

The Effects of Ashura

[‘Ashura from the Viewpoint of Great Thinkers of the World](#)

Any person who reads about the event of Karbala and carefully ponders what came to pass on the day of ‘Ashura, or hears about it from another person, will certainly be deeply saddened by what befell Imam al-Husayn (as), his *Ahl al-Bayt* (as) and the rest of his companions.

When a person with a sound conscience and healthy mind truly comprehends the heartrending occurrence, he will definitely decide to undertake a spiritual journey. He will embark on an inner pilgrimage and expedition towards Imam al-Husayn (as).

He will find Imam al-Husayn (as) and the purpose of his uprising captivating and concur with the objectives. In fact, this is exactly what has happened to many people who have read or heard about this event and we will now mention a few examples of such people:

[The English author and explorer, Freya Stark](#)

In her famous book entitled, “*The Faces of Baghdad*” [*Suwar Baghdadiyyah*], Freya Stark has assigned a short chapter to the event of ‘Ashura. At the beginning of that chapter she says, “Shi’ahs from all corners of the Muslim World remember al-Husayn and the site of his execution.

They publicly follow up on this event for the first ten days of the month of Muharram. Sorrow and grief is so predominant over them that on the last day, they parade mourning dramas and engage in public wailing and group weeping...”¹

In a separate chapter of this book, and in a more detailed manner, she has talked about the holy city of Najaf. She recounts, “And at a distance not far from the mausoleum, his son al-Husayn arrived from the other side of the desert. He rode his horse and crossed the desert until he reached the land of Karbala.

There, he pitched a tent. His enemies surrounded him and closed all access to water from him. The

events which came to pass have been retained in the memories of people. Detailed accounts about the sad events that occurred at Karbala have been passed from one generation to the next for the last 1257 years.

There is no possibility of deriving benefit from this holy city unless one has enough knowledge and information about this event, because the tragedies which befell al-Husayn penetrate and seep through every existing being to the extent that it shakes the very roots of their inner conscience and the foundations of their beliefs. This event is one of those rare occurrences which make men shed tears involuntarily.”

She then says, “When these tragic events came to pass, history stopped at Karbala and Najaf because people migrated to settle in these two cities with the intention of renouncing Yazid and washing their hands of the enemies of al-Husayn, the oppressed.”[2](#)

Professor Edward Granville Browne (1862–1926)

The famous orientalist Edward Browne, professor of Arabic and oriental studies at the University of Cambridge, recounts the appalling events which befell Imam al-Husayn (as) at Karbala in this way, “... a reminder of the blood-stained field of Karbala, where the grandson of the Apostle of God fell at length, tortured by thirst and surrounded by the bodies of his murdered kinsmen, has been at anytime since then sufficient to evoke, even in the most lukewarm and heedless, the deepest emotions, the most frantic grief, and an exaltation of spirit before which pain, danger and death shrink to unconsidered trifles.”[3](#)

He also says, “Is it possible to find a person who hears about the event of Karbala and is at the same time not overwhelmed by sorrow and grief? Even non-Muslims cannot refute the purity of spirit and morality which accompanied this Islamic holy war.”[4](#)

Charles Dickens

This English Writer says this about the uprising of ‘Ashura, “If al-Husayn fought to quench his worldly desires, then I do not understand why his sisters, wives and children accompanied him. It stands to reason therefore that he sacrificed purely for Islam.”[5](#)

Thomas Masaryk

While comparing Imam al-Husayn (as) with Prophet Jesus (as), Thomas Masaryk says, “The sufferings of Jesus Christ, when compared to the sufferings of al-Husayn, are like feathers made out of straw in the face of a huge mountain.”[6](#)

Justice A. Russell

This English poet describes the sorrowful event of 'Ashura in this way:

"... they hit the blessed mouth of Imam al-Husayn (as) with their wooden sticks. O holy body that has been crushed under hooves! You are that same body which used to charm every person who cast a glance at you.

