

The Shari'a Survived through Al-Husayn

Al-Husayn's revolution was the concluding part of the cause of firming the creed's foundations. It clearly distinguished between those who called for righteousness and those who advocated falsehood. It drew a line between this party and that, so much so that it has been said that Islam started by Muhammad (S) and its continuation is through al-Husayn ('a).

The Imams of guidance ('a), therefore, found no means to promote their cause to reform the nation, and to get their word to resurrect the *Shari'a* of their most sacred grandfather (S), except by attracting the attention to this glorious revolution due to what it contains of the calamities that split the solid rocks, cause children to grow gray hair, and cause the heart to dissolve.

They, peace be upon them, kept urging the nation to support it and to bring to memory the cruelty and persecution meted to the martyr/reformer, and to familiarize the nation with what took place during those bloody scenes of oppression meted to al-Husayn ('a) and to his family members and relatives.

They, peace of Allah be upon them, knew that demonstrating the oppression from which he suffered would bring sympathy and soften the hearts. The listener will naturally investigate the calamities and get to know the status of this oppressed Imam ('a) and the reasons why he was mistreated.

Of course he will come to know that the Prophet's grandson was a just Imam who did not court this world, nor did he pay attention to those who promoted falsehood, and that his Imamate was inherited from his grandfather (S) and from his own father the *wasi*, and that his opponent had no legitimate claim to caliphate at all, nor did anyone who followed his line.

Once the listener comes to know all this to be the truth that al-Husayn and the Imams who succeeded him ('a) were all on the right track, he will have no choice except to follow their lead and to embrace their exemplary method, thus firming the foundations of peace and harmony.

The usurping Umayyad and 'Abbaside authorities forced Ahl al-Bayt, peace be upon them, to keep to

their homes, closing all doors before them, prohibiting them from meeting with their followers.

The Ahl al-Bayt suffered at the Umayyad and the ‘Abbaside hands from all types of harm and annihilation, so they preferred isolation to taking to arms and fighting the promoters of falsehood despite their seeing them going to extremes in their oppression and in being unfair to the followers of the Commander of the Faithful and to his offspring ('a), pursuing them under every rock and in every city so that they would remove the ‘Alawides from the face of earth.

They saw how al-Mansur and al-Rashid placed the offspring of Fatima, peace be upon her, inside building columns in order to suffer a slow death, all out of injustice and oppression.[1](#)

Yet all of this did not distract them from urging the upholding of the supreme struggle by admonishing their Shi'as to hold *majalis*[2](#) to commemorate the *Taff* incident. Disgust persisted on account of the calamities and catastrophes, and floods of tears were shed because of the abundance of their painful tragedies.

They went to extremes in explaining the merits of doing so because they were convinced that that was the strong factor for maintaining the religious link for which the Commander of the Faithful ('a) suffered what he suffered, and so did his son al-Hasan ('a) as well as al-Husayn ('a), tragedies which shook the firm mountains.

The Ahl al-Bayt ('a) used to explore various avenues to explain the spiritual importance of remembering al-Husayn ('a) because of the perfect link between such remembering and the safeguarding of the creed from extinction. They expressed it once in general terms and once in specific references. Imam al-Baqir ('a), for example, has said,

“May Allah have mercy on one who meets with another to discuss our cause, for the third of them will be an angel seeking forgiveness for them; so, keep such memory alive, for your meetings and discussions keep our cause alive, and the best of people after us are those who discuss our cause and invite others to remember us.”

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) once asked al-Mufaddal Ibn Yasar, “*Do you meet and discuss?*” He answered the Imam ('a) in the affirmative, whereupon the Imam ('a) said, “*I surely love such majalis; so, keep our memory alive; whoever sits at a majlis in our memory, his heart will not die when hearts die.*”

The Imams, peace be upon them, aimed by so explaining to urge the nation to believe in their Imamate and in what the Master, Glory to Him, has mandated of their Infallibility and what He bestowed upon them of the virtues and merits, and that directing people to them cannot be separated from belief in their being the caliphs, had it not been for those who usurped this divine post.

