

## Azadari and Innovation

On the day of Ashura the drums of victory were beating in the army of Yazid and wails arose from the camps of Husayn (a.s). But very soon the eyes of the world also saw that in spite of having used unlimited material means, Yazid failed miserably to vanquish Husayn (a.s). Neither could Yazidism take away the magnificent remembrance of Husayn (a.s) from the hearts, nor could it erase the sanctified mention from the tongues. Peace be on the slain one whose tomb lies in the hearts of his devotees. History testifies that from the time of Yazid until date, in every period and every century an organized propaganda is unleashed so that people do not continue to remember Husayn (a.s), but we see that day by day this name continues to become more and more illuminated, and the devotion towards Husayn (a.s) appeals to people of all faiths and communities.

They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths, and Allah will not consent save to perfect His light, though the unbelievers are averse. [1](#)

*Every dry and wet thing shall flow away in the flood of death. However the name of Husayn Ibn 'Ali shall remain intact.* [2](#)

For sometime the communal riots had silenced the flames of opposition to Azadari [3](#) but recent news reports suggest that as soon as peace returned this spark is again ignited and blown by the selfish motives to demolish the structure of Islamic unity. Now vested interests have started calling the custom of Azadari to be a religious innovation.

These opponents of Azadari beguile the masses by saying that weeping is an innovation, *Ta'ziyah* [4](#) is an innovation, *Alam* [5](#) is an innovation, *Majlis* [6](#) is an innovation, *Ma'tam* [7](#) is an innovation, this is an innovation, that is an innovation. Thus for these people wearing the glasses of bigotry everything in the rituals of Azadari seems to be innovation and nothing else. And they are so much terrified of the furor of innovation that even before the commencement of Muharram these people depart for a tour of the countryside.

First of all I invite the people of taste to contemplate that even if Azadari is an innovation, how can it be expelled from the circle of honor and entered into the circle of prohibition?

## What is innovation (Bid'ah)?

Innovation is generally defined as something new created after the completion of religion or it denotes the invention of new beliefs and rituals after the passing away of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w).<sup>8</sup> In the same way *Majmaul Bahrayn* defines Bid'ah as:

“That which was not present in the period of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) is an innovation.”

Keeping these definitions in mind, not only Azadari but all the sciences and arts, which have safeguarded the survival of Islam, all of them seem to be wearing the label of ‘innovation’.

The present arrangement of the Holy Qur'an is innovation. The diacritics on the text of the Holy Qur'an are innovation. To transcribe it in the Naskh script is innovation. To bring out Qur'anic commentaries in book form is an innovation. Collecting traditions through new methods is an innovation. The science of narrators of traditions for determining their authenticity is an innovation. The study of sources to check the authenticity of traditional reports is an innovation. Compilation of jurisprudential works is innovation. Teaching and learning scholastic theology is innovation. Let us now move ahead... To select a caliph through consensus is innovation. Formation of a Shura consultative committee to select a caliph is innovation. The Tarawih<sup>9</sup> Prayer is innovation. To derive the religious laws through analogy is innovation. To establish the public treasury is innovation. So much so, that even wearing the Sherwani<sup>10</sup> is innovation. Conducting transactions through paper money is innovation. If you apply this criterion whatever was not present during the time of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) is all innovation and every innovation is prohibited.

If being an innovation, Azadari should be given up then we must say goodbye to the Hijri calendar and every type of religious education must be struck off. So much so, that even the recitation of Qur'an printed on paper must be avoided. And most important of all, the caliphate of the first three caliphs must also be weeded out from the garden of Sunnism.

...is as an evil tree pulled up from the earth's surface; it has no stability.<sup>11</sup>

The source of all the sorrows and the root of all these evils is that Ahl al-Sunnah scholars have conditioned the minds of general public to regard all innovations as deviations and all the deviations lead to Hell fire. Although to consider every innovation and method to be prohibited is a mistaken notion. Both sects believe in fact that everything is permitted until its prohibition is not mentioned. Therefore the best thing would have been if they had pondered whether this innovation comes under prohibition or not, before labeling Azadari as innovation and misleading the general public. If it is possible to have it included among the prohibited deeds through a legal argument, then indeed to encourage people from refraining from it would be the greatest service to Islam.

But if you do (it) not and never shall you do (it), then be on your guard against the fire of which men and

stones are the fuel; it is prepared for the unbelievers. [12](#)

Instead of getting oneself deviated by selfish motives and slaughtering the law of the Prophet it would have been better for them to commit suicide.