Blood that has been shed from your blessed veins and has dried is a heavenly mixture which no horse hoof has ever had the opportunity to be painted with such a holy mixture (or color) up to now. O bare and barren earth of Karbala! There is neither grass nor herbs growing on you! Forever the song of sorrow will be chanted for you and the dress of sorrow put on you because it was on your land that the holy body of Fatimah's son was torn to pieces. He dedicated his spirit to God."⁷

Captain H. Niblet

While describing the night of 'Ashura, he recounts, "That night, when the camp fires were burning all around him, the Imam called his followers and gathered them around him. In one long speech, he addressed them, 'Those who will stay with me are going to be martyred tomorrow.'

Then, he acted in a very gracious manner; a manner which proves that he possessed complete knowledge about the weaknesses of mankind, which shows the strength which his sacrificial soul possessed and is a sign of how generous and kind that great man was.

He said to his followers, 'Anyone who does not find in himself the courage and strength for steadfastness and martyrdom should secretly sneak out under the cover of darkness towards the east, and there is no reason whatsoever for anyone to feel ashamed.'

When the morning of 'Ashura emerged, purple clouds gathered in the eastern sky, and seventy one people possessing strong faith and certainty surrounded Imam al-Husayn (as). All of them were ready for death and martyrdom."⁸

Gibbon, the English historian (1737-1794)

He writes, "Notwithstanding that a long period of time has elapsed since the event of 'Ashura occurred, and we too are not countrymen with the main actors in that event, nevertheless the unbearable hardships which Imam al-Husayn endured still arouse emotions in the most cold and stonehearted of readers; so much so that every reader finds in himself a kind of affection and love towards that great man."⁹

Morris Duxbury

This American historian has written about mourning for Imam al-Husayn (as). He recounts, "If our

writers of history could perceive the reality of the day of 'Ashura, they would not view mourning ceremonies which are held for Imam al-Husayn to be something queer or unusual.

Al-Husayn's followers know that by means of mourning for their Imam, they are refusing to go under the yoke of oppression, lowliness and foreign domination because the message of their Imam and leader was that they should never surrender to oppression and tyranny.

Al-Husayn deliberately overlooked his own life, possessions and children for the sake of morality, principle, the people and the integrity of Islam. It is for this reason that he did not go under the yoke and adventurousness of Yazid.

Therefore, come and let us all imitate his way of life and free ourselves from the oppression of Yazid and those like Yazid. Let us prefer honorable death to living our lives in lowliness. In a nutshell, these are the basic teachings of Islam.

It is clear what status such a community will attain; a community which has been trained on such values from their cradles to the graves. Such a people possess every kind of honor and dignity, because all the people of that community are soldiers fighting for what is right, honorable and dignified.”¹⁰

Borris Salama

This Christian poet says, “On nights when I stayed awake, I could not but spend them with pain. The cause of my mental torment was my own thoughts and imagination about the people of the past.

I especially thought about the two great martyrs of history: Imam 'Ali and his son Imam al-Husayn. At one moment, I cried a lot because of the affection and fondness which I felt for those two great men. Finally, I composed a poem for 'Ali and al-Husayn.”¹¹

Gabriel Dankiri

He describes the savagery and barbarity of Yazid's army in this way, “Yazid's soldiers on the day of 'Ashura showed so much cruelty and ravenousness that no one can call to mind a day (in the history of mankind) equal or parallel to it in barbarity. They did not even have mercy on breast feeding newborns and minors.

They went so far as to take the bloody head of Imam al-Husayn to Damascus. Yazid imagined that with this apparent victory, he would live forever in peace and tranquility, but memories of that day have been revived every day from the day when that sad event occurred up to today, by way of shedding tears, mourning and grieving...”¹²

George Jordaq

This Lebanese Christian Writer recounts, “Yazid was a man who had inherited all the evil qualities of his

ancestors, the Bani Umayyah. He even exceeded them. Yazid shared in all the vice, iniquity and mischief of Bani Umayyah in general...

There was no one more deprived of human values than Yazid... and in comparison, there was no one more perfect in human values and morality than al-Husayn ibn 'Ali, the martyr in this event. Yazid possessed all the ugly traits imaginable; he was a spineless power seeking opportunist who lacked strength and a man who would never hesitate to commit murder.

