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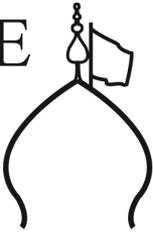




*Indeed Husayn is the
Light of Perpetual Guidance
and the Ark of Salvation*

Rasulullah Muhammad Peace and blessings be upon him and his family



THE
CH  RM OF
BEAUTY

Mahdi Tayyeb

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Table of Contents

Dedication.....	ix
A Note on Markings Used.....	xi
Foreword.....	xiii
Acknowledgments.....	xv
Note.....	xvii
Prologue.....	xix
Note from the Author.....	xxi
Introduction.....	xxv
Chapter 1: Living a Monotheistic Life.....	27
Chapter 2: A Positive Opinion of God and His Actions.....	31
Chapter 3: Trust in God.....	37
Chapter 4: Tranquility and Patience.....	43
Chapter 5: Satisfaction.....	49
Chapter 6: Worship, Servitude, and Freedom.....	53
Chapter 7: Submission.....	59
Chapter 8: Magnanimity, Self-Assurance, Honor and Greatness....	65
Chapter 9: Ethical Beauty.....	71

Chapter 10: Love and Self-Sacrifice	77
Glossary	91
Index.....	101
About the Author.....	105
Sources	107
The Family Tree of the Prophet’s Lineage.....	109

THE CHARM OF BEAUTY

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the Leader of Mystics, the Guide of the Lovers (of Allāh ﷻ), and the Master of the Martyrs, his eminence *Imām Ḥusayn* عليه السلام. It is hoped that the honorable Imām will accept this humble gift.

THE CHARM OF BEAUTY

A Note on Markings Used

It is customary in Islāmic discussions and books that anytime the name of God (Allāh), any of His prophets or revered individuals are mentioned, that a Muslim evokes words of praise and prayer for them. We have used the following Arabic symbols to represent these:

-  - Subhaanahu wa ta'aala – Used for God, with the following meaning: *'Glorified and Exalted is He'*.
-  - Şalla Allahu 'alayhi wa aalehee wa sallam – Used for Prophet Muḥammad, with the following meaning: *'Blessings of God be upon him and his family'*.

 - 'Alayhi/haa as-salaam – Used for all other prophets, Divinely appointed imāms and spiritually exalted men and women, with the following meaning: *'Peace be upon him/her'*.

THE CHARM OF BEAUTY



Foreword

The greatest calamity which shook all of history was the tragedy of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام in Karbalā' - when justice was embodied by his amazing revolution. His movement has inspired millions throughout history, teaching generations of people noble virtues.

This booklet outlines ten lessons that can be learned from Imām Ḥusayn's عليه السلام uprising. Each chapter contains beautiful narrations from the Ahlul Bayt عليهم السلام which demonstrate these lessons.

The message of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام will eternally continue, and whenever there is injustice and oppression in this world, his message will teach us how to fight for justice and freedom.

Sayyed Hassan Qazwini
Islamic Center of America
Dearborn, Michigan, U.S.A.

THE CHARM OF BEAUTY

Acknowledgments

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THE CHARM OF BEAUTY

Note

Accurate and true knowledge of the great characters of any religion is valuable and helpful to anyone, even those who do not adhere to that particular ideology or belief system. This is because such moral and spiritual characters are the best behavioral role models for any human being.

One such great spiritual role model is Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام. The tragic and yet inspirational events that befell him and his family, which eventually led to his brave martyrdom, have made Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام an exceptional role model in the history of Islam. Therefore, obtaining the right level of knowledge about Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام would be beneficial for every freedom-loving person who seeks the truth and desires freedom.

Unfortunately, the majority of available resources regarding Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام focus on the political dimensions of his movement. Even though this aspect of his life is very important, it does not cover the great character of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام as a whole.

It is this lack of information that inspired us to launch this project to introduce and mention just a few of the mystical and spiritual aspects of the movement of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام which will be conveyed in this concise work.

We hope that this book will enlighten the minds of those who are interested in knowing more about the real message of Islām for

truly as Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ has said: “Indeed, Ḥusayn is the light of guidance and the ark of salvation.”

THE CH RM OF BEAUTY

Prologue

Each chapter of this book is a summary of one of the ten speeches broadcasted by Channel 4 of the Islāmic Republic of Iran's television network during the first 10 days of *Muḥarram*¹ in 2006.

In light of the positive reaction of the viewers, and in order to ensure that the general public would become more familiar with the lesser known dimensions of the movement of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام, the transcription and publication of the summary of those ten lectures was carried out.

I must thank those who had the foresight to publish this book. I pray that this brief book is accepted by Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام himself and is of benefit to all of the readers.

Mahdi Tayyeb

¹ *Muḥarram*: The first month of the lunar Islāmic calendar.

THE CHARM OF BEAUTY

Note from the Author

Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام is the third infallible successor (*Imām*) to the Messenger of Islām, Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. He is the son of the daughter of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, Lady Fāṭima عليها السلام and Imām ‘Alī عليه السلام.²

During the leadership (*imāmate*) of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام, a man named Yazīd became the political ruler of the Islāmic territories after the death of his father, Mu‘āwiyah.

Yazīd, whose mother was a non-believer, and his father Mu‘āwiyah, never truly accepted or believed in Islām and the Prophet (Muḥammad ﷺ), was a cruel and harsh individual. In fact, he openly declared his faithlessness in Islām, acted against the Islāmic obligations and was a morally corrupt individual.

In order to consolidate power and stabilize his rule, Yazīd decided to forcefully take the oath of allegiance from Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام. In reply to the envoys of Yazīd, Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام stated: “When the Muslim state is forced under the rule of such a faithless and corrupt ruler such as Yazīd, Islām should consider itself perished. In fact, the death of Islām is coming and someone like me will never pledge allegiance to someone like Yazīd. I prefer

² Imām ‘Alī عليه السلام was the first cousin and son-in-law of the final Messenger of God, Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, as well as his rightful and immediate successor. [Figure 4, pg. 109]

being killed honorably than to accept and confirm Yazīd's rule. We, the Ahlul Bayt³, are far removed from baseness."

After Imām Ḥusayn's ﷺ refusal to give the oath of allegiance, Yazīd's army of thirty-thousand warriors fought against Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ and his seventy-two virtuous and loyal companions in the land of Karbalā'⁴, on the day of 'Āshūrā'⁵, on the tenth of the month of Muḥarram, in the year 61 AH/680 CE. The battle ended with the martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ, his companions and family members.

It must be noted that according to the Shī'ā viewpoint, an infallible Imām reflects the complete vision of Islām in all of its dimensions - scientific, spiritual, ethical, mystical, practical, social, and political.