The great Ahl al-Sunnah scholar, Imam Asqalani says in *Fathul Bari Sharh Sahih Bukhari* to the effect that:

It is well-known among the majority that innovation, can be divided into all types of acts. The compilation of scholastic theology is an example of obligatory innovation. Recommended innovation is writing of scholarly books and establishment of religious schools. Permissible innovation includes new types of dishes. Detestable innovation is spending so much on food and clothes as does not reach the level of wasteful expenditure. And prohibited innovation, according to the people of truth is to rise up in revolt and everything opposed to the Shariah whose prohibition is proved.

Shia scholars have also explained this. Thus the Shahid Thani (Second Martyr) (a.r.) says in *Sharh Lumah*:

“It is said that all innovation is not prohibited. Rather some people have divided it into four types of actions.”

After these explanations what intelligent person can say that the circle ‘all innovation is deviation’ also includes things which are in the position of obligatory, recommended and permitted? Keeping the same things in view, the First Martyr, (Shahid Awwal) (r.a.) has said: “Matters that developed after the period of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) are of various types. In our opinion innovation is applicable only to those things that fall under the prohibited category.

It is thus clarified that the standard of permissibility and impermissibility is not whether it existed in the time of the Prophet (s.a.), rather we should check whether the particular act conforms to the divine will or not.

## **Azadari rituals conform to Divine Will**

How do we explain the rituals of Azadari? It could be briefly explained as: To establish the remembrance of the immortal tragedy of Karbala’ and “to express ones grief and sorrow on this tragic event.” Now we should see if the remembrance of the events of the righteous predecessors conforms to divine will or not. What I feel is that, the Almighty Allah through the religious law, made us committed to always remember His proximate ones and keep their feats in our view. In the five-times daily prayers we utter at least ten times:

“Guide us on the right path. The path of those on whom You have bestowed favors.” [13](#)

The point worth noting is that until we do not honor and respect the feats of the proximate servants of God, and do not keep their sacrifices in our view, the actual purport of the above invocation cannot be realized.

Now let's move further and glance at the parts and method of another great pillar of Islam, viz. Hajj. You will see that in the rituals of Hajj from the beginning until the end, the complete episode of Prophet Ibrahim and Prophet Ismail (a.s) is sketched.

Why has 'Saiy' (jogging) between Mt. Safa and Mt. Marwah been made compulsory? It is only because Lady Hajrah had ran between these two hills with infant Ismail (a.s) in search of water. And that is the reason why the Holy Qur'an, ignoring the great peaks of the Himalayas and Pamirs, honored by calling these two small hillocks as 'signs of Allah'.

Today the Zamzam water is considered the best gift from a Hajj pilgrim. Why is it so? Is not the cause of this greatness only and only that this water spring erupted at the command of Allah to quench the thirst of Ismail?

The 8th of Zilhajj is called the Day of Tarwiyah only because it was on the night preceding this day when Ibrahim (a.s) had seen the dream in which he was slaughtering his son and the whole of next day he spent in contemplation.

The 9th of Zilhajj is called the 'Day of Arafah' only because on that day he had received the realization (Irfan) of sacrificing his son. The rituals of both these days are promulgated in remembrance of those same incidents.

To perform the sacrifice at Mina on the 10th of Zilhajj is an important duty of Hajj. Pages of History tell us about the reason behind it.

On the same day at the same place, Prophet Ibrahim (a.s) had tried to sacrifice Ismail (a.s) with his own hands in the path of God. Though the scribes of the tablet of 'erasing and rewriting' selected a ram in place of Ismail (a.s), however, the Holy Qur'an has kept the memory of this sacrifice alive and called all the animals of sacrifice as 'signs of Allah'.

...and whoever respects the signs of Allah, this surely is (the outcome) of the piety of hearts. [14](#)

These events prove that it is one of the ancient practices of Almighty Allah to keep the memory of past events alive and it is His continuing habit. Yes, the condition is that those events should be connected to His selected servants.

Now I would like to ask whether Husayn (a.s) was not among the proximate ones of the Almighty? Were his events not extremely significant? For the sake of Allah, act with justice! When the incomplete sacrifice of Ismail (a.s) is so much dear to Allah that He made it a pillar of Islam then would He not like the remembrance of the 'great sacrifice'? Which is having such terrible aspects that the sacrifice of

Ismail (a.s) is nowhere equal to it in anyway. If like other Muslim sects the Shias had also allowed modifications in the Islamic law after the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) the rituals of Azadari are so important that they would have been also included among obligatory acts like Hajj etc. But still it cannot be denied that it conforms to the Divine will.

...the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no altering of Allah's creation... [15](#)

If we present the scenes of the events of Karbala' before the people and year after year express our anguish and sorrow for the tragedy, what objections can be leveled against it? We only do that which we see the Almighty doing.

