



the
martyr

ISLAMIC SEMINARY PUBLICATIONS
P.O. Box No. 5425
Karachi - Pakistan

THE MARTYR

BY:

MURTAZA MUTAHHERY
MUHAMMADI RAYSHAHRI

ISLAMIC SEMINARY PUBLICATIONS
ACCRA BOMBAY FREETOWN KARACHI LONDON NEW YORK

First Published 1979
Fourteenth Enlarged Edition 1984
Copyright © Islamic Seminary

ISBN 0-941724-13-1

This book or any part thereof is sold subject to the condition that it shall not be way of any trade or otherwise be lent or resold, hired out or otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than what it is published in, without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser or donee, except with prior written permission of the copyright owner.

ABOUT OURSELVES

This international organization named 'The Islamic Seminary' established under the patronage of His Eminence Ayatullah al-Uzma As-Sayyid Abul Qasim al-Musavi al-Khui (Rehmatullah alaih of Najaf of Iraq) in 1977, is endeavouring to convey authentic Islamic literature to the people of the world.

The object of this organization is to meet the spiritual needs of the present age, to draw the attention of the people to real and solid Islamic learning and to safeguard this valuable treasure of knowledge which has been entrusted to us by the Seal of the Prophets, Muhammad and by his Holy Ahlul Bayt (Peace be upon them).

This organization has so far published more than one hundred books in Arabic, English, French Urdu, Malay, Hausa, Sindhi and Gujrati which enjoy a high position among the publications on Islamic literature. If Allah wills this process of publication will continue and will show the Straight Path to the humanity.

Moreover, many madaris which are being run under the supervision of the Seminary are playing their role in spreading basic Islamic education among the youths of the community.

Furthermore, the Seminary also participates in the establishment and development of social and welfare projects of the community.

Spreading the message of Islam is a task which needs cooperation by all of us. The Seminary invites you to participate in this noble task so that the teachings of Islam may be spread round the globe.

I pray to Almighty Allah to favour us with His kindness and blessings.

Sheikh Yusuf Ali Nafsi.
Representative of
Ayatullah al-Uzma Sistani (Najaf - Iraq)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

ISLAMIC SEMINARY PUBLICATIONS

Dear Reader.

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

This book is an Islamic Seminary publication. Its publications are designed to cater for the spiritual needs of the age with a particular emphasis on grooming Muslim mind and thinking. Utmost efforts have been made by the Seminary to put forth in its publications what is really authoritative and authentic in Islam.

You are requested to kindly go through this book in the spirit in which it is intended. You are also requested to communicate to us your free comments on our publication, which will be highly appreciated.

Propagating the message of Islam is a task which calls for the co-operation of all. The Seminary invites you to join it in this task complying cordially with the verse of the holy Qur'an: "*Say: I give you but one admonition, that you stand for Allah's sake jointly and singly.*" (34:46)

May Allah bless you!

Yours in Islam,
Publication Secretary.

وَفَضَّلَ اللَّهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ
أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

*Allah will grant a much greater reward
to those who struggle than to those who
stay at home, for no reason.*

(al-Qur'an 4:95)

وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ يُقْتَلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ
أَمْوَاتٌ ۚ بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ وَلَكِن لَّا تَشْعُرُونَ

*Do not say that those who are killed in
the way of Allah, are dead, rather they
are living, but you are not aware.*

(al-Qur'an 2:154)

CONTENTS

Prologue	1
Foreword	3

PART - 1

Imam Ali Gives Priority to Muslim Unity	8
Imam Ali Scolds his Companions	10
Imam Ali Fights in Obedience to Allah	11
Imam Ali Prefers Death in Action	12
Imam Ali Terms Martyrdom as his Success	14
Martyrdom is a Muslim's Cherished Goal	17

PART - 2

Martyr's Proximity	31
Martyr's Body	32
Martyr's Sanctity	33
Martyr's Responsibility	40
Martyr's Logic	44
Martyr's Blood	45
Martyr's Immortality	46
Martyr's Intercession	46
Martyr's Achievement	47
Martyr's Day	58
Martyr's Valour	62

PART - 3

Slogans of the Battle of the Ditch	66
Slogans of the Day of Āshura	67
Slogans of Pride	69
Slogans of Imam Husayn	71
Slogans of Muharram	73
Slogans of Renaissance of Islam	74

PROLOGUE

In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful

Mortal man from time immemorial has been vehemently aspiring for attaining immortality in one form or other. Every religion, cult or creed has been craving to find out ways and means to attain this cherished goal. But none other than Islam has been fortunate enough to propound successfully such a brilliant device as martyrdom to gain immortality in pursuance of this innate human desire.

In Islam the concept of immortality has been presented and personified in the image of a *shaheed* (martyr). This word in Islam is invested with a special glory. A sense of grandeur and sanctity is associated with it.

The Islamic theory that the blood of a martyr works visibly and invisibly for the revival and rejuvenation of the collective life of a nation is a matter that is fully corroborated by world history.

Every nation takes pride in its martyrs. However, Islam has its own conception of the martyr and martyrdom. In Islam martyrdom is the highest honour which any Muslim can crave for.

This book consists of three articles. The first article, by Muhammadi Rayshehri, deals with the personal sentiments of Imam Ali, peace be on him, on the question of martyrdom.

The impassioned desire shown by the Commander of the Faithful for attaining martyrdom during the various periods of his life is an impressive, instructive and interesting aspect of his majestic life.

Imam Ali's love for martyrdom and his desire to shed his blood and

bite the dust is a question which requires deep deliberation. It is for this purpose that we have collected in this article all that we could gather of what the Imam said in this respect. We thought it fit to bring his relevant sayings along with brief notes and comments to the notice of those who wish to live and die like Ali and want to make the example of the Imam, the guiding light and the model for their own life and death.

The second and the third article come from the erudite pen of the renowned author, Ayatullah Murtaza Mutahhery. The second article throws ample light on the philosophy of martyrdom, its role in society and its importance in connection with the well-being of mankind.

The third article on Islamic slogans and exhortations throws light on the movement of Karbala from an entirely new angle. It describes what Imam Husayn, peace be on him, said on the day of Āshura about his movement which proved a turning point not only in the history of Islam, but also in the history of the world. Imam Husayn did not go to Karbala simply to be killed. He had a mission and a lofty ideal for which he made the supreme sacrifice. He lost his life, but saved Islam.

We hope that this book will add to the knowledge and insight of the faithful, will inspire them with zeal and will persuade them to follow in the footsteps of the Commander of the Faithful and the Doyen of the Martyrs.

FOREWORD

by

Ayatullah Murtaza Mutahhery

In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful

In the common parlance of all the peoples of the world, whether Muslims or non-Muslims and especially in the Islamic terminology there are certain words and expressions to which a sense of dignity is attached. Some of them not only imply dignity but, as a matter of fact, project a sense of sanctity also.

Words such as *Talib al-ilm* (student), *Ustad* (teacher), *'Alim* (scholar), *Mujid* (inventor), *Muslayh* (reformer), *Faylsuf* (philosopher), *Zakir* (preacher), *Mu'min* (faithful), *Zahid* (pious), *Mujtahid* (doctor of divinity), *Wali* (saint), *Imam* (leader) and *Rasul* (prophet) fall under this category. Some of them carry a sense of dignity or even of sanctity in general use and especially in the Islamic terminology.

Evidently, a word by itself has no sanctity. It becomes sacred only because of the unique sense it conveys. The sanctity of meaning and concept from the point of view of the common people or a particular school is related to a special psychology and evaluation of man which in itself needs a profound human and philosophical discussion.

In Islamic terminology there is a word which has a special sanctity. When a person familiar with the Islamic concepts hear this word, he feels it to be invested with a special glory. The word in question is *Shaheed* (martyr).

A sense of sanctity and grandeur is associated with it in its use by

the peoples. Of course, the standards and criteria vary. In the pages to follow we are only concerned with Islamic usage of this word. The feeling of sacredness depends on the particular mental outlook evolved out of the values which are cherished.

From the Islamic point of view, therefore, only that person secures the status of a martyr, whom Islam recognizes as having acted according to its own standards. Briefly, only he who is killed in an effort to achieve the highest Islamic objectives, and is really motivated by a desire of safeguarding true human values, attains this position. The title of martyr, in Islamic philosophy, is one of the highest orders one could aspire to. From what appears in the Qur'an and the Sunnah about martyrs, one is able to infer its real meaning, and thus discover why so much reverence and sense of sanctity is attached by the Muslims to the word '*Shaheed*'.

1

by
Muhammadi Rayshahri

As far as we know, it was at the end of the Battle of Uhud that Imam Ali, peace be on him, for the first time was deeply grieved and disappointed at not being able to attain martyrdom. He felt extremely upset for missing the chance.

Uhud is the name of a hill. By the side of it in 3 A.H. a battle was fought between the holy Prophet, blessings on him and his pure family, and the idolaters in which 70 Muslims were killed. At that time Imam Ali (P) was about 26 years of age.¹ In this important and decisive battle most of the Muslims took to their heels after suffering some initial reverses. Only a few were left with the holy Prophet. At this critical juncture the Imam showed such an extraordinary courage and valour that in its appreciation a message was received from heaven. An echo rang in the ears of all saying: “No sword can match with Zul Fiqar and no young warrior can compare with Ali.”

At last the unmitigated efforts of the holy Prophet, Imam Ali and some other brave Muslims saved the situation. The fighting came to an end. Total defeat was averted. Imam Ali was heavily wounded. He received sixty, and according to certain reports, even more wounds on his body. But he was greatly moved when he saw the blood-drenched corpses of Hamzah, Mus’ab ibn Umayr and other warriors of Islam. They had fought bravely and performed heroic deeds. Now their bodies were lying motionless on the ground, as if they were enjoying sweet slumber. Their clothes were red with their own blood. This spectacle filled the heart of Imam Ali with a fervent craving for martyrdom. He wished that he also had met such a beautiful death. He was so much upset that he could not control himself and expressed his feelings to the holy Prophet, who

¹ Kulayni in the *Usul al-Kāfi* as well as some others have reported that the Imam was martyred in 40 A.H. at the age of 60.

gave him the good tidings of martyrdom in some other way. The holy Prophet consoled him and said: “Be cheerful, for martyrdom is chasing you.”

Ali felt relieved. Now he was looking forward to the day when he would achieve his object. Then it so happened that the first two verses of Surah al-Ankabut were revealed. From their implied meaning the Imam could understand that after the demise of the holy Prophet the Muslims would have to face a perilous situation. He also knew that some sad events would take place in his own lifetime. Then he recollected the word spoken to him by the holy Prophet at the end of the Battle of Uhud. Accordingly he had a talk with the holy Prophet. Let us hear the details from the Imam himself:

“When Allah revealed this verse: *Do men imagine that they will be left at ease because they say, we believe, and will not be tested with affliction*, I could understand that the hour of trial would not come so long as the holy Prophet was amongst us. I said: Messenger of Allah, what will be the nature of the test about which you have been told?”

“Ali”, he said, “After me my community will be confronted with a severe trial.”

“Messenger of Allah, on the occasion of the Battle of Uhud when a number of Muslims had been killed and I was feeling dejected because I had not been able to secure the honour of martyrdom, you had asked me to cheer up and had told me that martyrdom was chasing me” said I.

The holy Prophet said: ‘Yes, that’s right. But tell me how patiently you will be able to endure this sanguinary death?’

I said: “Messenger of Allah, that will be a matter of gratification

and thanks-giving and not a matter of patience and endurance. One exercises patience when there's a feeling of bitterness and resentment. I long for martyrdom from the core of my heart. That's my old desire."

Commenting on this conversation, Ibn Abi al-Hadid says: How sublime are the words uttered by the Imam! They bear witness to his firm conviction and deep knowledge. These words can be compared to what he said when Ibn Muljam struck him down with his sword. At that time he said:

"By the Lord of the Ka'bah! I have succeeded!"

Imam Ali gives priority to Muslim Unity

When following the sad demise of the holy Prophet Abu Bakr came to power, Abu Sufyan, who was one of the arch enemies of Islam and who finding himself unable to resist the power of Islam any longer had recently embraced Islam outwardly after the conquest of Mecca, took an advantage of the situation and tried to create rift among the Muslims and to ruin the central government.² He

² Following the death of the holy Prophet Muhammad bin Abdullah, the seal of the prophets, the Islamic society was threatened with grave dangers internally and externally. On one hand there was the Roman Emperor. Even during the lifetime of the holy Prophet a battle had been fought with the Romans in Palestine in which the Muslims had to withdraw after sustaining heavy losses. On another occasion the holy Prophet had made an advance towards that side as a tactical move, but had returned without any engagement. At the time of his death also the holy Prophet had dispatched a well-equipped expedition under Usamah ibn Zayd to fight the Romans. On the other hand Iran also, which at that time was considered to be one of the two big powers of the world, was posing a threat. This was the external situation. Internally the great majority of the Muslims composed of those who were newly-converted and who were not yet fully conversant with the teachings of Islam. Above all, there was a danger of the hypocrites, who were anxious to take advantage of this opportunity. In these circumstances there was a fear that a rift in the centre of Islamic power might cause an irreparable loss to Islam which was still in its early stages of development. That was the reason why the Imam in the interest of the ⇒

thought that the time was opportune to instigate the Imam and his partisans against the government of the day and thus to kick up such a row that might give a death blow to nascent Islam itself. Having this purpose in view he came along with the holy Prophet's uncle, Abbas to the Imam and proposed to pledge his allegiance to him. The Imam was fully aware of his ulterior motives and tricks. He also knew that if he rejected his proposal, Abu Sufyan would say that Ali was frightened of the power of the government of the day and if he accepted it, he would accuse him of being greedy of power.