³ Ahlul Bayt: A Qur'ānic term which is found referenced in chapter 33 (Sūratul Aḥzāb), verse 33 and also used extensively by Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ to refer to certain specific Divinely-chosen and purified members of his family - they include his daughter Lady Fāṭima ﷺ, her husband Imām 'Alī ﷺ, and their sons, Imām Ḥasan ﷺ and Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ. As an extension, the nine Imāms which came from the progeny of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ are also a part of the Ahlul Bayt. [Figure 4, pg. 109]

⁴ Karbalā': The name of the once-barren area located in present day Iraq, approximately 55 miles southwest of modern-day Baghdad and close to the western banks of the Euphrates River. Historically it was known by many names, however its most famous and current is that of Karbalā'. [Figure 1, pg. xxiii]

⁵ 'Āshūrā: Literally, the word means '10' and in the context of Islāmīc history, it refers to the tenth day of the first lunar Islamic month of Muḥarram which is the day of martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ, his family members and companions.

This concise text discusses some of the ethical, spiritual and mystical teachings of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام and his companions during the epic event of ʿĀshūrā.



Figure 1: A map of present-day Iraq and the surrounding region, with the city of Karbalā' and Baghdad shown.

Reference: www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/iraq501-additional.html#map

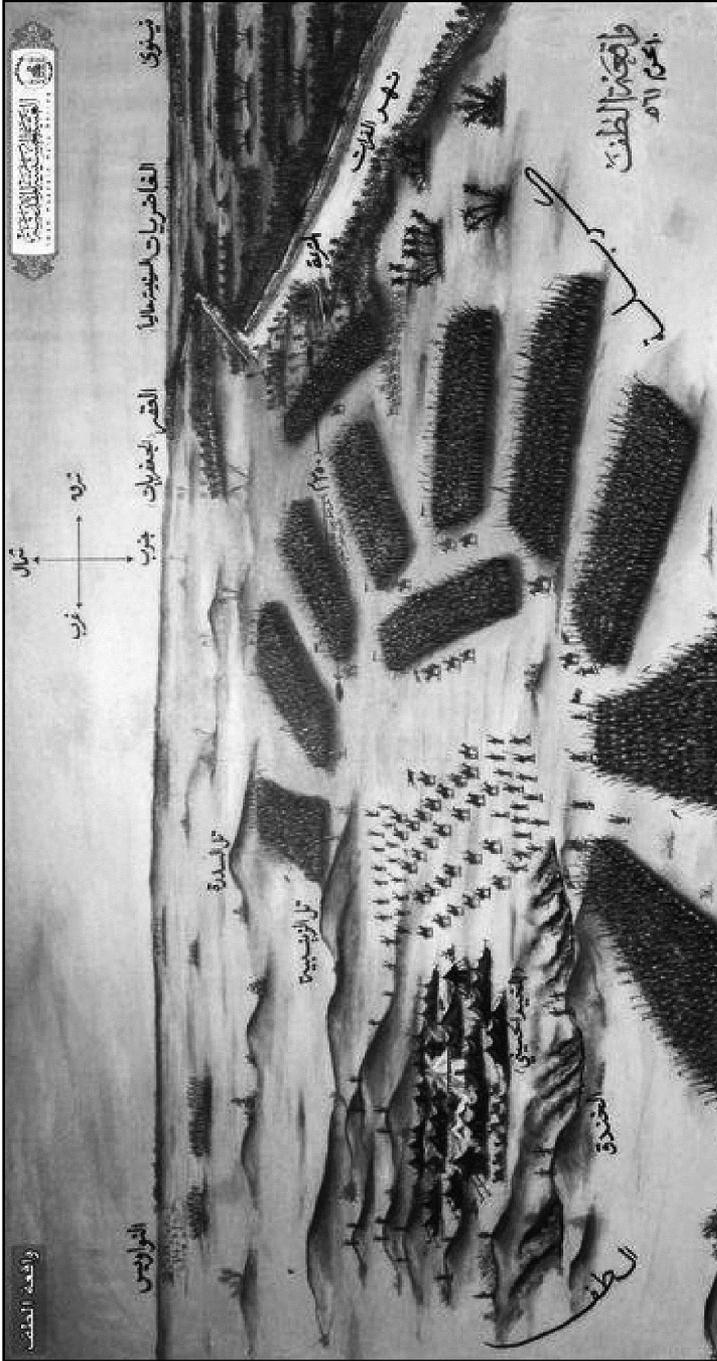


Figure 2: An artist's rendition of the scene in Karbalā' on the Day of 'Āshūrā' which shows how Imām Ḥusayn and his companions of only 72 men were surrounded by an army of over 30,000.

THE CHARM OF BEAUTY

Introduction

Before proceeding into the main discussion, there are a few important points which we must first mention.

Primarily, Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام is an Imām - an Imām is one who leads others to follow the true path; the term Shī‘a refers to someone who seeks, and after finding the guide, follows his imām.

Secondly, Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام is a role-model. He has been quoted as saying:

فَلَكُمْ فِيَّ أُسْوَةٌ

*“My character is an example for you to follow.”*⁶

Therefore, the Shī‘a of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام need to look up to him as a role-model within their lives.

Thirdly, the saying: “Every day is ‘Āshūrā’ and every land is Karbalā’,” implies that besides loving Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام and mourning for him, it is necessary to learn from the school of ‘Āshūrā’ and to live our lives like Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام - as much as possible.

Fourth, we must appreciate that knowledge and understanding about the event of Karbalā’ and the love towards Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام are both necessary and important, and one without the other is

⁶ Irbilī, ‘Alī ibn Isā; *Kashf al-Ghummah*, vol. 2, pg. 63

incomplete and ineffective. Someone who wants to learn lessons in this school must possess both of these aspects.

Fifth, the movement of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام manifests the truth and the full meaning of Islām with a balance among all of its dimensions. Therefore ‘Āshūrā’ should not only be reduced to one of its dimensions and seen solely as a revolutionary, historical, emotional, spiritual or mystical event. That being said, the spiritual and mystical dimensions of ‘Āshūrā’ are the dimensions which this book will mostly focus on.

Sixth, in the fields of morality, spirituality and mysticism⁷ Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام is the best role model. In these fields, he is the light of guidance and the ship of salvation.

This book summarizes ten, from the hundreds of lessons, regarding morality, spirituality and mysticism that can be learned from the school of ‘Āshūrā’.