And on the opposite side, that is to say on the side of 'Ali's children, was to be found all the lofty and praiseworthy human attributes in the best sense of the word; such traits as a generous disposition, courage, liberality and martyrdom..."[13](#)

Doctor Joseph

This French historian narrates, "During the days of 'Ashura, the Shi'ahs mention and listen to the sufferings of al-Husayn. They make every effort to recount the virtues of the Prophet's family and Household in the best possible manner..."[14](#)

Claudine Rulu

He is a news commentator for the Le Monde Newspaper who has written about Imam al-Husayn (as) and the event of 'Ashura. He recounts, "In the month of Muharram of every year, the Shi'ahs proceed to remind one another about the event of 'Ashura and revive the sufferings of Imam al-Husayn, who is the symbol of courage and justice, as opposed to Yazid, the incarnation of abomination and villainy. They draw similitudes between the tyrants of their time and Yazid..."[15](#)

Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi was the architect of Indian independence. He was the leader of the national liberation struggle of the people of India during their quest for freedom from British colonization.

He has been quoted as saying, "I have not brought anything new for the people of India; I just brought for them the results which I obtained from my researches about the history of Karbala and that of the champions of the event of 'Ashura. If we want to free India, it is incumbent upon us to traverse the same path which al-Husayn ibn 'Ali (as) traversed..."[16](#)

Sawir Jiny Naid

This Indian poet believes that the mourning ceremonies of Imam al-Husayn's (as) followers bring about revival of the heart-rending event of Karbala. He says that the uprising of Imam al-Husayn (as) strengthens the religion of Muhammad.

This poet believes that by this uprising, Imam al-Husayn (as) proved his ultimate love and affection for

Allah. He says, “During the night preceding that of al-Husayn’s martyrdom, his disciples wear black shirts, remain bare footed and congregate to remember the heart-rending event of ‘Ashura with tearful eyes.

While describing the incidents which took place that night, they all shout with one voice, ‘O al-Husayn! O al-Husayn! Why do your thousands of thousands of friends shed tears like this for you? O holy one possessing a high status! Is all this not because of your matchless sacrifices? Because you raised the banner of Muhammad’s great religion and proved to the amazed world your wonderful love for Allah’.”¹⁷

Irunick

This American historian recounts, “I do not like to make the account of al-Husayn’s martyrdom long because of the distastefulness and revulsion of the nature of that event. No incident uglier than this event came to pass in the entire history of Islam.

Even though the martyrdom of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam ‘Ali, is considered as a great calamity, the incident of al-Husayn consisted of atrocious killings, mutilations and taking people into captivity; acts which listening to send a shiver down a man’s spine... because it is the most outstanding account of what suffering means.”¹⁸

Al-Jamili

Even though he expresses sorrow for both sides of the confrontation on the day of ‘Ashura, he says this about Yazid’s apparent regret, “His remorse was false. Had it been real, he would have punished ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, ‘Umar ibn Sa’d and Shimr ibn Dhi al-Jawshan.

If he showed apparent remorse, it was because he realized that he had inflamed the anger of the Muslims throughout eternity, not because of the actual crimes which he had committed.”¹⁹

The German researcher Martin

He recounts, “... al-Husayn was the only person in the last fourteen centuries to stand up against an oppressive and tyrannical government... He remains the only politician in the entire history of mankind to employ such effective politics through uprising and revolution. Al-Husayn’s unchanging motto was ‘I will die in the way of truth and virtue, but I will not pay allegiance to iniquity...’

Al-Husayn realized that Bani Umayyah, who had changed the caliphate to an absolute monarchy and authoritative sultanate, were deliberately disregarding and even purposefully trodding upon the laws of Islam. He could foresee that very soon the foundations on which Islam was founded would fall. He perceived that nothing would remain of Islam and the Muslims if he delayed any more. Therefore, he decided to stand up against oppression and tyranny.

