



# THE MINISTER

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**THE MINISTER**  
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(It is not necessary that the trustees may agree with the writer's view.)

# The Guidance of Mankind

By Rosemary (Mariam) Al Attar

As mentioned previously, Imamate is the institution inaugurated by Allah Himself for the guidance of mankind, and is conferred upon His chosen ones only if they pass a test. This is shown by the following Qur'anic verse:

And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain Commands, which he fulfilled: He said "I will make you an Imam to the people." He pleaded "And also (Imams) from my offspring!" He answered: "But My Promise is not within reach of evil-doers." (2:124)

We understand from this that the Imamate is a Covenant between Allah (s.w.t) and the tested one of His chosen ones, and that it is not unconditionally hereditary and will never be conferred upon the unjust, for instance, an Idol worshipper. Such a person that has been polluted, even if it was in the past and could

never be suitable to be an Imam, i.e. a divinely commanded leader of mankind.

Imam Ali was the only one of the Companions of the Prophet, who, like the Prophet himself, had never worshipped idols. With the conclusion of the Prophethood, the Imamate took its rightful place in the Prophet's Household (Ahl-ul Bayt), who Allah (s.w.t) declared purified Himself (33:33).

The many hypocrites who had joined the rank of Islam wanting power and position, had ideas of their own which they planned to put into effect once the Prophet had passed away. Everything he had achieved would have gone to waste unless someone with divine qualities was appointed in the Prophet's place. (Indeed, such a person must have been appointed for we still have the Holy Qur'an, complete and

unaltered, which bears out the verse:

“We have, without doubt, sent down the Message and We will assuredly guard it.”(15:9)

It has been well guarded. The Prophet's proclamation was made at Ghadir Khum, a desert junction from where pilgrims returning from hajj would disperse and go their separate ways. The Prophet was aware that he had made his final pilgrimage, and with the vast multitude accompanying him, he was approaching Ghadir Khum when the following revelation - of huge significance - came to him:

O Prophet! Communicate the Message which has been revealed to you by your Lord without concealing one single part of it. If you do not deliver the entire Message, it is as if you have not delivered the Message at all. Allah will defend you against men who mean mischief; Allah does not guide the unbelievers. (5:67)

It is understood from these words that a revelation had been received which had not yet been conveyed to the people. It was obviously something of great importance, and it would seem the Prophet was awaiting the right moment to deliver it, fearing it would never be accepted by “certain men of mischief.”

But Allah (s.w.t) had made clear the Faith was not complete and all the effort of the Prophet had spent on it would be wasted as far as Mankind was concerned, without its delivery. So this revelation must mean the delivery of that vital part – upon which the fulfillment of the Holy Prophet's mission depended.

The Prophet's immediate reaction was to bring the huge caravan to a halt: they waited for those ahead of them to return and those behind to catch up. The Prophet made it known that he was about to make announcement. A

platform of camel saddles was hastily erected which the Prophet ascended, and with him went Imam Ali, who stood to the right of the Prophet. He began with praise and glory to Allah (s.w.t) and continued with an eloquent sermon. The Muslims learned of his impending death when he said:

“I have been summoned and it is nearly the moment for me to answer. The time has come for me to part from you. I leave behind me, among you, two things, which if you cling to them, will never let you go astray: that is, the Book of Allah, and my offspring from my Family (Ahl-ul Bayt). They will never leave you until they bring you to me at the Fountain of Kawthar.”

Then he called out in stentorian tones: “Am I not more appropriate to rule you than yourselves?” A deafening roar of assent came from the attentive multitudes.

Then, taking hold of both Imam Ali’s arms, the Prophet raised then on high, saying:

“Of whomever I am the Master (‘mawla’), this man Ali is his Master. O Allah! Befriend whoever befriends him; be hostile to whoever opposes him; support whoever supports him; and desert whoever deserts him.”

Had the Prophet not spoken clearly? Did he not use simple words in their own language? Was there anyone present who could misinterpret his meaning? Were they not all about to pay allegiance to the Commander of the Faithful (‘Amir il-Momineen), as the Prophet had announced his successor would henceforth be known?

