

Lecture One

In the Name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful

Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds, the Creator of all beings, and may peace be with the servant of God, His Messenger, friend, the chosen one, the trustee of His secret and the transmitter of His Message, our master and prophet, Muhammad and his pure and infallible progeny.

I seek refuge in God from the reviled Satan,

“He who forsakes his home in the cause of God, finds in the earth many a refuge, wide and spacious: Should he die as a refugee from home for God and His Messenger, his reward becomes due and sure with God: And God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.” (4: 100).

Immigration and jihad are two cornerstones on which Islam relies on in the social field. As is evident, the Holy Qur’an has, out of reverence for their sanctity, held them in high regard, wherever they are mentioned. Similarly, it has conferred great veneration and grandeur on the rank of immigrants and mujahideen (the fighters back).

Immigration (hijra), means leaving one’s home, people, and homeland, for a new place of abode, with a view to saving one’s faith from being compromised. In many Qur’anic verses, you will notice that both words are mentioned beside each other:

“Those who believe, and adopt exile, and fight for the Faith, in the cause of Allah as well as those who give (them) asylum and aid, - these are (all) in very truth the Believers: for them is the forgiveness of sins and a provision most generous.” (8:74).

In the early days of Islam, Muslims used to be divided into two groups: al-Muhajiroon (The migrants) and al-Ansar (The supporters or helpers). Al-Ansar were the inhabitants of Medina, previously known as Yetherb, who gave Al-Muhajiroon haven and aid. The latter were the ones who fled their homes and travelled to Medina in order to preserve their faith.

In common with jihad, immigration is an Islamic sharia rule that is not constant. That is, it becomes a performable religious obligation on Muslims when certain circumstances emerge and certain conditions

are met.

To avoid misunderstanding and contradictions in understanding the rules of both jihad and immigration, we set out here to discuss the subject in some detail.

For both jihad and immigration different interpretations have been put forward, i.e. different from the one we have just mentioned. Immigration has been taken to mean, “the abandonment of misdeeds and sinning”; thus, “the immigrant is the person who emigrated from the camp of disobedience”.

How precise is this interpretation? Would the person, whose soul has been tainted with sins, he then repented a true repentance, become a deserter of misdeeds? If we accept this interpretation, all people of the world who repented would fit this description for they forsook the vile deeds they were committing, such as Faheel bin Ayyadh, Bishr al-Hafi and others.

Ibn Ayyadh, used to be a thief. He turned his back to this type of wrongdoing and turned to God in a true penitence. Having mended his ways, he became a great man, turning into a famous teacher and educationalist for many people. In the spell when he had taken to stealing, Ibn Ayyadh was in the process of breaking into a house with the intent to steal. While he was scaling the fence of the house, he noticed that the owner of the house was in the middle of a devotional prayer, reciting the Holy Qur’an in a submissive voice. He heard the man recite,

“Has not the time arrived for the believers that their hearts in all humility should engage in the remembrance of Allah...” (57: 16).

While listening to this Qur’anic verse being recited, he somehow felt that as though he were being addressed with those words. The words shocked him to the core, so much so that he retorted, “O Lord! Yea. O Lord! Yea. It is high time. And it’s up.” He then came down the fence, after he had been dissuaded from carrying out his raid.

This was the last time he carried out an offending, be it a criminal activity, consuming alcohol or gambling, and all other sins. He made a clean break with his unsavory past. And in order to wipe the slate clean and forget about his past, he made amends with the victims of his crimes and reached a settlement with them, i.e. compensating them for what he stole from them and asking their forgiveness. He further made amends with his Creator. Therefore, Ibn Ayyadh fits the definition of immigration, in that he abandoned the vile deeds he was hooked on.

In Baghdad, and during the lifetime of Imam Mousa al-Kadhim (a.s.), there was a well know man called Bishr al-Hafi. One-day, al-Kadhim was passing by the house of Bishr. It happened that one of his maids opened the door to leave a bag of rubbish in front of the house. The Imam asked her if the owner of the house was a slave or a freeman. She answered, without hiding her bewilderment at his question, that he was a freeman. The Imam said, “You are right. Had he been a slave he would have feared his Lord”. [1](#)

The Imam then left the scene. When the maid went back into the house, Bishr, who was in a drinking session, asked her as to what kept her so late. She told him the story. It seems that the words of the Imam descended on him like a thunderbolt waking him up from his deep slumber and forgetfulness.