⁷ Mysticism: It is through the interaction with Islāmic mysticism that one seeks the following goals:

1. Being a disciplined servant before God, fulfilling one’s duties well.
2. Making God pleased with us by obeying him with true love and sincere purity without the intention of having any personal gain.
3. Having a deep understanding of the religious teachings, revelation instructions (the Noble Qur’ān), and the teachings of the prophets and infallible Imāms.
4. Understanding the facts of creation and religious secrets through obtaining Divine Inspiration.
5. Observing and experiencing the unseen world spiritually as a result of awakening one’s internal senses.
6. Benefitting from all of the religious capacities to reach spiritual perfection and to organize all aspects of one’s being and life within the religious teachings.

THE CHARM OF BEAUTY

Chapter 1

Living a Monotheistic Life

Amongst the greatest levels for mystics in their journey towards God is to achieve the monotheistic (*tawḥīdī*) view of existence - reaching the level in which one would truly believe that the only maker and real cause behind everything in the world is Almighty God, and to recognize the creations as representations of God's creativity. Therefore, after reaching that level, mystics do not put their hope and trust in anyone other than God, and do not fear anyone but Him. We will illustrate some aspects of this monotheistic spirit in what follows.

Imām Ja'far as-Ṣādiq⁸ عليه السلام has said: "One day when Imām Ḥusayn was present among his companions, after praising the Lord and sending greetings upon the Prophet of God, he said:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ! إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَا خَلَقَ الْعِبَادَ إِلَّا لِيَعْرِفُوهُ، فَإِذَا عَرَفُوهُ
عَبَدُوهُ فَإِذَا عَبَدُوهُ اسْتَعْنَوْا عَنِ عِبَادَةِ مَنْ سِوَاهُ.

"O people! God did not create the servants other than to know Him. Upon knowing Him, they will worship Him.

⁸ Imām Ja'far as-Ṣādiq عليه السلام was the sixth successor or Divinely-appointed leader (Imām) of the Muslim community after Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. [Figure 4, pg. 109]

When they have become His servants by worshipping Him, then they will have no need to worship anything else.”⁹

During his trip to Karbalā’, while he was in the area of Shaqūq, somewhere near Iraq, Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام said:

إِنَّ الْأَمْرَ لِلَّهِ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَرَبُّنَا تَبَارَكَ هُوَ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ فِي شَأْنٍ

“Surely everything is for God and everything is in His hands; whatever He wills and whatever He decrees will happen, and every day He is constantly involved directing the world’s affairs in a new act (of creation).”¹⁰

Also, in another place, named Khasimayyah, when his sister Zaynab¹¹ عليها السلام expressed her worryment, Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام replied:

يَا أُخْتَا! كُلُّ مَا قُضِيَ فَهُوَ كَائِنٌ

“O my sister! Whatever God has decreed will happen.”¹²

In his first speech on the day of ‘Āshūrā’, Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام told his companions:

إِنَّ وَلِيِّ اللَّهِ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْكِتَابَ وَهُوَ يَتَوَلَّى الصَّالِحِينَ

⁹ Majlisi, Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī; *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 5, pg. 12

¹⁰ Kharazmī, Khatīb; *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, vol. 1, pg. 312

¹¹ Zaynab bint ‘Alī was the daughter of Imām ‘Alī عليه السلام and Lady Fāṭima عليها السلام, and the grand-daughter of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. She is known for her courageous and eloquent role supporting her brother at the time of his martyrdom in the tragic events of Karbalā’; and went on to defend the remaining family members in their forced journey to Kūfa and later on to Shām (Syria). [Figure 4, pg. 109]

¹² Kharazmī, Khatīb; *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, vol. 1, pg. 225

“My Master is God – the One who has sent down the Qurʾān, and He is the Master of the righteous people.”¹³

Thus, in this way Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام did not see anyone besides God as his Master.

In general, for mystics, one of the levels which they should reach in regards to their certainty in God’s oneness and sovereignty is when they recognize none except God as the cause of everything in existence. In the supplication of *Shaʿbāniyyah*, Imām ʿAlī عليه السلام says:

إِلٰهِي! بِيَدِكَ لَا بِيَدِ غَيْرِكَ زِيَادَاتِي وَنَقْصِي وَنَفْعِي وَضَرِّي

“O God, the increase, reduction, benefit and harm in all which I possess all lie in Your hands alone and none but You.”¹⁴

This monotheistic belief in God caused Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام not to think of anything other than pleasing his Lord and not to fear his enemies, their power, thoughts, or threats. It also caused him to stand up in opposition to them with full confidence until the last breath of his life.

Saʿdī¹⁵ has stated this idea beautifully in a Persian poem:

“How can you warn one who neither fears the loss of his life nor hopes for gold - pour either gold at the feet of a true

¹³ Kharazmī, Khatīb; *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, vol.1, pg. 253

¹⁴ Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī; *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 91, pg. 96

¹⁵ Saʿdī was a famous Persian poet of the medieval period, his full name is Abū Muḥammad Muṣliḥ al-Dīn bin ʿAbdallāh Shīrāzī or Saʿdī Shīrāzī for short – he is well-known by his pen-name of Saʿdī.

monotheist or place an Indian sabre to his head - he bears no hope nor fear from anyone; and this is the religion of monotheism nothing less, nothing more.”

Therefore, one of the most important lessons that can be learned from ‘Āshūrā’ is the monotheistic belief in God, and seeing only Him as the ultimate cause and the One who is in charge of everything that happens in the world and within our lives. This belief will lead one to being unconcerned about other people’s admiration or criticism – and one will act only to please God and will ignore any greed or threats of other people.

THE CHARM OF BEAUTY

Chapter 2

A Positive Opinion of God and His Actions

One of the signs of a true mystic is having a positive opinion regarding God and His actions in all circumstances. From their point of view, this world is a symbol of the Lord's good doing, and all of the creations which are in the world are like mirrors that reflect God's goodness and beauty. In this regards, Imām 'Alī عليه السلام says:

أَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الْمُتَجَلِّي لِخَلْقِهِ بِخَلْقِهِ

“All praise belongs to God, who showed Himself to His creatures through the existence of His creatures.”¹⁶

One of the Persian poets has eloquently stated:

“From the atoms of the world, He created a multitude of mirrors; into each one of them He cast the “image of His Face¹⁷”; to the awakened eye, anything that appears

¹⁶ *Nahj al-Balāgha*, sermon 108

¹⁷ “Face” in this poem does not refer to a physical face of God, as Muslims do not accept that God has a body or any human-like characteristics. Rather, the “face” here has been used metaphorically.

beautiful is only a reflection of that Face.”¹⁸

In addition, God says in the Holy Qur^ʿān:

﴿فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ﴾

“Whithersoever you turn, there is the face of God.”¹⁹

In another tradition, Imām ‘Alī عليه السلام says:

مَا رَأَيْتُ شَيْئًا إِلَّا وَرَأَيْتُ اللَّهَ قَبْلَهُ وَبَعْدَهُ وَمَعَهُ وَفِيهِ

“I did not see anything unless I saw God before, after, with, and within it.”²⁰

That is why a mystic sees God’s greatness and beauty in everything and loves Him; and it is this point of view which causes a mystic to have a beautiful outlook on this world, as one Persian poet states:

“I am the famous lover in this town;
my eyes, evil seeds have never sown.”²¹

From another angle, whatever occurs in the universe is only with the Divine intervention. God is Independent, Omnipotent, All-Knowing, All-Wise, Forgiving, Bountiful, and Merciful; thus, nothing other than goodness comes from Him. Only goodness comes from the All-Gracious; and thus whatever happens is surely

¹⁸ Nūr ad-Dīn ‘Abdūr Raḥmān Jāmī^c, known as Jāmī^c, is one of the greatest Persian poets of the 15th century.