These were the considerations why the Imam while rejecting Abu Sufyan's proposal, deemed it necessary to add that he was not at all afraid of a sanguinary death and that he keenly welcomed martyrdom. He said that it was not owing to his personal interest that he avoided a confrontation with the government. He avoided that only in the interest of Islam.

Now let us see the beautiful wording which the Imam actually used on this occasion. He said:

“If I say that I am willing to accept this responsibility (because others are unfit to bear it), people would say that I am greedy of power. If I keep quiet (in the interest of Islam), people would say that I am afraid of being killed. Alas what a misunderstanding and that too after all my sacrifices!³ By Allah! The son of Abu Talib is

⇐ unity and stability of the Muslims did not give ear to the persistent request of Abu Sufyan.

In the early days of his caliphate the Imam said in one of his sermons: “By Allah, had there been no fear of disunity and dissension among the Muslims and their return to infidelity, our attitude to the government of those days would have been quite different.” (Ibn Abi al-Hadid, *Sharh-i Nahj al-Balaghah*, Vol. I, p. 307)

3 In the *Nahj al-Balaghah*, sermon 197, the Imam is reported to have said: “Those who are honest among the companions of the holy Prophet, know that I never wavered in my obedience of Allah and His Messenger. I did not part company with the Prophet even on those dangerous occasions when the ⇒

more intimate to martyrdom than a suckling child to its mother's breast."

On another occasion scolding his companions for their lack of interest in *jihad*, he said:

"Of all the things which I can get, the thing which I like most is death."⁴

Imam Ali scolds his companions

When the troops of Mu'awiya had occupied Egypt, consolidated their control over it and had slain Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr in cold blood, Imam Ali delivered a detailed sermon in which he analysed the events which took place following the demise of the holy Prophet. He explained how the Islamic government had deviated from its right path, and threw light on the causes which led to his conflict with Mu'awiya. He also recounted the reasons why complete victory against Mu'awiya and his partisans had not till then been achieved. In the end scolding his own companions for their weakness and lethargy he said:

"Among you there are scholars and theologians; there are noble and wise men; there are memorizers of the Qur'an; there are those who offer pre-dawn prayers; there are those who recite the Qur'an in the masjids. Then how is it that you do not show indignation and do not care that the idiots, the wicked and the mean are quarrelling with you with a view to bring you under their sway?"

"By Allah! If I have to meet them single-handed, I will not care at all and will not feel least worried even if they be so numerous that they fill the earth."

Then the Imam described the secret of his extra-ordinary courage
⇐ most valiant people recoiled. This boldness is a special favour of Allah which He has bestowed on me."

4 *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Sermon 180.

and sacrifice, which lay in his firm conviction of the justice of his cause and in his longing for meeting Allah. He said:

“I am fully convinced that they are in error and we are fighting for the right cause. I am desirous of meeting my Lord and hope that He will reward me well.”⁵

“By Allah! The right is on my side and I am seeking martyrdom.”⁶

Imam Ali fights in obedience to Allah

Ibn Abi al-Hadid says that at Siffin⁷ there was only one reservoir from which water could be drawn for use in the battlefield. On capturing this reservoir the Imam with a view to convince the Syrians of his fair dealings ordered that the troops of Mu‘awiya might not be stopped from drawing water from it and there should be no attempt to avenge the misbehaviour of Mu‘awiya’s partisans who had stopped the Imam’s soldiers from taking water from there.

Considerable time passed, but the Imam did not order fighting. In the meantime the envoys continued to and fro between the Imam and Mu‘awiya. At last some of the Imam’s soldiers became fed up with this indefinite ceasefire. The air was full of rumours. The Iraqis came grumbling to the Imam and said:

“Commander of the Faithful, we have left our women and children at Kufah. We have not come to settle permanently at the Syrian border. Please let us begin fighting. The people are saying all sorts of things.”

“What are they saying?” asked the Imam. One of them said:

“People think that you don’t want to wage a war because you’re afraid of losing your life. That’s why you want to try peaceful

5 Ibn Abi al-Hadid, *Sharh-i Nahj al-Balaghah*, Vol. 6, p. 100.

6 Ibid.

7 Siffin is the name of the place where in 36 A.H. fighting took place between Imam Ali and Mu‘awiya’s troops.

means. Some even say that you're not sure whether it's lawful to fight against the Syrians."

The Imam said: "When did I dislike the war? It's really strange that I should have been fond of fighting as a boy and as a youth and should now hate the war when I am elderly and aged and my death is imminent!"⁸

"It's absurd to say that I'm reluctant to fight the Syrians. Had it been so, I wouldn't have fought against the people of Basrah, especially when I knew that their operation was being led by a wife of the holy Prophet and two other eminent personalities of Islam, having a bright past."

"By Allah! I've fully thought over the question of fighting against Mu'awiya and have come to the conclusion that if I don't fight against him, I disobey Allah and His Prophet. What you see now, means only that I'm giving them a chance, hoping that they may realize what is in their interest, or at least some of them may be guided to the right path. I still remember what the holy Prophet told me on the occasion of the Battle of Khaybar. He said: 'If one person receives his guidance through you, that's better than everything on which the sun shines.'⁹

Imam Ali prefers death in action

Following the martyrdom of Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr the Imam wrote a letter to Abdullah ibn Abbas who was at that time Imam's commander of Kufah. In his letter the Imam intimated Abdullah that Muhammad had been killed by the supporters of Mu'awiya and at the same time expressed his dissatisfaction at the failure of the people to send him enough reinforcement. He added that he

8 Ibn Abi al-Hadid, *Sharh-i Nahj al-Balaghah*, Vol. 4, p. 13.

9 Ibn Abi al-Hadid, *Sharh-i Nahj al-Balaghah*, Vol. 4, p. 14.

was fed up with those lazy and little-minded people, and for him the only source of comfort was the hope of attaining martyrdom. It was owing to this hope only that he was not giving up their company. Now let us see the text of this letter.

From: Allah's slave, the Commander of the Faithful

To: Abdullah ibn Abbas

“..... The enemy forces have occupied Egypt. Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr has been killed. I leave the question of this tragedy in the Hand of Allah. (It is He who will recompense for it). I had informed the people of the situation and issued instructions to them to help Muhammad. I repeatedly asked them secretly and openly to dispatch reinforcements speedily. In spite of all this insistence only a small quantity of half-hearted aid was received by him. Some people put up false excuses, and some others consistently avoided any aid. I pray to Allah to deliver me of these people in some way or other.

By Allah! I would not have liked to stay with these people for a single day if I had not been bent upon attaining martyrdom and desirous of being killed in action.”¹⁰

Similar sentiments were expressed by the Imam in the speech which he delivered when following the battles of Siffin and Nahrawan some toadies of Mu'awiya started making raids on the borders of Iraq. They were raiding into various places and plundering them. When the Imam asked his men to take retaliatory action, they did not budge. Reprimanding them, the Imam said:

“If I had no hope of attaining martyrdom in some encounter with the enemy, though a clash with him is inevitable, I would have mounted my horse and gone away from you, and then so long as the south wind and the north wind alternate, I would have never

10 Ibn Abi al-Hadid, *Sharh-i Nahj al-Balaghah*, Vol. 6, p. 93.

called you.”¹¹

Imam Ali terms martyrdom as his success

The walls of Kufah were trembling. Ali was lying in the stream of his own blood. The gushing blood had given a special dignity to his face. The angels were upset because the pillar of guidance had fallen. People were weeping and wailing because the embodiment of justice had tumbled down. The only refuge of the oppressed and the downtrodden had come to ground. (For the life history of Imam Ali please refer to Islamic Seminary Publication, *The Voice of Human Justice*).

History was impatient to see the reaction of the historic hero to the stroke of Ibn Muljam. What does he do at this critical juncture of his life? What does he say? He was waiting for this end. Now he has achieved his desired object. Let us see how he reacts.

Suddenly his lips quivered. What did he say? Perhaps he cried because of pain. No! Then he must have complained of the enemy. Not even that!

Then he must have asked to send for a physician and medicines. Not at all! Then what did he say after all?

He uttered the words which all through history never existed in the dictionary of any human life.

He (Imam Ali) said: “*By the Lord of the Ka’bah I have succeeded!*”¹²

* * * * *

The fearless hero who had passed every moment of his noble life

11 *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Sermon 119.

12 *Bihar al-Anwar*, Vol. 42, p. 239.

in a struggle against the wicked, the aggressors and the hypocrites and who had ceaselessly worked for bringing the Islamic objectives to consummation, was now lying on the sanguinary bed of martyrdom with his weak and aching body but with more than ever vigorous spirit.

The head of Islamic society who always wished to lead as humble a life as the poorest member of his community, was now passing the last moments of his life in a simple and modest house of sun-dried bricks. The faces of the people were pale. They were overcast with grief. People were coming to the Imam's house in large numbers to inquire about his condition. But the crowd was so thick that most of them were unable to reach him.

The whole atmosphere was changed. Everyone was upset. But Ali was calm and serene. He did not want to miss any opportunity of awakening his people and guiding them to success and happiness. Sometimes he said:

“Till yesterday I was your colleague. Today I am a source of lesson. Tomorrow I'll part company with you.”¹³

Some other times he said: “Don't be slack in exhorting people to do what is good and restraining them from what is evil. Otherwise the miscreants will prevail upon you. Then you will be praying to get rid of them, but your prayer will have no effect.”¹⁴

The Imam said many other things. But the most beautiful and inspiring was what he said about his own sanguinary end, for which he had expressed his fervent love. Such sentences are not found in human speech anywhere else.

In the last moments of his life he addressed the grief-stricken people

13 *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Sermon 149.

14 *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Epistle 47.

who were surrounding him. These people, who were in tears, were probably thinking that Ali himself could not want the things to take such a turn. But Ali addressing them said:

“Don’t think I’m sorry for this end. Don’t think that Ibn Muljam’s sword might have enraged me. Don’t think that I ever disliked this sanguinary death. No! To me martyrdom is neither unwelcome nor unexpected. Nothing unexpected or undesirable has happened. Not only that I don’t dislike martyrdom, but it is what I like most. To me martyrdom is heart-warming. My feelings are such as if a thirsty man wandering in the desert at night in search of water has all of a sudden discovered a well or a spring, or as if a person who had lost something precious and was searching it since long, has suddenly found it. I love martyrdom. It’s heart warming. To me death is more agreeable than water to a thirsty man.”

When the Imam proceeded to Syria for the Battle of Siffin, he halted on his way at a place named Bulaykh. There a monk came out of his monastery and called on the Imam. He said that he had an ancient manuscript which had come down to him from his ancestors. The manuscript was written by a disciple of Jesus Christ. He told the Imam that he wished to present the manuscript to him.

The Imam agreed. Then the monk began to read out the manuscript. It contained an account of the appearance of the Prophet of Islam. In it there was a mention of some attributes of the Imam also. One of his characteristics was described thus: ‘In his eyes this world is more insignificant than the dust blown by the wind and death is more agreeable than water is to a thirsty person’.¹⁵

In the end it was written in the manuscript: “Whosoever be present during the time of this virtuous man, he must hasten to help him, for to die in his company means to attain martyrdom.”

15 Ibn Abi al-Hadid, *Sharh-i Nahj al-Balaghah*, Vol. 3, p. 206.

After reading out the manuscript the monk said to the Imam: “Now I’m with you through thick and thin. I shall never depart.” He remained with the Imam till he was killed in the Battle of Siffin. When the dead bodies were being buried, the Imam asked his companions to look for the body of the monk. When his body was found, the Imam offered the funeral prayer and then buried it. The Imam declared:

“He was one of us, the Prophet’s family.”

The Imam also repeatedly prayed to Allah to show His mercy to the departed soul.

Martyrdom is a Muslim’s cherished goal

As mentioned earlier, the interest in martyrdom was not confined to Imam Ali. Many other true Muslims, who had received sound Islamic training were desirous of the same end. For example:

There was a companion of the Prophet, whose name was Amr Ibn Jamuh. He was elderly and limped badly. His four strong and stout sons used to take part in every military operation along with the holy Prophet and used to display their fighting skill. On the occasion of the Battle of Uhud they decided not to let their father take part in the fighting. They said to him: “As you have a disability you are not under an obligation to take part in *jihad*.”

When his sons and relatives pressed him much and insisted that he should not take part in the ensuing battle, he went to the holy Prophet and said:

“Messenger of Allah, why do my sons stop me from attaining martyrdom? If it is good for others, it should be good for me too.”

The holy Prophet called his sons and told them not to stop him from taking part in *jihad*. The Prophet said:

“He is so keen to attain martyrdom. Though he is under no obligation to take part in *jihad*, he is not forbidden too. Therefore don’t stop him.”

