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Every Day Is Ashura and Every Land Is Karbala

If people would understand this meaning and observe it in every land they stay in and every day they live – the right of Islam for which Imam al–Husayn (as) was martyred, would be met!

If they did that, the face of Muslims in the world would change and they would be the masters instead of being slaves. However, a majority have understood it to be just to weep, wail, beat themselves with iron chains and knives – a dramatic performance which is repeated for a few hours of the year on the anniversary of Ashura and imitating some things like a parrot from the revolution of Imam al–Husayn (as). Then everything is to be forgotten thereafter. Most of the Sunnis criticize the Shia for such doings that are practiced on the day of Ashura which causes them to bleed.

Western and Arabic media in this age have spared no effort to show the Shia in Iran, during the season of Ashura, behaving as predatory beasts – knowing nothing but violence and admiring nothing better than to see bloods flowing from human beings. Though the Shia in India and Pakistan also practice this and much worse than that, the media – especially TVs, do not focus on them, rather they focus only on the Shia of Iran for a special purpose which is clear to everyone watching the events in the world and especially the affairs of Islam and Muslims.

The media do not show the Friday Prayer in Tehran where more than two millions gather to offer the prayer congregationally behind the President (as the imam of the prayer). The media do not show the wonderful reverence covering millions of Muslims while reciting the *du'a of Kumayl* on the nights of Friday when streets become fully crowded, avenues are closed and traffics stop. Here, you see men, women, old, young and children supplicating to their Lord humbly in the calmness of night and asking for forgiveness in the dawn.

These media are only concerned in showing the rituals of Ashura – focusing on the beating of heads with knives and chains and the bloody scenes involving a few persons!

It is true that what some of the Shia do during these rituals is not from religion at all, even if *mujtahids* give fatwas to say that there are great rewards in such deeds. These doings are but habits, traditions and emotions that overcome some people and make them behave unusually and little by little these

habits become part of the folklore inherited by one generation from another in blind imitation and without sense. In fact, some ordinary people feel that the shedding of blood by beating oneself is a deed that brings man closer to Allah and that whoever does not do that does not love Imam al–Husayn (as).

When I ponder with myself and in spite of my being Shia, after knowing satisfactorily that Shiism is the true creed – I am not satisfied with those ugly scenes that alienate souls and sound minds, especially when someone unclothes himself and beats himself with an iron tool in crazy movements shouting out too loudly: Husayn, Husayn!

The odd thing in this matter that makes you doubt it is that you see those very persons, who behave unusually and whom you think that the sorrow for Imam al–Husayn (as) has affected terribly, a little after the end of the rituals, jest, laugh and eat sweets as if everything ends with the end of the rituals. The oddest of all this is that most of these people are not religious or pious. Therefore, I have permitted myself to criticize them directly many times and say to them that what they did was just folklore and blind imitation. 1

May Allah have mercy on the martyr Muhammad Baqir as–Sadr who helped me much in this calamity when I asked him before my converting a Shia. He said to me, "The beating of bodies and shedding of blood that you see is from the practices of ordinary and ignorant people. No one of the ulama ever practices it. In fact, they always prevent and prohibit it."

I hate heresies and fight them wherever and with whomsoever they are. We must make the Shia aware to be able to give up heresies and make the Sunni understand that these practices cannot be obstacles preventing them from knowing the truth and following the Ahlul Bayt (as). They do not have to observe the practices of ordinary and ignorant Shia which are unfounded in true Shiism.

Anyhow, we have to imitate our great example the Messenger of Allah (S). When his uncle and protector Abu Talib died, he felt great sorrow for him. He felt this when his most beloved wife Khadijah died. And then he suffered the terrible loss of his uncle Hamza who was martyred and maimed and his body was found torn into pieces with no liver which had been taken out and chewed by Hind, the wife of Abu Sofyan. He felt great sorrow in all these instances, but he just wept out of his affection for them. He wept for his son Ibrahim, for his grandson al–Husayn (as) when Gabriel told him that he would be murdered, and wept for his brother and cousin Ali (as) when he foreknew that the most wretched of people would dye his (Imam Ali as) beard with the blood of his head.

The Prophet Muhammad (S) often wept and he ordered Muslims to feign crying if they could not cry. He sought the protection of Allah from the eye that did not shed tears. Nevertheless, he prohibited Muslims from being excessive in expression of their sorrow, beating their faces or tearing their clothes. Then, what is this about beating one's head or body with iron tools until one bleeds?

Our first imam after the Prophet Muhammad (S) – Ali ibn Abi Talib (as) did not do anything like that when his brother and cousin the Messenger of Allah (S) died. After a short time of six months, his wife

Fatima (sa) left to join her father in the better world. Imam Ali (as) felt great pain and sorrow, but he did never do anything unusual as what ordinary people do nowadays.

Imam al-Hasan (as) and Imam al-Husayn (as) did nothing of that when they lost their merciful grandfather Muhammad (S), and their kind, loving mother Fatima (sa), nor when their father Imam Ali (as), who was the best of all human beings after the Prophet Muhammad, was killed by the cursed ibn Muljam in the mihrab.