Those who object that Shias practice seasonal grief should note that the events of Ibrahim and Ismail (a.s) have been regulated by divine timetable and accept their folly.

## **Azadari of Husayn (a.s) is not Innovation**

Now let me explain that the Azadari of Husayn (a.s) is not included among the 'events after the Prophet'. Rather the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) had performed it. Please pay attention to the following narration of Allamah Ibn Hajar Makki, which he has quoted on the authority of Shobi and also *Musnad* of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal:

Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s) said: One day I came to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) and saw tears in his eyes. I asked, "Has someone angered you?" Why are there tears in your eyes?" The Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said, "A little while ago Jibrael told me that Husayn shall be slain at the banks of Euphrates. Jibrael asked me if I would like to get the soil of that place so that I can smell it. I said, 'Yes.' Thus Jibrael extended his hands and then gave me a handful of soil, due to which tears flow from my eyes."

This tradition informs us that weeping for Imam Husayn (a.s) is not only permissible, rather it is the Sunnah (practice) of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) and according to:

...whatever the Apostle gives you, accept it... [16](#)

It is obligatory for us to emulate it. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) was so much upset when he heard the forecast of the martyrdom of his beloved grandchild. Pay attention to this. If the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) had been alive after the incident of Karbala', what his condition would have been? And how he must have made elaborate arrangements for the Azadari of his son?

This incident also contains the point worth noting that in spite of the fact that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) loved Husayn (a.s) to an indescribable degree and Husayn was himself present before the eyes of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) and he (the Prophet) was also given the news of the martyrdom but in order to create more intensity in the emotion of grief he felt it necessary that he sends for the soil of the place of Husayn's martyrdom and smell it. The sentence: "Jibrael extended his hands and then gave me a

handful of soil, due to which tears flow from my eyes,” tells us that if we also keep before us the water skin, the standard, the Taboot,[17](#) Ta’ziyah, Tauq,[18](#) Zanjeer,[19](#) cradle and arrow in order to increase our emotions of grief it would exactly be according to the verse of Qur’an:

...you have in the Apostle of Allah an excellent exemplar...[20](#)

And it would be a perfect emulation of the practice of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w). Before the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (a.s), except for soil of the place of his martyrdom no other article was available which could have spurred the sorrowful emotion, therefore he had to be content upon this much. Now after the martyrdom when we are aware of all the details of the martyrdom and it is also possible to picture them in our imagination, why should we not express them all? So that we could form as much detailed imagination as is possible and to give as much condolence as is possible to the personality of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) for his grief?

Although this tradition, along with the Azadari of Husayn (a.s) also proves the justification of all the things connected with Husayn I feel that I should present the justification of some pillars of Azadari in brief, based on the events of the time of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w).

## **Nauha 103 and Majlis 104**

The following incident is recorded in *Madarijun Nubuwwah*, *Maarijun Nubuwwah* and other books as well. It is that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) did not weep for anyone as much as he did for His Eminence, Hamzah. He stood before the bier of Hamzah, wept and that also loudly, and so much so that he fainted. He used to say:

“O Hamzah! O uncle of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w)! O lion of Allah and His Prophet! O one who performed the good deeds. O Hamzah, O one who removed the sorrows, O Hamzah! O one who removed the enemies from the face of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w).”

The above blessed words of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) clearly justify the dirges and mournful poetry that is recited in the rituals of Azadari.

...who has a heart or he gives ear and is a witness.[21](#)

After that when the ladies of Medina began to lament upon the martyrs of Uhad and the sound of lamentation from the house of His Eminence, Hamzah did not reach the blessed ears of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w), he exclaimed sadly: “Alas! There is no lady to lament the death of my uncle, Hamzah!” When the Helpers (Ansar) heard this, they sent their ladies to the house of Hamzah and they arrived there and immediately organized a mourning assembly and began to weep and wail. When the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) heard their wails he prayed for them that may the Almighty Allah be pleased with them, with their children and grandchildren.

This incident, beyond any doubt proves that to mourn the martyrdom of one who has laid down his life in the path of God, the collective loud wailing of a large number of people is not only a legitimate act, it is in accordance with the direction of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w).

...sufficient as a witness...[22](#)

Keeping this incident in mind which is a perfect proof, please pay attention to the following narration of Abdullah Ibn Umar that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said: “The weeping of the living causes chastisement to the dead one. Even if we disregard the fact that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) had expressed the desire for ladies to weep on His Eminence, Hamzah and he prayed good for those who wept, how can you explain away the verse of Qur’an that says:

...and no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another...[23](#)

Does this verse not refute the above statement? Now side by side this, also pay attention to the report of the respectable traditionist, Ayesha, who when told about the above report of Abdullah Ibn Umar that ‘the dead are punished because of the weeping of the living ones’, said, “May Allah forgive him, he has not lied intentionally. He has either forgotten or misunderstood. The fact is that some Jews were weeping for a person who had died in their community and the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) was passing that way. He (s.a.w) said: “These people are weeping for him though he is involved in divine punishment in his grave. (Refer to chapter of weeping for the dead). All sects accept this tradition.