The old man was delighted. He at once decked himself with arms and set out for the battle.

In the battle-field a son of his was keenly watching him. He saw that in spite of his old age and weak body his father was fighting with remarkable enthusiasm. At last this old warrior was killed. One of his sons also laid down his life.¹⁶

From time to time several other people came to the holy Prophet and requested him to pray on their behalf that they might be granted the death of a martyr.

There was a warrior of Islam named Khaythumah. He was one of those who participated in the sensational battle of Uhud and made the supreme sacrifice. Before the beginning of the battle he had requested the holy Prophet to pray on his behalf that he might be granted the death of a martyr.

When the holy Prophet was consulting his companions about the operational tactics before the actual fighting began, Khaythumah rose from his seat and expressed his opinion. In the end he said: “We hope that Allah will grant us victory over the enemy, for He has always been helping us even if victory is not achieved, there can be no doubt about attaining martyrdom.”

“In the Battle of Badr I missed to get this honour. At that time I was very keen to attain martyrdom. That is why my son and I drew lots to decide who should stay at home and who should go to the battle. My son won the lots. Accordingly he went to the battle and was killed.”

¹⁶ Ibn Hisham, *Sirah*, Vol. 3, p. 96.

“Last night I saw in dream that my son was majestically having a walk in the garden of Paradise amidst streams and gardens. He was telling me:

‘Father, come here and stay with us. Allah has fulfilled the promise He had made to us’.”

Khaythumah continued: “When it was morning, I was feeling an intense desire to go to my son in Paradise. My age has advanced. Even my bones have become weak. Now I want to meet Allah. Please pray that I may die as a martyr.”

The holy Prophet prayed. He was accordingly killed in the Battle of Uhad and so died as a martyr.¹⁷

Thus the interest in martyrdom is in no way confined to Imam Ali. The distinguishing feature which has given a special distinction to his life is his ardent love and intense desire of martyrdom. Now the question is what is the philosophy of this ardent love, when usually people dread such a death and consider it to be terrible and unlucky?

Before answering this question let us see why people are afraid of being killed and what Islam has done to alleviate this fear which is the most important impediment hindering people from taking part in *jihad*.

CAUSES OF FEAR OF DEATH:

(a) Impression that Death is Total Annihilation

A man whose entire conception is limited to this world, naturally prefers life to death. He may even be willing to live in such a way that his whole body be in the belly of a mule with only the head

¹⁷ *Bihar al-Anwar*, Vol. 20, p. 125.

protruding out for breathing. This idea has been ascribed by Galen to Alexander.

No Muslim can have a fear of annihilation. From Islamic point of view man is not annihilated as the result of death. Actually death is the doorway of an eternal world.

The Qur'an has expressly said that a martyr is eternally alive and that he never dies.

Do not call those who are slain in the cause of Allah dead. Nay, they are living, but you do not perceive. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:154).

Do not consider those who have been killed in the way of Allah to be dead. They are indeed alive. (Surah Āle Imran, 3:169).

Socrates says: "In order to inculcate the qualities of courage and boldness in young men of an ideal society they should be brought up in such a way that they have no fear of death. All the words, verses and stories which draw a dreadful picture of the next world must not be allowed to reach their ears. Similarly the stories of the weeping and wailing of big men should not be told to them. It would be better if all such things are totally omitted from speech and writing. The spirit of freedom should be infused into the young men from the beginning so that they may prefer death to the life of subjection and may not consider the death of the kindred to be a calamity."

(b) Deep Attachment to Material Life

This is the most important cause of the fear of death. Islam has repudiated it and urged the Muslims to lay down their lives for the cause of Allah. It has censured those who because of their interest in the transient material life avoid to fulfil their responsibility and make no attempt to establish the just system of Islam.

In Surah al-Taubah, verse 38 the Qur'an says:

Believers, what is wrong with you when it is said to you to march for the cause of Allah, you sink down heavily to the ground? Are you content with this life in preference to the Hereafter? The comfort of the life of this world is insignificant as compared to that of the Hereafter.

In Surah al-Nisa', verse 77 the Qur'an has admonished those Muslims who criticised the order of jihad for fear of death:

As soon as they were ordered to fight, some of them began to fear the people as much as they would fear Allah or even more. They said: Our Lord! Why have you prescribed fighting for us? Why did you not yet give us a brief respite? Muhammad, tell them: Wordly pleasures are transient and the Hereafter will be better for him who practises piety. You shall not be wronged a single thread.

A week before he was wounded Imam Ali delivered an inspiring speech in order to boost up the morale of his troops and to prepare them for resuming their fight against Mu'awiya. In the course of this speech he said:

“The good bondmen of Allah are now determined to quit this world. They have decided to sell the transient and insignificant pleasures of this world in exchange for the abundant and ever lasting pleasures of the next. Those of our brothers who were killed at Siffin, have not suffered any loss. On one hand they have escaped from undergoing the present tribulations, and on the other they have met Allah who has rewarded them well. He has moved them from a place of danger and settled them where peace and tranquillity prevails.”

(c) Practical Unpreparedness for Death

In the absence of the above mentioned two factors the only reason of the fear of death can be one's pollution with sin's and one's unpreparedness for obtaining eternity.

Imam Hasan al-Askari reports on the authority of his forefathers that someone asked Imam Ali: “What does unpreparedness for death mean? And how can a man be prepared for death?” The Imam said:

“By discharging all duties and obligations, by refraining from all sins and the acts which are prohibited, and by adoption of all moral virtues and good habits. Such a man does not worry whether he himself goes to death or death comes looking for him.”

Thereafter the Imam said: “Son of Abu Talib does not care whether he approaches death or death overtakes him.”¹⁸

The Imam mentioned this valuable characteristic of him on several occasions.

(a) When Imam Ali’s brother Aqil bin Abi Talib found that the people of Kufah were not as obedient to the Imam as they should be and were not taking enough interest in the fighting against Mu’awiya, he, with a view to console the Imam, wrote a letter to him. In the end of this letter he enquired whether in the opinion of the Imam it was appropriate in these circumstances to continue the fighting. He added that if the Imam wanted to continue the war with a view to attain martyrdom then he should let him know to that effect so that he himself and his sons also might follow in his footsteps, for they did not want to live after his passing away.

In reply the Imam wrote: “I want to continue the fighting against the covenant breakers till I meet Allah, for it does not add to my dignity if I have a very large number of followers, nor does their paucity cause me any worry. By Allah! I do not dislike to die as a martyr. My cause is just and Allah helps those who have a just cause. It is only after death that one can be perfectly well, and only those who support what is right would be perfectly well in the next world.”

18 *Bihar al-Anwar*, Vol. 6, p. 137.

(b) One day the Imam was having a round of the lines of the troops. At that time he was neither wearing a coat of mail nor an undercoat. His son, Imam Hasan said: "It is not advisable to have no coat of mail in the battlefield." The Imam said: "My son! Your father does not care whether he approaches death or death overtakes him."

(c) One day Ash'ath ibn Qays, who was an army commander, was talking to the Imam. For some reason the Imam expressed indignation and showed temper. Ash'ath tried to impress on the Imam in an indirect way that his attitude might cause revolt among the troops.

The Imam was further enraged and said: "Do you frighten me of death? By Allah! I do not care whether I approach death or death overtakes me."

DIVINE DESTINY

Islam has not only repudiated those factors which encourage fear of death, but has also employed a special device to keep up the morals of the people while discharging their religious responsibility in their struggle against the enemies of justice and truth. This special device is the belief that only what is destined, that will happen. This belief dispels every fear and anxiety from the heart of the warriors, so that they can boldly and firmly discharge their duty on the battlefield.

After suffering a reverse and a heavy loss in men at Uhud the Muslims were so dejected and despaired that they began to say: "If we were fighting for a just cause, we would not have been killed here."

Those, who were martyred in the battlefield, were not killed, because

*they were not on the right path; rather they were killed, because it is not possible to escape the divine will. Allah had willed it that they should be martyred. If you had not gone to the battlefield, and had been sitting in your houses, even then those who were destined to be killed, would have certainly reached the site of their murder, since the hour of death, which is fixed cannot change even to the slightest degree.*¹⁹ (Surah Āle Imran, 3:154).

In another verse the following advice was given by the Qur'an in respect of those who were killed on the battlefield or died while travelling:

Believers, do not be like the disbelievers, who say about their brothers (when they meet death) while on a journey or fighting: If they had been with us, they would not have died, nor would have been killed. Allah will make them regret their words.

The Qur'an has given three answers to this wrong idea. The first one is:

It is Allah who gives life and causes death. Allah sees every thing you do. (Surah Āle Imran, 3:156).

In one of the encounters at Siffin fierce fighting was going on. Out of the companions of Imam Ali (P) two men were talking together. The name of one of them was Ziyad ibn Nazr and that of the other Abdullah ibn Budayl. Ziyad said to Abdullah:

“Today only those will stand firm, who are strong-hearted and well-intentioned. By Allah! I think that with the exception of a few unimportant persons from among our people and the enemy personnel none will survive.”

Abdullah said: “I also think so.”

The conversation of these two reached the ears of the Imam. He said to them:

¹⁹ Muhammad Husayn Tabatabai, *Tafsir al-Mizān*, Vol. 6.

“Keep this thing with you. Let no one else hear it. But remember one thing. Some people are destined to be killed. They will surely be killed. Others are destined to die their natural death. So it will be. But those who are killed fighting for the cause of Allah, they are lucky. They are the martyrs.”

On another occasion the Imam said about the fugitives:

“The life of him who runs away from the battlefield is not prolonged, nor the day of his death is put off.”²⁰

WHY ARE THE FRIENDS OF ALLAH FOND OF MARTYRDOM?

Now it is clear that all the factors which make death fearful, are despicable in the eyes of the true Muslims and the friends of Allah. Their interest in martyrdom is mainly due to two reasons:

(1) Martyrdom is the Means of Sure Salvation and Infinite Perfection.

Except for martyrdom for the cause of Allah there is no stage of evolution at reaching which man may be sure of his salvation and eternal bliss.

In other words, the advantage of every human virtue depends on the state in which man's life comes to an end and on the question whether that particular virtue will be of benefit to him in the next world.

Martyrdom is the only perfect virtue which will surely be of benefit to him in the Hereafter. That is the reason why prayer for martyrdom is so common in religious traditions in spite of the fact that the Islamic teachings so vehemently denounce a prayer for death.²¹

²⁰ *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Sermon 2124.

²¹ Once the holy Prophet went to inquire about the health of a person. He ⇒

The following words are found in the supplication which is reported to have been prescribed by the Imams for being recited after the Ziarat-i Jamia of the Amir al-Mu'minin:

“My Lord! Make my life successful and grant that I may die as a martyr.”

The following words are contained in the supplication reported on the authority of Abu Basir and about which he says that Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq used to recite it during the glorious month of Ramazan:

“O Allah, grant that I may be killed fighting for Your cause under the banner of Your Prophet along with Your friends.”

The same words are found in another supplication which is recited during the holy month of Ramazan:

“O Allah! as for being killed for Your cause, grant us success in it.”

These words are found at the end of the first prayer in the *al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyah*, consisting of praise of Allah:

“.... Praise by means of which we may be included among the lucky friends of Allah and among those who fall victims of the swords of His enemies.”

(2) Martyrdom is the Highest Stage of Practical Evolution

Martyrdom is the highest form of perfection. Evolution being directly related to *jihad* and struggle, Islamic traditions have highly

⇐ was desirous of death. The Prophet said; “Don't ask for death. If you continue to live, you'll get time to do good deeds and to renounce the sins. Therefore never ask for death.”

Another report says that a man said to Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq: “I am fed up with my life. Please allow me to pray to Allah for my death.” The Imam said: “Pray to Allah for your prolonged life so that you may have an opportunity of obeying Him and refraining from His disobedience. It is better that you live and obey Allah than that you die and then be unable either to obey or disobey Him.” (Allama Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 6, p. 128).

acclaimed the martyr. Martyrdom has been described as the most important deed and the highest stage of evolution. The holy Prophet has said:

“Above every virtue there is another virtue, but there is no virtue higher than being killed in the way of Allah.”²²

That is why, when a martyr after death observes Allah’s favours being showered on him, he wishes to come back to this world so that he may again take part in *jihad* and once again die as a martyr.²³

The holy Prophet has said that the best death is that of a martyr.²⁴ Imam Ali has said that the most noble way of death is being killed in the way of Allah.²⁵

He has also said: “He who reaches Allah through the way of martyrdom may be compared to a thirsty person reaching a well. Remember that Paradise is underneath the points of the spears”²⁶

According to the sources available with us none of the Imams of the Shi‘ah died a natural death. All of them chose to die the beautiful death of a martyr.

Ibn Shahr Ashob says that most of the Shi‘ah ulema believe that all

22 *Usul al-Kāfi*, Vol. 2, p. 348.

23 Ibn Hisham, *Sirah*, Vol. 3, p. 128.

24 *Bihar al-Anwar*, Vol. 100.