¹⁹ *Al-Qur’ān*, 2:115

²⁰ Kāshānī, Ḥabibullāh Sharīf; *‘Ilm al-Yaqīn*, pg. 49

²¹ Khawja Shams ad-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥāfēz Shīrāzī known by his pen name of Ḥāfēz is one of the greatest Persian poets. This portion has been taken from his Ghazal, portion 393.

good. In this regard, there is a Divine dictum (*Ḥadīth al-quḍṣī*)²², in which God says:

عَبْدِي الْمُؤْمِنَ لَا أَصْرِفُهُ فِي شَيْءٍ إِلَّا جَعَلْتُ لَهُ خَيْرًا

“I will never put My believing servant in a situation unless I have willed good for him in it.”²³

This view of the world causes mystics to see everything that happens in the world as good and beautiful.

In addition, a mystic is never negative, pessimistic, or hopeless, and it is based on this belief that Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ stated the following:

أَكْبَرُ الْكَبَائِرِ سُوءُ الظَّنِّ بِاللَّهِ

“The biggest of biggest sin is to have a bad opinion of God [about His will and actions].”²⁴

Therefore, having a bad opinion of God and what He wills in the world, being pessimistic and losing hope because of the events that happen in our lives are among the greatest of sins.

As an outcome of this mystical outlook, Imām Ḥusayn ؑ told an individual named Tarmah ibn Uday²⁵ and his companions who were coming from Kūfa²⁶ that:

²² Statements of God which He speaks to His prophets, but are not part of the Divinely revealed books, such as the Qur’an and other scriptures sent to previous prophets, are referred to as *Ḥadīth al-quḍṣī*.

²³ Al-Kulaynī, Muḥammad Ya‘qūb; *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, pg. 101

²⁴ Al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, ‘Alī ibn ‘Abd al-Malik; *Kanz al-Ummāl*, vol. 3, pg. 80

²⁵ A companion of Imām ‘Alī ؑ (Imām Ḥusayn’s ؑ father).

²⁶ Kūfa is a city in Iraq, about 170 kilometres (110 miles) south of Baghdad, and 10 kilometres (6.2 miles) northeast of Najaf. [Figure 3, pg. 42]

أَمَّا وَاللَّهِ إِنِّي لَأَرْجُو أَنْ يَكُونَ خَيْرًا مَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِنَا قُتِلْنَا أَمْ ظَفَرْنَا

“By God, I certainly hope that whatever God has decreed upon us is good – whether we are killed or we become victorious.”²⁷

Therefore, we must realize and accept that whatever God has destined for us is good and beneficial!

Another example of this optimistic outlook that can be seen in the event of ‘Āshūrā’ is when Zaynab (عليها السلام) and the rest of the Ahlul Bayt (Imām Ḥusayn’s (عليه السلام) family) were taken as prisoners of war to the palace of Ibn Ziyād²⁸ in Kūfa.

In the court, Zaynab (عليها السلام) stood up honorably and bravely in the presence of Ibn Ziyād. In return, he asked Zaynab (عليها السلام): “How did you view God’s doings to your brother?” To this, she (calmly) replied:

مَا رَأَيْتُ إِلَّا جَمِيلاً

“I saw nothing but beauty.”²⁹

This positive outlook of Zaynab (عليها السلام) – a believer who can see only beauty in a time of extreme hardship and pain – is indeed the mystical view which only this magnanimous daughter of Imām ‘Alī (عليه السلام) and Lady Fāṭimah (عليها السلام) can possess.

Therefore, another lesson which can be learned from the school of ‘Āshūrā’ is having a positive and optimistic opinion of

²⁷ Al-Tabarī, Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr; *Tārikh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, vol. 7, pg. 302

²⁸ *Ibn Ziyād*: In 680 CE, he was ordered by Yazīd to take control of the city of Kūfa as a response to Imām Ḥusayn’s (عليه السلام) popularity there.

²⁹ Kharazmī, Khatīb; *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn*, vol. 2, pg. 42

God in everything – and realizing that all of the actions and events that happen in our lives are only for our betterment, and to our advantage in one way or another.

THE CHARM OF BEAUTY

Chapter 3

Trust in God

One who sees God as the cause of everything which occurs and views the world as being under His command does not recognize anyone other than Him in this regard. Such a person has a positive view on whatever happens in one's life, and realizes that God knows what everyone needs and is capable of relieving those needs. Such a person will rely on God alone and will believe that God is All-Bountiful, All-Merciful, and All-Beneficent, and that only God is All-Powerful in this world and that He will decree only good for His servants.

Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ asked the Archangel Gabriel: “What is trust in God?” Gabriel replied:

مَا التَّوَكُّلُ عَلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ؟ فَقَالَ: أَلْعِلْمُ بِأَنَّ الْمَخْلُوقَ لَا يَضُرُّ وَ لَا يَنْفَعُ وَ لَا يُعْطَى وَ لَا يَمْنَعُ وَ اسْتِعْمَالُ الْيَأْسِ عَنِ الْخَلْقِ. فَإِذَا كَانَ الْعَبْدُ كَذَلِكَ لَمْ يَعْمَلْ لِأَحَدٍ سِوَى اللَّهِ وَ لَمْ يَرْجُ وَ لَمْ يَخَفْ سِوَى اللَّهِ وَ لَمْ يَطْمَعْ فِي أَحَدٍ سِوَى اللَّهِ فَهَذَا هُوَ التَّوَكُّلُ.