Be that as it may, the Muslims thronged around Imam Ali, intent on swearing allegiance and congratulating him, and among them were the two men who would be the first and

second caliphs. It was at this time that the last verse of the Holy Qur'an was revealed, namely:

“This day have I perfected for you your religion, and have completed My Favour on you and chosen for you ISLAM to be your religion.” (5:3)

During the life time of the Prophet, many sincere Muslims had come to love Imam Ali deeply, and always sought his company. These people, who believed in divine guidance, were naturally determined to follow him after the Prophet's death. They were so frequently referred to as “Shia of Ali” that gradually the term “Shia” on its own (or “follower”) came to mean the same thing. There is no doubt, however, that after the events at Ghadir Khum, Imam Ali also occupied a unique and central position among the Companions of the Prophet.

At Ghadir Khum, the Prophet had told the Muslims that his death was imminent, and once

back in Medina he began to make speech after speech warning, them against discord after him and opposition to him. He reminded them to follow his Family, to obey them, to support, guard and hold fast to them in matters of religion. Again he confirmed that Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib was his successor. These repeated warnings show that he was worried about the way the Muslims - or some of them - would treat the Holy Qur'an and his Ahl-ul Bayt after he was gone.

Before long the Prophet became unwell. He told Imam Ali that he had grown used to revising the Holy Qur'an with Angel Gabriel annually but that year Angel Gabriel had revised it with him twice. This led the Prophet to believe that it was because his allotted life span was at hand. He requested that no one but Imam Ali should wash him after his death.

At home he remained in a weak condition for three days.

Then he went to the mosque, with Imam Ali and another Companion supporting him. He ascended the pulpit and made his final speech; then descending, he led the people in a short prayer, and returned to his home.

With the death of the Prophet, the issue of his successor was brought to the fore, and had the effect of distinguishing the Shia - who firmly believed in the necessity of carrying out the Prophet's instruction to follow Imam Ali in his divinely appointed position - from the Sunni with an elected Caliph ruling Islamic society.

The Prophet had not even taken his last breath - and naturally Imam Ali was attending to him when the people who could not wait for his departure from this world, began quarrelling among themselves as to who should hold the Authority-Supreme.

The opposing sides were the "Muhajir" (those who had emigrated from Mecca to Medina), and the "Ansar" or helpers (those Medinites who had given the Meccans asylum).

After much argument, Omar ibn Khattab of the Muhajir declared Abu Bakr the Caliph and swore allegiance to him. Already forgotten was the fact that two months earlier they had all paid homage to Imam Ali, the Commander of the Faithful.

After Imam Ali had washed his beloved cousin's body, assisted by a few trusted companions, they sorrowfully buried him, and it was only then that Imam Ali learned that some companions, ignoring the sad event in the Prophet's house, had managed to proclaim Abu Bakr as the Prophet's successor, or Caliph.

*(To Be Continued...)*

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# Muslim Women in the Modern World

By Ayatullah Mohsen Araki

Although Western civilisation has presented many services to human society through its advanced knowledge and technology, on the other hand it has brought many unsolved daily problems and has had a destructive influence upon human society due to its position vis-à-vis religion and moral values.

One of the most significant elements of Western civilisation which has negatively influenced human society, due to its illogical views vis-à-vis religion and religious values, is the superficial, materialistic view of humankind which evaluates it in accordance with materialistic standards and criteria. It has established its social relations, particularly family relations, based upon these materialistic values and criteria.

There are a number of unpleasant and very

distressing facts about women's circumstances in Western society, which explains the unhappy life of women in the West and indicates their privation and civil death under the governance of the values of Western civilisation.

In the Reformation Movement, which resulted in the expansion of Western civilisation, there was a struggle to improve the condition of women and to take them out of the misery and deprivation of middle-age. However, due to the West's secular separation of its society from its religion and moral values, the movement for women's freedom led to some advancements which deviated from morality and caused social and family disruption.

The unfortunate result of the women's freedom movement in the shadow of the values of

Western civilisation was women's captivity and servitude, during this period, not to her husband, father or other family members, but to strangers. Women were slaves for wealthy men, owners of large cartels and companies. In the new period of women's servitude women were a means for the indulgence of men's sensual desires or were used for political or economic purposes.

Women in the West needed to work twice as hard as before. They had to respond to the immoral demands of society as well as having to respond to their individual needs. Today a new movement is needed which can free women from the chains that have imprisoned her true identity and personality in the name of civilisation. A new movement is needed which can return to her the greatness of her humanity and which will fulfill her human rights.

The most important mission of Muslim women in the

contemporary world is to lead the frontiers of this movement. A modern freedom-seeking movement is needed to enable women to claim back their true identity and open up routes for securing the rights of all women.