After the maid had told him of the direction the Imam continued his walk in, he quickly set off trying to catch up with the Imam, so much so that he forgot to wear his slippers. While he was in hot pursuit, he was saying to himself that the man who uttered those words must have been Imam Mousa bin Ja'far al-Kadhim (a.s.).

Indeed, he went to the house of the Imam and apologized to him. And while still weeping, declared in his presence that he wanted to repent and become a slave, not to anyone, but to God. He went on saying that he did not want any more the type of freedom he was used to, i.e. that which imprisoned in him his humanity and set forth the animal base instigations; that he did not want any more to chase lofty positions and repute; that he did not want to wade in the mire of sins and become their hostage; that he did not want to suffocate inside him the good innate nature and sound mind. He concluded that he wanted to be a true slave to God and a freeman when dealing with others.

Thus, Bishr announced his repentance at the hands of Imam al-Kadhim. From that point in time onward, he was never to relapse in his previous bad ways, i.e. he discarded his sins (hajara thunubah) and began a clean sheet, destroying all objects and symbols of wrongdoings, and turning to submission to and worship of God. Accordingly, Bishr met the criterion of immigration for he turned his back to all misdeeds and immoralities.

This definition of immigration (hijra) is similar to that of jihad for the mujahid (lit. maker of a great effort) which is "the one who is at odds with the inclinations of his tempting self",² especially its bad suggestions. It is a known fact that the internal struggle is ever present between the soul and its preferences on the one hand and reason on the other; in other words, a constant warring between heart and mind.

Imam Ali (a.s.) has been quoted as saying,

"The bravest of people is he who overcomes his leanings"³

The real courage is demonstrated in this incident, which took place during the time of the Messenger of God, Muhammad (s.a.w.). He was passing by a place where he saw a group of youth competing with one another over who could lift the heaviest rock. Aiming to make use of the occasion to preach to the youngsters, he approached them and offered to act as a referee between them in their contest. They accepted his offer.

He said to them, "No one of you should be in need to lift any rock so that they can be judged the strongest. Instead, I have a proposition for you, in that whoever among you can muster the strength and plug the courage to overpower his soul and prevent it from committing sins should be declared the

strongest.” It therefore follows that the mujahid is the one who could win over his self and the brave is the one who could overcome his desires.

There is another example and lesson, which demonstrates true bravery, and which we could draw from the story of Poryay Wooly (sic), a famous wrestling champion. He sets a parable for what a true champion should be. He was the epitome of gentlemanly conduct and magnanimity. The story goes like this: One day, our champion arrived in a town where he was scheduled to meet in a contest with the top wrestler of that town. While he was on a tour in that town, he came across an old woman who was giving out pieces of sweets to passersby. She gave him a piece of chocolate and asked him for a prayer.

He asked her whether there was anything in particular she wanted him to pray for. She said to him that her son was the wrestling champion of their town and that he was going to meet later in the week, another wrestler who came from another town. She added that she felt apprehensive about her son’s chances of winning, in that he might lose, and that his defeat would not only be considered a setback for her son, but it would mean that their source of income would dry up. In short, his defeat would spell disaster for the family. Our champion told her to have peace of mind, in that he would pray for her son to win the match.

After that conversation with the old woman, he was in a reflective mood, calling to mind that “he who overcomes his inclinations is the bravest of people”. At the appointed time of contest between him and his opponent and as the contest progressed, he came to know that his opponent was much weaker than him and that if he wanted to, he could have defeated him in no time.

However, having reached a decision that he would let his opponent defeat him, he overindulged in evasive movements to give the impression that the contest was proceeding normally, and in the opportune time, he gave way and let his opponent defeat him.

The storyteller went on to say that at the moment of defeat, our champion felt that his heart became wide open for God, as though he were in His dominion. And because that man did battle with his soul and scored a victory over its inclinations, he had become among the friends of God. You might ask, why? The answer is because “the true mujahid is the one who does battle with his soul”, the “bravest of people is he who overcomes his desires”, and lastly, because he demonstrated the kind of courage and magnanimity that made him excel over all champions.[4](#)

More significant of the previous story is that of Imam Ali (a.s.) and Amr bin Wid, a battle-hardened fighter, who earned the nickname of “the Knight of Yelyel.”[5](#) This story goes like this: At the battle of Khandaq (the Trench) the army of Muslims was on one side of the trench and that of the polytheists (mushrikeen) was on the other side. A group of infidels, among them Amr bin Wid, managed to cross over to the side of the Muslim army. Ibn Wid, mounting his horse, started yelling and challenging the Muslim fighters to fight him in a duel.

