

In this issue

Editor's Message

Four Blind Men

Hadith for Thought

Health - Are You at Risk for a
Heart Attack?

Crying for Imam Hussain(AS)

Commemoration of Muharram

Imam Hussain's (AS) Philosophy
and the Battle of Karbala

Message of Karbala

A Collection of Ideas on Ashura

The Importance of Tears

Calendar

Special Occasions

- ❑ **Dhul Hijjah 22 / Jan 1:**
Shahadat of sons of Hazrat Syed Muslim ibn Aqeel (AS)
- ❑ **Dhul Hijjah 24 / Jan 3:**
Eid-e-Mubahalah - Holy Prophet (SAW) and the Christians of Najaran
- ❑ **Dhul Hijjah 25 / Jan 4:**
Zefaf/Rukhsati of Hazrat Fatima (SA) with Imam Ali - Ameer-ul-Mo'mineen (AS)
- ❑ **Muharram 1 / Jan 10:**
Dua of Prophet Zakariyah (AS) seeking a son (Prophet Yahya (AS)) is accepted
- ❑ **Muharram 2 / Jan 11:**
Arrival of caravan of Imam Hussain (AS) in Karbala
- ❑ **Muharram 7 / Jan 16:**
Water Restricted on Imam Hussain (AS) and his family in Karbala
- ❑ **Muharram 10 / Jan 19:**
Day of Aashuraa - Martyrdom of Imam Hussain (AS) and his followers in Karbala
- ❑ **Muharram 18/ Jan 27:**
Qibla Changed from Holy Quds to the Holy Kaaba
- ❑ **Muharram 20/Jan 29:**
Wafat of Bibi Sakina - Daughter of

Editor's Message

Assalamu Alaikum Brothers and Sisters in Islam,

The VOW staff, the Board of Trustees, and the Board of Directors of the Muslim Congress (MC) would like to present this issue of VOW – with their sincere apologies for being late. We understand that this has been a big disappointment for our regular readers and supporters. The VOW staff, the Board of Trustees, and the Board of Directors of the Muslim Congress (MC) had a hectic schedule the last eight to ten weeks with the holidays, family vacations, graduations and the first Ashra of Muharram. This was the reason for the delay.

One thing that this has proven is that VOW could definitely use some help in this project. If you have the time and are willing to be part of the team and contribute to the cause of Islam, please get in touch with the VOW team.

Alhamdulillah, we have a few informative and stimulating articles about Muharram in this issue. The theme for the next newsletter is OPEN, i.e; all articles related to Islam, on being a good Muslim are welcome, **and due to be published in May 2008**

Suggested topics: How can Islam bring the community together? How do you explain Islam to your colleagues or non-Muslim friends? How does Islam influence your life and culture in the USA? Are we truthful to the message of Islam? Or are we practicing our own version of Islam? Is the message being preserved and passed on to the next generation? How can we bring the true message of Islam to the majority of the people of this country? Of course, articles that bring/build the community together, preserving the original message of Islam, are always welcome.

The deadline to receive articles for the May issue is March. 29, 2008. Please try to submit these articles in Word 6.0 format. Once submitted, these articles become the property of Muslim Congress, and Muslim Congress reserves the right to edit these articles before publication.

We ask Allah (SWT) for His support and blessings for all *muslimeen* in these very challenging times. As followers of the Holy Prophet (SAW) and his *Ahlul Bait* (AS), we are blessed with role models, but the challenge of living up to the expectations is upon all of us.

To send ideas and suggestions for the e-newsletters, please email us at newsletter@muslimcongress.org.

Four Blind Men Syed Mujahid Hussain

Four blind men encountered an elephant and reported:

1. The elephant is like a rope, (by the one who grabbed its tail);



Imam Hussain (AS)

- ❑ **Muharram 24 / Feb 2:**
Martyrdom of Imam Baqir-as-Sadr
- ❑ **Muharram 25 / Feb 3:**
Martyrdom of Imam as-Sajjad Zainul Abideen (AS)
- ❑ **Safar 1/ Feb 8**
Safar 4/ Feb
Islamic Revolution in Iran
- ❑ **Safar 7/ Feb 14:**
Martyrdom of Imam Musa-Al-Kadhim (AS)
- ❑ **Safar 9/ Feb 16:**
Battle of Naharwan
- ❑ **Safar 17 / Feb 24:**
Martyrdom of Imam Ali Al-Reza (AS), 8th Imam
- ❑ **Safar 20 / Feb 27:**
Arabeen of Imam Hussain (AS) and his followers
- ❑ **March 2008**
Safar 24 / March 2:
Wafat of Bibi Zainab (SA) daughter of Imam Ali (AS)
- ❑ **Safar 28 / March 6:**
Wafat of Holy Prophet (SAW) & Martyrdom of Imam Hasan (AS)
- ❑ **Rabi-al-Awwal 9 / March 17:**
Eid-e-Nahum/Eid-e-Zahra - Imam of 12th Imam begins
- ❑ **Rabi-al-Awwal 10 / March 18:**
Marriage of Holy Prophet (PBUH) & Bibi Khadija Al-Kubrah (SA)
- ❑ **Rabi-al-Awwal 17/ March 25**
Birthday of Holy Prophet (PBUH) & Imam Jafar Al-Sadiq (AS)

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2. The elephant is like a wall, (by the one who encountered the side);
3. The elephant is like a pillar, (by the one who wrapped his hands around it's leg); and
4. The elephant is like a snake, (by the one who felt its trunk).

Each of the four was correct, but woefully incomplete.

And so it goes with the memorial gathering or *majlis ta'zieh* for Imam Hussain (AS) - the *Majlis Ashura*. You can view this *Majlis* as a gathering to glorify the ultimate sacrifice for the sake of preservation of the true pristine message of Allah's beloved religion, or as a gathering to learn the true message and philosophy of Islam, or as a gathering to throw stones at the current or past enemies of Islam, or as a place to hear about the deeds and victories of Imam Ali (AS) or of the other Infallibles (*Masoomeen*). Or this gathering can be seen as a social event, or as a gathering just based on tradition and devoid of meaning or significance.

Today, most Muslims view the *Majlis Ashura* inaccurately, meaning they view it through a set of colored lenses. For example, a Muslim who comes to the *Majlis* to participate in a program based solely on his language preference to satisfy his own urge or his inner feelings cannot be expected to expound on the true message or the significance of Karbala. Or for that matter, he cannot expound on the powers and beneficence of the Master of the Day of Judgment. It is obvious, that he is out of touch with the real meaning and understanding of ultimate sacrifice at Karbala. This comment applies not just to the Muslim who comes to this *Majlis* but to all Muslims who insist on viewing Islam with their own set of colored lenses. A Muslim who sees only through his set of colored lenses is like each of the blind men. First and foremost, the purpose of this *Majlis* is to glorify Allah and Allah's final revelation and chosen religion and it is to learn the true message and philosophy of Islam; it is not just to throw stones at the current or past enemies of Islam, nor is this *Majlis* only a social event or a gathering just based on tradition devoid of meaning or significance.

What can a Muslim do? The answer lies in the story of the four blind men and the elephant.