“It is confiding in the fact that the creatures cannot harm or benefit one another. They cannot bestow blessing or anything else on each other and they cannot prevent anything from reaching an individual. One completely cuts

off all hope and becomes entirely independent of assistance from anyone except for God. When a person reaches this stage, then he works for God alone, his hope is only in God, he fears only God, and he goes only to God when in need - and this is the reality of trust in God.”³⁰

In Imām Ḥusayn’s عليه السلام movement, examples of this type of trust in God were clearly evident. In one of his lectures to the people of Kūfa on the day of ‘Āshūrā’, Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام said to them:

وَأَنْتُمْ ابْنِ الْحَرْبِ وَأَشْيَاعُهُ تَعْتَمِدُونَ. إِنِّي تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللَّهِ رَبِّي وَ
رَبِّكُمْ؛ مَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ آخِذٌ بِنَاصِيَتِهَا

“You people have trusted Yazīd and those who follow him; however, I trust in God alone – the One who is my Lord and your Lord. There is not a single living creature in existence unless it’s entirely under God’s control.”

He concluded his speech by saying:

أَنْتَ رَبُّنَا عَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ

“(O God!) You are our Lord. Thus, we only trust in You and we are developing towards you.”³¹

³⁰ Al-Āmulī, Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī Ḥurr; *Wasā’il ash-shī’ah*, vol. 15, pg. 194

³¹ Kharazmī, Khatīb; *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn*, vol. 2, pg. 7

Another aspect of the notion of not relying on anyone or anything other than God was manifested by Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام through the supplication which he and his companions recited after performing their morning prayer on the day of ‘Āshūrā’ when the Imām said:

اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ ثِقَتِي فِي كُلِّ كَرْبٍ وَرَجَائِي فِي كُلِّ شِدَّةٍ وَأَنْتَ لِي فِي كُلِّ
أَمْرٍ نَزَلَ بِي ثِقَةٌ وَعُدَّةٌ

“O Allāh! You are my source of trust, hope, and reliance when anything unpleasant or difficult happens to me. In such situations, I only have You to help me face the hardships.”³²

Another remarkable example of trust in God by Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام was the time when he stopped at Zubālah³³ on his way to Karbalā’ and heard the news about the martyrdom of Muslim ibn ‘Aqīl³⁴. It was at this spot where, unlike many leaders who would keep such

³² Al-Tabarī, Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr; *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, vol. 7, pg. 327

³³ Zubālah is the name of an area on the way from Mecca to Karbalā’. (Figure 3, pg. 42)

³⁴ Muslim ibn ‘Aqīl was the first-cousin of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام and was sent ahead as an envoy to Kūfa to judge if the people could be trusted and were loyal to Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام or not. The Imām had received thousands of letters from the people of Kūfa stating that they were rejecting their governor and wanted the Imām to come and serve as their leader. Therefore, Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام decided to send Muslim ibn ‘Aqīl, who was a famous warrior, as his emissary to Kūfa to examine the situation and report back to him. Muslim ibn ‘Aqīl, along with his two children, were murdered in the city of Kūfa by the new governor, Ibn Ziyād, who was appointed by Yazīd, and was loyal to him.

adverse news hidden from their followers for their own personal benefit so as to not lose their support, that the Imām discussed the situation clearly with them and said:

قَدْ أَتَانَا خَبْرٌ فَظِيْعٌ... قَدْ خَذَلْتَنَا شِيْعَتُنَا، فَمَنْ أَحَبَّ مِنْكُمْ
الْإِنْصِرَافِ فَلْيَنْصِرِفْ، فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْهِ مِنَّا ذِمَامٌ

“We have received very tragic news. Our followers [in Kūfa] have belittled us. Therefore, of you who wish to return, can return without being indebted to us.”³⁵

The Imām was informing them that now there is no option except for martyrdom, and if any of you wish, you can leave us. This spirit of complete trust in God and not depending on his companions is very beautiful.

We see an even better example of this on the night of ‘Āshūrā’. Imām Ḥusayn (عليه السلام) after thanking his companions for their loyalty, said to them: “I have given you permission to leave; the enemy only wants to face me. Use the darkness of the night and take my family members with you, and if you want, then leave Karbalā’.”³⁶

In his will, which was left with his half-brother Muḥammad ibn Hanafiyyah³⁷ in Medina³⁸, Imām Ḥusayn (عليه السلام) wrote:

³⁵ Al-Tabarī, Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr; *Tārikh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, vol. 7, pg. 223

³⁶ This may have been said so that in the future, the people wouldn’t blame these individuals (had they decided to go) for leaving the Imām alone, they could have used the excuse that they wanted to save the Imām’s family. As we see, the Imām himself gave them this good reason for leaving the battle of Karbalā’.

³⁷ He is the step-brother of Imām Ḥusayn (عليه السلام).

وَمَا تَوْفِيقِي إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ

“My succour is only with God: in Him I have put my trust, and to Him I turn, penitent.”³⁹

Therefore, another lesson that can be learned from Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام – both before and on the day of ‘Āshūrā’ – is the lesson of reliance and trust only in God, Almighty.

³⁸ Medina is a city in the Hejaz region of the western part of Saudi Arabia. It is the second most important city in Islam and is where Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is buried. [Figure 3, pg. 42]

³⁹ Kharazmī, Khatīb; *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn*, vol. 1, pg. 188



Figure 3: The spots that Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام and his camp passed through in his journey from Mecca towards Kūfa - ending up in Karbalā'.

THE CHARM OF BEAUTY

Chapter 4

Tranquility and Patience

One of the signs of belief in monotheism is to know that everything is under God's control. By having trust in God, we will not become frustrated and impatient during hard times. In addition, with this level of trust in God, we will not become nervous or worried about the future - for one who has certainty in God's sovereignty and mercy and knows what God wills is always in one's best interest will not become distressed.

Unpleasant events are like bitter medicine that helps in the cure and purification of an individual, and relieves one from illness and death. Therefore, such a person is neither frustrated about what happens, nor is he worried about the impending future - one is at peace during the most difficult of times.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

عَجِبْتُ لِلْمَرْءِ الْمُسْلِمِ لَا يَقْضِي اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ قَضَاءً إِلَّا كَانَ خَيْرًا
لَهُ وَإِنْ قُرِضَ بِالْمَقَارِبِضِ كَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُ وَإِنْ مَلَكَ مَشَارِقَ الْأَرْضِ وَ
مَغَارِبَهَا كَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُ

“I wonder at [the good situation] of a Muslim who God does not will for him anything but what is beneficial to him;

whether it be cutting him to pieces or making him the king of the world.”⁴⁰

Such a belief results in a person having no fear of the future and no regret over the past. As God says in the Qurʾān:

﴿إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ﴾

“Surely the friends of God will have no fear, nor will they grieve.”⁴¹

God refers to tranquility in the Qurʾān when He says:

﴿الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَ تَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ، أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ﴾

“Those who have faith, and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of God. Look! In God’s remembrance, the hearts find rest.”⁴²

Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام was an excellent example of this certainty and tranquility even in the face of the most difficult circumstances.