The Prophet (s.a.w.) turned to his companions, enquiring whether anyone of them was willing to fight the

challenger. All were quiet, apart from Ali, who stood up and said, "I am his match." The Prophet said, "He is Amr. Sit down." Ibn Wid grew more vociferous, taunting the Muslims and making fun of their assertion that whoever was killed among Muslims would go to heaven.

For the second time, Ali stood up and volunteered to face him in combat. He was asked by the Prophet to sit down. Amr bin Wid shouted for the third time, throwing down the gauntlet. Ali picked up the gauntlet and asked the Prophet to give him permission to fight Ibn Wid.

The result of the swordfight was in favor of Ali. The high point of the combat came when Ali overcame Ibn Wid, by seriously wounding him, and wanted to deal him the last blow. Ibn Wid spat in the face of Ali who was sitting on his chest, prior to beheading him. Ali let go of him and moved away to have a stroll before returning to finish him off. While Ali was in the process of doing just that, Ibn Wid asked him as to why he moved away and came back. Ali replied that he was hurt and offended when Ibn Wid spat at him, preferring to move away as not to let his dealing him the last blow be considered as though it were for taking personal revenge. That is, killing him would not count in the cause of God.

So, the short time Ali took between the incident of spitting and moving away from the fallen foe and coming back to finish him off was for suppressing his anger, so that his killing him would be deemed in the cause of God, and not for Ali's personal vendetta.[6](#)

In summation, the second definition of hijra (immigration) is forsaking sins and misdeeds and the second interpretation for jihad is battling with one's own self, with a view to deterring it from driving one to committing that which is vile or improper. However, is this interpretation correct? The answer to this question is yes, in that in itself it is correct and, yet, it has been misunderstood. Our statement, "The immigrant is he who departs wrongdoings, and the mujahid (the battler) is he who is at odds with his tempting self", can be found in the traditions (hadith) of the Infallibles (a.s.).

The Prophet (s.a.w.) describes battling one's soul (jihadun nafs) as "the major jihad". And yet, the mix-up and misinterpretation has come about as a result of some people's resorting to annulling the first meaning by suggesting that the import of hijra is departing one's misdeeds by mending their ways, and that the meaning of jihad is battling with oneself to dissuade it from committing what is unlawful, implying that there is no need for man to leave his home and kin when it becomes necessary.

That is, there is no point in fleeing to other countries when needs be. We should, instead, stay put; it would suffice that we abandon the crooked ways that leads to the commissioning of sins and would therefore be eligible for the definition of muhajir (immigrant).

As regards jihad, some would like to argue that since jihad is doing battle with oneself, there remains no necessity for entering in war with the enemies of Islam; it would, they further allege, suffice that we stay at home and busy ourselves with wrestling with our internal struggle. This, in their view, is the jihad in the cause of God (aljihadu fi sabilillah). In their judgment, this type of jihad is far superior to the other one because it is "the major jihad" (aljihadul akbar) as opposed to the other one, which is "the minor

jihad” (aljihadul asghar).

As is evident, interpreting hijra, as abandoning committing what is vile, has been taken as an alleged reason for dismissing as irrelevant hijra (immigration) according to the first meaning. Similarly, interpreting jihad as doing battle with oneself as an excuse for rejecting as redundant the jihad according to the first meaning. This is where deviation from the right reading of both the concepts has occurred.

It goes without saying that there are two types of hijra (immigration) in Islam; the same goes for jihad. Choosing [for convenience] any type at the expense of the other, i.e. in both the cases – jihad and immigration would entail departure from Islam and its injunctions.

Our great leaders of religion – the Prophet (s.a.w.), Imam Ali and the rest of the Imams (a.s.) were all among the immigrants (muhajir) in the Way of God in the sense of both types of hijra (immigration). And the same goes for jihad. However, tackling the subject from a semantic standpoint, we would come across gradations that cannot be reached without going through both the categories of jihad as well as immigration. That is, it is implausible that someone attains the rank of mujahid (fighter) before experiencing combat in the battlefield.

Likewise, one cannot be deemed “immigrant” without going through the process of real immigration, in the manifest meaning of term. This is God’s law with His creation; He has made man’s attaining maturity and advancement contingent on his passing educational/training courses.