What does it take to see the entire elephant? 'Sight' and 'Light'. 'Sight' is better than the limited touch to understand the elephant, because sight allows one to see the accurate picture of the full elephant, whereas touch gives only a limited view, based on the aspects touched. 'Light' enables 'sight' - clarifying, confirming, and thereby removing all doubt about the elephant. Correct Islamic education is synonymous with 'sight', and true faith (*imaan*) is synonymous with 'light'.

Therefore, a Muslim will be able to view the complete picture if he is provided with 'sight'. In other words, with the appropriate education and faith, the *Majlis Ashura* will describe the events and implications of Karbala more accurately. How this is done is immaterial. It might be as straightforward as providing many pictures, each of which shows a different view of the elephant. But this has several implications, including the fact that changes made to one picture must be visible in all other pictures.

Another implication is that the *Majlis Ashura* must not be viewed narrowly through a single pair of colored lenses. It should be possible for any Muslim to view the *Majlis* objectively, perhaps as a non-Muslim views it. For the non-Muslim, it is an occasion where the Muslims glorify Allah in a true and pristine form. In addition, to the majority of people in this land (who are non-Muslims), every one who glorifies Allah is simply a Muslim, irrespective of the language, country or color. Therefore, through the *Majlis Ashura* it should be possible for the Muslim community to perceive itself as one *ummah*.

In general, if the Muslims want to establish a true and correct *Majlis Ashura* in this land, the Muslims must be able to overlook their differences and see the *Majlis* as an extension of the Ahlul Bait's 'Open University'.

Today, many Muslims feel satisfied with their colored lenses, and the narrow view that they afford. The future lies in providing 'sight' and 'light'.

Hadith for Thought ¹ : On Keeping Company Hajj Massoud Nashatizadeh

Once again Br. Hajj Massoud shares his knowledge and thoughts in his own unique style, which is refreshing and thought provoking.

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (AS) said:



"Keep the company of a wise person. If you do not benefit from his generosity, you would, however, gain from his intellect."
Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (AS)

عَلَيْكَ أَنْ تَصْحَبَ ذَا الْعَقْلِ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَجِدْ كَرَمَهُ وَ
لَكِنْ أَنْتَفِعَ بِعَقْلِهِ.

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Some prominent Islamic linguists are of the opinion that the Arabic word for human being - 'insan' - is derived from 'uns', which means sociability; affinity, or emotional closeness. Therefore, the name itself highlights one of the natural human tendencies - the need for friendship and social intimacy. An isolated, affluent person, in spite of all his wealth and material prosperity, would become perplexed and unhappy. The extensive survey of man's behavior, published by those who have for centuries studied human beings, has this primary characteristic for man: he strives consistently and without intellectual reluctance to establish close connections with others.

In light of the innate urge to live collectively and avoid solitude, human beings gravitate toward anyone who conforms to his expectations for association and friendship. It is commonly accepted that a friend has a definitive role in the outcome and quality of everyone's life, and seldom one may find someone who is not affected by some type of relationship. As a result, human beings unconsciously, as time progresses, acquire some of the characteristics and inclinations of their friends.

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Imam Ali (AS) stated:

"لَا تَصْحَبِ الشَّرِيرَ فَإِنَّ طَبْعَكَ يَسْرِقُ مِنْ طَبْعِهِ شَرًّا
وَأَنْتَ لَا تَعْلَمُ." الإمام علي بن أبي طالب عليه السلام

"Avoid the company of the wicked; verily your nature will snatch wickedness and you would not be aware of it."
Imam Ali (AS)

People often identify their own personality in others, and then strive to make a friendship and close association. In general, it is the similarity in character that brings people together.

The Holy Qur'an states:

يَا وَيْلَتَى لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أَتَّخِذْ فُلَانًا خَلِيلًا.

"Woe to me! Ah, would that I had never taken such a person as a friend!" The Holy Qur'an 25: 28

The statement quoted in the **Immaculate Qur'an** brings out some central features of an ill-conceived affiliation. It is clear from the context of this verse (*ayah*) that the person who is making this statement is among those who, on account of making improper associations and a poor choice of friendship, has fallen into a life of transgression and iniquity. Hence, during the cataclysmic and dreadful moments of the Judgment Day he would be uttering these words of regret.

"الْمَرْءُ عَلَى دِينِ خَلِيلِهِ وَقَرِينِهِ."

"Man is in the creed of his friend and close companion." Prophet Mohammad (SAW)

Therefore, we must examine on which parameters and guidelines Islam sanctions a well-suited friendship and a sound affiliation with others. Referring back to our "theme *hadith*" from Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (AS), the prescription for ways to make a friendship and the formula for forming an association, emerges. The Imam emphasizes the word "wisdom", a dynamic term analogous with "enlightenment" and "understanding", that from the Islamic point of view is a critical quality in a person one should consider before choosing him as a friend. Furthermore, intelligence is a resplendent source of eminence and a divine instrument of internal guidance. Its momentous blessings not only enrich the one who owns it, but it also benefits others. The Infallibles (AS) have accredited the intellect as an "inner prophet", similar to the prophets of the physical realm (peace and blessings be upon them).

The principal mission of the prophets (AS) is to illuminate the hearts and minds of mankind and guide them along the correct path to perfection. If an intelligent friend were not willing to be charitable, his wisdom, however, would always be a source of inspiration. Despite cultural, national, or economic interests, one must avoid the company of an ignorant person, even if he endeavors to provide assistance. Since he is devoid of wisdom, he would ultimately harm the person. To further illustrate this point, it suffices to contemplate the following advice given by the Leader of the Faithful - Imam Ali (AS), to his venerable son, Imam Hassan Mujtaba (AS):

"يَا بُنَيَّ! إِيَّاكَ وَمُصَادَقَةَ الْأَحْمَقِ، فَإِنَّهُ يُرِيدُ أَنْ
يَنْفَعَكَ فَيَضُرُّكَ"

"Oh my son! Avoid the friendship of a fool, as he would tend to benefit you but he would harm you in the process;

and avoid the friendship of a miser as he would turn away from you when you need him;

وَإِيَّاكَ وَمُصَادَقَةَ الْبَخِيلِ؛ فَإِنَّهُ يَقْعُدُ عَنْكَ أَحْوَجَ مَا
تَكُونُ إِلَيْهِ؛

وَإِيَّاكَ وَمُصَادَقَةَ الْفَاجِرِ، فَإِنَّهُ يَبِيعُكَ بِأَلْتَا فِيهِ،

and avoid the friendship of a sinner as he would sell you for nothing,

وَإِيَّاكَ وَمُصَادَقَةَ الْكَذَّابِ فَإِنَّهُ كَالسَّرَابِ يُقْرَبُ
عَلَيْكَ الْبَعِيدَ وَيُبْعَدُ عَنْكَ الْقَرِيبَ.

and avoid the friendship of a liar as he is like a mirage, for he would make far things look near and near things far."
Imam Ali (AS)

Furthermore, the most important fact relating wisdom and knowledge to friendship is that the **Holy Qur'an** and the Infallibles (AS) have enjoined the believers to choose Allah the All-Knowing and His perfect representatives as the supreme choice for love and friendship. Moreover, the alliance of the believer and his friendship with Allah (SWT) and His emissaries (AS) is the basis on which his entire salvation depends. Naturally, this relationship stretches out to all those who endeavor to attain closeness to their Creator. On the other hand, a believer is commanded to avoid the company of those who distance themselves from Allah (SWT).