By sacrificing his most beloved ones, proving how right he was and exposing the wrong which was committed against him by Bani Umayyah, al-Husayn taught mankind valuable lessons in self-sacrifice and risking one's life for what is right. He recorded the name of Islam in history and made it renowned in the world. If such a heart-rending event had not taken place, Islam and the Muslims would certainly have been effaced and completely wiped out.”[20](#)

Jurji Zaydan

He narrates about Imam al-Husayn in this way, “... The sight of Imam al-Husayn's head affected all, making everyone sorrowful... When Yazid's eyes fell on the cut head of Imam al-Husayn, he shivered from head to foot and realized what an abominable act he had committed.”[21](#)

Nicholson

He recounts, “The event of Karbala caused regret and remorse for Bani Umayyah because it united the Shi'ahs, who became unanimous in their agreement to avenge the blood of Imam al-Husayn.”[22](#)

'Ashura and Religious Transformation

The event of Karbala has not only been influential on the hearts of mankind in general, but has also been the reason for many individuals who did not even profess Imam al-Husayn's (as) beliefs to become attracted to him. It has also become a cause for mankind to denounce the religion and customs of Mu'awiyah, and to be led towards that great Imam (as).

The Frenchman, Dr. Joseph, in his research work entitled, “*The Shi'ahs and Their Astounding Progress*” writes, “Portraying and depicting the leaders of their religion as oppressed is one of the things which has served to prove the rightfulness of the Shi'ahs.

This, too, has managed to leave an effective impression on other sects. And this is natural, because the nature of every man is inclined to assist the oppressed. Every man wants to see the weak overpower the strong and iniquitous, because man's natural inclination is towards the weak...

Despite apparently not believing in Imam al-Husayn (as) and his companions, such European authors have written detailed accounts about the battle and martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn (as) and his companions.

They have acknowledged the oppression which was committed against Imam al-Husayn (as) and the barbarity of his killers and have, as a result of all this, been led to hold the names of Imam al-Husayn's (as) killers in contempt. Nothing can stand against these natural forces, and this is the point which proves the rightfulness of the Shi'ite sect...”[23](#)

Now, we will mention some of the people who have undergone a kind of religious transformation and

hence gained discernment after reading or hearing about the event of 'Ashura.

1. The Egyptian instructor, Abu Sharif, known as 'Abd al-Majid

In one of the letters he has written to an orator specializing in preaching about Imam al-Husayn (as), Abu Sharif says, "One day, I was holding a small portable radio in my hands and searching for a Cairo radio frequency to listen to. I was alone in my room and I was tuning my radio in search of the frequency. Suddenly, I heard a pleasant and touching voice. I kept the tuner of my radio on that frequency.

This voice was unique and different from all the voices I had previously heard. Gradually, my whole attention was absorbed by it. When I paid careful attention, I found out that a man was talking about Imam al-Husayn (as). He was recounting the bitter events which came to pass at Karbala in detail. I do not know for sure what month that was, but I guess it was the month of Muharram.

Up to that day, I had not understood the issue of crying for Imam al-Husayn (as). However, when I heard a part of the events of 'Ashura, I cried bitterly. Tears flowed from my eyes spontaneously.

The tears I shed were hot and intense. I cried with such bitterness like I have never cried before in all my life. My tears continued to flow to the last words of the preacher. This condition overwhelmed me and affected my whole being..."

Continuing his narrative he said, "... After this experience, new and wide horizons were opened to me regarding the issue of shedding tears for the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn (as)." [24](#)

After this occurrence, he converted to the Shi'ism and moved to Iran where he became a television presenter.

2. Professor Sa'ib 'Abd al-Hamid

In his book entitled, "*Manhaj fi al-Intima' al-Madhhabi*", he recounts the story of his religious transformation and spiritual insight in this way, "Yes, the beginning was like this. The actual beginning was the guiding light of al-Husayn.

The ship of salvation began with al-Husayn; a beginning that I had not intended, but one which he had intended. Allah granted me success by giving me the wisdom to welcome al-Husayn. Allah held my hand and took me to al-Husayn's doorstep... and this happened on the day when a sad voice touched my ears.

How often before had that voice reached my ears, but I had passed by paying no attention to it. I had placed veils over this voice and, as a result, it paid no attention to me either. However, this time, al-Husayn himself had invited me, at a time when I was near seclusion or something like that. Because of that voice, all my senses trembled, and I surrendered all my feelings, affections and will to him...

That voice captivated all my attention... its stormy waves and scattered flames were affecting me every moment as it narrated, to the extent that my whole being melted into it. All my being was entirely attentive to this voice. I started to move along with the voice and started to relive the events which was relating.