For example, in the view of Islam, marriage is a sacred institution for a number of reasons, unlike contemporary Christianity that considers celibacy, [perhaps a reference to the institution of bachelorhood of the Catholic priesthood] as a sacred deed. So, why does Islam regard marriage a sanctified practice? The secret of attaching great importance to this tradition lies in its immense influence in cultivating man’s spirit.

For man’s soul to attain a sublime position of wisdom and perfection, marriage would contribute immeasurably to reaching that rank. Conversely, if men preferred to stay bachelor and women spinster till death, they would remain lacking in spiritual prosperity.

The reason for this is the absence of the educational dimension of marriage.

Such men and women will not be able to overcome this inadequacy even if they spent their entire lives in worship, meditation, and battling with their tempting selves. Islam has, therefore, considered the institution of wedlock among its traditions, being one of positive influences on man’s education and his pursuit of perfection. Thus, any effect of any factor that contributes in shaping man’s character is limited to the area where it can be effective. Equally, any alternative factor would not have the same effect, if it were to be hoped to give the same results. And by the same token, any of these factors that are collectively taking part in the process of man’s cultivation cannot be used interchangeably.

Immigration and jihad are among the factors that have a say in man’s development towards perfection. It

therefore follows that no other factor can replace them. Using the same rationale, jihad, in the sense of man's struggle with oneself, has its place, so does immigrating, i.e. turning one's back to committing sins. And yet, practical immigration is one of the educational factors that cannot be superseded by the type of immigration in the sense of abandoning committing sins. Similarly, jihad, in the sense of fighting back the enemies of God, can never be replaced by the second type of jihad, i.e. doing battle with one's tempting self and vice versa. In the eye of Islam, both are in the same rank of importance in Islamic education.

Here one may say that the living circumstances vary from one individual Muslim to another and that a certain Muslim individual may not be required to embark on either immigration or jihad against the enemies of God. What would become of such an individual, given the important positive influence of upholding these two tenets?

The Noble Messenger (s.a.w.) provides the answer for this question, saying that the religious duty on such a Muslim in such circumstances should be that he always has a true and sincere intention to embark on such a duty should circumstances change, in that there may arise the need for embarking on immigration or engaging in jihad as the case may be.

Thus, provided there is such intention and determination, such an individual should be able to meet the requirements of attaining the rank of immigrant (muhajir) and fighter (mujahid). This meaning can be gleaned from this prophetic tradition,

“Whomever did not take part in battle [against the infidels] or did not contemplate such an eventuality, would die a hypocrite.”

The Holy Qur'an has this to offer in this regard:

“Not equal are those believers who sit (at home) and receive no hurt, and those who strive and fight in the cause of God with their goods and their persons. God hath granted a grade higher to those who strive and fight with their goods and persons than to those who sit (at home). Unto all (in Faith) hath God promised good: But those who strive and fight hath He distinguished above those who sit (at home) by a special reward, – Ranks specially bestowed by Him, and Forgiveness and Mercy. For God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.” (4:95–96).

It is clear from this Qur'anic text that in its discussion, it does not talk about those who preferred not join the fight [out of choice, and not for a good reason]. The reference to those “who sit at home” is confined to those believers who did not join others in the strife and fight because there is a sufficient number of mujahidin (fighters). So, when it comes to allotting ranks, the fighters are given loftier positions or ranks over those who stayed behind for a reason.

However, in the same vein, the Qur'anic verse confirms that this classification does not cover “Those who sit (at home) by a special reward”, i.e. those who stayed behind by virtue of their physical

disabilities – such as blindness, paralysis, and illness. The Qur'an reiterates that those too may attain the rank of the fighters. They may as well overtake the fighters, should they have harbored sincere intentions and true determination to join in the fight. That is, if their valid reasons for not joining were lifted, they would have joined the war effort in person and wealth. This principle is sound, when its conditions are fulfilled.

On the return of Imam Ali (a.s.) from the battle of Siffeen [fought against Mu'awiyah],⁷ a man, among the rank and file of his army, asked him, "O Commandar of the Faithful! I have a brother whom I would have loved that he be among us, so that he could achieve the favour of your companionship." The Imam replied, "What was the intention of your brother, his resolution, the inclination of his heart? Had he a valid reason that prevented him from joining us?" The Imam then provided the answers for all these questions, saying, "Had he no valid reason and did not join us, his not being with us is better for us."⁸

Had he a good reason for not being with us and yet his heart was with us and his resolution was to join us once the reasons that had prevented him from joining us were lifted, he would be judged as though he were with us." The man answered in the affirmative. The Imam (a.s.) said, "Not only your brother alone was with us. Verily, other men who are still in the wombs of their mothers; rather, those unborn men [who are still, in the form of sperm in the semen] of their fathers, are with us."