1 The pronouns "he, him, and his" or the word 'brother' that are frequently used in this series of "Hadith for Thought" do not pertain to gender. They signify mankind, both male and female.

Health: Are You at Risk for a Heart Attack?

Dr. Syed H. Akhtar MD Cardiologist; Austin, Texas



A common answer to this question would be "I feel fine" or "I have no chest pain" or "I have no problem." This answer may be true in majority of the cases. However, feeling fine and not having symptoms of heart disease is no guarantee against having silent coronary artery heart disease, which may lead to a heart attack.

Coronary artery disease or "hardening of the arteries of the heart" does not produce symptoms until the disease is advanced. In that case, it is generally too late to reverse the disease process. Coronary heart disease is the leading cause of deaths in the United States, more than cancer deaths. Some heart facts:

- 79 million Americans have cardiovascular disease
- 15.8 million Americans have coronary heart disease
- 1 million are victims of heart attack per year in the US
- 1/2 million die of heart attack each year in the US
- 1/4 million die before reaching a hospital
- In one out of six heart attack victims, the only symptom of heart disease is sudden cardiac death (SCD)
- In men, a heart attack frequently is the first indication that they have or had a heart problem

An accelerated form of coronary artery disease leading to heart attack and sudden cardiac death has been identified in relatively young Asian-Americans from the Indian subcontinent living in the United States. These are very successful individuals, who are otherwise healthy. Stressful lives, genetics, lack of exercise, along with other risk factors are implicated.

"Prevention is better than cure."

This adage is much more relevant today than it was in the past. This is mainly due to enhanced diagnostic tools, better understanding of the disease process, and improved preventive measures available.

Risk factors for coronary heart disease (Coronary Atherosclerosis):

- High blood pressure;
- Sedentary life style;
- High 'bad' (LDL) cholesterol;

- Low 'good' (HDL) cholesterol;
- Cigarette smoking;
- Family history of heart attacks;
- Diabetes;
- Obesity;
- Male gender (men are more prone to heart attacks);
- Old age (men >45 and women >55 years old);
- Inflammatory conditions, etc.

Cholesterol

This is a fat-like substance in the blood that can deposit in the walls of coronary arteries causing hardening and blockage. This leads to angina pain (chest pain from lack of oxygen to the heart). It can lead to heart attack. Cholesterol is of two types: "bad cholesterol" or LDL cholesterol or low density lipoprotein cholesterol. This promotes hardening of arteries; and "good cholesterol" or HDL cholesterol or high density lipoprotein cholesterol. This fights hardening of the arteries. A 2% reduction in bad cholesterol reduces coronary heart attacks deaths by 1%.

Normal values of cholesterol:

- Total cholesterol less than 200 mg per DL (deciliter)
- LDL cholesterol less than 160 mg per DL (if no risk factors)
- LDL cholesterol less than 100 mg per DL (if known heart disease or diabetes)
- HDL cholesterol greater than 40 mg per DL High blood cholesterol is a common disorder.

As we grow older, our cholesterol level tends to increase. It causes no symptoms and thus is undetected, unless a blood test is performed. In addition to cholesterol contained in foods, cholesterol is also manufactured by the liver. The amount manufactured is genetically determined. Certain enzyme deficiencies may lead to high cholesterol as a familial disorder. A large proportion of a person's cholesterol level comes from the food he eats.

High cholesterol-containing foods include red meats, eggs, dairy products, shrimp, etc.

Low (relatively) cholesterol-containing foods include non-red meats, lean meats, fish, and chicken (minus the skin).

Cholesterol-free foods include vegetables, grains, seeds, nuts, fruits, etc.

High blood pressure (Hypertension):

High blood pressure also promotes hardening of the arteries and heart attack. Unfortunately, it causes no symptoms for a long time. In the mean time, it is damaging the blood vessels all over the body. The consequences of untreated high blood pressure include heart attack, enlarged heart leading to congestive heart failure, stroke, kidney failure, rupture of main artery called the aorta leading to sudden death, blindness, etc.

- Normal blood pressure**
less than 120 mm Hg systolic or less than 80 mm Hg diastolic
(** These readings apply to all age groups, even the elderly)
- Borderline high BP (pre-hypertension)
120 - 139 mm Hg systolic or 80 - 89 mm Hg diastolic
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
140 mm Hg or higher systolic or 90 mm Hg or higher diastolic

Cigarette smoking

It increases the risk of heart attack several fold. It is the single greatest preventable cause of death in United States today.

Sedentary life style

It increases the risk of heart attack, high blood pressure, osteoporosis (weakening of bones), overweight and obesity.

Overweight and obesity

This has reached epidemic proportions in United States and in other industrialized countries. Teenage and child obesity is increasing. Adverse health effects of overweight and obesity include early diabetes, increased heart attacks, high blood pressure, diabetes, and many others. In some medical circles, obesity has been termed "the mother of all diseases."

Diabetes

Elevated blood sugar could be due to lack of insulin. This type of diabetes is termed insulin-dependent diabetes. It usually starts at a young age and is usually familial. The majority of diabetic patients suffer from non-insulin-dependent diabetes. It occurs in an older age group, especially in those who are overweight or obese. It is also termed adult-onset diabetes. Diabetes is a strong risk factor for all types cardiovascular diseases, including heart attacks, strokes, peripheral vascular disease especially involving lower extremities, diabetic retinopathy leading to blindness, diabetic kidney disease leading to kidney failure requiring kidney transplant, etc. Diabetes shortens life span.

What can you do?

Prevention is better than a cure. Do not wait until you have symptoms. Routine preventative health checks, including blood pressure check and blood tests will identify most of the risk factors.

High blood pressure

If your doctor diagnoses high blood pressure then make sure blood pressure readings return to normal with a combination of diet, exercise, and in some cases with medication. The goal should be to bring down the blood pressure to normal values, regardless of the number of medications you may need.

High cholesterol

If diet, exercise and lifestyle changes do not bring cholesterol down satisfactorily, then your doctor will prescribe medication. Chances are that with a few exceptions you will need the medication(s) indefinitely. Periodic blood testing is generally required.

Cigarette Smoking

Seek professional help and counseling to overcome nicotine addiction.

Diabetes

Good control of blood sugar with the help of diet, exercise, and weight reduction is mandatory. Some patients may need oral medications, and some other may need to take insulin injections, additionally. It is an incurable disease as of today, and lifelong precautions/treatment are mandatory. Again, the endpoint is control of blood sugar, regardless of the number of medications taken or lifestyle changes made. Uncontrolled diabetes is disastrous to health resulting in heart attacks, strokes, blindness, loss of limbs, and life-threatening infections.

Physical exercise

The American Heart Association recommends 3060 minutes of aerobic exercise four to five days a week. Exercise on a given day may be divided into more than one session. It may be in the form of jogging, running, fast walking, bicycling, treadmill exercise, or stationary bicycle. Gardening and lawn work is helpful. Exercise has many benefits by modifying several cardiovascular risk factors. Caution: If you have heart disease or suspect that you may have one, then consult your doctor before starting an exercise program.

Diet and nutrition

Diet plays an important role in our health. The diet of Asian-Americans may be particularly "heart unhealthy". Excess dairy products, meat, oils and carbohydrates should be avoided. Below are some of the herbal and nutritional supplements that can contribute to a healthy diet.