25 Ibn Abi al-Hadid, Vol. 7, p. 300.

26 Commenting on this sentence of Imam Ali, Ibn Abi al-Hadid says that its idea has been borrowed from that Prophetic tradition which says that Paradise lies under the shadow of swords. In the Battle of Uhud an Ansari heard the holy Prophet say that. At that time he was eating some dates. A few dates were in his mouth and some others in his hand. When he heard what the Prophet said he exclaimed: “Oh! The distance between me and Paradise is only of these dates.” Having said so he threw away the dates, drew his sword and fell upon the Quraysh. He continued to fight till he was killed.

Imams were martyred. They base their opinion on this saying of Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq:

“By Allah! Each one of us will be slain and will be a martyr.”²⁷

Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba reports that the holy Prophet has said: “There will be 12 Imams of our family. Each of us will either be slain or poisoned.”²⁸

This view is corroborated by a saying of Imam Ali Riza also. He has said: “Each one of us will be killed.”

Sayyid Ibn Taus says: When Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad ordered Imam Sajjad to be put to death, the Imam said:

“It is our habit to be killed and martyrdom is a matter of honour for us”²⁹

This was the grand story of the House of the holy Prophet. History tells us that the Imams trained their disciples in such a way that they were always ready to sacrifice their life and property for the right cause. They were accustomed to speak truth in the presence of despotic rulers. It was due to their training that they did not hesitate to ascend the gallows for the protection and safety of Islam.

Why do Mitham and Miqdad sacrifice their lives? Why does Abu Zar say to the enemy: “I shall not stop proclaiming what the holy Prophet said even if you put your sword on my jugular vein.” Why did Muslim willingly lay down his life? Why did Abbas let his arms be cut off on the bank of the Euphrates? They did all this to preserve the religion of Muhammad ibn Abdullah in its true form.

²⁷ *Bihar al-Anwar*, Vol. 27, pg. 209.

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 217. The last portion of this tradition may be consisting of the words of Imam Hasan.

²⁹ *Luhūf*.

Imam Husayn has said: “Life is a creed and to fight for this creed.” Even today if Islam is in danger, the only remedy is jihad. The Qur’an says in Surah al-Nisa, verse 75:

How should you not fight for the cause of Allah and of the helpless men, women and children who say. Our Lord! Deliver us from this town of the oppressors, and appoint for us from You a protector and send us one that will help us.

* * * * *

2

by
Ayatullah Murtaza Mutahhery

As regards the martyr's proximity to Allah, the holy Qur'an says: *Think not of those who are slain in the way of Allah as dead. Nay, they are alive finding their sustenance with their Lord.* (Surah Āle Imran, 3:169)

In Islam, when any meritorious person or deed is exalted, it is said that such and such person has the status of a martyr, or such and such act justifies the reward of martyrdom. For example, with regard to a student, who seeks knowledge with the motive of finding out the truth and gaining the favour of Allah, it is said that if he dies while learning, he dies the death of a martyr. This expression denotes the high status and sanctimonious place of a student. Similarly with regard to a person who takes pains and labours strenuously to earn his livelihood for the support of his family, it is said that he is like a mujahid 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.

Martyr's Proximity

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 extent the martyrs do and that is why all sections of the 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 or are indebted to a very small degree. A scholar, 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. They burn themselves out and illuminate humanity. If they do not shed their light, no human organization can commence its task or continue it.

A man who works in the light of the sun during the day and in the light of a lamp or a candle at night, pays heed to everything but his attention is not drawn to the source of light while it goes without saying that without that light he can accomplish nothing. The martyrs are the illuminators of society. Had they not shed their light on the darkness of despotism and suppression, humanity would have made no progress.

The holy Qur'an has used a delightful expression about the holy Prophet. It has compared him to an "illuminating lamp." This expression combines the sense of burning and enlightening. The glorious Book says:

Prophet! Surely We have sent you as a witness, a bearer of glad tidings and a Warner; and as a guide to Allah by His permission and as an illuminating lamp. (Surah al-Ahzāb, 33:45-46).

There is no doubt that for those who use an Islamic vocabulary the word 'martyr' and its concept are holy and sacred and convey a sense higher than any other word or concept.

Martyr's Body

Islam is a rational religion. Every Islamic law is based on a social consideration. According to an Islamic law the dead body of every Muslim has to be washed ceremoniously and shrouded in neat and clean sheets. Thereafter, prayers have to be offered and then it is to be buried. There are good reasons for doing all this, but we need not discuss them in the present context.

In contrast, there is an exception to this general rule. The body of a martyr is neither to be washed nor to be shrouded in fresh sheets. He is to be buried in those very clothes which he had on his body at the time of his martyrdom.

This exception has a deep significance. It shows that the spirit and the personality of a martyr are so thoroughly purified that his body, his blood and even his garments are cleansed and purified by this purification. The body of a martyr is spiritualized in the sense that certain rules, applicable to his spirit are also applied to it as well as to his garments. The body and the garments of a martyr acquire sanctity because of his spirit, thought, virtue and sacrifice. One who falls a martyr in a battlefield is buried with his blood-stained body and blood-soaked clothes without being washed.

These rules of the Islamic law about the body of a martyr are another indication of his sanctity.

Martyr's Sanctity

What is the basis of the sanctity of martyrdom? It is evident that merely being killed can have no sanctity. It is not always a matter of pride. Many a death may even be a matter of disgrace.

Let us elucidate this point a bit further. We know that there are several kinds of death, which may be classified as follows:

(a) Natural Death: If a man dies a natural death after completing his normal span of life, his death is considered to be an ordinary event. It is neither a matter of pride nor of shame. It is not a matter of much sorrow even. Naturally such deaths are not treated to be premature.

(b) Accidental Death: Death as a result of an accident or an

epidemic disease like smallpox, plague or due to a natural disaster like an earthquake or a flood, is considered to be premature and hence is regarded as regrettable.

(c) Criminal Death: In this case, a person kills another in cold blood simply to satisfy his own passion or because he considers the victim to be his opponent or rival. There are many instances of such murders. We often read in the daily newspapers that a certain woman killed her little step-son because the father loved the child more while the woman wanted to monopolize his attention or that a particular man murdered the woman who refused to accept his love. Similarly, we read in history that a particular ruler massacred the entire progeny of another ruler to eclipse the chances of any future rivalry.

In such cases, the action of the murderer is considered to be atrociously criminal and heinous and the person killed is regarded as a victim of aggression and tyranny whose life has been taken in vain. The reaction which such a murder creates is one of horror and pity. It is evident that such a death is shocking and pitiable, yet it is neither praiseworthy nor a matter of pride. The victim loses his life unnecessarily because of malice, enmity and hatred.

(d) Self-Murder: In this case, the death itself constitutes a crime and hence it is the worst kind of death. Suicidal deaths and the deaths of those who are killed in road accidents because of their own fault, come under this category. The same is the case of the death of those who are killed while committing a crime.

(e) Martyrdom: Martyrdom is the death of a person who in spite of being fully conscious of the risks involved, willingly faces them for the sake of a sacred cause or as the holy Qur'an says, (*fī sabil Allah*), in the cause of Allah.

Martyrdom has two elements; firstly, life is sacrificed to a sacred cause and secondly, sacrifice is made consciously and willingly.

Usually in the case of martyrdom an element of crime is involved on the part of the offender. As far as the person martyred is concerned his death is sacred but as far as his killers are concerned their action is heinous and criminal.

Martyrdom is heroic and admirable because it results out of a voluntary, conscious and selfless action. It is the only type of death which is higher, greater and holier than life itself.

It is regrettable that although many preachers, who narrate the history of Karbala, call Imam Husayn the Doyen of the Martyrs, they have little analytical insight into the very concept of martyrdom and they describe the events in such a way as though the Imam lost his life in vain.

Many of our people mourn Imam Husayn for his innocence. They regret that he was a victim of the selfishness of Yazid bin Mu'awiya, a power-hungry ruler, who shed his blood, without any fault on his part. Had the fact been really so simple, Imam Husayn would have been regarded only as an innocent person to whom great injustice was done, but he could not have been called a martyr, what to say of his being the Doyen of the Martyrs.

It is not really the whole story that Imam Husayn was a victim of selfish designs. No doubt the perpetrators of the tragedy committed the crime out of their selfishness, but the Imam consciously made the supreme sacrifice of his own accord. His opponents insisted upon him to offer his allegiance but he knowing fully well the consequences, chose to resist their demand. He regarded it as a great sin to remain quiet at this juncture. The history of his martyrdom and especially his statements bear witness to this fact.

Hence martyrdom acquires sanctity on this account that one sacrifices one's entire being consciously for the sake of a sacred cause.

* * * * *

In Islam the thing that leads to martyrdom or the giving of one's life consciously for a sacred cause has become a law. It is called *jihad*. This is neither the proper place to discuss its nature in detail nor to say whether it is always defensive or offensive, and if it is only defensive whether it is confined to the defence of the individual or at the most, of national rights, or that its scope is so wide as to include the defence of all human rights such as freedom and justice. There are other relevant questions also such as whether faith in Oneness of Allah is or is not a part of human rights and whether jihad is or is not basically repugnant to the right of freedom. The discussion of these questions can be both interesting and instructive but in their proper place.

For the present, suffice it to say that Islam is not a religion advocating that should someone slap your right cheek, then offer to him the left also; nor does it say: "Pay unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar and unto God what belongs to God." Similarly, it is not a religion which may have no sacred social ideal or may not consider it necessary to defend it.

The holy Qur'an in many of its passages has mentioned three sacred concepts, side by side. They are *iman* (faith), *hijrat* (migration) and *jihad* (crusade). The man who has full faith in the holy Qur'an is the one attached to faith and detached from everything else. To save his own faith he migrates, and to save the faith of his society and in fact to save his society itself from the clutches of the faithless demon he carries out *jihad*. It will take greater space, if we reproduce all the verses of the Qur'an and the Hadith on this subject. Hence we shall content ourselves by

quoting a few sentences from Nahj al-Balaghah. (This is a compilation of Imam Ali's sermons, letters and sayings and has been published by Islamic Seminary under the caption of *Peak of Eloquence*).

“No doubt *jihad* is an entrance to Paradise which Allah has opened for His chosen friends. It is the garment of piety, Allah's impenetrable armour and trustworthy shield. He who refrains from it because he dislikes it, Allah will clothe him in a garment of humiliation and a cloak of disaster.”

Jihad is a gateway to Paradise but it is not open to all and sundry. Everyone is not worthy of it. Everyone is not elected to become a *mujahid*. Allah has opened this door for his chosen friends only. A *mujahid*'s position is so high that we cannot call him simply Allah's friend. He is Allah's chosen friend. The Qur'an says that Paradise has eight gates. Evidently, it does not have so many gates to avoid over-crowding, for there is no question of it in the next world. As Allah can check the accounts of all people instantly, He can also arrange their entry into Paradise through one gate. There is no necessity of entering in turn or forming a queue there. Similarly, these gates cannot be for different classes of people, for there is no class distinction in the next world. Surely, the people there will not be classified according to their social status or profession.

There the people will be graded and grouped together on the basis of the degree of their faith, good deeds and piety only, and a gate, analogous to its spiritual development in this world, will be opened to each group, for the next world is only a heavenly embodiment of this world. The door through which the *mujahid* and the *shaheed* will enter, and the portion of Paradise set aside for them is the one which is reserved for Allah's chosen friends who will be graced with His special favour.

Jihad is the garment of piety. The expression “garment of piety” has been used by the Qur’an in the Surah al-A’raf. Imam Ali says that *jihad* is the garment of piety. Piety consists of true purity, i.e. purity from spiritual and moral pollutions which are rooted in selfishness, vanity and avarice merely for personal profit and pleasure. On this basis, a real mujahid is the most pious. He is pure because he is free from jealousy, free from vanity, free from avarice and free from parsimony. A *mujahid* is the purest of all the pure. He exercises complete self-negation and self-sacrifice. The gate which is opened to him is different from the gates opened to others morally undefiled. It can be deduced from the Qur’an itself that piety has various grades:

There is no harm if the believers, who have done good deeds, utilize the bounties of the world, provided they practise piety and believe and do good deeds. Then for the second time they practise piety and believe. Once again they practise piety and do good to others. Allah likes the benevolent people. (Surah al-Maidah, 5:93)

This verse comprises of two valuable points of the Qur’anic knowledge. The first point is that there are various degrees of faith and piety. This is the point under discussion at present. The other point concerns the philosophy of life and human rights.

The holy Qur’an wants to say that all good things have been created for man and man has been created for faith, piety and good deeds. Man is entitled to utilize the bounties of Allah only when he marches forward on the path of evolution prescribed for him by Nature. That is the path of faith, piety and good deeds.

The Muslim scholars, inspired by this verse and by what has been explicitly or implicitly stated in other Islamic texts, have classified piety into the following three degrees:

- (i) Average Piety
- (ii) Above average Piety

(iii) Outstanding Piety

The piety of the mujahids is one of supreme self-sacrifice. They sincerely renounce all they possess and surrender themselves to Allah. Thus, they put on a ‘garment of piety’.

Jihad is an impenetrable armour of Allah. The Muslim ummah equipped with the spirit of *jihad* is invulnerable to the enemy’s onslaughts. *Jihad* is a reliable shield of Allah. The armour is the defensive covering worn during fighting but the shield is a tool taken in hand to foil the enemy’s strokes and thrusts. A shield is meant to prevent a blow and an armour is meant to neutralize its effect. Apparently, Imam Ali has compared *jihad* to both an armour and shield because some forms of it have a preventive nature and check the onslaught of the enemy and other forms have a resistive nature and render his attacks ineffective.

