

Martyr of Freedom

AhlulBayt Islamic Mission

The revolution of Imam Hussain (a) stemmed from the soul of the Islamic message. It sprung from and was the very embodiment of the heart of the human conscience. A conscience that defies degradation, tyranny and oppression; a conscience that continually affirms the nobility of equality, freedom and justice. With his still resonating stand, Hussain etched into the soul of humanity an eternal stand against oppression.

After years of unjust tyrannical rule, the exuberant torch of Islam had turned into a faint glimmer kept alight by a devoted few. The religion had become nothing more than a tool in the hands of despotic rulers who shared neither its supreme teachings nor elevating principles.

Living in a social domain rife in corruption and favoritism, with the law and wealth in the hands of an elite, the Muslim community had turned its face away from its troubles and had become indifferent to the adversities facing it. Yet, despite the rapidly deteriorating state of affairs, one obstacle firmly remained in the path of the wicked regime and the realisation of its superficial goals. The oppressive regime constantly looked to strengthen its reigns over the Islamic helm by obtaining legitimacy for their unjust rule from the Household of the Prophet - whom the masses still regarded as the embodiment of the true message of Islam. However, this hope remained futile. In spite of the extreme pressures which they placed upon them; the Household of the Prophet remained in firm denunciation of their unjust rule.

Amid the socio-ethical decline of the time, Imam Hasan, Hussain's older brother, held regular gatherings in Madina, the city of his grandfather the Prophet. During such gatherings he would address queries from the public and impart to them Islamic teachings, thereby elucidating their Godly given rights and freedoms. In this way a select group of pious Muslims had formed, driven solely by their unwavering and resolute belief in the need for spirituality and justice in society, preferring to use the pen over the sword in bringing about reform.

Before his demise, Hasan appointed Hussain as the guardian over the affairs of the Muslim community. In so doing, he kept to the instruction laid down by the Prophet when he famously said; *"Hasan and Hussain are both leaders (Imams) whether they rise up or not."* Imam Hussain continued in the same manner as his brother whose demise left no void in the community, for it was filled by an equal in piety, knowledge and wisdom.

On the other side, Yazid took to the helm of the Muslim nation and pronounced himself as the leader of the Islamic caliphate following the death of his father. Yazid was a character whose brutality and viciousness knew no bounds. With his open indulgence in the vile acts clearly contradictory to the Islamic teachings, he showed himself to be the latest product from a family deeply-rooted in their hatred for Islam.

Amongst the foremost actions he took in his role as leader, Yazid demanded allegiance from Hussain - he knew too well that the acceptance of the entire Muslim community was of no value without Hussain's acceptance. In reply to this unacceptable demand, Hussain majestically replied: ***"a person like me can never pledge allegiance to a person like him"***, thereby highlighting the universality of the principles from which his stand stemmed from.

In this way a supreme Sacrifice that was to transcend beyond superficial barriers of caste, creed and religion was put in motion. Hussain rose to restore freedom, peace, equality and justice; qualities which the Divine Message had perfected but were constantly undermined by those who hijacked religion and acted in its name. In a will which he wrote before leaving Medina, Hussain wrote; ***“I have risen as I seek to reform the community of my grandfather. I wish to bid the good and forbid the evil.”***

Amongst the unique identifiers of Hussain’s revolt was the inseparable attachment of the entire movement to its’ awe-inspiring goals. Hussain did not let outbursts of anger or pressures exerted by the unjust rulers of his time affect the direction of his movement in the least. Despite the enormity of the dangers facing him, each of his moves was well calculated and executed with an unerring precision. Indeed many within the masses, who shared in their sentiments against Yazid and his accomplices, continually tried to advise Hussain to take an alternate approach. Some advised Hussain to flee to remote lands where he would be safe from the troops of Yazid, but Hussain knew too well the profane character of Yazid; and more importantly, the vital need for reform within the community.

On the tenth of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic Calendar, Hussain stood bravely with around seventy-two companions and his family members on the plains of Karbala, in present day Iraq, confronted by an army in excess of thirty-thousand. On the night preceding the great sacrifice, Hussain urged his companions to part his company as they had already shown their loyalty and obedience but they remained steadfast and chose to remain.

Why is this we may ask in the face of imminent death? The answer is very obvious; they had tasted in the presence of Hussain the values of Truth, Freedom, Justice and above all the true meaning of Life. Forsaking Hussain would be tantamount to the worst of deaths! It should not therefore come to us as a surprise that in the face of such a huge army, Hussain’s companions began by exhorting their opponents towards righteousness or established prayers in the midst of raining arrows and spears. Indeed, the famous couplet of Hussain; Death in Honour is preferable to Life in Humiliation, reverberated throughout this entire camp, all included, from the women, the youthful soldiers to the elders of above ninety years of age.

The small camp of Hussain was destroyed, all the men brutally massacred, the women and children taken captive and paraded on a humiliating display around the cities. However, this tragedy would soon be recalled in the books of history as the ‘Tragedy of Karbala’. A narrative whose admirers have since multiplied across the four corners of the globe - encompassing followers of different faiths and races. In this way, Hussain became victorious over his enemy in the most profound of ways and wrote with his pure blood the most glorious of all epics of heroism and determinism.

The day Imam Hussain was martyred on the plains of Karbala was the day he was reborn; for the revolution which he led, set loose an everlasting cry for righteousness and justice; a paradigm that has been forever etched within the hearts of humanity. As the famous poet Iqbal beautifully expressed in his couplets dedicated to Hussain: *“Truth survives and triumphs because of Hussain. Falsehood is destined to meet with failure and grief.”*