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MAJLIS 1
STARTING OF JOURNEY FROM
MADINA TO KARBALA

The start of the month of Muharram indicates the new year of the Islamic calendar. It is customary for all nations to celebrate their new year with feasting and rejoicing but, in contrast all Islamic countries go into mourning during this month. To understand the real significance of the tragedy of Karbala it is important to study the history of events of Islam from its beginning. Then only we come to the conclusion that it was not a fight for a kingdom or for the dominance but for the defence of principles and to establish beyond doubt that martyrdom (*shahadat*) is essential when the cause is just.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) was born on the 3rd Shaban in the fourth year of Hijra in Madina. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) came to Fatimah (s.a.) and

taking the baby in his lap placed his tongue in the mouth of the baby and the baby began sucking it and thus Imam Husayn was first fed by the saliva of the Prophet of Allah as the first sustenance of his holy body in this world. After giving the first feeding by his saliva, the Holy Prophet said:

Husayn u minni wa ana min al Husayn
(Husayn is from Me and I am from Husayn)

The events of history give out a clear verdict that the series of the sufferings, the miseries and the calamities inflicted on the Ahlul Bayt, which ended in the massacre of the Holy Imam Husayn (a.s.) and his faithful devotees at Karbala was inaugurated at the Saqeefa.

Upon the death of Muawiya (the father of Yazid) in 60 A.H. Yazid was proclaimed an absolute monarch in Damascus. When Yazid ascended his father's throne, he demanded allegiance (*bayt*) from Imam Husayn (a.s.). Yazid was known

for his indulgence in corrupt practices. He was a drunkard, committing adultery and making a mockery of *Shariat*. He is reported to have declared “The family of Hashim has staged a play to acquire kingdom. Actually there was never an angel nor was there a revelation.” This sums up his character as well as his belief.

Yazid wrote a letter to his governor Walid son of Utba bin Aby Sufyan at Madina to secure *bayt* from Imam Husayn (a.s.). In reply to the call from the governor Walid, Imam Husayn (a.s.) accompanying 30 courageous youths of Bani Hashim visited the governor. Reaching the entrance of the governor’s house he told the youths to stay at the door and if they hear Imam Husayn talking unusually aloud they may get in to him.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) said to Walid that the pledge of allegiance (*bayt*) cannot be given secretly and

he told him to invite the muslims of Madina the next day and ask them in front of them to pay allegiance to Yazid. Then only can it be decided.

Walid accepted the reply of Imam Husayn but Marwan son of Al-Hakam, the old enemy of Islam who was expelled by Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) out of Madina, seated there addressed Walid: “Let not Husayn go out of the grip now. Cut off His head now and let not this opportunity go, you will never get it again.”

Imam Husayn (a.s.) stood up to depart from the governor and hearing the insulting words of Marwan, retorted aloud “Woe to you, O son of a foreign woman, will you cut my head off? By God, you have told a lie and showed your base origin.” Then he turned to Walid and said to him: “O Walid! We are the household of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.). We surely are the centre of the message and to our house the angels descend

from heaven. By us Allah sent his first Prophet and by us he sent the seal of the Prophet. Yazid, on the other hand, is a corrupt man, who drinks wine, puts to death the soul which God forbids to be destroyed and declares his wickedness in public. A man like me would never give an oath of loyalty to him.”

Marwan immediately got up and ran away and the Hashmites youth who stood restless, rushed into the court with drawn swords. Imam Husayn (a.s.) immediately commanded restraint and had not Imam Husayn (a.s.) controlled the situation, the matter would have been settled then and there. The meeting came to an end and Imam Husayn (a.s.) returned home.

To prove that the Prophet Muhammad’s message was right, someone had to take a stand and this could be only is grandson Imam Husayn bin Ali (a.s.), who stood up against the tyranny of the Umayyad ruler Yazid bin Muawiya.

After returning back from Walid's place, Imam Husayn (a.s.) told his sister, Sayyeda Zainab (s.a.) what had happened and the time had come for them to leave Madina and the graves of their beloved grandfather, mother and brother. Imam Husayn (a.s.) decided to leave Madina the next day during the darkness of the night and members of Bani Hashim were informed of the decision.