Allah will clothe with a “garment of humiliation” a person who refrains from *jihad* because he dislikes it and not due to special conditions and circumstances. The people who lose the spirit of fighting and resisting the forces of evil are doomed to humiliation, disgrace, bad luck and helplessness. The holy Prophet has said: “All goodness lies in the sword and under the shadow of the sword.” He has also said: “Allah has honoured my followers because of the hoofs of their horses and the position of their spears.”¹

This means that the Muslim *ummah* is the *ummah* of power and strength. Islam is the religion of power. It produces *mujahids*. The well-known philosopher-cum-historian, Will Durant, in his book *History of Civilization*, says that no religion has commanded its followers to attain power to the extent that Islam has done.

According to another significant hadith, the holy Prophet has said:

1 *Tahzeeb al-Ahkam* by Shaykh Tusi

“He who has not fought and has not even thought of fighting will die the death of a hypocrite.”

Jihad, or at least a desire to take part in it, is an integral part of the doctrine of Islam. One’s fidelity to Islam is judged by it. Another hadith reports that a martyr would not be interrogated in his grave, for the flash of the sword, over his head, is enough test. A martyr’s fidelity having been proved once it is not necessary to subject him to any further interrogation.

Martyr’s Responsibility

In the early days of Islam many Muslims had a special longing for martyrdom. Imam Ali was the prominent of such people. He himself says: *When the verse Do men imagine that they will be left at ease because they say, we believe, and will not be tested with affliction?* (Surah al-Ankabut, 29:1–2), was revealed I knew that so long as the holy Prophet was alive, the Muslims would not be subjected to any trial. I, therefore, asked him what this trial would be. The holy Prophet said that after him, a civil strife would break out among the Muslims. I then enquired from him whether he had not told me at the time of the Battle of Uhud, when I was dejected because a number of Muslims were martyred in that battle and I had been deprived of martyrdom that I, too, would attain martyrdom. The holy Prophet reaffirmed what he had told me earlier and asked if I would be patient when that time comes. I replied that it would be the time for thanks-giving to Allah and not of merely being patient. The holy Prophet then gave me some details of the troublesome events to come.” This is what we mean by the longing for martyrdom. Had Imam Ali lost the hope of attaining martyrdom, life would have become meaningless to him.

We always have Imam Ali’s name on our lips and claim to be his devotees. If mere verbal professions could do, no one would be a

better Shi‘ah than we are. But true Shi‘ism requires us to follow in his foot-steps, too. We have given above just one example of his conduct.

Apart from Imam Ali we know many others who longed for martyrdom. In the early days of Islam, every Muslim prayed to Allah for it as is evident from the supplications which have come down to us from our Imams.

In the supplication which is offered during the nights of the holy month of Ramazan we say: “O Allah! Let us be killed in Your way in the company of Your friend (Imam) and attain martyrdom.”

We find that during the early days of Islam everyone, whether young or old, high or low had this longing. Sometimes the people came to the holy Prophet and expressed this desire. Islam does not allow suicide. They wanted to take part in *jihad* and to get killed while doing their duty. They requested the holy Prophet to pray to Allah to grant them martyrdom.

In the book *Safinah al-Bihar* there is a story of a man named Khaythumah (or Khathimah). He and his son were both keen to take part in the fighting and to get killed at the time of the Battle of Badr they argued with each other. In the end they drew lots. The son won and accordingly went to the battle-field where he laid down his life. Some time later the father had a dream in which he saw his son living a very happy life and he told him that Allah’s promise had come true. The old father came to the holy Prophet and narrated the dream. He told the holy Prophet that though he was very old and weak he was desirous of taking part in the fighting and to attain the status of a martyr. He requested the holy Prophet to pray to Allah to grant him his desire. The holy Prophet prayed accordingly. Within less than a year the old man had not only the good fortune of taking part in the Battle of Uhud but also of achieving martyrdom.

There was another man whose name was Amr ibn Jamuh. He had many sons. He was lame in one leg and so, according to the Islamic law, exempt from taking part in the fighting. The holy Qur'an says: *The blind, the lame and the sick are under no obligation to go forth to fight.* (Surah al-Fath, 48:17) On the occasion of the Battle of Uhud all his sons equipped themselves with arms. He said that he must also go into the battle and lay down his life. His sons objected to his decision and asked him to stay behind as he was not under any obligation to go to battle. However, he remained adamant. His sons brought the senior members of their family to exert pressure on him, but the old man would not change his mind. He went to the holy Prophet instead and said; "Prophet of Allah! Why don't my children let me become a martyr? If martyrdom is good for others it should be good for me too." The holy Prophet then asked his sons not to restrain him. He said: "This man longs for martyrdom. If he is under no obligation neither he should be forbidden to fight nor you should have any objection to it." The old man was immensely pleased. He immediately armed himself. In the battlefield one of his sons was watching him. He saw that his father, in spite of being old and weak, was fighting with valour and zeal. At last he was killed. One of his sons was also killed.

Uhud is situated near Madina. There the Muslims suffered heavy losses and their position become critical. In the meantime, a report reached Madina that the Muslims had been defeated. The men and women of Madina hurried to Uhud. One of the women was the wife of the aforesaid Amr ibn Jamuh. She went to Uhud and found out the dead bodies of her husband, son and brother. She loaded them onto a strong camel and set out for Madina with the intention of burying them in the cemetery of Baqi. On her way back she noticed that her camel moved very haltingly and slowly towards Madina and turned constantly towards Uhud. Meanwhile other women including some of the wives of the holy Prophet were coming towards Uhud.

One of the wives of the holy Prophet asked her where she was coming from. She replied that she was coming from Uhud. “What are you carrying on your camel?” “Nothing. Only the dead bodies of my husband, son and brother. I want to take them to Madina.” “How is the holy Prophet?” “Thank Allah! Everything is all right. The holy Prophet is safe. The designs of the infidels have been frustrated by Allah. So long as the holy Prophet is safe, everything else is immaterial” said the wife of Amr ibn Jamuh.

Then the woman said that there was something queer about her camel. It appeared that it did not want to go to Madina. Infact it should have been going towards its manger eagerly, but instead it wanted to go back to Uhud. The holy Prophet’s wife proposed that they should go together to the holy Prophet and tell him about that. When they met the holy Prophet, the woman said:

“I have a strange story. This animal goes onto Madina with difficulty, but comes to Uhud eagerly.” The holy Prophet said, “Did your husband say anything when he came out of the house?” “Yes, when he came out of the house he raised his hands in prayer and said, ‘O Allah! grant me that I don’t come back to my home again,’” said the woman. “That’s it. Your husband’s prayer has been granted. Now let him be buried at Uhud along with other martyrs”, advised the holy Prophet.

The Commander of the Faithful used to say: “I prefer a thousand strokes of the sword as compared to dying in bed.”

Imam Husayn on his way to Karbala used to recite certain lines of poetry. His father is also reported to have recited these verses occasionally. We give below a translation of the same:

*What if this world unfolds as treasure,
A recompense far worthy is gaining God’s pleasure
And if all we possess must be left behind;
Then why is mankind so stingy and not sublime?*

*If our sustenance is what is predestined,
Then lesser the greed to possess; the better it is.
When bodies created are meant to die and thus decay;
Choice superb is death by sword; cut to pieces, in Allah's way.*

Martyr's Logic

A martyr's motivation is different from that of ordinary people. His logic is that of a devoted reformer and that of a zealous gnostic. If the two logics, namely the logic of an earnest reformer and the logic of a zealous gnostic are put together, the result becomes the motivation of a martyr. Let us elucidate this point further. When Imam Husayn decided to leave for Kufah, some prudent members of his family tried to dissuade him. Their argument was that his action was not logical. They were right in their own way. His decision was not in conformity with their logic which was the logic of worldly-wise men. But Imam Husayn had a higher logic. His logic was that of a martyr which is beyond the comprehension of ordinary people.

Abdullah ibn Abbas was no small a person. Muhammad ibn Hanafiyah was also not an ordinary man. But their logic was based on the consideration of personal interests and political gains. From their point of view Imam Husayn's action was not discreet and prudent at all. Ibn Abbas made a proposal which was politically very sound. It has been the usual practice of clever people to use others as their tools. They push others forward and themselves remain behind. If others succeed, they take full advantage of their success. Otherwise, they lose nothing. Keeping this in view Ibn Abbas said to the Imam,

“The people of Kufah have written to tell you that they are ready to fight for your cause. You should write back asking them to expel Yazid's officials from there. They will either do what you suggest or won't. If they act according to your suggestion you can go there

safely, and become the ruler; but if they are unable to do so, your position will not be affected.”

The Imam did not listen to this advice. He made it plain that he was determined to proceed. Ibn Abbas said: “You will be killed.”

“So what?” said the Imam.

“A man who goes knowing that he may be killed should not take his wife and children along with him.”

“But I must”, said the Imam.

A martyr’s logic is novel and unique. It is beyond the comprehension of ordinary people. That is why the word ‘martyr’ is encircled with a halo of sanctity. It occupies a remarkable position in the vocabulary of sacred and highly glorious words. It connotes something higher than the sense conveyed by the word hero or reformer. It cannot be replaced by any word in human vocabulary.

Martyr’s Blood

What does a martyr do? His function is not confined to resisting the enemy and, in the process, either giving him a blow or receiving a blow from him. Had that been the case, we could say that when his blood is shed it goes waste. But at no time is a martyr’s blood wasted. It does not flow on the ground. Every drop of it is turned into hundreds and thousands of drops, nay into tons of blood and is transfused into the body of his society. That is why the holy Prophet said: “Allah does not like any drop more than the drop of blood shed in His way.” Martyrdom means transfusion of blood into a particular human society, especially a society suffering from anaemia, so to speak, of true faith. It is the martyr who infuses such fresh blood into the veins of such society.

The distinctive characteristic of a martyr is that he charges the atmosphere with courage and zeal. He revives the spirit of valour and fortitude, courage and zeal especially divine zeal, among the people who have lost it. That is why Islam is always in need of martyrs. The revival of courage and zeal is essential for the revival of a nation.

Martyr's Immortality

A scholar serves the society through his knowledge. It is on account of his knowledge that his personality is admitted and acknowledged in the society just as a drop of water is mingled in the sea. As a result of this intermingling of a part of his personality, his thoughts and ideas are infused and become immortal. An inventor is acknowledged in the society through his inventions. He serves the society and becomes immortal by virtue of his skill and inventions. A poet makes himself immortal through his poetic genius and a moral teacher through his wise sayings. Similarly, a martyr immortalizes himself in his own way. He gives his invaluable fresh blood to the society.

In other words, a scholar immortalizes his thoughts, an artist his piece of art, an inventor his inventions, and a moral teacher his teachings. But a martyr, through his blood, immortalizes his entire being. His blood flows forever in the veins of the society. Every other group of people can make only a part of its faculties immortal, but a martyr immortalizes all his faculties. That is why the holy Prophet said:

“Above every virtue there may be another virtue but there is no virtue higher than being killed in the cause of Allah.”

Martyr's Intercession

There is a hadith which says that there are three classes of people

who will be allowed to intercede with Allah on the Day of Judgment. They are the Prophets, the *ulema* (scholars) and the martyrs. In this hadith, the Imams have not been mentioned expressly but as the hadith has been reported by our Imams it is obvious that the term, “*ulema*” stands for the true divines, who par excellence include the Imams themselves and other *ulema* who follow in their footsteps come after them.

The intercession of the Prophets is quite apparent. It is the intercession of the martyrs which we have to comprehend. The martyrs secure this privilege of intercession because they lead the people onto the right path. Their intercession will be the portrayal of the events which took place in this world.

The Commander of the Faithful says: “Allah will bring forward the martyrs on the Day of Judgment with such pomp and grandeur that even the Prophets, if mounted, will dismount to show their respect for them. With such grandeur will a martyr appear on the Day of Judgment.”

Martyr’s Achievement

Among the martyrs of the early days of Islam, the most brilliant was Hamzah, the uncle of the holy Prophet. He was given the epithet of the Doyen of the Martyrs. He was martyred in the Battle of Uhud. Those who have had the good luck of visiting Madina must have paid a visit to his grave.

When Hamzah ibn Abd al-Muttalib migrated from Mecca, he was alone, for nobody lived with him in his house. When the holy Prophet returned from Uhud, he found women weeping in the houses of all the martyrs, except that of Hamzah. He uttered just one sentence, “Has Hamzah no one to weep for him?” The companions of the Prophet went to their houses and told their

women folk that the holy Prophet had said that Hamzah had no one to weep for him. All the women who were weeping for their sons, husbands and brothers immediately set out for the house of Hamzah and wept there, out of respect, to fulfil the wish of the holy Prophet. Thereafter it became a tradition that whenever anybody wanted to weep for any martyr he or she first went to the house of Hamzah and wept there. This incident shows that though Islam does not encourage lamenting the death of an ordinary man, it does appreciate the people to weep for a martyr. A martyr creates the spirit of valour and weeping for him means participation in his valour, harmony with his spirit and conformity with his longing for martyrdom.