The characteristics of a modern freedom movement for women are as follows:

1. The achievement of women's rights by enforcing rules and plans which clarify women's rights from the point of view of Islamic thought.

In Islam, men and women are both equal in humanity and servitude of Allah (SWT) and both are equal in His Presence. The criterion superiority amongst humankind is not whether one is a man or a woman: lies in nothing but piety. Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'an in chapter 3, verse 195:

“So their Lord accepted of them (their supplication and answered them), “Never will I

allow to be lost the work of any of you, be he male or female. You are (members) one of another.”

Allah (SWT) says in another verse, chapter 49, verse 13:

“O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily the most honourable of you with Allah is the pious.”

It is evident that the equal status of men and women does not imply their equality in everything. Due to the physiological and psychological differences and the special place that both men and women possess in the structure of society, each has a specific role in the composition of society. The rules specific to either gender cannot be inter-changed, nor can one perform them instead of the other.

2. To free women from the double-edge sword of

deprivation and lack of identity, one edge of which represents a view of women from a purely materialistic perspective. This is the perspective upon which the position of women Western civilisation has been based and also the point from which it has developed. The other edge of this sword represents the contempt with which women are treated and which is deeply rooted in social tradition.

A Muslim woman in her Islamic freedom-seeking movement should be able to combat the captivity that has resulted from the materialistic values of 'modern' civilisation on the one hand and the false obligations inherited from social traditions on the other. The contemporary Muslim woman can become successful on these two battle fronts on the condition that she has the necessary Islamic education and creates in herself the true characteristics of the personality of a Muslim woman.

The true characteristics of a Muslim woman who is able to follow the example of Lady Fatimah Zahra (SA), who has been able to develop her Islamic personality and who, as a responsible woman, acknowledges and performs her complex social and religious duties can be summarised in the following passage:

i. Religious piety and having correct Islamic knowledge in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah of Prophet Mohammad (SAWA) and his purified Household (AS).

ii. Qualities like those of Lady Khadija (SA) who accompanied Prophet Mohammad (SAWA) in combating polytheism and infidelity at every stage and who, by her generosity with her life and wealth played a great role in laying the foundation of Islam and defending the Prophethood of Prophet Mohammad (SAWA).

Also, qualities like those of Lady Fatimah (SA), who was at the frontier of combating the diversion from the true line of Islam after Prophet Mohammad (SAWA) and who had the most important role in defending the true Islam and the Imamate, the continuity of the message of the Prophet Mohammad (SAWA). Another example is Lady Zainab (SA) who, in the renewed restoration movement of Islam, played the greatest role after the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (AS). Through Lady Zainab's (SA) role, she can be seen as the precursor to the Islamic modern freedom-seeking movement.

iii. One of the most important characteristics of the Islamic personality of women is the performance of two responsibilities at the same time:

The first of these two responsibilities is with regard to her inner femininity; it is to

stand beside her husband as a sympathetic partner and a soul-mate and to be pure and chaste, giving love and care to her children in order to bring them up with the correct Islamic education.

The second responsibility is towards her outer femininity. This is her active presence in society and the performance of social responsibilities, since this is reflected in the personalities of Lady Fatimah (SA), Lady Zainab (SA) and Lady Khadija (SA). The contemporary Muslim woman should be able to perform her important responsibilities by following the example of these great personalities.

iv. The contemporary Muslim woman should have adequate knowledge of Islamic teachings, especially those related to the rights and responsibilities of women in both family and society. This will enable her to propagate Islamic teachings and to be successful in her efforts in creating appropriate social

grounds for establishing Islamic values. She will have the ability to perform her role as the leader of the Islamic modern freedom-seeking movement.

v. The contemporary Muslim woman should have knowledge about the contemporary world, current affairs and the destructive powers within the fields of political and social affairs which are making efforts against divine values and are trying to turn women into a tool for misuse in human society. Women's knowledge of these affairs, of their dangers and consequences, is vital for spreading and continuing the Islamic Muslim women's freedom-seeking movement in the contemporary world.

vi. The contemporary Muslim woman should have awareness of the deprivation occurring under the shadow of the ruling atheistic culture. She should be aware of the critical and difficult conditions that have

undermined the foundations of the family on the one hand and manners and human values, including humanity of women on the other. Today there is growing oppression of women and other vulnerable sects of society due to a weakening of spiritual values and the

indulgence of wealth and physical desires. This knowledge can help Muslim women to fight the modern captivity and social oppression of women which, under the false cover of freedom, has been inflicted upon her.