- **Garlic:** According to some studies, garlic may decrease blood levels of total cholesterol by a few percentage points. Other studies, however, suggest that it may not be as beneficial as once thought. It may also have significant side effects and/or interactions with certain medications. Consult your doctor before starting over the counter garlic supplements.
- **Dietary Fiber:** Increased consumption of dietary fiber, soy foods, and plant compounds (plant stanols and sterols) can significantly reduce LDL cholesterol or bad cholesterol. Only plant foods like vegetables, fruits, legumes, and unrefined grains contain dietary fiber. The soluble fiber found in foods such as oat bran, barley, psyllium seeds, flax seed meal, apples, citrus fruits, lentils and beans are particularly effective in lowering cholesterol.
- **Soybeans:** Soybeans have been shown to prevent coronary heart disease by lowering LDL cholesterol and triglycerides. Soy protein is present in tofu, soy milk, soy yogurt, soy nuts and in many other food products made from soybeans.
- **Phytosterols:** Phytosterols (plant sterol and stanol esters) are compounds found in small amounts in foods such as whole grains as well as in many vegetables, fruits, and vegetable oils. They decrease LDL cholesterol, mostly by interfering with the intestinal absorption of cholesterol.
- **Fish oils and foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids:** Including these in your diet may also help lower cholesterol. Aim for at least 2 servings of fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, herring, tuna and sardines per week. Other dietary sources of omega-3 fatty acids include flax seed and walnuts.
- **Over-the-counter (OTC) omega-3 fatty acid capsules (fish oils)** help lower cholesterol and triglycerides, as well as slightly increasing good cholesterol. Check with your doctor before starting these or any other OTC medicines.

Foods to avoid: Avoid partially hydrogenated and hydrogenated vegetable oil. These come in the form of margarines and cooked foods and confectionaries. These manmade oils are sources of *trans* fatty acids known to increase blood LDL cholesterol, promoting coronary artery blockage and heart attack. They lower heart protecting HDL (good) cholesterol and increase the inflammatory response in the body. You can now find *trans* fats listed on the Nutrition Facts panel of packaged foods. Minimize consumption of *trans* fatty acid containing foods. Some of the newer margarines like "SmartBalance" and others do not contain *trans* fats. These do not increase bad cholesterol. However, they are high in calories and one should avoid their excessive use. Other foods to avoid are red meat, butter, organ meats like liver, kidneys, brain, etc.

If a plant-based, low fat diet alone is not effective at reducing cholesterol levels, such a diet should be combined with cholesterol-lowering medications prescribed by your doctor. "A stitch in time is better than nine." Periodic health checks may prevent serious ill effects of silent and undetected high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, cancer and other serious cardiovascular diseases.

Crying over Imam Hussain (AS)

Sr. Fatima Sherrif



Why do we commemorate the tragedy of Karbala? Why do we have *majalis*, do *matam*, and cry over the tragedy of Karbala?

Sometimes, young people ask these questions. They say that there are people in this world who have been killed without any fault of their own due to wars or natural disasters, but why are we only concerned about Imam Hussain (AS)?

In order to respond, first we will differentiate between the tragedy of Karbala and other heartbreaking events in the world. Then we will discuss the importance of understanding the reasons of the Imam's sacrifice, and in the end we will see the benefits of such commemorations.

Let us discuss the first point.

Ever since the human race has existed on this earth, there have been killings, calamities, and misfortunes. How many people get killed due to wars? How many people die due to natural disasters? How many lose their lives due to accidents? These innocent lives deserve our sympathies, and those who purposefully take innocent lives must be condemned; but the question arises - why is the tragedy of Karbala any different?

How do innocent people die? Certainly innocent people who end up getting killed would have saved their lives if they had known they would be killed soon. For example, if someone knows that a missile will fall on the roof of his house, he will do his best to escape from there before it happens. Similarly, if someone found out that if he went to a certain place, he would be killed, he would not go there. If there were a chance to save their life, they would definitely try to save themselves and try to escape from the situation. These lives deserve our sympathies but it is not the same as the tragedy of Karbala.

Then there were other events such as the martyrdoms of the Messengers and other Imams. They also deserve commemoration but among all these events, Karbala still stands out. We know that Imam Hussain (AS) is called the Heir (*Warith*) of the Prophets because by his sacrifice he saved Islam - which was their goal too.

Imam Hussain (AS) could have saved his life in several ways:

1. He could have accepted the rule of Yazeed. It would have been a disaster for Islam and the Muslims. At that time, Marwan met him and offered him his advice saying, "...you should do Yazeed's allegiance (*bay'at*) it is good for this world as well as the hereafter." Imam said, "*Inna lillahe wa inna elayhe rajeoori*" or "we are from Allah and to Him we are returning" - meaning that if the people like Yazeed become the ruler of Islamic world then we would bid farewell to Islam.
2. He could have migrated to another country. In fact, someone advised him to take his family and go away to another country. But would he escape?
3. The Imam knew what was to become of him, but the tragedies that would befall his family were not more important than saving Islam. During his journey to Karbala, at one point he said that people are the slaves of this world and their faith is only on their tongues. They support the religion as long as their lives are comfortable but when they are tested, very few remain faithful to the religion.

There was no one else to speak up and condemn the oppressor other than Imam Hussain (AS). The people of Madinah knew that the Imam had called this government illegal but nobody said anything. The people needed a jolt to wake them up from their slumber. At another location called *Tha'alib*, Imam Hussain (AS) saw a dream about a horseback rider saying that this caravan is moving forward and death is following it. When he mentioned it, Hazrat Ali Akbar (AS) asked Imam Hussain (AS), "Are we not on the Right Path?"

Imam Hussain (AS) replied, "Of course we are, oh my son."

Then Ali Akbar replied, "Then we don't care about death."

The Imam said, "*Jazakallah khair!*"

Such were the Imam's companions and family members (AS). They were not afraid of death but wanted to follow the Path of Truth alone. It is our responsibility to seek truth and support it, be on the Right Path, not condemn people who say what is true or *haqq*, and not be afraid of speaking up. We should also consider that a disrespectful action toward one person versus another has different value. For example, if two friends argue and one pushes the other, it is not as bad as if one person argues with his mother and then pushes her. How disrespectful would that be? Although both actions are the same, it is important to whom it was done. The higher the recipient's status, the worse even a small disrespect would be. As another example, a person kills someone. It is horrible but may not make news. But when a president of a country is

assassinated, it makes headlines all over the world. The crime was the same but the intensity of impact was different.

Allah says in **Surah-e-Hujuraat (Holy Qur'an 49:2)**, "*Do not raise your voices over the voice of the Prophet, and do not speak loud to him as you speak loud to one another...*" Imagine how appalling such disrespect is toward Imam Hussain (AS) - the grandson of the Holy Prophet. Imagine how heartbreaking such tragedy is for him and his family. In **Ziarat-e-Ashoora** we read that the angels say, "*...O Imam Hussain! Your tragedy was great even for us and all the people of Islam.*" This calamity was huge even for angels and dwellers of heavens.

We discussed the importance of events of Karbala; why are they different from any other event in the world, and why Imam Hussain (AS) had to give the sacrifice.