I melted into all these events with my imagination, picturing everything as the voice was narrating. I was moving with the caravan of Imam al-Husayn, and wherever they camped, I camped too. I followed them from the beginning to the end of the journey. Step by step, I traversed the way.

The incident which was being described by the voice was the story of Imam al-Husayn's martyrdom. The voice belonged to Shaykh 'Abd al-Zahra Ka'bi. The day was the tenth of Muharram, the year 1402 of the Islamic calendar.

I was listening to the calls and mottos of Imam al-Husayn and my whole body was shaking. I was shedding tears and learning lessons as all this occurred. Then, something occurred in my blood... it seemed as if there was a call and a revolution in my being... here I am, O my master! Here I am, O son of the Prophet! Here I am, O al-Husayn (as)...

There were endless questions in my mind. It seemed as if I were seeing a light within myself; a light that had been veiled in my soul all this time. This light had now been incited, and in a split second, the light had opened up and lit my whole inner being.

This luminosity was acquired from imitating al-Husayn. Al-Husayn, a gift for mankind and a remembrance from the Chosen One of Allah, Mustafa Muhammad (S), was one of the great leaders of religion.

The light of Islam was newly incited in me in the best sense of the expression; a light which the Prophet of Allah (S) guided me to through a religious preacher and one of his own family members, Imam al-Husayn.

Wherever the call of Islam is made, it spreads and everyone recognizes it. There is no other meaning for Islam than this.

Yes, the places where the Prophet's children fell..."[25](#)

3. Professor Idris Husayni Maghribi

In his book entitled, "*Laqad Shayya'ani al-Husayn (as)*" (Al-Husayn Made Me a Shi'ah), he writes, "One of the people close to me asked, 'Who made you a Shi'ah and what books did you trust and find reliable for your research?' I answered, 'As regards who made me a Shi'ah, I must say that my ancestor al-Husayn made me a Shi'ah.

The atrocious injustices which were imposed on him at Karbala converted me to the Shi'ism. And, as

regards which books I found reliable while pursuing this, I must say that the books are *Sahih Bukhari* (the Authentic Book of Bukhari) and the other *Sahihs* (other authentic Sunni books of tradition). These are the books which made me a Shi'ah.'

He asked, 'How is this possible?' I said, 'Read the authentic books of Sunni *hadith*, and do not ignore any contradictions. Note all the discrepancies down and reflect upon them. Count all the inconsistencies you can find in these books and do not bypass anything unless you have deliberated and reflected upon it.. This is when you will obtain the object of your desire.'

With all certainty, the people who killed al-Husayn and took his chaste family into captivity are not at all trustworthy. There is no justification whatsoever for their abominable actions. For a free thinking mind liberated from religious bigotry, there is no way of justifying the event of 'Ashura in the same way that it is unthinkable to interpret pure blood as being natural water.

This pool of blood which flowed was not a river of water. On the contrary, it was the blood of the most honorable people. These people were the ones about whom the Holy Prophet (S) expressed his will and desire that Muslims should love them. This community, the Islamic *ummah*, is responsible for losing its own credibility.

Whatever they say, they cannot convince me as regards why a certain group of Sunni scholars have good relations with the people on whose hands there is so much blood. I cannot understand why some so-called Sunni scholars maintain good ties with the criminals who shed the blood of al-Husayn for the sake of gaining predominance and rule over the Muslim community [*ummah*].

After the Holy Prophet's (S) departure, this community did not assist the Holy Prophet's children. They even abandoned the *sunnah* and did not observe or follow the Prophet's way of conduct. You can say whatever you wish in your endeavors to justify these distasteful actions; you can say what you always say, that the Muslims strove hard in reaching consensus regarding the application of religious law in the first era after the departure of the Holy Prophet (S) when they killed al-Husayn!

And that narratives which are found in Shi'ah books are all products of wild imagination and do not correspond with the real history of Islam.

However, can anyone ever be found in the world who refutes the fact that Imam al-Husayn (as) was killed in an oppressive manner on direct orders issued by Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah by means of an official *fatwa* (religious edict) passed by Sharih Qadi? Can anyone in the whole world be found denying the sad reality that Imam al-Husayn (as) was killed by the revengeful swords of Bani Umayyah's armies?