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## Activities

- English Monthly Magazine “The Minister”.
- Urdu Monthly Magazine “Al-Moballigh”.
- Audio Magazine “The Voice”.
- Religious Madressa. (Mon, Tue and Wed).
- Islamic Library (a collection of manuscripts and printed books in Arabic, Persian, English and Urdu languages).
- Weekly Religious Gathering:

Thursday 8:00 pm – Dua-e-Kumayl and Majlis

Friday 8:00 pm – Dinner, Lectures (English & Urdu), followed by questions and answers.

Saturday 7:30 am – Breakfast followed by lecture on Different topics.

Sunday 11:00 am – (First Sunday of every month)  
Medical Lecture by a Doctor.

We need Momeneen’s views and help.

## **A brief life history of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.)**

By Dr Syed H. Akhtar

Muhammad was born in Mecca in the Arabian Peninsula in the year 570 AD. At the age of 40, Muhammad received God's first revelation through the Angel Gabriel, and was instructed to guide the people.

At that time, the majority of people in the region were pagans. Idolatry, sin, and immoral behavior were common. Women were ill-treated, sold, and had no legal status; female infants were even buried alive. The Arabs believed in and worshipped over 300 different gods. Muhammad, for the first three years of his ministry, preached about one God secretly and thereafter, on divine instructions, preached openly. Upon teaching the new faith, he was initially mocked and later on abused, persecuted, and tortured. The advent of Islam was seen by the pagans as an economic blow, since they depended to a large

extent on the income from having many tribal gods, and from pilgrims that came to Mecca from different parts of Arabia to pay homage to their gods. The first converts emigrated to Abyssinia and sought asylum there under the Christian ruler, Negus, in order to save their lives.

In 622 AD, at the age of 52 years, Muhammad left Mecca for Medina to save his life, as the pagans of Mecca had plotted to kill him. This event is referred to as *Hijra* or 'migration,' and this year constitutes the first year of the Muslim calendar. In Medina, Muhammad was welcomed with open arms by its people and amongst them he found many friends and supporters.

In the subsequent years, Muhammad successfully defended himself and his people from several attacks by the pagans of Mecca who wanted to kill him and root out

the new religion. Muhammad fought with a small and ill-equipped band of his supporters against large and well-equipped forces.

The Meccan pagans had signed several peace treaties with Muhammad but repeatedly broke them, and plotted again and again to kill him. Eventually, Muhammad and his followers marched towards Mecca, his homeland, and took control of the city without a struggle. The inhabitants of Mecca feared revenge for the atrocities committed against Muhammad and his followers, but Muhammad declared general amnesty. He gave orders that no one should loot or plunder. Soldiers were forbidden to enter any house that was inhabited. No one was to be attacked unless he refused to lay down arms. Women and children were protected from harm under strict orders. The Meccans were so moved by Muhammad's generosity and compassion that they hastened

in throngs to swear allegiance to him. Finally, Muhammad removed all the idols from the Ka'bah, the symbolic House of God, which was built by his forefather, Prophet Abraham, many centuries earlier.

Eventually, deputations from all parts of Arabia came to Medina to meet the Prophet and to listen to the Holy Scripture, the Qur'an. The Prophet also sent emissaries to neighboring countries in order to convey the message of Islam.

The Prophet, in fact, had become the virtual ruler of Arabia. His lifestyle, however, remained as simple as ever. In the tenth year after *Hijra*, after performing the pilgrimage, called the Hajj, Muhammad addressed his followers who had gathered in the thousands, and announced his impending departure from this world. At that time, he received the divine revelation that the religion of God had been completed and perfected. That was the final revelation from God conveyed by the Angel

Gabriel to Muhammad. In that same year, he died after a brief illness, at the age of 62 years.

Thus, in a brief span of 23 years, Muhammad had abolished idolatry in Arabia and had established God's religion, Islam. He brought civilization, law, order, and decency to a land and a people known for idolatry, oppression, and lewdness.