Now we come to the last part of our topic.

It is true that there have been great and very important events in history but if we do not talk about them, we will soon forget them. For example, we find that since the historical event of *Ghadir* was not reiterated again and again, it was erased from the minds of many, even though it was so important and thousands of people witnessed it. This lack of emphasis changed the history of Islam. Similarly, if we do not commemorate the tragedy of Karbala every year, it would be forgotten too and would only be found in the pages of obscure history.

Some people these days say that 'it is true that these events were important and that we should remember them, but there is no need to cry, do *matam* or *majlis*'. Instead every year we can have a conference where speakers can throw light on the history of Karbala. The answer to this argument is that such conferences or programs are for the intellect of the people where emotions do not play any role. Whereas commemorating the tragedy of Karbala with *matam* and *majlis* is for the heart; it invokes emotions. The whole environment that we create - putting on black clothes, abandoning entertainments and happy occasions - bring us closer to understanding the event. Even after the passing of 1,367 years, it is still fresh and alive.

Even today, it teaches us to give up our indifference towards arguments of right and wrong; it shakes us to action to help the oppressed, and to condemn the oppressor anywhere in this world. It helps us to forget our own sufferings like the death of a loved one when we see how the Imam lost so many family members in one day. It motivates our people to be brave in the face of calamities and to make sacrifices for the sake of Allah by keeping the Hereafter in mind, not this worldly life. Crying softens our hearts and keeps us from becoming stonehearted.

The *Majlis Ashura* commemorations are like informal universities that relay the teachings of the Infallibles (*Masoomeen*) to us. We must keep this religious tradition alive for our own sakes.

1 Page 36, Najmi, M. S. (2003). Sermons, Sayings, and Letters of Imam Husain (a.s.) From Madina to Karbala. Karachi: Darussaqlain (Urdu).

2 Page 52, Najmi, M. S. (2003). Sermons, Sayings, and Letters of Imam Husain (a.s.) From Madina to Karbala. Karachi: Darussaqlain (Urdu).

Commemoration of Muharram

Syed Mohammad Ali Hashim Naqui



Time and again you see the differences in how *Ashura* is remembered by the different communities of the Shia' around the world. There may be differences in how *Muharram* is observed by different communities, but they all share a depth and intensity in commemorating the tragedy of the martyrs of Karbala that is consistent with people from many different nations, races, regions and language groups. We all share the longing to remember the martyrdom of the Imam Hussain (AS) at Karbala' and his family that to this day has the ability to bring people to tears, feeling the intensity of the tragedy, as if it just happened. This is nothing short of a miracle over time, the intensity of the pangs of a tragic loss of a family member, fade. But the sorrow for the tragedy of Karbala has a depth in perpetuity that is another sign of the blessings of Allah (SWT).

Unlike prayers, where children sometimes have to be reminded, the commemoration of *Muharram* bubbles out of the very souls of the Shia'. Even as a young child, I remember looking forward to the coming of *Muharram* and feeling depressed when the holy and blessed days that commemorate my Imam's martyrdom left us sad. One has to wait for one whole year to welcome again *Muharram*, where the remembrance (*dhikr*) of Imam Hussain (AS) and his noble family was again on our lips with a greater intensity than in the rest of the year, and the special blessings it brings to our homes.

It was when I lived in Raleigh, N.C., where our very small and diverse Shia' community with brothers and

sisters from Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran as well as many American converts joining together in the commemoration, that I began to notice that although we all shared the tragedy, we all observed *Muharram* in slightly different ways. We had to be "divided" to truly partake in the *Majalis Ashura*, although we were all lovers of *Ahlul-Bait*. We could all pray together, celebrate the fasting in Ramadan together, but when it came to the *Majalis*, we had to go our separate ways, because of linguistic and cultural differences.

Until I came and settled in America, this issue had never come in front of me. The brothers from Iraq and Iran did not have *ulamaa* per se, as the community from India and Pakistan did. The North Indians did not even commemorate *Muharram* like those in Hyderabad, where we had a pattern of how to conduct this *Majlis Ashura*.

Thus, with the onset of *Muharram*, the Shia' were divided into smaller groups. In some cases, although the other brothers and sisters wanted to join us, they were not able to understand the way the *Majalis* was recited by us. *Muharram* ironically divided our small little community, instead of uniting us all in remembering our Imam, who has in fact united people even from other faiths.

Many non-Muslims praise the sacrifice of Imam Hussain (AS). Many people from *Ahlus-Sunnah* also commemorate *Muharram* in their own way by conducting gatherings in which the tragedy of Karbala is remembered. Our Imam has in fact managed to unite people from many different backgrounds who have the decency and compassion to come together to stand in support of the Imam and his brave little group who laid down their lives rather than giving up their will to the forces of tyranny.

Yet, our own Shia' community is divided every *Muharram*. We have to walk away from the Shia' brother ever so slightly, to commemorate *Muharram* in our own way.

The next question that used to come to my mind in light of our Final Imam (ATF) seeing all these sincere Shia' who truly love Imam Hussain (AS) dividing as soon as *Muharram* began - what can we do as individuals to unite the Shia' in their traditions? The only traditional commemorations we do together is the reading of *Ziarat of Ashoora*.

I remember the Punjabi brothers longing to recite the Eulogies (*nohas*) in Punjabi, the Sindhi brothers wanted to do that in their mother tongue and the Urdu groups wanted to recite the *nohas* in Urdu. The English-speaking brothers and sisters did not have any *nohas* to recite and the manner in which the Arab and Persian brothers remembered Imam Hussain (AS) seemed so totally foreign to us. There is indeed no harm or wrong in doing the *Majalis Ashura* in the traditions of our cultures and our heritage, but there is a desire in my heart, that we could possibly unite in at least some common traditions.

One thing that could potentially unite us in commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (AS) is to follow our Imams. I wonder if the knowledgeable among us would tell us how Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (AS) commemorated *Muharram*. What happened in their homes on what dates? Did they put black banners in their homes? What did they write on those banners? Do we have any surviving *nohas* either written by the Imams or do we have any poetry that was recited in front of the Imams, any of them, that we could adopt together, so everyone could potentially recite and commemorate/observe the proceedings as our Imams did? Was there a tradition of reading some of the speeches given by Imam Hussain (AS)?

Religious scholars (*ulamaa*) should relate these traditions so they could become the basis of uniting us across the globe. Perhaps we could make a joint effort to conduct a portion of the memorial programs just as the Imams (AS) performed them by doing at least some readings in Arabic, following them in mourning their great grandfather (AS) We might then all feel comfortable, regardless of our national origin or language.

This should not mean that we stop commemorating with our own traditions, by the way. There can be a great variety of ways to mourn the martyrdom of the Imam (AS). Let each heart reach out to the Mother of the Martyr, our Sayyidah Fatimah Zahraa (AS), from every direction, in every language and from many nations, so she knows that her son's actions have become the basis of lighting the ever-burning torches of faith (*imaan*) through his great sacrifice.

Imam Hussain's (AS) Philosophy and the Battle of Karbala

Syed H. Akhtar



Talib (AS), and the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), the last Prophet of God, evokes strong emotions. But what was Imam Hussain's philosophy? What did he stand for? What did he teach us?