This is an unshakeable truth till the Day of Judgment, that any person who is intent on wishing that he were at the time of Ali and that he would have, with firm will, joined him in his army in Siffeen, he must rest assured that he would be deemed among his supporters, even though he did not witness the battle.

[Awaiting relief from suffering](#)

What does waiting for the happy ending mean? And what does the statement, "The best of works is looking forward to the happy ending" mean? Some people mistakenly believe that waiting for relief from suffering (faraj), which is the best of deeds, means that we should look forward to the reappearance of the Awaited Imam, al-Mahdi (May God hasten his reappearance) who would do so with a group of his disciples, totaling 313 men, with scores of followers.

And once they appeared on the scene, they would wage war against the enemies of Islam, cleanse the earth of their uncleanness and vile deeds, establish the rule of justice and security in the land, and make available freedom and prosperity for all. And once this is done, they would invite us to enjoy their toil!! It seems that some people would like us to believe that this is what is meant by "Waiting for the happy ending (faraj)", describing it as the best of good deeds.

However, the true waiting for faraj is that we should expect the reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi and be drafted in his army and fight under his command even if we get martyred in the process. The genuine waiting is in man's whole aspiration to be party to the jihad in the cause of God. That is, not the kind of waiting that entails dependency on the Imam to solve our problems by performing all the intractable

tasks, and once these are out of the way and the time for reaping the fruit of the toil comes we would then emerge to enjoy the harvest. This is not the right approach.

This is the reasoning of the followers of Prophet Moses (a.s.). As for the followers of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.), they said to him: O Messenger of God! We are not going to address you in the same manner the Israelites did with Moses when they got to the approaches of Jerusalem, Palestine and found out that there was an army waiting for them:

“. O Moses! We shall never enter it as long as they are in it. Gof thou, and thy Lord, and fight ye two, while we sit here.” (5:24).

To that, Moses (a.s.) retorted: What is your responsibility then? You should be liable to drive out the transgressors who occupied your land and sent you into exile. In contrast, the followers of Muhammad (s.a.w.), such as al-Miqdad, did not replicate the position of Moses' followers. They said: We believed in you and bore witness that what you call for is the truth, and swore allegiance to you to be obedient.

Therefore, set forth to wherever you have decided and we will be with you. We swear by Him Who sent you with the truth, should you decide to push your way in this sea we would have done so with you, without a single one of us turning back. We are not averse to the orders to engage in combat an enemy tomorrow.[9](#)

As such, genuine “waiting for the happy ending” is that we should be full of hope and determination to succeed in joining the army of the Awaited Imam (May God hasten his reappearance), so that we be in a position to contribute to reforming the world.

“We wish we were with you, so that we could have achieved a great victory”. We always repeat this statement, addressing Imam Hussain (a.s.). Yet, do we really pay attention to its actual meaning? It simply means,

“O Aba Abdillah! We wish we were with you so that we could have attained the rank of martyrdom fighting on your side and under your standard, and thus we would have achieved a great victory.”

Are these just words or do they underline a sincere intension and a true desire? Although there are people who utter the words and truly mean what they are talking about, yet the majority of us recite these words in the book of visitations, paying lip service to them.

Imam Hussain (a.s.) uttered these words, in commendation of the sincerity of his companions,

“I am not aware of any companions who are better than my companions both in kindness and loyalty.”[10](#)

An outstanding Shia scholar used to cast doubt over the authenticity of the statement, in that it might have not emanated from Imam Hussain. His rationale for dismissing it as unauthentic goes thus, “Having

pondered the question, I have reached this conclusion: The companions of Imam Hussain did not do an exceptional deed. It was the enemy who demonstrated debased attitude and practice. Knowing that Imam Hussain is the grandson of the Prophet, the son of Imam Ali and Fatima, the Imam of his Age, etc., it goes without saying that any ordinary Muslim would have come to his rescue, seeing him in that situation. So, the band of people who fought beside him did not do anything out of the ordinary. On the contrary, those who did not come to his aid were very bad people”.

He went on to say, “It seems that Allah wanted to deliver me from this inattention, ignorance, and misguidance. In my dream, I saw myself witnessing the battle of at-Taf, i.e. Karbala. In response to his appeal for support, I declared to Imam Hussain my readiness to side with him against his enemy.