When Imam Husayn was about to leave Madina he visited the tomb of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) where he wept bitterly and said "O Holy Prophet of Allah, may my parents be ransom for you. I am leaving your blessed neighborhood much against my will. Pressure is being brought on me to swear bayt to Yazid. If I pay homage to Yazid, it would amount to infidelity and if I desist from it I shall have to pay for it with my life. I am being forced to bid farewell to this holy tomb. O my grandfather, accept my last respects."

Imam Husayn (a.s.) bid farewell to the grave of his beloved mother Sayyeda Fatimah Zahra (s.a.) in a similar manner. He wept loudly when a voice from the grave came “O my son, I will be with you throughout the tribunal journey.” He started from Makka on 28th Rajab 60 A.H. to perform Hajj, reciting the Quranic verse: “So he went forth in fear, apprehending and said he, O my Lord! Deliver me from the unjust people.” (28:21)

Imam Husayn (a.s.) was accompanied by all the members of his immediate family except for one of his daughters, Fatima Sughra who was seriously ill and closely resembled his mother Sayyeda Fatimah Zahra (s.a.) and he did not want her to be a captive of Yazid’s army who took the respected ladies from Karbala to Kufa and finally Damascus.

Learning about the departure of Imam Husayn

(a.s.) people in groups approached him asking the reason for his decision to leave the Holy city with tears in their eyes. Imam Husayn (a.s.) was accompanied by his younger sister Sayyeda Zainab (s.a.) the wife of Abdullah son of Jafar who bid them farewell. The caravan completed its five day journey from Madina to Makka and entered the city in the month of Shaban of the year 60 Hijra. The news of his coming soon spread through the city and all men who held significant social positions hurried to see him and gave him a warm welcome.

In the meantime Hazrat Abdullah brought along with him two of his sons Aun and Muhammad at Masjid-e-Aysha and called Sayyeda Zainab (s.a.). He himself was suffering from sickness at that time and asked Sayyeda Zainab (s.a.) to take Aun and Muhammad with her on this journey so that Aun can represent their maternal grandfather Imam Ali (a.s.) and Muhammad would represent his paternal grandfather Jafar-e- Tayyar.

During this period, people in Kufa had refused *bayt* to Yazid and the leaders of the city wrote a letter in which they declared their opposition to the Umayyad rule. This letter was followed by twelve thousand similar letters.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) decided to send his cousin Muslim son of Aqeel as an ambassador to Kufa which used to be the capital of Iraq at that time. In the middle of Ramzan 60 Hijra, Hazrat Muslim left Makka with two of his young sons Muhammad and Ibrahim. It is said that Muhammad was just 10 years old and Ibrahim was just 8 years old.

MAJLIS 2

MUSLIM BIN AQEEL (AMBASSADOR OF IMAM HUSAYN)'S BRAVE FIGHT WITH ENEMIES

When Hazrat Muslim bin Aqeel reached Kufa and the public confirmed their support for Imam Husayn's (a.s.) stand, the spies of Yazid reported the course of events which were taking place against him. Yazid immediately dismissed the governor of Kufa (Numan bin Bashir) in order to safeguard his interest. He then sent Ibn Ziyad (the governor of Basra) to handle the situation in his favor. Within a day or two, almost all the leaders of the town were bribed and strong threats from Ibn Ziyad made the people of the town desert poor Muslim. None in Kufa would now even speak to Muslim, who was sent as an ambassador of Imam Husayn (a.s.) to Kufa and he was left homeless, wandering in the streets with everyone in town, now hostile to him.

With a heavy heart Muslim was now trudging the narrow by-lanes of Kufa in the darkness of the night not a soul was venturing out. It became evident to Muslim that if he walked on, there was every possibility of his being arrested. He sat on the doorstep of a house hesitating whether to knock at the door and ask for water. Whilst he was still indecisive, he heard the opening of the door and an old lady stood there with a flickering candle in her hands. Muslim turned to her and requested for a glass of water. She went inside and returned with a tumbler of water. The old lady looked at him for a while and then asked him “My son, why do you not return to your house? Don’t you realize how your wife and children must be worrying about you in such troubled atmosphere?” A lump came into Muslims throat with the recollection of his family and home. Controlling his emotions he said “Good lady, I have a house but in a distant land. My wife and young daughters are at home and my sons are in

Kufa but perhaps they will wait for me forever. In this unfriendly town I have no home and nobody to whom I can turn for shelter.” These words moved the lady and she asked him “From where do you come and why are you here in these troubled times?” Muslim replied that he was from the city of the Prophet and came on the invitation of the people of Kufa as their guest and that there was now not a soul who would admit him into his house.