Before those questions can be answered, a brief review of the political situation at that time will be helpful. Yazid, the son of Muawiyah, had assumed rulership of the Islamic Empire and wielded absolute power over the people. Yazid was the embodiment of vice, tyranny, and injustice, and was openly anti-Islamic in his behavior. His campaign of deceit and false propaganda had misled the Muslim masses. Ignorance about true Islam was widespread. The true position of the members of the family of the Prophet was concealed from the common people. Against this backdrop, Yazid desired to legitimize his corrupt rule by demanding that Imam Hussain submit and swear allegiance to him, or be killed.

Imam Husain (AS) explicitly declared that he could not swear allegiance to what was evil and false. He clearly understood that Yazid was determined to kill him for his refusal to submit to him. As a result, Imam Hussain(AS) had few choices: he could gather forces and fortify himself in Medinah or Makkah and try to escape or resist Yazid's power; he could go out in force and try to overthrow Yazid's government; or, he could take an open and public moral stand against Yazid's corruption, and die as a martyr.

Imam Hussain (AS) knew that avoiding confrontation would only allow Yazid's defacement of Islamic values to continue unchecked. He also knew that a military victory would have only short-term success, and would not save Islam in the long run, because it would not reform the morally complacent Muslim nation. He also did not want to die in vain, and be portrayed as one who unsuccessfully tried to defeat Yazid in order to simply gain power.

Thus, Imam Hussain (AS) chose to confront Yazid in the open and on purely moral grounds. He took with him a small band of family members and companions, which included not only the able-bodied, but also the elderly and infirm, as well as women, children, and infants. According to Arab tradition, if it were simply his intention to fight, he would not have brought women and small children with him.

Imam Hussain (AS) and his male supporters, including the elderly and children, numbered less than 100, and were mercilessly slaughtered in the desert plains of Karbala on the tenth day of the month of Muharram, in the year 61 of the Islamic calendar. Yazid's forces, numbering min.30,000, were responsible for the massacre. Imam Hussain's (AS) camp was denied the most basic necessities, including water, and died fighting bravely in a state of hunger, thirst, and in utterly inhumane circumstances. Many minors perished of thirst. The women and the remaining children were taken as prisoners, subjected to torture and humiliation, and were presented before Yazid in his court. Imam Hussain (AS) taught us that a leader must uphold the highest principles, the purest heart, and total submission to Divine Will. He should be able to inspire his followers to make the ultimate sacrifice, if necessary. He must have the understanding of the socio-political and religious situation at hand and choose the best course of action, and have foresight and knowledge of its consequences, in achieving his goal.

The goal in the case of Imam Husain's (AS) struggle was saving true Islam from permanent defacement or, worse, obliteration. In martyrdom, he achieved glowing success, by exemplifying true Islam, and by exposing injustice and tyranny. Imam Husain (AS) intended to bring about an enduring revolution, through which the forces of oppression, tyranny, and evil would be weakened forever, the truth would be manifest, and the difference between a false leader and a true leader (an Imam) would be clearly demonstrated. Imam Husain (AS) all these objectives, and more. He taught us that human dignity and freedom are more valuable than life, and that death in defending these values was preferable to a life of humiliation and disgrace.

In his letters to the Muslims of Kufah and Basrah in Iraq, who had invited him to come, he showed his philosophy as the Imam and true leader of Muslims, in these words:

"From Hussain bin Ali to the believers and Muslims (of Iraq): You have invited me to come to you because you have no imam to guide you, and you hope my arrival there will unite you in the Right Path and in the truth. You must be clear about the fact that the imam can only be one who follows the Book of God, makes justice and honesty his conduct and behavior, judges with truth, and devotes himself to the service of God.

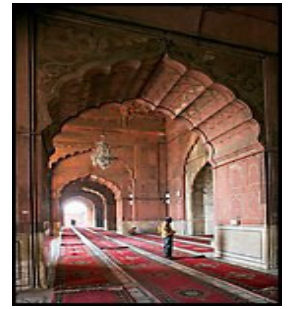
I have sent my messenger to you and I call you to the Book of God, and the Sunnah of His Prophet, the Sunnah that has become obliterated; innovations have become active and energetic. If you listen to me and obey my orders, I will guide you to the Right Path.

May the peace and mercy of God be upon you. "Hussain showed us that religion is not merely ritualistic worship, but appropriate action at the time of need, and sacrificing whatever is necessary to defend one's faith and principles.

As the followers of Imam Husain (AS), let us be Muslims of action, let us struggle against our evil desires, and whatever else is evil around us. Let us avoid complacency and excessive pleasures, and let us place love of God above all else. For the love of God did Imam Husain a.s. sacrifice everything gladly, even his six-month-old son, Ali al-Asghar. Let us not stop at mourning, shedding tears, matam, and ta'azia for Imam Husain (AS)(although these are very important), but let us rise above these rituals by learning from the philosophy behind them, and by implementing the teachings of Imam Husain (AS).

Message of Karbala

Syed Hadi Abedi



On the death of Mu'awiya, his son Yazid wrote to Walid, the governor of Medina, ordering him to seek the pledge of allegiance from Imam Hussain (AS) without any delay. On this command Imam Hussain (AS) was summoned to Walid's palace. Imam Hussain (AS) appeared at the palace with a group of his own followers who were bearing arms. Imam Hussain (AS) was aware of Walid's intentions, so he requested his followers to wait outside the palace. They were to enter the palace for his protection, if they heard Imam's voice. Marwan (ex-ruler of Medina) was visiting Walid, when Imam Hussain (AS) entered the palace. Walid informed the Imam of the death of Mu'awiya and also Yazid's order to extract a pledge of allegiance from Imam Hussain (AS).

Imam Hussain (AS) responded to this demand, "*My allegiance in private would not be sufficient, it should be in public so that people be aware. Tomorrow we will see what will happen.*" Imam wanted to leave, but at the same moment, Marwan interrupted and advised Walid, "If Hussain leaves now without pledging allegiance you will never have the same power over him until there is a great number of slain men between you and him. Kill him, do not let him leave until he has given allegiance or kill him."

Imam Hussain (AS) raised his voice and said, "*O son of foreign women would you or he kill me? By Allah you cannot do that, a person like me cannot pay allegiance to a person like Yazid.*" With that the Imam (AS) walked away accompanied by his followers.

Three days later, (the 28th of Rajab 60 A.H.), Imam Hussain (AS) headed towards Mecca accompanied by his sons, his brother's sons, his brothers, sisters and their children. He entered Mecca on the night of Friday, the 3rd of Shaban 60 A.H. Imam Hussain (AS) stayed there for a period of four months, during which its inhabitants began to visit him frequently, as did those who had come to make the lesser pilgrimage (*Umrah*).

This news reached the city of Kufa, upon which more than eighteen thousand people, including the Shia, wrote letters to the Imam saying, "There is no Imam over us, therefore come; through you, may Allah unite us under truth and guidance".

In reply to the letters, the Imam sent his cousin Muslim Ibn Aqil (may Allah have mercy on him) as his representative to Kufa. Eighteen thousand people of Kufa pledged allegiance to Hazrat Muslim on behalf of Imam Hussain (AS). Muslim Ibn Aqil wrote to Imam Hussain (AS), informing him of the pledge of allegiance of eighteen thousand and urging him to come to Kufa soon.

