the greater pilgrimage." The Prophet then would say, "Tell them that God has declared inviolate your lives and your property until the day you will meet your Lord; that he has made the safety of your property and of your lives as inviolate as this day." At the end of his speech, the Prophet asked, "O God, have I conveyed your message?" And the people answered from all corners, "Indeed so! God be witness."