After this there remains no point in further analyzing or discussing the report of Abdullah Ibn Umar.

## [Taboot and Ta’ziyah](#)

Making a Ta’ziyah and paying homage to it is labeled as idol worship. Though it is foolishness to call a replica of a non-living thing as an idol, and that too from the tongues of those whose traditional reports prove that it is recommended to make the replica of even living things. Ayesha is reported to have said:

“I used to play with my doll in the presence of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) and some of my friends used to play with me. When the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) used to enter they hid themselves from him. Then the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) used to send them to play with me again.” Muhaddith Dehlavi, in explanation of this tradition says, “It is permitted to make a doll and play with it.”[24](#)

Anyway, let us move away from this discussion. If you want to hear the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) speak of making a replica of a grave see the following traditional report:

A companion told the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) that he has vowed to kiss the threshold of Paradise and the Hourul Ein.[25](#) The Holy Prophet (s.a.w) told him: Go and kiss the feet of your mother and the forehead of your father. He asked what he should do if his parents were not alive anymore? He was told to kiss their grave. Again he asked what he should do if he didn’t know where their grave was? The

Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) told him to, “Draw two lines and consider one as the grave of the mother and the other as the grave of the father and kiss them, and do not break your vow.”

This tradition is itself so detailed and self-explanatory that there seems no need of further elaboration.

## Ma'tam

If I am unable to present an instance of Ma'tam<sup>26</sup> (Chest beating) during the lifetime of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) it is perhaps due to my shortsightedness. However, the following incident is sufficient enough to prove my claim:

Mutawakkil ordered that Ma'tam should be held at the place where funeral prayer was recited on the bier of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal. Thus 2.5 million people gathered at that place and Muslims, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians and people of four schools performed Ma'tam there.

This is the same Mutawakkil who had tried to erase even the traces of the tomb of the blessed son of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w). But today he is so much moved at the death of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal that he himself is arranging for Ma'tam and in following him the four schools of thought mourn the tragedy. So much so, that the figure of people performing Ma'tam reaches to 2.5 millions, and at that time no one felt the need to say anything against it, that Ma'tam is an innovation. Rather histories describe the event in a boastful way.

But you should not think that the same tone and same acceptance is expressed in case of the Ma'tam of Husayn (a.s). Allamah Suyuti writes in *Tarikhul Khulafa* in the account of Caliph Mu'taz that: “Women performed Ma'tam for Husayn (a.s) and this was the first time that Nauha was done for Husayn (a.s) in Baghdad and this innovation (Bid'ah) continued for many years.” Its really a great pity that in the view of the great scholars of Islam, the respect of the son of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) is not equal to that of Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal.

In the end I only wish to state that time is such a medicine that cures even the deepest wounds; but the grief for Husayn (a.s) is such that even after the passage of so many centuries it still retains its original freshness. This itself is the proof that the mourning for Husayn (a.s) is having Divine assistance.

- [1.](#) Surah Taubah 9:32
- [2.](#) Urdu couplet
- [3.](#) Mourning rituals for the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (a.s.)
- [4.](#) An effigy of the tomb of Imam Husayn (a.s.)
- [5.](#) A replica signifying the standard carried by His Eminence, Abbas in the battle of Karbala'
- [6.](#) A mourning assembly
- [7.](#) Beating of chest
- [8.](#) Qamus
- [9.](#) Special prayers recited by Sunnis during the month of Ramadan
- [10.](#) A long coat worn in India and Pakistan

- [11. Surah Ibrahim 14:26](#)
- [12. Surah Baqarah 2:24](#)
- [13. Surah Fatiha 1:6-7](#)
- [14. Surah Hajj 22:32](#)
- [15. Surah Rum 30:30](#)
- [16. Surah Hashr 59:7](#)
- [17. Effigy of a bier](#)
- [18. Iron-collar](#)
- [19. Chain](#)
- [20. Surah Ahzab 33:21](#)
- [21. Surah Qaf 50:37](#)
- [22. Surah Nisa 4:79](#)
- [23. Surah Anam 6: 164](#)
- [24. Mishkatul Masabih, Jame al-Usool, Jame Bain as-Sahaiin](#)
- [25. The Hourie of Paradise](#)
- [26. Beating of chest in mourning](#)

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