Yazid was informed by the allies of Banu Umayya about Hazrat Muslim's arrival and the pledge of allegiance to him and the incapability of his ruler Nu'man Ibn Bashir to take any action to stop the people from pledging. Yazid ordered Ubayd Allah Ibn Ziyad (who was at that time Basra's ruler) to go to Kufa and search for Hazrat Muslim and imprison him, and kill or expel him from Kufa.

Ubayd Allah reached Kufa, imprisoned more than five thousand Shia and killed some of the prominent Shia, thus totally changing the situation in favor of Yazid, Hazrat Muslim was also martyred on the day of Arafah, the 9th of *Dhul Hijja* 60 A.H.

Imam Hussain (AS) set out from Mecca towards Kufa on the 8th of *Dhul Hijja*. During his journey he got the news of Hazrat Muslim's martyrdom, and continued his journey towards Kufa until he was stopped by Hurr ibn Yazid Reyahi, who was sent with one thousand horsemen to meet the Imam (AS) and stop him from going to Kufa. After meeting with Hurr, the Imam changed his direction from Kufa towards Karbala and arrived in Karbala on the 2nd of Muharram 61 A.H. On the 10th of Muharram, the day of Ashura, Imam Hussain (AS) was martyred along with his children, brothers, family members and companions.

Each and every one of us knows this but very few among us are aware of Imam Hussain's message. Let us discuss his message:

When the Imam (AS) was leaving Medina, he wrote his will in which he mentioned the purpose of the journey and handed it over to his brother Muhammad Ibn Hanafiyya (may Allah have mercy on him). In his will the Imam (AS) wrote:

"I am leaving Medina neither for egoism nor for a luxurious life nor to do mischief and tyranny. My mission is to enjoin virtue and forbid evil so that I could correct the seditious actions of the Muslims, and to restore the customs, rules and regulations of my grandfather The Prophet of Islam (SAW) and the way and principles of my

father Ali Ibn Abu Talib (AS)."

After this he continued, "Whoever accepts this fact and follows me, he has accepted and followed Allah's path, and whoever rejects this and does not follow me, I will continue my mission with patience and perseverance until Allah (SWT) decides between me and them, and Allah is the best decision maker (judge)." (**Maqatal Qawarazmi** Vol. 1: 188 and **Maqatal Awalem** page 54)

In his will the Imam did not mention even a single word about the pledge of allegiance issue, although it had just occurred a couple of days earlier and was the only apparent reason to leave Medina. Why didn't Imam Hussain (AS) mention that in the will?

The true reason is known only to Imam Hussain (AS) and to our Imams (AS). But our great scholars have pointed out some of the reasons that I would like to share with you.

1. The most widely accepted and mentioned reason is that the Imam (AS) did not want to give any importance to Yazid's impudence and stupidity.

2. If Imam Hussain (AS) had mentioned the issue regarding the pledge of allegiance as the reason for his mission, then the corrupt writers and historians of the Muslim world might have interpreted his mission as a pure personal issue. In other words, the Imam's ego was bruised that Yazid had power and this was why the Imam (AS) had opposed Yazid. In this scenario, if Yazid had not asked for allegiance then the Imam could have continued his life as usual in Medina even under Yazid's rule as Caliph. Those who might have interpreted the events thus would have concluded that the Imam's mission was not for Islam, but a personal power struggle between Imam Hussain and Yazid. Such an interpretation then would have damaged the image of Imam Hussain (AS) as a pious and spiritual leader.

Can any one of us imagine that Imam Hussain (AS) would have accepted Yazid as Caliph?

3. Another reason could be that if the Imam (AS) had mentioned the pledge issue as a reason for his mission or journey, then the "Option" and "Authority" for the Imams - this 'pious revolution' and 'pious mission' - would have gone into the hands of Yazid, in the sense that if Yazid had taken back his demand of allegiance, then Imam (AS) had no valid reason to continue his stand or Qiyam and mission.

4. Another reason could be that his will and the message it contained would have had limited impact. After the 10th of Muharram 61 A.H., his will would only be viewed as a historic document and not necessarily used as guidance for all mankind until the Day of Judgment. Imam Hussain (AS) wanted his will to be continuous source of guidance for all his followers. Today his will is still a source of guidance to all human beings who would like to correct the seditious actions and activities of human beings through out the world.

At the start of his journey on the 28th of Rajab 60 A.H. in Medina, Imam Hussain (AS) declared that "my mission is to enjoin virtue and forbid evil so that I could correct the seditious actions of the Muslim Ummah, and restore the customs, rules and regulations of Rasoolullah (SAW), and the way and principles of Ali Ibn Abu Talib (AS)."

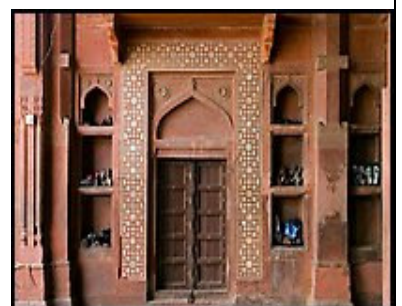
And

On the 10th of *Muharram* 61 A.H.; at the last moments of his life, by questioning the *ummah* - "Is there anyone to assist me in my mission?", he has made his mission eternal.

Karbala is one continuous journey, a continuous mission to correct the wrong and seditious actions, thinking and intentions of human beings, by inviting them to enjoin virtue (*amar bil maroof*) and forbid evil (*nahe anil munkar*).

Let us remember and follow the message of Karbala, and pass-on the torch of Imam Hussain's message .

A Collection of Ideas on Ashura
Hussain Fallathi



Who is Imam Hussain (AS)?

Words from our beloved Prophet (SAW):

"Hussain is from me and I am from Hussain." (**Sunan ut-Tirmizee**)

"Hussain would suffer the death of martyr on the bank of the Euphrates." (**Mishkat**)

"Whoever loved Hasan and Hussain loved me and whoever bore enmity to them bore enmity to me." (**Mustadrak**)

Who are the Real Shia'?

A man once came to the Imam Hussain (AS) claiming to be one of his Shia'. The Imam instantly reacted to this, saying:

"Fear God and do not claim anything for which Allah may hold you responsible. Verily our Shia' are those who keep their hearts clean of fraud and malice. But you may claim that you are from our friends and lovers."

Having been born in a Shia' Muslim family and following Shia' Muslim traditions, one may be outwardly recognized as a "Shia'". But from the foregoing definition of a Shia' by the Imam, anyone who cherishes fraud and malice in his heart against others, so commonly witnessed in our surroundings today, cannot be considered a true Shia'.

In describing the strange mentality of the people and the state of religion during his time, the Imam said:

"People have become slaves of worldly things and religion has become a matter of lip-service." In other words, the mentality of the people was occupied with the worldly gains that only lip-service was being given to Islam. No efforts were being made to follow its tenets and its teachings.

Reflections on the historical context of the Battle at Karbala

Background on the life of Yazid

Yazid was the son of Mua'wiya and the grandson of Abu Sufyan. (Abu Sufyan, during the time of Prophet Mohammad (SAW), converted to Islam but not with a sincere heart). In his book, **The Literary History of the Arabs**, Reynold Alleyne Nicholson writes that the Omayyads opposed Islamic law or *sharia*, rejecting its principles. During their rule, the polytheism of the age of ignorance had returned and was dominating the cultural scene. Nicholson adds that Yazid himself had never accepted Islam and was brought up by his non-Muslim mother, living in a so-called Christian (*maseehi*) tribe, where hunting, drinking and prostitution were daily indulgences.