### **What the Bible says about Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.)**

Abraham is considered the common forefather of the three major religions; Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. From his son Isaac's lineage came many prophets, including Jacob, Joseph, Solomon, David, Moses and lastly Jesus (peace be upon them all). Muhammad was the direct descendant of Prophet Abraham through his son, Ishmael. The advent of Prophet Muhammad was the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. The Bible says:

*"I will make you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name so famous that it will be used as a blessing." Genesis 12:2.*

*"For Ishmael too I grant you your request: I bless him and I will make him fruitful and greatly increased in numbers. He shall be the father of twelve princes, and I shall make him a great nation." Genesis 17:20-21*

*"But the slave girl's (Bibi Hajara's) son I will also make into a nation, for he is your child too." Genesis 21:13*

### **Status of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) in the eyes of Muslims**

The Qur'an enjoins total obedience to Prophet Muhammad. A believer is commanded to show him the utmost respect. Whenever his mere name is mentioned, the believer sends peace upon him and invokes God's blessing upon him. The Qur'an clearly

states that the Prophet has greater right on the believers than they have on themselves. The following quotes from the Qur'an will demonstrate the status of Prophet Muhammad in the eyes of the believers:

*"And most surely you (Prophet) conform to sublime morality." Chapter 68: verse 4*

*"Surely God and His angels bless the Prophet. O you who believe! Call for (divine) blessings on him and salute him with a (becoming) salutation." Chapter 33: verse 56*

*"Surely (as for) those who speak evil things about God and His Apostle, God has cursed them in this world..." Chapter 33: verse 57*

*"O' Prophet, surely We have sent you as a witness and as a bearer of good news and as a Warner, and as one inviting to God by His permission, and as a light-giving torch Chapter 33: verses 45&46*

*"Certainly you have in the Apostle of God an excellent example in him who hopes in God and the latter (judgment) day, and remembers God much." Chapter 33: verse 21*

*"The Prophet has greater claim on the faithful than they have on themselves." Chapter 33: verse 6*

*"And We have sent you not but as a mercy to the worlds." Chapter 21: verse 107*

*"Say: Obey God and the Apostle," Chapter 3: verse 32.*

*"O you who believe! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet, and do not speak loud to him as you speak to one another, lest your deeds become null while you do not perceive. Surely, those - who lower their voices before God's Apostle are the ones whose hearts have been tested for piety." Chapter 49: verses 2&3*

Prophet Muhammad measured

up to the highest standard divinely laid for him. Historians, philosophers, students of world religions, and world leaders have nothing but flowing praise for his noble personality, as well as his spiritual and temporal accomplishments.

Thus it is clear that giving the utmost respect, bestowing the highest honor, and holding the Prophet dearer than one's own life is integral part of the faith of a Muslim. Most non-Muslims, especially in the west are unaware of this

important aspect of Islamic faith and do not understand the sensitivity of Muslims in this respect. Drawing the very picture of the Prophet is considered sacrilegious, and prohibited in Islam. It must be emphasized that Islam teaches peace, tolerance, forgiveness, compassion, sanctity of life, and treating others with respect. Violence, unlawful behavior, hurting others, and causing damage to the property of others is strictly prohibited. Those who indulge in such behavior are acting outside the teachings of Islam.

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The Patron**

# Islamic morality

By M. A. Shomali

## **Relationship with other people:**

There are many instructions that govern relationships with others. Here we refer to some examples.

### **Fulfilling one's promise:**

“And fulfil the promise surely (every) promise shall be questioned about.” (17:34)

“And those who are faithful to their trusts and their covenant.” (70:32)

### **Delivery of the trust:**

“Surely God commands you to make over trusts to their owners.” (4:58)

“If one of you trusts another then he who is trusted should deliver his trust.” (2:283)

## **Pardon:**

“And those who restrain (their) anger and pardon people.” (3:135)

“They should pardon and turn away. Do you not love that God should forgive you? And God is Forgiving Merciful.” (24:22)

The Holy Prophet said:

“May I lead you to the best moralities of this world and the life to come? These moralities are to regard him who disregard you, give him who deprived you (of his bestowals) and pardon him who wronged you.”

Imam Ali said:

“When you gain power over your adversary pardon him by

way of thanks for being able to overpower him.”

Of course, if someone insists on his wrong actions or there is a systematic violation of others' rights the proper action is to speak to that person and ask him to stop his wrong actions. It is also recommended to cancel any debt that someone owes you and he is unable to repay.

### **Serving people:**

In Islam it is very important to render a service to fellow human beings. For example, the Qur'an reports that Jesus Christ said:

“And He has made me blessed wherever I may be.” (19:31)

Commenting on this verse, Imam Sadiq, the sixth Imam of the Shia, said:

“This means that God has made me very useful (for the people).”

The Holy Prophet said:

“To believe in God and to benefit His servants are the two highest characters.”