One person who narrated the events of Karbalā’ said, “I swear by God, I have never seen a person, who after losing his children, the members of his household, and his companions, was more at peace than Imām Ḥusayn.”⁴³

⁴⁰ Al-Kulaynī, Muḥammad Yaʿqūb; *al-Kāfi*, vol. 2, pg. 62

⁴¹ *Al-Qurʾān*, 10:62

⁴² *Al-Qurʾān*, 13:28

⁴³ Al-Ṭāwūs, Radī ad-Dīn ʿAlī ibn Yaḥyā; *al-Lūhūf*, pg. 119

The 4th Imām who was the son of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام, Imām Sajjād⁴⁴ عليه السلام said: “On the day of ‘Āshūrā’, while we approached noontime and the hardships increased, my father’s face seemed happier and more relaxed.”⁴⁵

This characteristic was also seen in the companions of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام. Individuals such as Burayr⁴⁶ and ‘Abdul Raḥmān ibn ‘Abd al-Rabbīḥ⁴⁷ were seen joking around on the day of ‘Āshūrā’, after which Burayr said, “I swear by God that I am not the type to joke around, but today I am happy because of the true eternal happiness which awaits us.”⁴⁸

Even the smallest amount of distress, discontent, or complaint was not shown or uttered by Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام, or his companions on the day of ‘Āshūrā’. In fact, during the last moments of his life when Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام fell off of his horse and was breathing his

⁴⁴ Imām Sajjād عليه السلام was Imām Ḥusayn’s عليه السلام son, as well as the fourth Shi‘a Imām. He stood beside his father right from the moment of his migration towards Karbalā’ and was the only son of Imām Ḥusayn’s عليه السلام whose life was spared during the massacre at Karbalā’, since he could not take part in the fighting due to his severe illness. He was bedridden and too sick to fight. This was all God’s will so that he can survive the battle and subsequently take upon the responsibility of becoming the next Imām appointed by God. (Figure 4, pg. 109)

⁴⁵ Al-Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī; *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 44, pg. 297

⁴⁶ Burayr was amongst the martyrs of Karbalā’ and was known for reciting the Qur’ān and teaching it to others. He was killed early on the day of ‘Āshūrā’ in Karbalā’.

⁴⁷ Abdul Raḥmān ibn Abd al-Rabbih was one of the companions of Imām Ḥusayn in Karbalā’ who was martyred on the day of ‘Āshūrā’.

⁴⁸ Al-Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī; *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 45, pg. 1

final breath, as blood was gushing forth from all of his wounds, a Divine voice from the heavens proclaimed:

﴿يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً﴾

“O you trustful soul at peace! Return to your Lord, pleased, pleasing!”⁴⁹

A person who shows weakness during difficulties and becomes nervous and frustrated is unaware of the great power that God has placed inside of him. Such a person considers himself small and worthless. However, we must believe, accept and appreciate that God does not burden individuals with more hardship than they can bear.

Moreover, God does not impose duties upon people more than what they can handle:

﴿لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا﴾

“God does not burden any soul beyond its capacity!”⁵⁰

Thus, our restlessness during times of difficulty actually stems from a lack of knowledge of our own capabilities.

Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام, his family, and his companions provide perfect examples of having patience during hardships – and as Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام conveyed this message in Mecca:

نَصْرٌ عَلَىٰ بَلَائِهِ وَ يُوقِينَا أَجْوَرَ الصَّابِرِينَ

“We will be patient towards the trials, because He thoroughly rewards the patient ones.”⁵¹

⁴⁹ *Al-Qur’ān*, 89:27-28

⁵⁰ *Al-Qur’ān*, 2:286

In a supplication for his great-grandfather Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام, Imām al-Mahdī عليه السلام⁵² says:

قَدْ عَجِبَتْ مِنْ صَبْرِكَ مَلَائِكَةُ السَّمَاءِ

“O Ḥusayn! The angels of heaven were astounded your patience.”⁵³

Another lesson which can be learned in the school of ‘Āshūrā’ is that of tranquility and tolerance even during the hardest times of one’s life.

⁵¹ Al-Ṭāwūs, Radī ad-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Yahyā; *al-Lūhūf*, pg. 53

⁵² Imām al-Mahdī عليه السلام is the ultimate savior of humankind and the final Imām in the lineage of the twelve Imāms. The Shī‘a who follow the twelve Imāms believe that al-Mahdī عليه السلام was born in 869 CE and has not yet died, but rather was concealed by God in 941 CE and will later emerge with Prophet ‘Isā (Jesus Christ) عليه السلام in order to fulfill their mission of bringing peace and justice to the entire world. (Figure 4, pg. 109)

⁵³ Al-Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī; *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 98, pg. 239

THE CHARM OF BEAUTY

Chapter 5

Satisfaction

Spiritual people are always satisfied with whatever God has willed for them in their lives. This level of consent is the result of their true love for God. Whatever is given to them from their beloved brings great happiness to them, in every sense.

The love that Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام and his companions had for God inspired them to express gratification during such hardship. Also, Imām Ḥusayn's عليه السلام love for God resulted in his immense tranquility and inner peace during the extremely challenging events of 'Āshūrā'. He welcomed the most difficult hardships with gratitude because he was in love with God and he knew that He had "willed" for these events to take place.

Imām as-Ṣādiq عليه السلام says:

لَا يَمَسُّونَ آلَمَ الْحَدِيدِ

"On the day of 'Āshūrā' [the companions of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام] did not feel the pain of iron (arrows and swords hitting them)."⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Al-Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī; *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 45, pg. 80

This is not unusual. When people are mesmerized by their beloved, they do not feel the challenges and tribulations that are caused by them.

For example, when Prophet Joseph عليه السلام passed by the aristocratic women in the Pharaoh's court, the women were so distracted by his beauty that they cut their hands, instead of fruits, by knives without noticing the pain:

﴿فَلَمَّا رَأَيْنَهُ أَكْبَرْنَهُ وَقَطَّعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ وَقُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلَّهِ مَا هَذَا بَشَرًا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا مَلَكٌ كَرِيمٌ﴾

“So when they saw him, they marvelled at him and cut their hands [absent-mindedly], and they said, ‘Good heavens! This is not a human being! This is but a noble angel!’”⁵⁵

Similarly, the companions of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام were so astonished by his spectacular personality that they did not feel the pain of the arrows and swords that struck them by the enemies.

Another example of Imām Ḥusayn's عليه السلام satisfaction (with what God had willed) was when his infant son, ‘Alī Aṣghar⁵⁶ عليه السلام, was martyred.