The old lady was taken aback and as she carried the candle near to Muslims face, she bent down on her knees and said “My Allah, you are Muslim, the ambassador of my Imam, my beloved Husayn who is hunted by Ubaidullah’s soldiers.” Sobbing bitterly she added “How will I face my lady Fatimah on the day of judgment when she will ask me Toaa, my Husayn’s ambassador came to you shelterless and you turned him out. The least I can do for you is to give you shelter in my house

till an opportunity arises for you to make good your escape.” Toaa invited Muslim in her house and gave him what ever food there was in the house.

Hardly a few hours had passed when Toaa’s son returned home. When Toaa asked him the reason for his coming home so late he told her that along with other soldiers he was patrolling the streets in search of Muslim. She strongly protested to her son at the role he was playing. That cunning man turned around and assured his mother that though he was searching for Muslim, in reality he was as much devoted to Muslim as she was. His assurances seemed true to the simple old lady and after making him swear by his faith she told him everything about the happenings of the evening. The crafty son of Toaa was inwardly elated at the thought that he would be able to collect the prize placed on Muslims head. He thought for a few moments and then decided to go and inform

Ubaidullah Ibn Ziyad that he had Muslim in his house and he could be easily captured.

The greedy son of Toaa hastened to the governor's house and informed the governor about Muslims presence in his house. Accompanied by armed soldiers the traitor returned to his house for Muslims arrest. Muslim was, at that time, engaged in prayers. When he heard the beating of several horses hooves, he understood that the soldiers had come for his arrest. He snatched the sword and rushed out. Though he was on foot and the soldier opposite to him was mounted, he overpowered him. Though more and more soldiers were pouring in Muslim was still fighting his defensive battle most courageously. When Ubaidullah Ibn Ziyad's men informed him that Muslim was giving a tough fight he got infuriated and tauntingly asked his generals how many thousands of warriors they needed to capture one

solitary person. He retorted to his generals why someone could not adopt some trick to arrest Muslim. After some consultations amongst themselves they decided to send soldiers to the top of the roof of an adjoining building and from there to hurl stones and burning ambers to Muslim. It did not take them long to carry out their strategy. With showers of arrows and stones, fire and missiles Muslim was so wounded that he decided to give up his position. Someone suggested that a trench could be dug on the road and covered with straw so that it was completely disguised trapping Muslim. While rushing on and wielding his sword, Muslim fell into the trench. With gushing blood Muslim could not regain his feet and lay unconscious in the trench. When he regained consciousness he found himself a captive. Before being marched off to the court of Ubaidullah Ibn Ziyad, Muslim was paraded through the streets of Kufa with heavy chains on his hands and feet. The people of Kufa who

were for the support of Muslim a few days before were now watching him from the windows with shamelessness.

When Muslim was presented before Ubaidullah Ibn Ziyad he stood firm with dignity. The governor asked him whether he knew the fate that awaited him and his master Husayn Ibn Ali. Muslim replied “O mercenary of Yazid. I do not care what you do to me but I do not like to hear your cursed tongue mentioning Husayn’s name.” Ubaidullah Ibn Ziyad was taken aback at this bold rebuke of Muslim. With an intention of creating an impression of his magnanimity on the people who were gathered in his court he said to Muslim “According to the age old Arab custom I want you to mention your last desire before you are beheaded so that I may fulfill it.”

A glint of hope came into Muslims eyes and like a drowning man who catches at a straw Muslim

decided that if at all, this was his only chance. He immediately replied “Ubaidullah, if you are true to your word, fulfill my last wish and send a message to my Master Imam Husayn (a.s.) asking him to go back to Madina and abandon the idea of his visit to Kufa.”