“God loves most the servants who benefit other servants most.”

“There are some servants (of God) to whom people resort in needs. They will be safe from the punishment on the Day of Resurrection.”

### **Safeguarding family:**

In addition to general instructions on how to treat other people, there are further instructions about certain groups of people. For example, due to its very high status in Islam there are many moral and legal guidelines for safeguarding and promoting family life. On philosophy of marriage, the Qur'an says:

“Among His sign is that He has created mates for you from among yourselves so that you find peace and tranquility with them and He has established love and mercy between you.

Surely there are signs in this for those who reflect.” (30:21)

The Qur'an also urges members of the family i.e. husband and wife or children and parents to have love and mercy for each other. For example, we read:

“And treat them (women) kindly.” (4:19)

On necessity of religious training of the members of the family, the Qur'an asks the believers to save themselves and their family members from going astray and doing wrong. (66:6)

According to Islam, family is a sacred institution and everything must be geared towards protection and promotion of family life. Divorce is permitted in Islam, but is considered to be the worst permitted act.

### **Respect for parents:**

Respect for, and obedience and kindness to, parents are

enjoined upon Muslims. Unless the parents ask for injustice or sin to be committed, one needs to obey one's parents. The Qur'an says:

“And your Lord has commanded that you shall not worship none but Him and has commanded you to treat your parents with good will and respect. If one or both of them should live to old age, do not reproach them in the slightest or send them away in anger, but address them in terms of honour.” (17:23-24)

“And He has enjoined on me to be dutiful to my mother.” (19:31)

The Prophet has said:

“It is an act of worship to look at either parent with affection and kindness.”

“God is pleased when one has pleased his parents, and God gets angry when one has angered either parent.”

“Paradise lies under the feet of mothers.”

### **Hospitality:**

In Islam hospitality is considered as a very important virtue and indeed a test of belief in God and the Last Day according to the mass-transmitted (*mutawatir*) hadith of the Prophet Muhammad:

“Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, must treat his guest with respect and generosity.”

Guests are treated with courtesy and given what they need: sustenance, shelter and more importantly very warm welcome. The best treatment

is to provide the guest with what the host has. Though the host is encouraged to give preference to his guest in using what is available, there is no need to go to great lengths, say, by borrowing money in order to buy new things or better food. The unexpected guests should not expect more than what is available. Those who fail to observe the obligation of hospitality should expect similar treatment when they meet their Lord in the Hereafter. On the other hand those who practice hospitality will be treated in an even better way when they arrive before the judgment of God, the eternal Host.

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## **An excerpt from Jihad and Shahadat (cont.)**

These shuhada carried out another task as well. With their blood, not with words, in the court of the history of mankind, each as a representative of his social group, they witnessed that all human groups and human values are condemned in the one system ruling over the history of mankind, a system which employs politics economy, religion, art, philosophy, thought, feeling, ethics, and one word, humanity, as tools for sacrificing men to their own interests, which makes everything support the rule of oppression aggression, and crime.

There is one ruler over all history, or oppressor who rules history and one executioner who martyrs throughout history, many children have been victims of the executioner. Many women have been silenced under the whips of the executioner who rules history. At the price of

much blood, endless appetites have been appeased. Many cases of starvation, slavery, and massacres in history have been suffered by women and children, by men, heroes, slaves, and teachers, in all times and in all generations.

And now Hussein (A.S.) has come with all his existence to the court of history, so that he may witness on the banks of the Euphrates. He has come to witness for all the oppressed people of history, for all those condemned by the executioner ruling history, to witness how this merciless executioner, Dahhak, continues to eat the brains of the youth throughout history. He has come to witness with his Ali Akbar. He has come to witness how heroes have died in criminal regimes.

He has come to witness with himself. He has come to witness with his sister Zaynab (S.A.) that in the regimes ruling history, women must

either choose slavery and thus remain in the harems or choose freedom and thus become shuhada, thereby leading to the caravan of the captives and being heirs to the shuhada.

He has come to bear witness with his nursing child, Ali Asghar that in the regime of oppression, aggression, and crime, the executioner does not show mercy, not even to a nursing baby.

And Hussein (A.S), with all his existence, has come to bear witness in the criminal court of history for the benefit of those for whom there has never been a witness and thus have died defenselessly in silence.

Now the court has ended, and the witnessing of Hussein (A.S), all his dear ones, and all his existence, the best that anyone other than God is capable of, have completed their great divine mission.