Imam as-Sajjad (as) as well, did nothing unusual when he saw scenes that had never happened anywhere else at all. He saw with his own eyes the massacre of Karbala when his father, uncles, brothers, cousins and companions were murdered and after this terrible event also he faced great difficulties and suffering that even mountains would not be able bear.

History did not record that any of the infallible Imams (as) did something of that or ordered their followers to do it. The only thing they did was that they liked to hear from some poets' elegies about the Ahlul Bayt (as) where they wept and felt sorrow and ordered people to weep and be sad for the Ahlul Bayt (as). In fact, this is a recommended thing if not obligatory.

I myself, attended many occasions of Ashura in many countries and did not find anyone of the *ulama* doing that at all. Scholars and learned people of the Shia avoid that and try to refute and forbid it.

We, after having become Shia, do not imitate ordinary people of the Shia in all what they do without researching and being certain of its truth. We celebrate the anniversary of Ashura by reciting the *maqtal* (the story of Imam al–Husayn's martyrdom) and the tragedies that the Ahlul Bayt (as) faced. We weep and feel sad for that. The point is that the heart should respond and weep with the eyes. Thereafter all of man's entity should submit to the remembrance of Allah the Almighty and to the truth that He has revealed. The hearts should promise their Lord to follow the path of Imam al–Husayn (as) which is the same path as of the Messenger of Allah (S) and all the Ahlul Bayt (peace be on all of them).

Ashura – with its condolence, sorrows, weeping, observing of remembrance and taking lessons from its situations and heroes, remains pure for the loyal Shia who abide by the true *Sunnah* of the Prophet (S) and the instructions of the infallible imams (as). On the other hand, the acts and practices of ordinary Shia remain liable to criticism and fabrication by those who fish in troubled waters to distort the beliefs of the Shia and separate them from the Ahlul Bayt (as) and then consider them as disbelievers.

Praise be to Allah Who has made us from the discerning Shia who has been guided to the truth through study and research and not from imitating the Shia.

Thus, readers have to be exemplar in abiding with the true Prophet's *Sunnah* transmitted by the infallible Imams (as).2

1. These doings are doings of ignorant and underdeveloped people; they are a way of expressing their love and allegiance to Imam al–Husayn (as) as they think. Once, one of them said to a religious authority that he had served food for al–Abbas

(as) and all the time he did not take off his shoes. The alim (scholar) asked him how he performed wudhu' and prayers then, but he paid no attention, thinking that he would get his reward from al-Abbas (as).

On the other side, we find the circles of dhikr (remembrance) near the Sunni with their different methods like Qadiriyyah, Naqshabandiyyah, and others, as shows for nothing but to be close to the chief of the creed (method). These shows are done by inserting nails in the head and eyes, and daggers and swords in the body with tambourines and smokes and shaking the heads and bodies in harmony with the melodies. Some of them rotate for continuous hours.

We knew some of them well that so-and-so drank intoxicants, so-and-so did not offer prayers, so-and-so was impious... did not refrain from abusing Allah and His messenger...committed adultery or sodomy...etc. However, those persons were invited by the chief (Sheikh) to attend the circles. They did not leave except when blood came out of their bodies, and then the Sheikh cried out: "Get out! Either you have not washed after janaba (sexual intercourse), or you have come here while having drunk wine...!"

I say that these things are recent heresies, which the colonists have emphasized on and fed for certain purposes. They are about to vanish among the Shia; so would they be so among our Sunni brothers?

2. It is well known that many ulama like Sayyid Muhsin al-Amin and nowadays Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei, Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadhlullah, and many others have given a fatwa that these practices (beating oneself with iron tools) are not permissible. Those, who say they are permissible, mean some things else. That one of the scholars said, "The swords that the Shia unsheathed in the face of oppressors are used today to strike their heads with" – is so that the British gave some swords to the processions of the Shia on Ashura!

These traditions came from the nations of Asia and India where there were groups practicing such rituals in their celebrations. When they gathered in Karbala, every group (procession) showed its way in expressing emotions. It is worth mentioning that different colonies lived in Karbala and kept on imitating their ancestors that made others admire what they practiced. Therefore, these things became as a part of the rituals of Ashura...

In addition to that, some people, who love Imam al-Husayn (as), think that the issue of Imam al-Husayn (as) shall die out if there is no shedding of blood...etc.

The pressures against the Shia in the past, during the Ottoman reign, and then during the oppressive rule of the Iraqi tyrannical regime that prevented military men, placemen, and state officials from going to Karbala on Ashura and punish (if not hang) them if they went there, made people emotionally practice these traditions.

Nowadays, these practices have become limited because of wide comprehension and the fatwas of the religious authorities. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, these practices have abated 98%. So have they in Iraq, Lebanon, and in different percentages in India, Pakistan, and other places according to the milieu surrounding them. In fact, these practices are practiced by the ignorant among ordinary people who think that the cause of Imam al–Husayn (as) to them is greater than the fatwas of so–and–so of ulama!!!

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