The Imam asked me to wait for his instructions. In the meantime, the time for prayer became due.¹¹ The Imam said: We want to say our prayer. You are required to keep a vigil in that corner, so that you can forestall any attack by the enemy that could be coming from there. I said: Go ahead O son of the Messenger of God! He started saying the prayer. I stood in front of him. After a short while I saw an arrow coming in my direction. I, unconsciously, ducked it. The arrow crashed into the Imam. I said: I seek forgiveness from God and repent to Him, what a preposterous act I have just committed.

This incident happened on three more occasions, where I, time and again, took evasive action to avoid the arrow hitting me and instead let it hit the Imam every time. On turning my head towards the Imam, I noticed that he was looking at me with a smile on his face and said: (I have never seen any companions better than my companions both in kindness and loyalty)”.

The Imam then added, and the narrative is still that of the Shia scholar was relating, “Sitting at home repeating the words: (We wish we were with you, so that we would achieve a great victory) is worthless if you do not put it into practice. Are you like this? My companions were people whose actions spoke louder than words. They were not mincing their words.”

[Going back to that part of the story of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (a.s.)], on the tenth of Muharram (Aashoura’), the Imam said the last Dhuhr (noon) prayer before he was martyred. Most of his comrades in arms were martyred earlier that day, in the exchanges of volleys of arrows between the combatants. Thus, he was left with the immediate members of his family and a small band of his companions.

The fighting force of the Imam totaled some seventy-two warriors. And yet, despite their small number, they were enjoying high morale and showing exemplary gallantry. Being the commander of this small army, Imam Hussain did not show any sign of weakness or despondency.

He planned for the showdown with the enemy by positioning three main groups of his soldiers into a central segment (the heart), right and left flanks, as any other regular army did in those circumstances. Zuhair bin al-Qayn was appointed commander of the right flank, Habib bin Mudhahir was charged with the responsibility of defending the left flank. His brother al-Abbas (a.s.) was made the standard-bearer.

The companions of Imam Hussain (a.s.) were eager to start the fight. However, the Imam was insistent on not launching the first strike, leaving it to the enemy to do so. That starting shot came at the hands of Omar bin Sa'ad.

Ibn Sa'ad was keen on holding both the spiritual and the materialistic at the same time. He was aspiring to securing Ibn Ziyad's offer of appointing him the governor of Ray, but without staining his hands with the blood of al-Hussain. Because of this soul-searching and struggle to subdue his inclinations, he embarked on a string of letters to Imam Hussain with a view to avoiding the bloodshed.

When the news reached Ibn Ziyad, he wrote to him a stern letter, ordering him to quickly kill the Imam. He threatened him that he would sack him and appoint someone else in his place, should he choose to ignore his instructions. Ibn Sa'ad could not rid himself of his bondage to the materialistic world. So, since he was given a choice between this world and the next, he opted for the former, selling his faith in return. Thus, he acquiesced to the order of Ibn Ziyad. In so doing, he demonstrated dishonorable qualities and treachery and committed one of the most heinous crimes in the history of mankind.

Ibn Ziyad's justifications for committing some of those atrocities was that he was seeking to be seen taking a position of neutrality, i.e. by not siding with Imam Hussain (a.s.). In order to show his loyalty to Ibn Ziyad, especially in the light of the latter's receiving many reports accusing him of showing reluctance in fighting the Imam, he embarked on a killing spree, massacring the Progeny of the Prophet (a.s.).

When the two adversarial armies pitched their fighters opposite one another, Ibn Ziyad took a bow and arrow from one of his bowmen, or archers, placed an arrow in the bow and shot in the direction of al-Hussain's camp, remarking, "Bear witness for me with the Prince [Ibn Ziyad] that I was the first one to shoot". [12](#)

This is the story of the first arrow that was shot in the battle of Karbala. However, whenever I reach thus far in telling the story of the battle, I remember a saying by our friend the great scholar the late Ayati. I either heard him say it or read his words somewhere. He used to say,

"The battle of Karbala was started with a shot of an arrow and was ended with another shot of an arrow".