Friends! In Shi'ism - which has presently taken this form we see such that anyone who wishes to speak of genuine, dynamic, and awakening Shi'ism is victimized by his friends before the enemy has access to him great lessons and messages, abandoned treasures, divine values, mighty capitals, and life-giving souls for the revival of society, nation, and history are hidden.

One of the best life-giving sources in the history of Shi'ism is shahadat.

As Jalal has said, "Since the time that we have forgotten the tradition of shahadat and have become the guardians of the cemeteries of the shuhada, we have submitted to the black death." Since the time that we, instead of being Shi'ites of Ali, Shi'ites of Hussein (A.S), and Shi'ites of Zainab (S.A), that is to say, being followers of the shuhada our men and women have become mere mourners

for the shuhada we have remained in eternal mourning. How intelligently the message of Hussein (A.S) and his great, dear, and immortal friends has been metamorphosised a message addressed to all mankind.

After he sees all his dear ones fallen on the battlefield, and when he has no audience except the vengeful and plundering enemy, Hussein (A.S) cries, "Is there anyone to stand at my side?" Does he not know that there is no one to stand by his side? This is the question posed to future generations, to each one of us. This question revealed Hussein (A.S)'s expectations

of those who love him. It is an invitation addressed to all those who respect and revere the shuhada.

We belittled this invitation, this expectation, and this message by misreading its content. Instead of, "Hussein (A.S) demands followers in every age and generation," we read, "Hussein (A.S) demands only tears and weeping. He has no other message. He is dead and demands mourners. He is not a living shahid in every time and place in search of followers." Thus we have been told.

*(To Be Continued...)*

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# Karbala at a Glance

By Salman Hadi

The name Karbala softens the heart and moistens the eyes of anyone with a conscience. It evokes a feeling of grief and inspiration that has set in motion a revolutionary movement that is not just limited to Islam and Muslims. It is that spot on Earth where the lips, of even innocent children as young as a 6 month old boy, had been forced to remain parched within eyeshot of the fresh flowing waters of the River Euphrates. It is the land where blood triumphed over naked swords.

It is the site where victory was announced, not by those who wrought history's most heart-rending tragedy and exulted in wild celebrations but by the severed heads of their victims mounted gruesomely on lances. It is the soil of curative properties and the source of the Planet's most sought after clay tablets for those who believe that Islam - as part of

its exaltation of the humbleness of a Muslim before the infinite majesty of the Lord Most High – has prescribed *sajdah* (prostration) on undefiled ground, preferentially dried mud, rather than on synthetic materials or victuals. It is the tract whose fateful future, according to *ahadith* had been foretold by God to some of His prominent prophets, like Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and others in antiquity. It is the place made immortal by Imam Hussain's (a.s.) heroic stand on the Day of Ashura (61 AH/680 CE) in defence of justice and humanitarian values when surrounded by the bloodthirsty hordes of evil and oppression.

It is not a relic of the past but a permanent barometer between truth and hypocrisy. It beats with the indomitable spirit of immortal martyrdom. It is the city that has recently shot back into international limelight,

baffling political analysts, social scientists, economic experts and academic researchers, by hosting with remarkable frequency record gatherings of 5 million plus, unfazed by the terrorist attack that claimed the life of over a hundred devotees on March 2, 2004.

Karbala translates faith into action; defies political equations defines the parameters of philosophy; promulgates the principles of morality; inspires poets towards reality and demonstrates the art of converting inevitable death into glorious immortality. Karbala is thus the rendezvous of the followers of the Ahl-al-Bayt, the Blessed Household, so clearly defined by Almighty Allah in the Holy Qur'an and so explicitly explained by Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) in the famous *Hadith al-Thaqalayn* that serves as the safeguard from manifest error.

## **Geographical Features**

Geographically, Karbala is in Iraq or Mesopotamia, the Land of the Two Rivers (the Euphrates and the Tigris) that is considered the cradle of civilization, where mankind took to the tilling of land to grow crops, domesticated animals for varied uses, invented the art of writing, learned how to weave thread out of cotton wool and subsequently make clothes, designed the wheel to speed up transportation and discovered the benefits of a number of other basic sciences and industries including astronomy and the progress towards urban life.

That means it was not an obscure or desolate place when Imam Husayn (a.s.) stepped on its soil to transform it into an eternally focal point of the world. In its strict topographical definition, the city of Karbala lies 105 km southwest of the Iraqi capital

Baghdad, on the western side of the River Euphrates, 32.61°N, 44.08°E and has a population of around 600,000 that is expected to rapidly expand in view of the current political situation after the downfall of the repressive Ba'th minority regime.