It is more saddening when we realize that all this barbarism occurred in a community where the thinking of the common man had made considerable advances! It was in this very community where another unparallel event came to pass; this occurred when the caliphate was reduced to a monarchy and sultanate. After that, Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah was tyrannically imposed over the Muslims...

Never and a thousand times never... has anyone had the courage to refute or the ability to justify this heartrending event because history is never negligent as regards the oppression which is committed against the weak? I say so in spite of the fact that the mischief-makers hate to hear this truth.”[26](#)

He continues, “Imam al-Husayn’s (as) desire was to free the *ummah* (Islamic community) from the stiffness it had acquired and to incite a revolution against the depraved kings of Bani Umayyah who depended on repression to rule. This kind of revolution needed self-sacrifice. It was necessary to shed blood in order to bring about a revolution in the people’s hearts and souls.”[27](#)

He adds, “Imam al-Husayn (as) was eager for the prominence of the Islamic community and desired to protect its interests. That is why he stood up against Yazid and his misguidance... Yes indeed! Al-Husayn was left forlorn at a time when he was in grave need of help from the people.”[28](#)

After briefly recounting the event of ‘Ashura, he reaches this conclusion, “Al-Husayn made me a Shi’ah.” Then he adds, “I swear upon my soul! This place is a holy place for one who always calls out to the innermost recesses of my conscience and has made all my states and actions sorrowful.

I did not feel satisfied with short accounts about the killings of Karbala; I kept delving deeper until an uprising took place in my heart; a revolution against all the doctrines and teachings which I had inherited from my ancestors. Yes, al-Husayn’s revolution entered my mind and soul...

The people of Sham and Kufah came with their swords but Imam al-Husayn (as) came with his blood; and blood was victorious over the sword. Blood triumphed over deviated history. Therefore, al-Husayn (as) is a light which will never be overcome by the darkness of distortion.

We exalt this event because we know that Imam al-Husayn (as) was killed for standing up for what was right. We also know and are proud that only a drop of his blood buried all of his enemies in the annals of history.

We cry for those negligent people who either killed al-Husayn or abandoned him. We regard those who helped as our role-models and leaders. We take al-Husayn’s (as) helpers to be our examples of self-restraint and we imitate them in our lives... we hate the people who killed Imam al-Husayn (as) while they knew that he was better than their King, and that he was the rightful leader for the Muslims.

We detest those who martyred al-Husayn (as) because of the material rewards which Yazid had promised them. Did not these people have the motivation to distort Islam and the power to forge traditions [*hadiths*] for the sake of earning rewards from Yazid?

Yes, it was al-Husayn (as) who made me Shi’ah because of the whole truth of his sufferings and the sufferings of his *Ahl al-Bayt*. He made me Shi’ah with his blood; fresh blood shed on orange gravel stones in the land of Taff (Karbala).

He made me a Shi’ah with the cries of newborn children and the wailing of women. I was shouting out

loudly as I remembered that day, while hot tears were falling from my eyes because of the sorrow which I felt deep inside my heart. With a heart torn by deep sorrow, I said,

ويرثي ربابك دنيا السّجون ودمع النواح وفيض الدما

What did the enemies of al-Husayn (as) achieve, except digging their own graves?! Their crushed bodies got buried in the annals of history in a disgraceful and lowly manner. O Aba 'Abd Allah! You are the greatest man in the history of mankind! Life has become enlightened by your pure and sweet-smelling blood!

سطعتَ بريقاً كَوْمُضِ الشَّمُوسِ وشاعَ سناك كبر السما

Whenever I read detailed accounts about Karbala, they attracted me from afar. Then, my breathing would quicken. I used to see al-Husayn next to myself covered in blood. I wish I were with him so that I could attain great success.

O how I wish I could disappear into the attraction and captivation I feel for al-Husayn! Yes, there is someone in this place who understands what I perceive. But, is it possible that others might not understand what I understood and that great historical event might not leave an impression upon him?