The title of the Doyen of the Martyrs was first applied to Hazrat Hamzah. After the tragedy of Āshura (10th Muharram 61 A.H.) and the martyrdom of Imam Husayn which overshadowed all other instances of martyrdom, it was transferred to him. No doubt this epithet is still applied to Hamzah but he was the Doyen of the Martyrs of his own time, whereas Imam Husayn is the Doyen of the Martyrs of all times, just as the Virgin Mary was the Doyen of the Women in her time and the Lady of Light Fatimah-tuz-Zahra is the Doyen of Women of all times.

Prior to the martyrdom of Imam Husayn it was Hazrat Hamzah who was regarded as the symbol of lamentation over the martyrs. Weeping for him meant participation in a martyr's valour, and was in conformity with his spirit of sacrifice and in harmony with his longing for martyrdom. But after the martyrdom of Imam Husayn this title was also transferred to him.

We deem it necessary at this juncture to refer briefly to the philosophy of lamentation over a martyr.

Nowadays many people including even some of those young men

who show attachment for Imam Husayn object to the weeping for him. Some of them assert that this custom is the result of perverted thinking and a wrong conception of martyrdom. They think it has had bad repercussions and has been responsible for the backwardness and decline of the people who have adopted it.

I (the author) remember that while I was a student at the holy city of Qum (Centre of Islamic learning in Iran) I had gone through a book by Muhammad Mas'ud, a well-known author of those days. In it the author drew comparison between the Shi'ah custom of weeping for Imam Husayn and the Christian practice of celebrating the crucifixion (according to their own belief) of Jesus Christ with festivities.

The author (Muhammad Mas'ud) wrote: "It is to be noticed that one nation weeps for its martyr because it regards martyrdom as something undesirable and regrettable, whereas another nation rejoices at the death of its martyr, because it regards his martyrdom as a great achievement and a matter of pride. A nation which has been weeping and mourning for the last thousand years naturally loses its vitality and becomes weak and cowardly, whereas the nation which, has been celebrating the martyrdom of its hero becomes powerful, courageous and self-sacrificing. For one nation martyrdom means failure and reaction is weeping and lamenting which leads to weakness, helplessness and submissiveness, but for the other nation, martyrdom means triumph and hence, its reaction is joy and rejoicing which boosts up its morale."

This is the gist of the criticism made by Muhammad Mas'ud. The same arguments are advanced by other critics as well.

We would like to analyse this question and prove that the festive celebration of martyrdom by the Christians stems from their

individual approach and the weeping for the martyrs by the Muslims from their social approach.

Of course, we cannot justify the attitude of those of our masses who look at Imam Husayn only as a person to whom great injustice was done and who was killed just for nothing. They express profound regret at his death but pay little attention to his heroic and praise-worthy performance. We have already denounced this attitude.

We intend to explain why the Imams of the Prophet's House have exhorted weeping for the martyrs and what the real philosophy behind this is. We do not know since when and by whom the festive celebration of the martyrdom of Jesus Christ was initiated, but we know that weeping for the martyrs has been recommended by Islam and it is an indisputable doctrine of the Shi'ite Muslims.

Now to analyse the main point, let us first discuss the individual aspect of death and martyrdom.

Is a martyr's death an achievement on the part of the individual or something undesirable? Should others regard it as a heroic deed on the part of the individual concerned?

We know that in this mortal world there have been many schools, and some of them may still be existing, which believe that the relationship between the man and the world, or in other words between the soul and the body is similar to that of the relationship between a prisoner and a prison or between a man who falls into a well and that of the well or that between a bird and its cage. Naturally, according to these schools death is equivalent to liberation and emancipation. Therefore, they allow suicide. It is said that the famous false prophet, Manikhaio held the same view. According to this theory, death has a positive value and is desirable

for everyone. No one's death is regrettable. A release from prison, getting out of a well and the breaking of a cage is a matter of joy and not of sorrow.

Another theory holds that death means non-existence, complete annihilation and utter destruction whereas life means to be and to persevere. Obviously, existence is better than non-existence. It is a matter of instinct that life, whatever be its form, is preferable to death.

The famous mystic poet of Iran, Mawlawi, quotes the Greek physician Galen as having said that in all circumstances he preferred to live rather than to die, no matter what form life took. He preferred life even if it meant living in the belly of a mule, with only the head protruding out for breathing. According to this theory death has only a negative value.

There is another theory, according to which death does not mean annihilation. It means only shifting from one world to another. The relationship between man and the world and between the soul and the body is not similar to that between a prisoner and the prison, between a person in a well and the well itself and between a bird and its cage. It is similar to the relationship between a student and his school and between a farmer and his farm.

It is true that occasionally a student has to live away from his home and at a place where he misses the company of his friends and has to pursue his studies within the limited four corners of his school, but the only way to lead a happy life in the society is to complete his course of studies successfully. It is also true that a farmer has to leave his house and family life to work on his farm but that provides him a good means of livelihood and enables him a happy family life throughout the year.

The relationship between this world and the next and between the soul and the body is of this very nature. To those who have this outlook on the world but who fail in practical life because of their lethargy and malpractices the idea of death naturally appears to be dreadful and terrible. In fact, they are afraid of death because they fear the consequences of their own deeds.

But the attitude of those who are successful in their practical life is naturally that of the student who has paid his whole-hearted attention to his studies and of the farmer who has worked hard. Such a student and such a farmer yearns for his return to home but does not think of leaving his task incomplete.

The saints are like the successful students. They long for death which means going into the next world. Every moment they impatiently wait for it. Imam Ali has said about them, “If Allah had not fixed the time of death their souls would not have remained in their bodies for a moment because of their desire for recompense and fear of retribution.”

At the same time they do not run after death, for they know that it is only this life which gives them an opportunity to work and attain spiritual development. They know that the longer they live, the greater will be perfection they will achieve. Hence they resist death and always ask Allah to grant them a long life.

Thus, we know that it is not contradictory that the holy persons on the one hand consider death to be desirable and on the other hand resist it and pray for a long life.

Addressing the Jews who claimed to be the friends of Allah, the holy Qur’an says:

If you are friends of Allah (as you claim to be) then wish for death. (Surah al-Jum‘ah, 62:6).

It further says that they will never wish for death because they know what deeds they have committed and what retribution they are to receive in the Hereafter. These people belong to the third category mentioned above.

There are two conditions in which the holy persons refrain from praying for a long life. First, when they are not attaining continuous success in doing virtuous deeds and they fear that instead of progressing they may retrogress. Imam Sajjad used to say: "Allah! Prolong my life only so long as it is spent in obeying you, but if it becomes the grazing field of the Devil carry me to Yourself as early as possible."

Secondly the holy men pray for martyrdom unconditionally, for it constitutes a virtuous deed as well as spiritual progress. We have already quoted a Prophetic saying to the effect that martyrdom is the highest virtue. Further, martyrdom means going into the next world which the holy men so much yearn for. That is why we find Imam Ali's joy knew no bounds when he felt that he was going to die as a martyr.

Many sentences uttered by Imam Ali during the interval between his being wounded and his demise are recorded in books including *Peak of Eloquence*.

One of those sentences has a bearing on the point under discussion. He said:

"By Allah, nothing unexpected and undesirable has occurred. What has occurred is exactly what I had longed and prayed for. I have achieved martyrdom which I had so intensely longed. I am like a man who was in search of water during a dark night and suddenly struck upon a well or a spring. I am like a man who was strenuously looking for something and at last got it."

In the early morning of the 19th Ramazan (40 A.H.), when his assassin struck him on the head, the first or the second sentence which was heard from Ali was:

“By the Lord of the Ka’bah! I have succeeded!”

So from the Islamic point of view martyrdom is a great, rather the greatest achievement as far as the martyr himself is concerned.

Imam Husayn said: “My grandfather told me that I was destined to attain a very high spiritual position but that could not be attained except through martyrdom.” Thus for Imam Husayn martyrdom was promotion and the highest stage of perfection.

So far we have analysed the individual aspect of death and martyrdom and have arrived at the conclusion that death in the form of martyrdom is really an achievement so far as the martyr himself is concerned. From this angle no doubt death is a happy event and that is why a great scholar, Ibn Taus, has said: “Had we not been given instructions about mourning, I would have preferred to celebrate the days of the martyrdom of the Imams with festivity.”

On this ground, it may be said that Christianity is right in celebrating the martyrdom of Christ as a festive event. Islam also fully recognizes martyrdom to be an achievement of the martyr.

However, from the Islamic point of view, the other side of the picture is also to be seen. From the social point of view martyrdom is a phenomenon which takes place in specific circumstances and is preceded and followed by events which have to be duly assessed. Similarly, it creates a reaction in the society which does not depend merely on the success or defeat of the martyr, but is mainly based on the opinion held by the people on the respective positions of the martyr and his opponents.

One more aspect of martyrdom is important. It is the martyr's two-fold relationship with the society:

(a) Relationship with those who have been deprived of his presence among them; and

(b) Relationship with those who by their depravity, created an atmosphere in which he had to stand against them and lay down his life.

It is evident that from the viewpoint of his followers a martyr's death is a great loss. When they express their emotions they really cry over their own bad luck.

Martyrdom is desirable if we consider the situation in which it takes place. It is necessitated by an undesirable and ugly situation. In this respect it is comparable to a surgical operation which becomes necessary as in the case of appendicitis and duodenal or gastric ulcer or the like. In the absence of such a situation the operation will obviously be a mistake.

The moral which the people should draw from martyrdom is that they should not allow a similar situation to develop in the future. The idea of mourning is to project the tragedy as an event which should not have happened. Emotions are expressed to condemn the perpetrators of oppression and the killers of the martyr for their heinous act with a view to restrain the members of the society from following the example of such criminals. Accordingly, we find that none of those belonging to the school of the mourning of Imam Husayn would like to have the least resemblance of Yazid, Ibn Ziyad and the like.

Another moral which the society should draw is that, whenever a situation demanding sacrifice arises, the people should revive the very passions of a martyr and willingly follow his heroic

example. Weeping for the martyr means association with his fervour, harmony with his spirit and conformity with his longing. Now let us see whether festivity, rejoicing, dancing and sometimes even mockery, drinking and revelry, as witnessed during the religious feasts of the Christians, are more in keeping with the spirit of martyrdom or weeping and mourning are.

Usually a misconception prevails about weeping and it is thought that weeping is caused by pain and distress, and hence it is an untoward thing.

Weeping and laughter are two peculiar characteristics of human beings. Other animals feel pleasure and pain and get happy and sad, but they neither laugh nor weep. Laughter and weeping are the manifestations of intense emotions peculiar to human beings.

Laughter has many varieties which we do not intend to discuss here. Weeping also has varieties but it is always invariably associated with a sort of sensitiveness and excitement. We are all aware of tears of love and longing. When a person weeps because of the excitement of love, he feels closer to his beloved. Joy and laughter usually have an introvertive aspect. On the other hand, weeping has an extrovertive aspect and means self-negation and unification with the object of love.

Because of his noble personality and heroic death Imam Husayn evokes the deepest emotions in hundreds of millions of people. The whole world could be reformed if our preachers could utilize this enormous fund of emotions to bring the spirit of the common man in harmony with the spirit of the Imam.

The secret of Imam Husayn's immortality lies in the fact that on the one hand his movement was logical and rational and on the other hand it evoked deep emotions. The Imams gave the most

judicious direction when they exhorted the people to weep for him, for it is weeping that has firmly implanted his movement in the hearts of the people. We again wish that our preachers knew how to utilize this emotional treasure.

When the holy Prophet, gave his daughter, Fatimah- tuz-Zahra, the well-known liturgical formula which we also usually repeat after daily prayers, or at the time of going to bed (*Allahu Akbar* 34 times, *Al-Hamdu lillah* 33 times and *Subban Allah* 33 times), she went at the grave of her grand uncle, Hamzah and collected clay from there to make a rosary. What is the significance of her action? The grave of a martyr is sacred. The clay of its vicinity is sacred. She required a rosary for counting the liturgical formula. Actually, it made no difference whether a rosary was made of stone, wood or clay. The clay could be taken from anywhere, but she preferred to take it from the vicinity of the martyr's grave. Her action actually meant paying due respect to him. After the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, the epithet of the Doyen of the Martyrs was transferred from Hamzah to the grandson of his brother. If anybody wants to seek the blessing of martyr's grave now, he should make a rosary of the clay of Imam Husayn's mausoleum.

We have to offer our prayers. At the same time we do not regard it permissible to perform *Sajdah* on rugs, carpets or anything which is eatable or wearable. Hence, we keep with us a piece of stone or clay, which is clean. The Imams of the Prophet's House have said that it is better to perform *Sajdah* on the earth taken from the vicinity of a martyr's grave. If possible the earth of Karbala should be obtained, for it emits the smell of the martyrs. While offering his prayers, one can prostrate on any earth, but if for this purpose someone uses the earth, which has had some sort of contact with the martyrs, his reward will be enhanced a hundred times.

One of the holy Imams has said: "Perform *Sajdah* on the earth

of the grave of my grandfather, Husayn ibn Ali. When a person offering prayers performs *Sajdah* on that sacred earth he pierces through seven veils.” The idea is to urge the people to realize the importance of the martyr and to revere the earth of his grave.