The Province of Karbala that has been reshaped and reduced in size as per the political and administrative expediencies of the rulers is today one of Iraq's 18 provinces, sharing borders with al-Anbar Province on its north and west, Najaf Province on its southwest and Babil Province (site of ancient Babylon) on its

east. However, in terms of historical geography Karbala is the region between the River Euphrates (*Nahr al-Furat*), the Arabian Peninsula (*Jazirah al-'Arab*) and the Syrian Desert (*Badiyah al-Sham*) at the crossroads of the empires of antiquity such as Akkad, Babylonia, Assyria, Chaldea, and Persia etc.

Karbala is thus an ancient geographical name and a very important place in early human history, but more importantly it is the name of the place where Imam Hussain, his family and his companions sacrificed themselves to save Islam.



**Important dates of this month**  
**Subject to the sighting of the moon**

1 <sup>st</sup> May 2008 .....	24 <sup>th</sup> Rabi Al Thani 1429
7 <sup>th</sup> May 2008 .....	1 <sup>st</sup> Jamadi Al Awwal 1429
11 <sup>th</sup> May 2008 / 5 <sup>th</sup> Jamadi Al Awwal 1429 .....	Birthday of Hazrat Zaynab (a.s.)
18 <sup>th</sup> May 2008 / 12 <sup>th</sup> Jamadi Al Awwal 1429 .....	Moon Confronting Scorpio
19 <sup>th</sup> May 2008 / 13 <sup>th</sup> Jamadi Al Awwal 1429 .....	Moon Confronting Scorpio

## In the Dead of Night

It was a dark, cold night. Imam Jaffer As-Sadiq (A.S.) was walking along carrying a heavy sack.

"Where is Imam Jaffer As-Sadiq going with this heavy sack?" I said to myself. "In this dark night perhaps he will find himself in danger. It is best for me to walk along with him and guard him." I walked quietly along behind Imam Jaffer As-Sadiq (A.S.), but I couldn't think where he was going or what he was carrying. We walked through a few lanes, and then I heard a noise.

It sounded as if the Imam's sack had fallen to the ground. I heard the Imam's voice as he prayed, "O Lord, help me this dark night to find what I have lost."

I went closer to the Imam and could just see that the sack which he had been carrying on his back was lying on the ground. Imam Jaffer As-Sadiq

(A.S.) was trying with his hands to gather all its contents.

I came up to the Imam and greeted him. The Imam returned my greeting and, recognizing my voice, asked me, "Is it you Mu'alla?"

"Yes, O son of the Prophet" I replied. "Will you let me help you?"

The Imam had been carrying loaves of bread and packets of food, and I helped him gather them and put them back in the sack. When the sack was full I asked him if he would allow me to carry it for him. "No", he said, "it is more fitting for me to carry it."

"My grandfather the Prophet used to say that whoever doesn't think about the needs of the Muslims is not a Muslim, and that whoever sleeps at night with a full stomach while his neighbors are hungry is not a Muslim."

Together we walked along until we came to the lodge of Bani Sa'idah where many poor people were living. Imam put his load on the ground and, quietly, without awakening anyone, began to distribute the food he had brought. He put the share of each person by the side of his head, and, without any one knowing who it was from, we quietly left.

The example of Imam Jaffer As-Sadiq (A.S.) as narrated to us in this story is one that we Muslims must follow as it is our duty to look after and care for our fellow Muslims.

Giving just a small proportion of the wealth that we have in the West could help feed a poor family; could help provide vaccinations for children who are otherwise exposed to disease that would otherwise kill them before

they reach adulthood; could help provide clean water for an entire village; could help educate children to read and write.

When we think of all the things we waste money on in the West, could we not spare a small amount to help others? Not only will we get the satisfaction of knowing that we have helped another human being, but also, Allah will reward us for giving to charity in the Hereafter.

Allah (s.w.t.) tells us in the Holy Quran:

"Give to the poor and distribute from what We have provided you and render them needless, before the Day of Resurrection when you will be sorry for your hoarding of wealth, and you will be faced with a severe chastisement."

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## Album

Religious gathering at S I Education Society, London.



To:

**Our Motto**

Faith, Piety, Courage, Justness,  
Knowledge, Tolerance, Modesty,  
Abstinence, Sacrifices and  
Propagation.

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