⁵⁵ *Al-Qur’ān*, 12:31

⁵⁶ ‘Alī Aṣghar عليه السلام was the youngest child of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام whom the Imām had taken into the battlefield to show the enemy how this 6-month-old child was dying of thirst due to lack of water for many days. Tragically, instead of being given water, he was given a three-headed arrow which instantly killed him, shot by the marksman, Hurmala. From the seventh day of Muḥarram, there was no water in the Imām's camp and it was because of this that ‘Alī Aṣghar عليه السلام was in great pain due to intense thirst and the heat of the desert. It should be noted that the fact

When this honorable child of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام was beheaded by the three-branch pronged arrow, the blood spilled into the hands of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام and he threw the blood toward the sky. Once this event transpired, the Imām said:

هَوَّنَ عَلَيَّ مَا نَزَلَ بِي أَنَّهُ بِعَيْنِ اللَّهِ

“This occurrence is easy for me because it has happened in front of the eyes of my Lord.”⁵⁷

One who loves God has not a taste different from God’s taste,
and only likes what He likes.

One person is content with pain,
another with the cure.

One is content with Union,
another with separation.

I am content with whatever the Beloved desires.
Be it cure, pain; union or separation.⁵⁸

Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام said in his sermon before leaving Mecca:

رِضَا اللَّهِ رِضَانَا أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ

“The pleasure of God is our – the Prophet’s household - pleasure.”⁵⁹

that Imām took a new-born baby with him further demonstrates that his intention was never to engage in any armed rebellion.

⁵⁷ Al-Ṭāwūs, Radī ad-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Yaḥyā; *al-Lūhūf*, pg. 103

⁵⁸ Baba Taher, Dobaiti, He was a poet in Persian literature and an Iranian mystic.

⁵⁹ Al-Ṭāwūs, Radī ad-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Yaḥyā; *al-Lūhūf*, pg. 53

During the last moments of the Imām's life when he fell off of his horse and landed face-first on the ground, Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام started to supplicate. This is when a Divine voice proclaimed:

﴿يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً﴾

“O you trustful soul at peace! Return to your Lord, pleased, pleasing!”⁶⁰

Therefore, another lesson that can be learnt from the school of ‘Āshūrā’ is satisfaction in all aspects of one’s life.

⁶⁰ *Al-Qur’ān*, 89:27-28

THE CHARM OF BEAUTY

Chapter 6

Worship, Servitude, and Freedom

The Noble Qur'ān has declared the message of all the prophets to be:

﴿أَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ﴾

“Worship God and shun false gods (anyone who has disobeyed and rebelled against God).”⁶¹

Worship is an effort to reach the level of servitude of God, and servitude to God is the key to freedom from the domination of God's creatures. Any worldly matter that a human falls in love with, and eventually becomes infatuated with, will soon become like a god after one develops an attachment to it.

It is for this reason that all of the prophets had the mission to declare that nothing except God is worth our full love and attachment.

Thus, the secret of a human being's freedom from internal and external attachments, which are the result of an attachment to various things in this transient world, is servitude of God. In this regards, Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said:

⁶¹ *Al-Qur'ān*, 16:36

قُولُوا لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ تَفْلِحُوا

“Say ‘There is no god but (the One) God!’ so you’ll be salvated.”⁶²

It is through the servitude of God that a human being will not become a slave to any other creature, just as Imām ‘Alī عليه السلام said:

لَا تَكُنْ عَبْدَ غَيْرِكَ وَقَدْ جَعَلَكَ اللَّهُ حُرًّا

“God created you free, so do not be a slave of anything or anyone else.”⁶³

Worship is the practical implementation and manifestation of ‘servitude’ which establishes and confirms servitude in the human soul. It inspires the sense of servitude in all life activities and agendas, making people free, exalted, and divine (God-like). In this regards, Imām as-Şādiq عليه السلام stated:

الْعُبُودِيَّةُ جَوْهَرَةٌ كُنْهَهَا الرُّبُوبِيَّةُ

“Serving God is a gem the essence of which is cherishing.”

In a sacred ḥadīth (*ḥadīth al-qudsī*), God says:

عَبْدِي أَطْعِنِي حَتَّى أَجْعَلَكَ مَثَلِي

“O My servant! Obey Me and I will make you similar to Myself.”⁶⁴

⁶² Al-Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī; *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. 18, pg. 202

⁶³ Al-Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī; *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. 74, pg. 227

Being God-like makes a human deserving of being God's caliph, and his heart becomes the place of God's will and his body becomes the vehicle through which God's deeds are fulfilled. By reaching that level, one's heart will desire only what God has commanded; his tongue will speak only that which God desires him to say; his eyes will see only what God wants him to see; and his hands will do that which God wants him to do. Such a person will only act in a way which God wants him to, and as a result, one will be granted dominance and authority over different levels of existence and will be able to perform miracles of untold wonders – and the way to reach these stages lies in worship of God alone.

On the other hand, acts of worship and supplications are the most beautiful ways to show our love to God, communicating with Him privately and achieving His closeness. True mystics are those who love to worship and those who worship God wholeheartedly.

Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said:

أَفْضَلُ النَّاسِ مَنْ عَشِقَ الْعِبَادَةَ فَعَانَقَهَا وَ أَحَبَّهَا بِقَلْبِهِ وَ بِأَشْرَهَا
بِجَسَدِهِ وَ تَفَرَّغَ لَهَا

“The best people are those who love the worship and embrace it. Their hearts are fond of the service and worship. Their bodies are familiar with the worship and they look forward to having the privacy to perform it.”⁶⁵

Imām ‘Alī ؑ said:

⁶⁴ Al-Āmulī, Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī Ḥurr; *al-Jawāhir al-saniya fī al-aḥādīth al-qudsiya*, pg. 361

⁶⁵ Al-Kulaynī, Muḥammad Ya‘qūb; *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, pg. 83

إِلَهِي! مَا عَبَدْتُكَ خَوْفًا مِنْ نَارِكَ وَلَا طَمَعًا فِي جَنَّتِكَ، لَكِنِ
وَجَدْتُكَ أَهْلًا لِلْعِبَادَةِ فَعَبَدْتُكَ

“O Lord! I worship you neither out of my fear of your fire; nor in hope of entering Your Paradise; rather, I saw that You are worthy of being worshipped and so I worshipped You.”⁶⁶

Imām as-Ṣādiq عليه السلام has said:

قَوْمٌ عَبَدُوا اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ حُبًّا لَهُ فَهُوَ عِبَادَةُ الْأَحْرَارِ وَهِيَ أَفْضَلُ
الْعِبَادَةِ

“Some worship God out of true love and that is the worship of free men and the best form of worship.”⁶⁷

Thus, worship is the path to freedom.

