

## Conclusions

We have discussed accounts of how each martyr fell, how even young children eagerly gave their lives to save Islam. We have looked at the misery and suffering of the women and the children. We have talked of the five journeys of tears.

We must now revisit the message of Imam Husayn. Unless we undertake this journey and make sure that the message of our Imam for ever remains with us to guide us through our lives, those five journeys of grief and suffering of the martyrs and the captives can not possibly have any meaning for us.

The tears we shed and the *maatam* we perform will be little more than hypocrisy if we allow ourselves to forget the message of Karbala' until next 'ashra al-Muharram. If we do so we shall be guilty of having insulted the martyrs in such a manner that our Imam will never forgive us.

We must remember that mourning for the martyrs is not a ritual we have to perform. We do so out of love for them and to keep their memory alive so that people everywhere in every age will remember what our Imam lived and died for.

From the day he left Madina on the 28th Rajab in 60 Hijrah, at every stage, our Imam made his mission clear. He left no doubt as to his intentions. It was not to fight Yazid to get the throne of the empire over which the khalifah ruled. Imam's mission was to reawaken the spirit of Islam and rekindle the Islamic conscience which was nearing extinction by the conduct of Muawiya and Yazid. Justice and morality were gradually being destroyed by the greed for land and power of those who had become rulers. Where Quraan insists that distinction can be accorded by piety alone, aristocracy based on nepotism and blood relationship was reigning the social order.

Let us look at some of the statements by Imam Husayn. Before leaving Madina Imam Husayn made a will and handed it over to his brother Muhammad Hanafiya. In this will Imam wrote: "My mission is to reform the muslim community which I propose to do by **amr bil ma'roof and nahya anil munkar**, inviting them to the good and advising them against evil. It is not my intention to set myself as an insolent or arrogant tyrant or a mischief maker."

In Mecca a man came to him and said he was a Shiah of Ahlul Bait. Imam looked at him and said: “My friend, never claim to be one of our Shiahs lest Allah, on the Day of Judgement, raise you with the liars. No one can be our Shiah except a person whose heart is free of deceit, malice or hatred towards others and free of corruption. If you are not such a person you can claim to be our admirer or supporter but never our Shiah.”

Imam Husayn has defined what being a Shiah means. Can we honestly say that we are Shiahs of Ahlul Bait? Being a Shiah means having a pure mind and soul, free of greed, malice, jealousy, deceit. It means keeping away from back biting and other habit of putting down others. It means having a thirst for knowledge. It means living our lives justly, humbly and being true to ourselves and others.

In Mecca Imam addressed a large group of scholars who had come for pilgrimage. He exhorted them to do amr bil ma'roof and nahya anil munkar and not to pander to the philosophies of the rulers who paid them to keep away from truth. This was a long and powerful speech reminding the scholars of their duty to inculcate Islamic conscience and not to mislead the masses who trusted them

In a letter which he addressed to the people of Kufa Imam wrote: “An Imam is one who judges by the Holy Quraan, upholds justice, professes the religion of truth and dedicates himself to obeying Allah and His Prophet.”

When Hurr and his army stopped Imam's caravan from going to Kufa, and Hurr told Imam that his order from ibn Ziyad was to ask Imam for Bai'at to Yazid, Imam refused to declare Bai'at to someone who was only serving his own ends and not of Islam. Hurr said that such an attitude would cost Imam his life. Imam replied: “Are you threatening me with death? Death is many thousands of times better than the dishonour of Bai'at to an enemy of Islam. Do you not see that truth is not being practised and falsehood is not being prevented? I see death as a blessing and life with tyrants as the most disgusting state one can be in.”

At Karbala', facing the army of Yazid, Imam Husayn addressed them as follows: “Remember that when you see a ruler who does what has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, who indulges in sins, who oppresses the people he rules, and you do nothing to stop such a ruler, before Allah you are as guilty as he is.” He went on to add: “My parents did not raise me to submit myself to an evil tyrant. I am your Imam and it is my duty to tell you that you have surrendered the freedom of your mind to the evil ways of Yazid. If you do not care for Islam, and do not fear the day of judgement, at least do care for that precious gift from Allah, the freedom of your spirit!!”

When Umar Sa'ad called upon the army to attack and kill Imam Husayn he said: “Death is better than disgrace and disgrace is better than the fire of hell.”

From all these sayings of Imam Husayn, from the ceremonies of mourning in which we have taken part during the 'ashra al-Muharram, from all the majalis we have heard and the literature we have read, what are the specific lessons for the youths of the Shiah Ithnasheri Community?

This question has to be answered by the youths themselves. But surely it can not be anything to do with the form of Aza' al-Husayn. The form will always remain culture bound and any comparison between the form in one country with the form in another country is an exercise in futility. We have to remember that Aza' al-Husayn has tripartite objectives:

(1) Demonstration of personal grief. This is an issue which has by very definition to remain a matter of personal choice and every community has to ponder over it and decide upon the form acceptable to it having regard to its geographic location and its composition.

(2) The dissemination of Husayn's message to the indigenous population. Where such population is Muslim of other persuasions, processions and public maatam have proved very effective. In the west, there is a need to explore other avenues such as:

- a) The Blood Bank;
- b) Visiting hospital patients with small gifts in the name of the martyrs,
- c) Food drive for the homeless, the poor, the aged and those in the homes,
- d) Distribution of literature explaining the message of Karbala'.

(3) Finally, and most important, a personal commitment by each one of us to make every effort to get rid of those evil qualities within us which could prevent us from claiming to be the Shiah of Husayn ibn Ali. Supposing every Muharram we forswear one evil habit like drug addiction, back-biting, arrogance, mischief making or any other un-Islamic habit, what a strong and powerful community we would be, and how sincere our maatam and tears would seem to us!

“Greetings be upon you, O' Aba Abdillah and upon the souls who were annihilated with you. Upon you, from me, is the (prayers) of peace from Allah for all eternity, as long as the night and day remain. May this visitation of yours not be my last contact with you. Salutations upon Husayn and upon Ali the son of Husayn (Ali al-Akbar) and upon the children of Husayn and upon the virtuous companions of Husayn.”

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