Martyr’s Day

It is the usual practice in the modern world to dedicate a day every year to a certain group or class of people to pay homage to them. Mothers’ Day, Teachers’ Day etc. are the examples of such days. But we do not find any day being dedicated to the martyrs by any people, except the Muslims. It is the day of Āshura. Its night may be regarded as the Martyrs’ Night.

We have already said that a martyr’s logic is a combination of the logic of a gnostic lover and that of a reformer. If the personalities of a reformer and a gnostic lover are combined a martyr comes into existence. A Muslim ibn Awsajah, a Habib ibn Muzahir and a Zuhayr ibn Qayn thus come into being. Anyhow, it must be remembered that all martyrs do not hold the same status.

During a night like the last one Imam Husayn offered a testimony concerning the martyrs of Āshura which indicates their high status. It is known that the martyrs occupy a prominent position among the pious and the virtuous and the companions of Imam Husayn occupy a prominent position among the martyrs. Do you know what Imam Husayn’s testimony was? Though his companions had been screened previously and those found not upto the mark had been asked to leave on the night of Āshura, he finally tested those who had been found upto the mark. This time not a single person was rejected.

There are two versions of the report. According to the first version, Imam Husayn had a tent where water was kept in water-skins and

he assembled his companions there. Why he chose, that tent for the assembly we do not know exactly. Probably he did so because that night there were no water-skins there. The only water which might have been available was that which was brought by Imam's son, Ali Akbar from the Euphrates.

It is reported by the authentic chroniclers of the Battle of Karbala that on the night of Āshura, Imam Husayn sent his son with a small contingent to fetch water. The mission was successfully accomplished. All drank the water they brought. Later Imam Husayn asked them to take a bath and wash themselves. He told them that it was the last supply of the water of this world that they were getting. Whatever be the case, he assembled together all his companions and allowed them to leave should they wish to do so. He delivered an eloquent and forceful sermon to them in which he referred to the development of that afternoon.

You must have heard that the enemy had delivered his last ultimatum, on the evening of 9th of Muharram, according to which the Imam had to take his final decision by the morning of the day of Āshura. Imam Sajjad who was present on that occasion related that Imam Husayn assembled his companions in a tent, adjacent to the tent in which he (Imam Sajjad) was confined to bed, and delivered a sermon. He began saying: "I praise Allah with the best praise. I am thankful to Him in all circumstances, whether pleasant or otherwise.....".

For a person, who takes a step in the pursuit of truth and righteousness, all that happens is good. A righteous man consciously performs his duty in all circumstances, irrespective of the consequences.

In this connection, Imam Husayn gave a very interesting reply to the celebrated poet, Farazdaq, who met him while he was on

his way to Karbala. Farazdaq explained the dangerous situation of Iraq. In reply the Imam said: "If things develop as we want, we shall praise Allah and seek His help for being thankful to Him, but if anything untoward happens, we won't be the losers, because our intentions are good and our conscience is clear. Hence, whatever comes about is good, not bad. I am thankful to Him in all circumstances, whether pleasant or otherwise."

What he meant to say was that he had seen good days and bad days in his life. The good days were when, in childhood, he sat in the lap of the holy Prophet and rode on his shoulder. There was a time when he was the most favourite child in the Muslim world. He was grateful to Allah for those days. He was grateful to Him for the present hardships also because all that had been cast in his lot was good to him. He was thankful to Allah who chose his family for Prophethood and who enabled his family (Ahl-al-Bayt) to understand the holy Qur'an fully and to have a true insight into the religion.

After stating this the Imam produced his historic testimony in respect of his companions and the members of his family. He said: "I don't know of any companions better and more faithful than my own companions, nor do I know of any kinsmen more virtuous and more dutiful than my own."

Thus, he accorded to his own companions a status higher than that of those companions of his grandfather, Prophet Muhammad, who were killed fighting in his company, and of those companions of his father, Imam Ali who were killed in the battles of Jamal, Siffin and Nahrawan. He said that he was not aware of any kinsmen more virtuous and more dutiful than his own. Thus, he accorded recognition to their high position and expressed his gratitude to them. Then he went on to say: "Gentlemen! I would like to tell you all, my companions and my kinsmen both, that these people

(enemy forces) are not concerned with anybody except me. They regard me to be their sole adversary. They want me to take the oath of allegiance. If they could eliminate me, they would have nothing to do with you. The enemy is not concerned with you. You have pledged your allegiance to me. Now I release you from your commitment. You are under no obligation to stay here. You are compelled by no friend or foe. You are absolutely free. Whosoever wants to go may go.” Then addressing his companions, he said: “Let each one of you take hold of the hand of one of my kinsmen, and leave.”

The members of Imam Husayn’s family included both adults and minors. Moreover, they were all strangers there. The Imam did not want them all to leave together. So he asked each of his companions to hold the hand of each one of them and leave the battlefield.

This incident throws light on the high character of Imam Husayn’s companions. They were under no compulsion from any side. The enemy was not concerned with them. The Imam had set them free from their obligation. In these circumstances, the heart warming reply that each of the companions and relatives of the Imam gave was remarkable. Some excerpts appear in the following pages.

On the day of Āshura and during the night preceding it, it was a matter of great satisfaction for the Imam to see that all his relatives from the smallest child to the most aged person were following in his footsteps.

Another matter of satisfaction for him was that none of his companions showed the slightest sign of weakness. On the other hand, they brought a number of hostile personnel over to their own side. Such people joined them, both on the day of Āshura and the night preceding it. Hur ibn Yazid Riyahi was one of them.

In all, 30 people joined him during the night of Āshura. These were the gratifying events for the Imam.

One by one, Imam Husayn's companions said to him: "Our Master! Do you permit us to go away and leave you alone? That cannot be. Life has no value in comparison with you."

One of them said: "I wish I were killed; my body was burnt, my ashes scattered and I might have been brought to life again to be killed for your sake. I wish this process were repeated seventy times. To be killed only once means nothing."

Another companion said: "I wish I were killed a thousand times consecutively. I wish I had a thousand lives, all to be Sacrificed for you."

The first one to speak was his conscientious brother, Abu al-Fazl al-Abbas. Others repeated what he said.

This was their test. After they had all pronounced their decision, Imam Husayn disclosed what was going to happen the next day. He said: "I tell you that all of you will be killed tomorrow." They all thanked Allah for being given an opportunity to sacrifice their lives in the cause of Allah and for the sake of their Prophet's descendant.

Martyr's Valour

Here, there is a good food for thought. Had it not been a question of a martyr's logic, it could have been argued that the stay of those people was useless. If Imam Husayn was to be killed in any case why should they have stayed on, except that they, too, should have been killed? And why did they stay on?

Imam Husayn did not compel them to depart. He did not tell them that their stay was useless and they would lose their lives in vain; and hence their stay was forbidden.

Imam Husayn did not say any of these thing. On the other hand, he hailed their willingness to make the supreme sacrifice. This shows that a martyr's logic is different from that of other people. A martyr often sacrifices his life to create fervour, to enlighten the society, to revive it and to infuse fresh blood into its body. This Was one such occasion.

To defeat the enemy is not the only object of martyrdom. It aims at creating fervour also. If Imam Husayn's companions had not laid down their lives that day, how could so much fervour have been created? Though Imam Husayn was the central figure in this event of martyrdom, his companions added to its lustre, grandeur and dignity. Without their contribution, Imam Husayn's martyrdom might not have assumed such a significance as to move, educate and encourage people for hundreds, nay thousands of years.

In the end, we seek refuge in the unabounded Mercy of Allah Subhanahu wa ta'ala and invite you to pray that He may bestow upon us the grace to surrender willingly our will to His Will, and grant us His grace and honour of martyrdom in His Cause.

* * * * *

3

by
Ayatullah Murtaza Mutahhery

Before saying something about Islamic slogans it appears to be necessary to explain what a “slogan” means. A slogan signifies a battle cry, which may be a piece of prose or a poetical composition. In olden times every group of warriors had its own distinctive slogan. The battles usually began with individual combats between two persons, one from each side. The warriors used to keep themselves fully armed day and night. They were always equipped with a helmet, a coat of mail and a pair of military shoes. Every soldier had with him a sword, a spear and a shield as his weapons. His face used to be covered upto his nose. Only the eyes were kept uncovered. That is why it was a bit difficult in the battlefield to know which soldier belonged to which side.

Normally every body keeps his face and neck open, and wears his own distinctive dress. Different people put on different kinds of clothes. But in a battle all appeared to be so alike that it was difficult to distinguish between a friend and a foe. It often happened that some soldiers instead of attacking the enemy killed their own comrades.

For this reason it was necessary that every army and its various groups should have a common slogan. It Usually consisted of a sentence which was raised off and on, so that it might become clear which soldier belonged to which side. Both the opposing armies involved in a battle had their distinctive slogans and thus the possibility of any one killing his own comrades by mistake was eliminated.

Sometimes a slogan was more elaborate. A warrior besides raising a slogan of his own group introduced himself also.

The Arabs are endowed with a special aptitude for poetical art. Poetry is rooted in their life. That is why when a warrior entered the battlefield, he used to introduce himself by means of a war song. When a warrior threw a challenge and called for a contender to meet him in an individual combat, he usually expressed his challenge in a couplet, and the one who accepted his challenge, also often expressed his readiness in another couplet having the same metre and rhyme, notwithstanding the fact that it is not so easy to do that extempore.

Slogans of the Battle of the Ditch

On the occasion of this battle the holy Prophet had a ditch dug round Madina to prevent the enemy from entering the city. Anyhow a few horsemen were able to cross the ditch at a point where it was not wide enough. One of these persons was Amr ibn Abd Wadd, who was known as Ma'rut. He crossed the ditch and shouted:

“Is there anybody bold enough to fight me?”

The Muslims knew Amr ibn Abd Wadd well. They were frightened of him and thought that to fight him meant courting death. So none dared to respond him except a young man who rose from his seat and addressing the holy Prophet said: “Messenger of Allah, allow me to go out and fight him.” But the Prophet asked him to sit down. This young man was Ali, the brave son of Abu Talib. Amr ibn Abd Wadd threw his challenge again. This time also none except Imam Ali rose. The honour of the Muslims was at stake. Umar ibn al-Khattab making a plea on behalf of the Muslims said: “Messenger of Allah, if none is accepting his challenge, that is because it is not possible to measure swords with him. Once I was with him in a caravan. On our way we had to face a big band of robbers. This man fought them single-handed and used the young one of a camel as his shield. Who can dare to fight him?”

At last to humiliate the Muslims Amr ibn Abd Wadd recited a couplet which meant:

“My throat is sore for shouting for you to come and meet me. Now I know that even the brave among you are cowards and cannot face a warrior like me.”

Thereupon the holy Prophet allowed Ali to go out. Imam Ali rose from his seat and shouted in verse,

“Your challenge has been accepted by a man who is not weak.”

Ali’s reply was in the same metre and rhyme as used by Amr. Ali stepped forward and gained a victory. The circumstances were such that when Ali proceeded to fight, the holy Prophet said:

“The whole of faith is going to fight against the whole of infidelity.” He meant to say that combat was to decide the fate of Islam and paganism.

Slogans of the Day of Āshura

Slogans were one of the prominent features of the Battle of Karbala. These slogans were raised by Imam

Husayn himself, his family members and his companions. They consisted of some verses by means of which they introduced themselves and threw light on their movement. What Imam Husayn said on that occasion was of utmost importance.

It has been observed throughout history that when people get together to achieve a goal, they often realize that their movement was being misrepresented by the outsiders. The same happened in the early days of the constitutional government in Iran, when all sorts of rumours were rampant. Simple people were often assembled under a plausible pretext. When they dispersed, only then they realized that there was some ulterior motive.

Imam Husayn offered many a slogan on the day of Āshura. He explained the factual position of his movement and told his audience why he was not willing to pledge his allegiance to Yazid and why he had come to Karbala to shed the last drop of his blood. It is regrettable that we, the Shi'ah, have forgotten the Imam's slogans and have replaced them with some other slogans which do not represent his movement.

Our Imams came in succession. They instructed that the memory of Āshura must be kept alive. It was a great asset which must be protected.

You should be able to explain the significance of Āshura.

When a Sunnite or a Christian or a Jew or an atheist asks you, "Why do you assemble on the 9th and the 10th of Muharram? Why do you close your business and stop your normal activities on these days? Why do you get together in the masjids? Why do you prepare mourning bands? Why do you beat your chests? Why do you lash your bodies with chains? Why do you weep and wail? After all what is your aim and what do you want to show?" In reply to these questions you should be able to explain your aim and the purpose of your weeping and mourning. Imam Husayn did not go to Karbala simply to be killed without explaining his goal. He said what he wanted to say and made his aim and object very clear.

Let us see what slogans he raised on the day of Āshura. It were his slogans which infused a new life in Islam. These slogans shook the Umayyad caliphate to its foundation, and as a result the Abbasid government came into power. Had not there been the movement of Imam Husayn, the Umayyad clique which, according to Abdullah Alaini and others, had a program of predominating the destiny of the Muslim countries for ever, would have continued to rule for a thousand years. But the question is what

the aim of this ruling clique was. Its aim was to lead the people back to pre-Islamic paganism under the cloak of Islam. Fortunately Imam Husayn through his slogans unveiled the truth and frustrated the Umayyad plans.

