

And ...Such were the judges

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“The balance on the day of judgment... will it be of gold or silver”. This was the question posed by an emir of Andalusia. The hall was packed with people. The gathering included students, followers, and people who had come to ask about issues, questions and seek clarifications about them. In the meantime a messenger arrived with a letter with the above question and handed it over to the person presiding over the gathering. He opened the letter, read it silently and started writing the reply to it. He then put the letter in an envelope and handed it over to be delivered to the petitioner.

This was Hazrat Ziyad bin Abdul Rahman who belonged to Andalusia, and was a resident of Cordoba. Hazrat Ziyad was a student of Imam Malik and had learnt the *hadith* from him. He was the person who made the Maliki school of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) popular in Andalusia. Twice in his life did he travel from Spain to Medina to learn from his illustrious and great master.

Ziyad was a very learned man. He was very intelligent and also possessed man of strong character. Hazrat Sufiyan Thauri used to say: “those who have a craving and passion for knowledge must meet fewer people. This not only helps in preventing wastage of time, but also from listening and indulging in useless banter. This improves interaction with which draws a man closer to this material world. Man is prone to lust and when it increases, he becomes more mad after this world”.

Ziyad was a learned man and a man of God. His was a man of both word and deed. He never visited any one who was wealthy or those in power. A learned man is always very careful, reserved and self-respecting. He is well aware of himself and also God. No wealth of this world can buy him out. Ziyad was among those learned men whose name was far reaching and was well known in distant lands. He was an authority on the *Qur'an*, *hadith*, *fiqh*, literature, and his authority was well acclaimed. However difficult and complicated the issue might be, he would solve it in a short time. Knowledge, like love and fragrance, cannot be contained and remain hidden for a long time. When Hisham, the emir of Cordoba, came to know how unmatched Ziyad was in the

field of jurisprudence, he appointed the latter as the *Qadi* (judge or magistrate) of Cordoba.

When Sufiyan Thauri was appointed the *Qadi* of Baghdad, he headed to the banks of the Tigris with the letter of appointment. He then tore the official edict and

scattered the pieces in the river, and left Baghdad for he did not like work under the dictates of any other authority. Ziyad too acted in the same way. He too left Cordoba and went away because he did not wish to be *qadi* under an authoritative ruler. He found this very unacceptable to him. The spies of the ruler were always active. They reported back to the ruler that Ziyad had left the city. The emir felt very sad. He then wrote another letter to Ziyad and instructed his messenger to find Ziyad urgently and hand his letter to him. The letter contained a simple message... |I understand your temperament, but for God's sake do not leave Cordoba. I promise you that I shall never offer you any position of office”. When this letter reached Ziyad, he returned to Cordoba.

Later when it was enquired of him about the contents of the letter he had received earlier, and which he had replied and sealed it in an envelope, Ziyad said; “I was enquired about the scales on the day of judgment, if it would be made of gold or silver?” The audience enquired about his reply. He said that he had mentioned one *hadith* in reply which states that giving up useless talk and not indulging in useless argument is a sign of a good Muslim.

About The Author

Shah Baleeghuddin is an eminent scholar of Islamic history and former member of Pakistan's National Assembly. He is author of several books and internationally recognized for his extension lectures on politics, history and comparative study of religions.