Yes, Karbala is the place of my entry into history and the time of my admission into proper Islam. How can I not be attracted to this reality like a sensitive [*raqiq al-qalb*] mystic? Or like the attraction of an erudite person whose intelligence led him to fall in love and perish with reality?

Yes, this is the path I came along and the road I traversed. I have briefly mentioned the sufferings imposed upon Imam al-Husayn (as) and the historical crimes committed against the prophets' descendants. Now, I would like to end my words."²⁹

4. Dr. Muhammad Tijani of Tunisia

In his book entitled, "*Thumma Ahdaitu*" (Then, I was Guided), he says, "My friend Mun'im and I traveled together to Karbala and there I understood the sufferings of our leader al-Husayn, like the Shi'ahs do. I understood that Imam al-Husayn is not dead. The people were crowding and pressing together all around his resting place, going round it with grief and anguish the like of which I had never seen before.

They were crying and expressing restlessness as if Imam al-Husayn had just recently been martyred. I heard preachers who were arousing people's emotions by retelling the tragic event of Karbala. These accounts made the people cry, grieve and wail. No one who hears these accounts can endure it.

On the contrary, he spontaneously loses himself. I too cried. I cried and cried. I cried so much that it

seemed as if for years sorrow had accumulated in my throat and it was now exploding out.

After crying, I felt peace like I had never felt before. It seemed as if I was previously one of the enemies of Imam al-Husayn and, in a split second, I had now transformed into one of his friends. I now felt like I was one of the helpers and followers of the man who had sacrificed his life, Imam al-Husayn.

I became calm. It was amazing that, at that very moment, the preacher was narrating and explaining the story of Hurr. Hurr was one of the soldiers who had come with the opposing army to battle Imam al-Husayn, but suddenly, right on the battlefield, he trembled. His friends asked him, 'What is wrong with you?

Are you afraid to die?' He answered, 'I swear upon Allah! I have never feared death, but I see before myself the option to choose either paradise or hell.' Suddenly, he rode his horse towards al-Husayn and hastened to see him. He was crying as he asked, 'O son of the Holy Prophet! Is repentance from me acceptable?'

At that very moment, I could not bear it anymore and I threw myself down on the ground crying and wailing. It seemed as though I was replaying the part of Hurr and was pleading with Imam al-Husayn thus, 'O son of the Holy Prophet! Is repentance from me acceptable? O son of the Holy Prophet! Overlook my sins and pardon me.'

The preacher's voice had produced such an effect on the listeners that it caused the people's crying voices to become louder. My friend, who had heard my cries, embraced me while he too cried. He held me the way a mother holds her child, and he was repeating, '*Ya al-Husayn! Ya al-Husayn!*' (O al-Husayn! O al-Husayn!)

This was the moment that I understood and perceived what real crying was. I felt as if my tears were washing my heart and cleansing my entire body from inside. It was then that I understood the real meaning of the Prophet's tradition, when he used to say, 'If you knew what I knew, then you would surely laugh less and cry more.'

I spent the whole of that day in sorrow. My friend wanted to console me, so he brought some cookies for me, but I had lost my appetite entirely. I requested that my friend retell the story of Imam al-Husayn's martyrdom, because I did not know much about it..."³⁰

5. Ahmad Husayn Ya'qub of Jordan

Ahmad Husayn Ya'qub had traveled to Iran on the anniversary of the death of Imam Khomeini. He says, "One of the things on my programme during the death anniversary was to visit the shrine of Imam Khomeini. In the morning of that day, I went to visit his shrine. I found a large number of pilgrims.

Not less than three million men and women altogether. They had surrounded the shrine in such a way

that they seemed to form a chain. Their hands were spread to the sky and were shouting together Persian poetry. I asked my translator to accurately translate what those people were saying. He said, ‘They are saying, ‘We are not like those people who deserted and left their Imam alone. We are with you, O Imam!’”

I broke down crying and I understood that the Imam who was left alone and was killed by the caliph’s huge army was Imam al-Husayn. On that day, it occurred to me that I should write a book about the event of Karbala.

I reached the conclusion that informing the people about this event was necessary. Therefore, I dedicated a part of my time to this issue and started reading, collecting data and keeping records of whatever I found out in this field with the intention to publish the results...