Ubaidullah had never expected this reply from Muslim. He had thought that perhaps Muslim might request him to spare the lives of his two young sons who were captured, For a while he was speechless and knew that he could not fulfill this wish of Muslim without incurring the displeasure of Yazid, but to decline this request would betray him in his true colour. His crooked mind did not take long to find a solution to this problem. He ordered his executioner to take Muslim to the top of the government house and behead him. He immediately dismissed his court and hurried back to his apartment.

When the sword of the executioner was swaying over Muslims head, his last thoughts were with his master Imam Husayn (a.s.) who he had loved more than anything in his life. His only regret was that till the end he could not do what he wanted most, to warn Imam Husayn (a.s.) against the treachery of the people of Kufa. As the sword fell on his neck he silently prayed to Allah that Husayn might come to know of the happenings in Kufa. Merciful Allah did not allow Muslims last prayer to go in vain. There was one witness to the ghastly enactments of that day who had some sparks of faith in him. He started on his horse out of Kufa at the earliest opportunity and reached the camp of Imam Husayn (a.s.) a few days after Muslim's *shahadat*. He conveyed the sad news to Imam Husayn (a.s.) who wept bitterly. He called the young daughter of Muslim, Fatimah who was travelling with him and told her that from now on she should regard him as a guardian.

He made her sit in his lap and gave one pair of earrings to her and one to Sayyeda Sakina (a.s.). Sayyeda Sakina (a.s.) really cared for them and slowly whispered to her father that is this action done when someone becomes an orphan. Imam Husayn (a.s.) replied that her father was no more and from now on she would be like a daughter to him. When the messenger asked Imam Husayn (a.s.) whether he would return to Madina in view of what would happen to Hazrat Muslim bin Aqeel, he replied “I am going forward to meet my destiny, to fulfill the purpose of my life and so there is no question of my retracing my steps.”

MAJLIS 3

HUR SURROUNDED IMAM HUSAYN'S CARAVAN

When the news of the arrival of Imam Husayn (a.s) in Makka reached Yazid, he became so agitated that he decided to send Amr ibn Saad as delegate of the caliph and among his duties was to kill Imam Husayn (a.s.) at what ever the cost. Yazid hired thirty men to disguise themselves as Hajjis with daggers hidden in their pilgrim garbs to murder the holy Imam even while performing the pilgrimage rites, be he even in the Great Sanctuary of the Holy Kaba.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) has received the letter from Hazrat Muslim-bin-Aqeel in Kufa to proceed towards Kufa without any delay, the letter which Hazrat Muslim had written before what befell him later. Imam Husayn (a.s) waited for *Hajj* to start, so that he can proceed towards Kufa there after, but he came to know about the Yazid's plot

to kill him even in the Holy Kaba, a place wherein no creature could be disturbed nor even a plant be plucked out. If the Sanctity of the holiest place of Islam be violated by the shedding of the blood of the holy Imam which was the very blood of the Holy Prophet himself, no security for anyone else would be left thereafter and the holy Kaba would cease to be a place of safety.

Imam Husayn (a.s) decided to leave the place with his whole caravan, performing the briefer pilgrimage *Umra* instead of *Hajj*. Imam left Makka on the 8th of Zilhajj, 60 Hijrah and proceeded towards Kufa. When Imam Husayn (a.s.) reached Zurood he learned that Zuhair ibn Qain who was a notable of Kufa, though not fully inclined towards Imam was camping beside the stream there, having returned from *Hajj*. Imam Husayn (a.s.) sent a word to him that he wanted to meet him. At first Zuhair was not inclined to have meeting with Imam Husayn (a.s.) but when

his wife taunted him that the son of the Holy Prophet wished to honor him with his visit and it was strange that he was refusing it, he then agreed. When Imam Husayn (a.s.) met him he fully explained his plans to him where upon Zuhair ibn Qain decided to join Imam (a.s.) and ordered his tents to be pitched along with those of Imam Husayn (a.s.). It was at the place known as Salabiya that two Kufi persons (Abudllah bin Salim and Muzri bin Mushmail) who had joined Imam's (a.s.) group on coming back from *Hajj*, disclosed the news of Hazrat Muslim bin Aqeel being killed and that they had seen his dead body being dragged through the streets. Imam Husayn (a.s.) wept bitterly and said, *Inna Lillahi Wa Inna Illaihi Rajioon.*

These two men advised Imam (a.s.) that nobody in Kufa would support him and that they were apprehensive about Imam Husayn's journey to Kufa. Imam Husayn (a.s.) who appeared to be

taking every step after having carefully weighed all the pros and cons of his great move, did not give any reply but turned towards Hazrat Muslim bin Aqeel's brothers and sought their opinion. They were unanimous in their reply and said, "By Allah we would not get back unless we take revenge of Muslim's blood or get killed." Then turning to the two persons - Abdullah bin Salim and Muzri bin Mushmail - Imam said "Why should I then live without them?" and the march was resumed.