Indeed, it started with the shot/arrow of Ibn Sa'ad and ended with a poisoned three-pronged arrow that was shot at Imam Hussain, who was already badly wounded and very thirsty, which lodged into his heart, putting an end to his jihad. The Imam was on the verge of collapsing, but for his last few words, in which he was addressing his Lord, "In the Name of God and by God, and on the religion of the Messenger of God." [13](#)

Another of the Imam's companions was Aabis bin Shabeeb ash-Shakiri, who was filled with high spirit and valour. He took the centre stage of the battlefield and issued a challenge to the army of Ibn Ziyad, if

there was any one among them who was prepared to fight him in one-to-one combat. No one dared to respond to his challenge. Having repeated his call several times, but to no avail, and realizing that the coat of arms and headgear he was wearing were proving cumbersome, he parted with them. Thus, he mounted attacks on the enemy soldiers who were fleeing before him. They were not able to kill him, only by stoning him and shooting him with torrents of arrows. Thus, he was martyred.

On the day of the Battle of Karbala, all the companions of Imam Hussain (a.s.), men and women, depicted the most vivid portraits of gallantry and sacrifice. They left their indelible marks in the chapters of history of mankind, only to be revered and emulated. Had their equivalent been found in the history of the West, they would have held them in a very high regard.

Abdullah bin Omeir al-Kalbi was another of the companions of Imam Hussain. In his company were his wife and mother. He was a gallant warrior. When he wanted to join the battle, his wife, a newly wed woman, tried to prevent him and pleaded with him, "With whom you are going to leave me? Who is going to take care of me? Please do not leave me behind for bereavement." On hearing her, his mother intervened, "O my son! Do not listen to her. Go and fight in defense of the son of the Messenger of God, so that he would tomorrow, on the Day of Judgment, be your intercessor. I will not be pleased with you until you got killed fighting with al-Hussain." He assaulted the enemy and got killed in the process.

His mother plucked the courage, arming herself with a pole, and embarked on attacking the enemy. Al-Hussain prevented her from doing so, saying, "May all members of your family be rewarded with that which is best. Go back and join the rest of the women. May God have mercy on you. Being a woman, you are not required to do jihad."

As the battle progressed, more massacres took place. The enemy beheaded Abdullah bin al-Hussain, [who was just an infant], hurling the severed head towards his mother. She held it and wiped the dirt off it, hugging and kissing it, and saying, "O my son! I am pleased with you, I am pleased." She then tossed the baby's head towards the camp of the enemy, saying, "What we give away in the Way of God, we do not reclaim."

Among the other supporters of al-Hussain was a boy, aged either ten or twelve years, whose father was killed earlier on in the fighting. Armed with his sword, he approached the Imam and asked for permission to enter the fight. The Imam did not grant him permission out of sympathy for his mother who had just been bereaved of her husband, saying, "The father of this boy was killed in the first campaign, and maybe his mother does not like him to be killed." The boy replied that his mother had agreed to his taking part in the fighting and that she would be pleased with him, if he got killed in defense of al-Hussain.

That boy was of an outstanding character, demonstrating his moral fiber in the battle. His way of joining the battle was different from the manner the rest of the fighters, who were coming forward for their debut in the battle. They introduce themselves and their lineage by way of reciting war poetry in a roaring style

(rajz). That boy did not follow in the footsteps of the fighters who preceded him and introduced themselves in that pattern. Instead, he recited a couplet, singing the praise of his connection with al-Hussain (a.s.) and being one of his soldiers per se,

“My lord is Hussain, the pleasure that descended on the heart of the bearer of good tidings, the warner [Prophet Muhammad]. Ali and Fatima are his parents. Do you know of anyone thus pure-bred?”

[Approaching the end of the lecture, it is customary to end it on this note, i.e. a supplication],

“O Lord! Grant us the success to be submissive to You, keep our distance from committing what is vile, be truthful in our intentions, and make us recognise that Your Mercy knows no bounds. Be gracious to us by bestowing on us guidance and straightforwardness. Guide our speech towards that which is right and wise. Fill our hearts up with knowledge and mindfulness. O Lord! Illuminate our hearts with the light of faith. Make us among the true immigrants (muhajirs) and fighters (mujahids) in the way of striving to make the word of Thy religion rule supreme.

O Lord! Grant the Muslims victory over their enemies in all the fronts.”

1. When the maid opened the door, the sound of singing and clamor could be heard by the passersby.

2. Wasail'ush Shia, vol. 11, p. 124.

3. Nahjul Balagha. Imam Ali (a.s.) has an adage, serving the same theme, “It is not a winner whose sins catch up with him, and if the evil one overcame, he would eventually taste defeat.” Nahjul Balagha, Beirut new edition, Catalogued by Dr. Subhi as-Saleh, axiom No. 327, p. 533.