We see that on the day of Āshura two kinds of slogans were raised. Some slogans introduced the personality of the Imam. Some others, which were more frequent, represented his feelings, views and ideas.

Slogans of Pride

One of the themes of his slogans on the day of Āshura was his pride in being a son of Imam Ali. Though his opponents were the enemies of Imam Ali, yet they claimed to be Muslims. Imam Husayn made it a point to take pride in his position with a reference to his relation with Imam Ali. Some of the verses which he recited on the day of Āshura were his own, while some others were of other poets. For example he recited a number of verses of Farwah ibn Musayk, which were all in the style of martial poetry. A couplet which the Imam used as his slogan said:

“Death is better than courting infamy; and infamy is better than entering the Fire.”

This slogan may be called the slogan of freedom, honour, and nobility of character. To a true Muslim it is more pleasing to embrace death than to shoulder the burden of humiliation.

Do you know why Imam Husayn was so readily willing to shed the last drop of his blood? He himself has explained the reason.

Imam Husayn was brought up under the tutelage of the holy Prophet and Imam Ali. His mother whom he suckled was none else than Fatimah-tuz-Zahra, daughter of the Prophet, the illustrious.

On the day of Āshura Imam Husayn delivered a sermon. At that time no hope was left. A man of a less calibre than that of Imam Husayn surely would have lost his heart completely. But his sermon was full of enthusiasm and zeal. It appeared as if his mouth was spilling fire.

Ibn Ziyad a blood-thirsty tyrant was appointed the governor of Kufah. Some twenty years back his father had struck terror in this very city. When the people of Kufah heard the news of his appointment, they were terrified. They concealed themselves in their houses because they knew him with reference to his cruel forefathers.

People had an experience of the high-handed policy of Ibn Ziyad and his father. Therefore as soon as Ibn Ziyad took over the administration of Kufah their ideas underwent a change. Now they had a different standard of virtue. Previously they advocated *jihad*. Now they became pacifists. Previously they loved Islam. Now their life was more dear to them. But Imam Husayn held Islam more dear than his life. He was not to be overawed by any body. Addressing the people he boldly said:

“Look! Your governor is a bastard, son of a bastard. He has put me in a fix. Either I should lose my life or succumb to a life of humiliation. But let him know that I am far above all that. My humiliation cannot be tolerated by Allah, His Messenger, the believers and the pure and chaste laps on which I have grown.”

What the Imam meant was that he had grown on the lap of Imam Ali and sucked the milk of the holy Prophet's daughter, Fatimah-tuz-Zahra. How could such a person accept humiliation and tolerate to be a captive of a man like Ibn Ziyad?

These were the slogans of Imam Husayn on the day of Āshura.

A well-known sentence is commonly ascribed to Imam Husayn. According to it he was saying: “Let me have some water.”

We have not come across such a sentence anywhere. There is only one report which says that he was seeking water when he was attacking. Indications point out that this sentence means that he was looking for water, not that he was asking for it.

Our behaviour is not in keeping with the grandeur and dignity of Imam Husayn. People recite some verses while lamenting the Imam and beating their chests. Lamenting is extremely good. The Imams used to send for poets and lamenters and asked them to recite elegies and dirges. While they did so the Imams used to shed tears and weep. Within certain limits we agree to the propriety of lamentation, chest-beating and lashing the body with chains. But the verses recited on this occasion should not be self-invented. They should represent the Husayni slogans, and should not be merely such catchwords as: “My young man Akbar, my young man Asghar.” The Husayni slogans are of a somewhat different character.

Slogans of Imam Husayn

Imam Husayn said loudly: “Don’t you see! Truth is not being followed. Falsehood is not being shunned. It’s time that the true believer should earnestly seek to meet his Lord.”

It is note worthy that he called himself ‘the believer’ and not Imam or simply Husayn.

“I don’t find death but a bliss and don’t find life with tyrants but annoying.”

He added: “I’m not like the common folk. My uprising isn’t aimed

at self-aggrandizement. All should know that I don't want to amass wealth or to set up my rule”

Each of these sentences is worth being transcribed in letters of gold and disseminated all the world over, so that the whole world may know the truth about Imam Husayn's movement.

When Imam Husayn left Mecca for Madina, he wrote a testament and addressed it to his brother, Muhammad ibn Hanafiyah. It has been reproduced by Ibn Taus. In it the Imam explained his policy and described the motive of his uprising. He said:

“I'm not setting out with the intention of aggression or self-aggrandizement, nor do I want to be unjust or a mischief-maker. I am setting out to reform the community of my grandfather. I want to exhort people to do what is good and to restrain them from evil. I shall be following in the footsteps of my grandfather and father”, (i.e. Prophet Muhammad and Imam Ali, peace be on them).

In the light of this statement it is easy to understand why the Imams were so particular about arranging the mourning of Imam Husayn and why have they declared that to be a meritorious act. Instructions in this respect were not issued by them with the idea of expressing pain and grief at the distress of a few ill-fated persons or expressing sympathy with them, as is one in the case of an ordinary condolence. For example if our father or mother dies, people condole his or her death and express sympathy with us. But the death of our relatives has no importance, because it has no ideal or a philosophy behind it. The Imams have issued instructions about the mourning of Imam Husayn with a view to keep the movement of Āshura and its ideology alive. Imam Husayn is not personally present among us, but at the beginning of every new year we can feel his symbolic presence and can be inspired by him to defend the down-trodden and the under-privileged and to

fight against the evil forces with a view to maintain the true shape and spirit of Islam.

Slogans of Muharram

Now Imam Husayn is not present among us. But as the month of Muharram begins, people suddenly feel as if these words still strike their ears:

“Don’t you see! Truth is not being followed. Falsehood is not being shunned. It’s time that the true believer should earnestly seek to meet his Lord.”

These words are meant to inspire his followers to exhort the people to what is good and to restrain them from what is evil. These words should fill the Shi‘ites with a zeal and a determination to bring about reconciliation among the Muslims and to set right their affairs.

If we are asked as to the significance of Āshura, we should say that it is the day of the renewal of our life.

We want to attend the Husayni school (mourning assemblies) every day and illuminate our heart and mind with its pure teachings. We want to learn the principles of Islam anew and imbibe its fundamental elements. We do not want to be bereft of the spirit of the exhortation to what is good and restraining from what is evil. We do not want to be deprived of the sentiments of sacrifice, martyrdom and *jihad* nor do we want to commit sins and consummate them by misusing the name of Imam Husayn.

Our sins can be pardoned only when our spirit comes into direct communion with that of Husayn and we become Husayni in the true sense of the word. Then and only then the rays of his illuminated personality will reflect on us and only then we will not go near a sin.

Slogans of Renaissance of Islam

That was the reason why Imam Husayn, the Doyen of the Martyrs, towards the end of Mu‘awiya’s reign wrote letters to the surviving companions of the holy Prophet and their descendants. He invited them to come to Mecca. More or less one thousand companions and the followers (successors of the companions) assembled at Mina. Addressing them Imam Husayn said:

“Do you know what treatment is being meted out to us and our supporters? You should convey what transpires here to your compatriots at home.”

Then he narrated the virtues and excellences of his great father and counselled his audience to exhort people to do what is right and restrain them from what is evil.

The way of the expression of this sermon reproduced in the *Tuhaf al-Uqul un Ale Rasul* indicates that it was delivered on this occasion. To explain what we mean, we quote some relevant sentences from it. After having recited some verses of the Qur’an, the Imam said:

“Men you are known for your knowledge, virtue and sincerity. You are held in esteem by the people. You are respected by the people of noble character and honoured by the weak. Even those to whom you have shown no favour consider you to be superior to them.”

He continued to say: “You wish for blessings of Allah. But I fear lest you may earn His displeasure. You hold a position which is not held by others. You have a good reputation. Still you see that the covenants made to Allah are being violated, but you do not feel perturbed, while you are upset if a promise made to your fathers is not fulfilled. Nobody cares for the Islamic laws. The blind, the dumb and the crippled have been left to wander about in the townships but none feels pity for them. You do not heed to your

responsibility and pay no attention to those who want to do their duty. You overlook irregularities and excesses and co-operate with the oppressors to save your skin. It is these things which Allah has forbidden and told others to forbid them. But you are heedless of all this. It is you who are suffering the most, because you have been forcibly deprived of the position, which is your right as the divines. I wish you could understand.”

He added: “In fact the administrative and executive power should have been in the hands of the divines who know what is lawful and what is unlawful and to whom Allah has entrusted the supervision of these affairs. You were removed from your position because you deviated from the right path, and despite clear proofs you are not unanimous about the Sunnah (holy Prophet’s words and acts). Had you felt your responsibility and endured some hardship, you would have wielded full power. But you gave your place to the oppressors. You surrendered your powers to them. They adopt dubious ways and follow their own base desires. They prevailed upon you because you were afraid of death. You held dear your life, which is after all not lasting. You handed over the weak to them. Some of the weak have been enslaved and crushed. Others are facing starvation. Now the oppressors are the absolute masters. They do whatever they like. They follow the ways of the wicked and do not care for Allah. In every town their khatib shouts from the pulpit. They have become the sole masters of Allah’s earth. None can hold their hands. All are subservient to them. They can lay their hand on whomever they like. None can stop them. Some of them are arrogant, stubborn and oppressive. Some others are indifferent to Allah and the Hereafter. Is it not amazing that the unjust and the selfish have become masters of the land? They are interested only in plundering it. Those who show no mercy to the believers, have become the rulers.”

Imam Husayn’s slogans are the slogans of the revival of Islam.

Some of them are as under:

“Why have a few individuals taken possession of the public treasury belonging to the Muslims?”

* * *

“Why are the things made unlawful by Allah being declared lawful and the things made lawful by Allah being declared unlawful?”

* * *

“Why have the people been divided into two classes? The common folk are suffering from poverty and a few are eating so much that they have become too fat to move about.”

* * *

Addressing the troops of Hur ibn Yazid Riyahi, Imam Husayn delivered a sermon. In this sermon he quoted a saying of the holy Prophet. He said:

“In regard to the conditions as they are prevailing at present, when public money is being misused and the divine injunctions are being misinterpreted, the holy Prophet has said: ‘If a Muslim of sound intellect comes to know of these conditions and he still keeps quiet, Allah has a right to dispatch him where he dispatches all wrong-doers’. Therefore I feel that in the present circumstances I have the utmost responsibility.”

This is the philosophy of Āshura and these are its life-giving slogans.

In the mourning meetings and processions of Muharram we should use only life-giving slogan and should avoid the paralysing ones. The paralysing slogans not only will be of no use to us, but they will also cut us off from Imam Husayn. It is highly meritorious to weep for Imam Husayn, provided we have a true picture of him in our minds.

It is not possible that a man be truly faithful but he should not have love for Imam Husayn, who is an embodiment of faith.

A tradition says: “Husayn’s love has been implanted in the hearts of the faithful.” According to another tradition Imam al-Sadiq has said: “Husayn is the torch of guidance and the ark of salvation.”

When Imam Husayn was left alone in the battlefield, he raised lofty slogans and recited a large number of verses.

Once he said:

“I am son of Ali, who was the most learned man (next to the Prophet) of the House of Idas him. This distinction is enough for me to be proud of.”

As we mentioned earlier, while attacking the enemy he recited a couplet which said: “Death is better than courting itifamy; and infamy is better than entering the Fire.”

In fact the exploit of the martyrs of Karbala needs deep thinking. It is astonishing how such a small group of men could achieve such a brilliant success. If Imam Husayn had some worldly motive and if he were killed for a material cause, he could not have attained such an eminence in the world. Even a cursory glance at his movement will show that there was no personal or material interest behind his movement. The importance which his movement has gained in the history of Islam, and even in the history of the world, is due to the fact that the situation prevailing in the Muslim world at that time had put a great responsibility on the shoulders of the Imam. He had come to the conclusion that in the then prevailing circumstances the only way to protect Islam was that he should lead an uprising and lay down his life.

In modern times also we need a comprehensive slogan. In the

present circumstances one of our slogans should be:
“Islamic republic, Islamic republic,
Neither pro-East, nor pro-West.”

* * * * *

I

S

L

A

M

“Have you fully realized what Islam is?
It is indeed a religion founded on truth.

It is such a fountain-head of learning
that several streams of wisdom
and knowledge flow from it.

It is such a lamp
that several lamps will be lighted from it.

It is a lofty beacon
illuminating the path of Allah.

It is such a set of principles and beliefs
that will satisfy every seeker of truth and
reality.

Know you all!

that Allāh has made Islam the most
sublime path

for the attainment of His supreme pleasure
and the highest standard of His obedience.

He has favoured it with
noble precepts

exalted principles
undeniable wisdom

undoubtable arguments
and unchallengeable supremacy.

It is upto you to maintain the eminence
and dignity granted to it by the Lord,

to follow it sincerely,
to do justice to its articles of faith and
belief,

to obey implicitly its tenets and orders
and to give it the proper place in your

lives.”

Imam ‘Ali (Peace be on him)