The things that remind people of al-Husayn ('a), in their various methods, such as commemorative *majalis*, mournings,³ beating the cheeks⁴ at homes and in the streets..., help promote the sect. The role of the re-enactment of the tragedy, accompanied by the recitation of poetry and the narration of the epic, best demonstrates the cruelty which the Umayyahds and their followers inflicted upon al-Husayn ('a).

It thus clearly reaches the minds of children and the commoners who do not comprehend what is contained in the books, or in poetry, of the particulars of the incident. It is the most effective means in influencing people and in strengthening their determination to safeguard the religious links between us and the Imams ('a) and those who paid tribute to them, and it plays a major role in firming the creed.

Other people, such as the Indians, in addition to other Islamic sects, have emulated the Shi'as in the re-enactment of the *Taff* tragedy. This is more prevalent in India than in any other Islamic heartland.⁵

Attracting attention to such reminders and promoting them is needed primarily to keep the memory of the Infallible Ones alive with those who love them, those who love to discuss them and to remember them. Probably a host of the benefits of doing so are not appreciated by the nation. The most they get out of them is that their doing so brings them rewards in the hereafter; that is all.

But one who is acquainted with the mysteries of Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and who digs deep in order to digest the implications of their statements and actions will clearly see what they have referred to with regard to such meetings and with their urging their Shi'as to do due to their munificence and vast knowledge.

^{1.} as-Saduq, 'Uyun Akhbar al-Riṣṭa, p. 62.

^{2.} Holding commemorative gatherings (*majalis*) to bring that tragedy to memory is not confined to homes, for such an understanding contradicts the spirit of the narration. In his *Amali* (or *Majalis*), as-Saduq cites Imam al-Riṣṭa ('a) saying, "One who is reminded of our tragedy and who consequently weeps, his eyes shall not weep on the Day when eyes will be blinded [with tears of remorse]." On p. 26 of *Qurb al-Isnad*, Abu 'Abdullah ('a) is quoted as saying, "Anyone who mentions us or to whom we are mentioned and who sheds a tear as small as the wing of a fly, Allah will forgive his sins." On p. 100 of *Kamil al-Ziyarat*, Abu Harun quotes Abu 'Abdullah ('a) saying that one to whom al-Husayn ('a) is mentioned, so he sheds a tear as small as a fly's wing, will be rewarded by Allah Who will not accept anything for him less than Paradise. There are many such statements which urge the employment of any means whereby al-Husayn's tragedy or the tragedies that befell Ahl al-Bayt ('a) are brought to memory, such as holding commemorative *majalis*, spending money on them, composing poetry or writing about such tragedies, the citation of already composed poems in their honour, or re-enacting the tragedy before people in all its aspects. All of these are implied in his following statement: "Whoever reminds others of our tragedy..., etc."

^{3.} Ibn Qawlawayh, *Kamil al-Ziyarat*, p. 174, where Malik al-Juhni quotes Imam al-Baqir, peace be upon him saying, "On 'Ashura, let everyone mourn al-Husayn, weep, and demonstrate his grief for him. They should meet one another at their homes weeping over him, and let them pay condolences to one another on the anniversary of al-Husayn's tragedy, for I guarantee for them, if they do so, that Allah will grant them the rewards of two million pilgrimages and 'umra and campaigns with the Messenger of Allah and the guided Imams, peace be upon them."

^{4.} On p. 283, Vol. 2, of *Al-Tahthib*, Shaikh al-Tusi quotes Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq ('a), at the end of a chapter dealing with atonements saying, "The daughters of Fatima ('a) rent their pockets and beat their cheeks as they mourned al-Husayn ibn 'Ali, and it is on such tragedy that the cheeks should be beaten and the pockets rent." The same is indicated by al-Shahid in his book *Al-Thikra* in a chapter dealing with *Ahkam* (injunctions) relevant to the dead.

5. In an article published in issue No. 28 (17th year), of the Persian newspaper Al-Habl al-Matin, Dr. Joseph, a French intellectual, is quoted as saying that such a re-enactment has been employed by Shi'as since the time of the Safawides (Safavids) who acquired their authority through the power of their creed assisted by their theologians and scholars.
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