If a caliph and leader of the Muslim *Ummah*, is totally devoid of faith, and openly flouts the teachings and tenets of Islam, then there is serious danger that the religion may not survive and it may become extinct.

The Meaning of the allegiance pledge or *baya't*

In the old days in Arabian countries like Syria, the kings were worshipped as gods, and Yazid had adopted this tradition. The Omayyads staunchly believed the king must be fully obeyed as a god. The Arabic word "*baya't*" originates from the word "*bayo'n*" which means "to sell, to dispose of". The word *baya't* is usually interpreted to mean pledging allegiance to a caliph or ruler - an irrevocable oath whereby the person doing so becomes bound to obey each and every command of the ruler. It meant selling oneself to the king like a slave entirely at the mercy of his master. Pledging to a caliph in this way meant acknowledging him as a supreme head of the Islamic law or *sharia* and bowing down to his every word.

Yazid wanted Imam Hussain (AS) to give such a pledge of allegiance to him so that all his actions, however un-Islamic and evil, could be accepted as lawful by the masses. Failing to secure Imam Hussain's (AS) allegiance, he decided to kill him. This was not only to remove an obstacle but also to avenge the deaths of his ancestors who were killed in the battles of Badr and Uhud during the time of Prophet Mohammad (SAW). Yazid's aim was to bring back polytheism, and thus destroy the practice of true Islam.

Martyrdom

Different types of martyrs: In Islam, when any meritorious person or deed is exalted, it is said that such a person has the status of a martyr, or such an act justifies the reward of martyrdom. For example, with regard to a student who seeks knowledge with the motive of finding Allah, it is said that if he dies while learning, he dies the death of a martyr. This expression denotes the high status and blessed place of a student. Similarly with regard to a person who takes pains to labor strenuously to earn his livelihood for his family, it is said that he is like a crusader in the way of Allah. It may be noted that Islam is severely opposed to lethargy and parasitism and regards hard work as a duty.

Martyrs are the unobtrusive light of the world

All those who have served humanity in one way or the other, whether as scholars, philosophers, inventors or teachers, deserve the gratitude of mankind. But no one deserves it to the same extent as the martyrs in the field of battle and that is why all people have a sentimental attachment to them. The reason is that all other servants of humanity are indebted to the martyrs; whereas the martyrs are not indebted to any of them. A doctor, a philosopher, an inventor and a teacher require a congenial and conducive atmosphere to render their services and it is the martyr who with his supreme sacrifice provides that atmosphere. He can be compared to a candle whose function is to burn and get extinguished in order to shed light for the benefit of others. The martyrs are the candles of humanity, as stated by Shaheed Murtadha Mutahhary(RA). They burn themselves out and illuminate humanity.



The Importance of Tears

Syed

A collection of traditions (Hadith) that throw light on the significance of tears that are shed for Imam Hussain (AS) and his family and friends

Hadith No. 1: The eyes that weep for Imam Hussain (AS)

The Holy Prophet (SAW) said, "*O' Fatimah! Every eye shall be weeping on the Day of Judgment except the eye which has shed tears over the tragedy of Imam Hussain (AS), for surely, that eye shall be laughing and shall be given the glad tidings of the bounties and comforts of Paradise.*"
(Bihar al-Anwar Vol. 44:293)

Hadith No. 2: Paradise - The Recompense of Azadari

Imam 'Ali Ibn al-Hussain (AS) used to say, "*Every Mo'min, whose eyes shed tears upon the killing of Hussain Ibn' Ali (AS) and his companions, such that the tears roll down his cheeks, Allah shall accommodate him in the elevated rooms of Paradise.*"
(Yannaabe' al-Mawaddah : page 429)

Hadith No. 3: Tears - Barrier of Hell

Imam Baqir (AS) said, "*He who remembers us, or in whose presence we are remembered, and (as a result) tears flow from his eyes, even though they may be in the measure of a wing of a mosquito, Allah shall construct for him a house in Paradise and make the tears a barrier between him and the fire (of hell).*"
(Al-Ghadeer Vol. 2: 202)

Hadith No. 4: Tearful Eyes

Imam Sadiq (AS) said, "*He in whose presence we (and our miseries) are mentioned and, as a result, his eyes pour out tears, Allah shall make his face forbidden upon the fire of hell.*"
(Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 44: 285)

Hadith No. 5: Invaluable Tears

Imam Sadiq (AS) said (to Masma', one of those who mourned over Imam Hussain (AS)), "*May Allah have mercy upon your tears! Do know that you are regarded as being of those who are deeply concerned about us and of those who are happy at our happiness and aggrieved at our sorrow. Do know that you shall witness the presence of my fathers near you at the time of your death.*"
(Wasail al-Shia'h Vol. 10: 397)

Hadith No. 6: Tears

Imam Sadiq (AS) said, "*He whose eyes shed tears for our blood which has been shed, or for our rights which have been usurped, or for the humiliation meted out to us or to one of our Shiites, Allah shall accomodate him in Paradise for a long time.*"
(Amali al-Shaikh al-Mufid: page 175.)

Hadith No. 7: Benefits of Weeping over Hussain (AS)

Imam Reza (AS) said, "*Those who weep should weep over the likes of Hussain (AS) for surely, weeping over him does away with one's great sins.*"
(Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 44: 284)

Hadith No. 8: Forgiveness of Sins

Imam Reza (AS) said, "*O' Son of Shabib! Should you weep for Hussain (AS) in the measure that tears roll*

down your cheeks, Allah would forgive all the sins committed by you, whether they be the great sins or the small sins and whether they be meagre or immense."

(**Amaali al-Saduq**: page 112)

Hadith No. 9: Intercession on the Day of Judgment

The Holy Prophet (SAW) said (to Hazrat Fatimah (AS)), "*On the Day of Judgment, you shall intercede for the ladies and I shall intercede for the men; every person who has wept over the tragedy of Hussain (AS), we shall take him by the hand and lead him into Paradise.*"

(**Bihar al-Anwar Vol. 44**: 292)

Hadith No. 10: Visiting the Shrine of Imam Hussain (AS)

Imam Sadiq (AS) said, "*He (Imam Hussain) sees those who come to his shrine and he knows them by their names, their father's names and their ranks in the eyes of Allah, The Glorious, better than you know your own children!*"

(**Wasaail al-Shia'h Vol. 14** :422)

Feedback Solicitation

If you would like to contribute towards to future issues of **VOW**, the bi-monthly Muslim Congress newsletter, please send an email with your content, write-up or suggestions to newsletter@musimcongress.org. You can also email questions to be answered by an *A'alim* in our 'Ask-the-A'alim' section. Thank you.

"Islam is founded on five pillars: Salat, Zakat, Hajj, Sawm (fasting), and Walayah; People took the first four, and left this (Walayah). I swear to Allah, they cannot complete/perfect the four, unless they complete them through the fifth one (Walayah)"

Hadith of Imam al-Baqir (AS) narrated in al-Kaafi, by Zurarah ibn Aayan.