When I was busy writing my book on this issue, there were times when I was definitely sadder than other days. I would be affected by the events which took place and would cry a lot during the day. What kind of man would not cry as he passes through the varying parts of the event at Karbala...”

Ahmad Husayn Ya‘qub is a person who possessed foresight and was guided to the right path. He became a Shi‘ah and has written a number of books in defence of the Shi‘ism.^{[31](#)}

6. ‘Allamah Dr. Muhammad Hasan Shahhatah

He is one of the professors and scholars of al-Azhar University. After a lot of research about the Shi‘ahs, he understood the legitimate claims of this sect and traveled to Iran. In a speech to the people of Ahwaz, a province in Iran, he said, “My love for Imam al-Husayn was the reason that I left all the worldly opportunities that I had.”

In another part of his speech, he said, “If you ask me, ‘Can you find Imam al-Husayn in the east or in the west?’ I will answer you that you will see Imam al-Husayn in my heart. Allah has also granted me the fortune and honor that I should be favored with visiting the holy presence of Imam al-Husayn.”^{[32](#)}

^{1.} Suwar Baghdadiyyah, pp. 145–150.

^{2.} Ibid., as narrated by Mawsu‘ah al-‘Atabat al-Muqaddasah.

^{3.} ‘Ali Pasha Salih, Adab al-Kalam, p. 199, from the book Tarikh al-Adab al-Irani (A Literary History of Persia) by Brown, London, 1919.

^{4.} Rahbar-e Azadegan, p. 53.

^{5.} Ibid., p. 52. See also The Martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn (as) by Yusuf Lalljee.

^{6.} Ibid., p. 53.

^{7.} Husayn (as), Pishva-ye Insan-ha, pp. 11–12.

^{8.} Ibid., p. 46.

^{9.} Rahbar-e Azadegan, p. 51. See also The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, London, 1911, vol. 5, pp. 391–392.

^{10.} Zendegi-ye Pishva-yan, pp. 84–85.

^{11.} Ibid., p. 86.

^{12.} Shahr-e Islam, pp. 267–268.

- [13.](#) George Jorda, Al-Imam 'Ali (as), trans. Abu al-Hasan Shahrani; see also 'Ali (as), the Voice of Human Justice, trans. M. Fazal Haq, Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 1990.
- [14.](#) Rahbar-e Azadegan, p. 56.
- [15.](#) Zendeji-ye Pishva-yan, p. 87.
- [16.](#) Husayn (as), Pishva-ye Insan-ha, p. 30.
- [17.](#) Jawaharlal Nehru, Negahi be Tarikh-e Jahan, vol. 1, p. 298, trans. Mahmud Tafadduli.
- [18.](#) Tarikh-e Fakhri, p. 5.
- [19.](#) Al-Jamili, Istishhad al-Husayn (as), p. 13.
- [20.](#) Husayn (as), Pishva-ye Insan-ha, pp. 37-40.
- [21.](#) Jurji Zaydan, Faji'ah-ye Karbala, p. 143, trans. Muhammad 'Ali Shirazi.
- [22.](#) Dr. Hasan Ibrahim Hasan, Tarikh-e Siyasi-ye Islam, p. 352.
- [23.](#) Sayyid Amin, Iqna' al-La'im, p. 356.
- [24.](#) Dr. Muqaddasi, Dawr al-Manbar al-Husayni fi al-Taw'iyah al-Islamiyyah, pp. 112-113.
- [25.](#) Sa'ib 'Abd al-Hamid, Minhaj fi al-Intima' al-Madhhabi, pp. 31-32.
- [26.](#) Idris Maghribi, Laqad Shayya'ani al-Husayn (as) (Al-Husayn made me a Shi'ite), pp. 63-65.
- [27.](#) Ibid., p. 297.
- [28.](#) Ibid., p. 303.
- [29.](#) Ibid., pp. 313-315.
- [30.](#) Thumma Ahdaitu (Then, I was Guided), pp. 96-98.
- [31.](#) Ahmad Husayn Ya'qub, Karbala, al-Thawrah wa al-Ma'sah, pp. 7-8.
- [32.](#) As narrated in the Newspaper Jumhuri-ye Islami, no. 6771.

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