4. No doubt many champions, heroes, and ordinary people find in Imam Ali a role model, because, above all, he was fighting on two fronts – The external enemy and the enemy within, i.e. his tempting soul.

5. The reason why he earned that title is that he was in a caravan with other members of the tribe of Quraish. When the caravan reached the valley of Yelyel, near Badr, it was ambushed by a group of men of the tribe of Banu Bakr. Amr bin Abdi Wid asked his travelling companions to slip away. He single-handedly faced up to the attackers and defeated them. (at-Tabataba'i, al-Mizan Qur'anic Commentary, Chapter 33, al-Ahزاب vol. 16, p. 297).

6. The story we traced has been related by al-Majlisi in his Biharul Anwar, vol. 41, p. 51, Beirut new edition, that goes like this: When he gained the upper hand over Amr bin Abdi Wid, he did not deal him the final blow. The companions of the Prophet criticized Ali for not finishing him off. Huthaifa spoke in defense of Ali. The Prophet asked him to keep quiet, adding that Ali would put them in the picture as to why he paused before dealing his foe the last blow.

When he finally killed bin Abdi Wid and went back to join the other combatants, the Prophet asked him about the delay in finishing his enemy off. Ali said that bin Abdi Wid called his mother names and spat in his face, and that had he killed him under the spur of the moment, it would have counted as though he killed him in revenge of his honor. Thus, he added, that he gave himself a respite to cool down in order that his killing him would be in the cause of God.

7. The story as it is told in Nahjul Balagha explains that this dialogue took place while the Imam was returning from Basrah after God granted him victory over the adversaries in the Battle of the Camel, and not after Siffeen, as the author had mentioned. (Nahjul Balagha, Beirut new edition, Catalogued by Dr. Subhi as-Saleh, vol. 1, p. 55).

8. “If they had intended to come out, they would certainly have made some preparation therefore; but God was averse to their being sent forth; so He made them lag behind, and they were told, "Sit ye among those who sit (inactive). If they had come out with you, they would not have added to your (strength) but only (made for) disorder, hurrying to and fro in your midst and sowing sedition among you, and there would have been some among you who would have listened to them. But God knoweth well those who do wrong.” (9/46-47).

This is in respect of the first group. As regards the second group, which the Imam made reference to, the Holy Qur'an describes them, thus:

"There is no blame on those who are infirm, or ill, or who find no resources to spend (on the cause), if they are sincere (in duty) to God and His Apostle: no ground (of complaint) can there be against such as do right: and God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. Nor (is there blame) on those who came to thee to be provided with mounts, and when thou said, "I can find no mounts for you," they turned back, their eyes streaming with tears of grief that they had no resources wherewith to provide the expenses." (9/91-92).

In Sunan Ibn Majah, the Book of Jihad, vol. 2, p. 923, it has been related from the Prophet, after his return from expedition of Tabuk towards the approaches of Medina, "There are people in Medina, who, whatever distance you have covered, they would be with you." They asked, "O Messenger of God! Even if they were in Medina?" He replied, "Yes, even if they were in Medina. They have a good reason for not being with us."

[9.](#) Those words were Sa'ad bin Ma'ath's in reply to a question put by the Prophet, who asked the opinion of the Ansar (Supporters, i.e. the people of Medina) about the proposition of taking on the army of the polytheists at the Battle of Badr. See Ibn Hisham's Prophetic Biography, the Battle of Badr, in the closing pages of vol. 2 of the Beirut edition.

[10.](#) This is the text the author has quoted, however, what we found in the books of history is that Imam Hussain (a.s.) gathered together his companions and members of his household on the eve of the tenth of Muharram and gave an oration, among whose contents were these words, "Now then, I am not aware of any companions more superior than my companions, neither a household that are more caring and loving than my family. May God reward you all on my behalf."

[11.](#) The historiographers of battles assert that Sa'eed bin Abdullah al-Hanafi and a group of other combatants formed a circle around Imam Hussain and his companions while they were saying their prayers. (Abdullah Shubbar's Jala'ul Uyoon, the Chapter concerning His Arrival in Karbala until His Martyrdom.)

[12.](#) It is worth noting that Sa'ad's father was a companion of the Prophet. He was a consummate archer and had a good reputation among Arabs. He had a very good record in the battles of Islam and rendered noble services to Islam in this regard.

[13.](#) Abdullah Shubbar's Jala'ul Uyoon, on which we relied heavily to cross-check the text relating to the Battle of Karbala throughout the three lectures.

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