In the meantime, Imam Husayn (a.s.) and his followers who had come with him from Madina, and a small group of those who had joined him at a later stage during the journey, proceeded to sharaf, where he ordered that as much water should be carried as the containers permitted. The new moon had appeared and the month of Muharram had started. As the caravan reached the place called Dhul-Hasam, Imam Husayn

(a.s.) set his camps. At noon Hur, son of Yazid e Riyahi with one thousand soldiers appeared in front of the Imam, carrying a message from Ibn Ziyad, which was on order to capture Imam (a.s.) and bring him to Ibn Ziyad. When Hur and his soldiers reached Dhul-Hasam they were completely exhausted by heat and thirst. Seeing their pitiable condition, Imam (a.s.) ordered his men to take out the water which had been stocked at Sharaf and give it to them. Imam Husayn (a.s.), Hazrat Abbas (a.s) and Hazrat Ali Akbar (a.s.) personally supervised this operation and not only gave to Hur's men all the water they needed but also allowed their horses to quench their thirst twice as animals do not quench their thirst in the first round of drinking water. This unexpected hospitality stunned Hur and his soldiers, who sat down to take rest here.

At the time of Zuhr Prayer Imam Husayn (a.s.) led the prayers and Hur and his soldiers offered

the prayers behind him. After this Hur asked Imam Husayn (a.s.) to follow him. In spite of Imam Husayn's (a.s.) protest he had remained adamant. Imam Husayn (a.s.) knowing that this brave soldier was acting according to his superiors instructions without realizing the consequences of his actions, agreed to divert his route. When Hur cut off his route and forced him to proceed to Karbala, he was under the belief that a peaceful solution could be found in the courts of negotiations with Amr bin Saad. Little that he realized, that the army of Syria would dare to spill the blood of the Prophet's grandson and his beloved ones. Only on the night of the ninth of Muharram, when an announcement was made by Amr ibn Saad and Shimr that on the next day no relief would be given to Imam Husayn (a.s.) and his people, he realized what a big mistake he had made in forcing Imam Husayn (a.s.) to come to Karbala against his will. He was overcome by repentance when he heard the cries

of little children's thirst (*Alatash Alatash*) who were thirsty when he reached Imam Husayn's tent. He realized that Imam Husayn (a.s.) had peaceful intentions for had that not been the case, Imam Husayn (a.s.) could have easily defeated him and his army when they were dying of thirst and exhaustion. It did not take Hur very long to resolve his mental conflict. It was not a difficult choice for him - either to chose the worldly gains and power which he would get in plenty by remaining in Yazid's army, or to accept death which awaited him in case he went over to Imam Husayn's (a.s.) camp. It was a choice between Hell and Heaven and he chose the latter, without any mental reservations. He revealed his intentions to his son and his faithful slave. Both of them whole-heartedly agreed with his choice and decided to cross over to Imam Husayn's (a.s.) side regardless of the consequences. It was on the ninth of Muharram that all these three men mounted their horses and reached the outskirts

of Imam Husayn's (a.s.) camp. They were hearing sounds of Prayers from the tents of Imam Husayn's (a.s.) followers and frequent cries of thirsty children. Hur asked his son to tie up his hands, so that he could surrender himself to Imam Husayn (a.s.) and ask for his forgiveness. With tears in his eyes he approached the Imam and said, "Oh! my master Husayn, I consider my crime unpardonable. The least I can do now is to lay down my life first, before any one from amongst you is killed. I have brought my son with me to die in defending your sons and ask for your forgiveness." Imam Husayn (a.s.) was deeply moved by Hur's words. He embarrassed him and said that he had already forgiven him and that he considered him to be his honored guest but regretted that he did not have a morsel of food or a drop of water to offer him.

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