Ḥāfiz, the great Persian poet has said:

“Openly, I admit with much joy and such glee;

Enslaved to Your love,

from both worlds I am free.”⁶⁸

On the ninth day of Muḥarram, the day known as *Tā'sū'ā*, Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام told his brother, ‘Abbās ibn ‘Alī (Abūl Fadhl) عليه السلام:⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Al-Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī; *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 67, pg. 186

⁶⁷ Al-Āmulī, Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī Ḥurr; *Wasā'il ash-shi'ah*, vol. 1, pg. 62

⁶⁸ Hafiz⁶⁸, Ghazal 317

⁶⁹ ‘Abbās ibn ‘Alī عليه السلام was one of the sons of Imām ‘Alī عليه السلام and the step-brother of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام.

إِنْ اسْتَطَعْتَ أَنْ تَصْرِفَهُمْ عَنَّا فِي هَذَا الْيَوْمِ فَافْعَلْ لَعَلَّنَا نُصَلِّيَ لِرَبِّنَا
فِي هَذِهِ اللَّيْلَةِ فَإِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ أَنِّي أَحْبُّ الصَّلَاةَ لَهُ وَتِلَاوَةَ كِتَابِهِ وَكَثْرَةَ
الدُّعَاءِ وَالِاسْتِغْفَارِ

“O my brother, if you can, dissuade the enemy from battle so that on this last night we can pray; God knows that I love to perform prayer to Him, to recite His Book (the Qur’ān), to pray a lot and to ask forgiveness from God.”⁷⁰

“Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام and his companions spent that last night in worship, remembering God, and reciting the Holy Qur’ān in such a way that their voices sounded like the humming of bees from a distance. They were either (in the various states of the prayer) standing, bending, or sitting.”⁷¹

On the day of ‘Āshūrā’, Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام and his companions stood to perform the noon prayer under the constant barrage [of arrows] from the enemy troops. Later, when Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام fell off of his horse, he placed his forehead on the ground and communicated with God through some last supplications.

Thus, one of the lessons understood in the arena of mysticism and morality from the school of ‘Āshūrā’ is that of venerating God and engrossing ourselves in servitude to Him – the only thing which will guide humanity to true freedom.

⁷⁰ Al-Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī; *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 44, pg. 391

⁷¹ Al-Ṭāwūs, Radī ad-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Yahyā; *al-Lūhūf*, pg. 94

THE CHARM OF BEAUTY

Chapter 7

Submission

Those who love God and engage in servitude to Him never object to His commands nor do they follow their own opinions and desires. In the presence of one's Lord, a servant does not consider oneself the owner of knowledge and understanding because God is the only One who is Omniscient, as it is stated in the Noble Qur'ān:

﴿هُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ﴾

“He (God) is the All-Knower of everything.”⁷²

The Noble Qur'ān addresses the human being as a servant and a creature who does not know much:

﴿وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا﴾

“...and you have not been given of the knowledge except a little.”⁷³

Thus, how can a servant, with the little knowledge of what he has been given, have his own opinion in the presence of God?

For example, when the greatest physicist, sociologist, or lawyer becomes ill, one submits oneself to a physician and will not dare to

⁷² Al-Qur'ān, 2:29

⁷³ Al-Qur'ān, 17:85

have a say about the physician's diagnosis, nor will one object to the medicine and treatment that is prescribed for him. He will even trust the physician to operate on him if required because he understands that the physician is qualified in that field while he is not.

In the same way, humans have no knowledge compared to God's ultimate wisdom, which is why they must submit to Him. According to one mystical saying, "The real servant before God is like a corpse in the hands of the man who washes the body⁷⁴, who moves it in different positions without the corpse showing any resistance."⁷⁵

Likewise, the real servant of God surrenders to Him, does not have a say before Him, and accepts anything that God has willed for His servant.

On the other hand, a lover of God does not have any desires independent of God's will; he does not utter his desires, nor does he oppose what God has willed and planned for him. In this way, a true servant of God leaves everything in His hands as He is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise, and the All-Aware. In the Qur'an we read:

﴿أَفَوَضُّ أَمْرِي إِلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَصِيرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ﴾

"I entrust my affair to God. Indeed God is Seeing of [His] servants."⁷⁶

⁷⁴ In Islamic tradition, before burial, the dead body is ceremoniously washed and then wrapped in a white burial shroud (referred to as a *kafan*).

⁷⁵ Al-Ḥadīd, ibn Abī; *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol. 11, pg. 699

⁷⁶ *Al-Qur'an*, 40:44

A loving servant of God complies with His wants and fully obeys His commands; whatever God wants for him in life, he accepts cheerfully with open arms and follows happily and obediently whatever the Lord instructs him to do in matters of his religion.

A good example of a servant's submission to His Lord can be seen in the early stages of Imām Ḥusayn's ﷺ uprising, when in a dream, Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ told Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ to leave Mecca and head towards Iraq:

أُخْرِجْ إِلَى الْعِرَاقِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى شَاءَ أَنْ يَرَاكَ قَتِيلاً... لَقَدْ شَاءَ
اللَّهُ أَنْ يَرَاهُنَّ سَبَايَا

“Go out towards Iraq as indeed God, the Most High, has willed to see you martyred ... and God has willed to see your women folk as captives.”⁷⁷

Since it was the will of God and it was revealed to the Imām through the Prophet, Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ fully complied with it and headed towards Kerbalā’.

Other sublime examples of a servant's submission to the will of God can be seen in the events leading up to the day of ‘Āshūrā’. When they were approaching the vicinity of Karbalā’, when ‘Alī Akbar⁷⁸ ﷺ heard from his father that they would be martyred soon, he asked his father:

⁷⁷ Al-Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī; *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. 44, pg. 364

⁷⁸ ‘Alī Akbar ﷺ was the son of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ whom historians write resembled Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ in his form, physique, method of speaking and his conduct. It is for this reason that Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ often said: “Whenever I remember my maternal grandfather [and long to see

أَلَسْنَا عَلَى الْحَقِّ؟ بَلَى. إِذَا لَا نُبَالِي بِالْمَوْتِ

“Are we not on the [path of the] truth?” Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام affirmed, to which ‘Alī Akbar عليه السلام responded: “Then how can death be frightening? Death for the sake of God is nothing but an honor!”⁷⁹ In this way, ‘Alī Akbar عليه السلام accepted God’s will.

On the day of ‘Āshūrā’, each of Imām Ḥusayn’s عليه السلام companions came to the Imām, asking permission to leave for the battle. The Imām hesitated before letting them go, but when his honorable son ‘Alī Akbar عليه السلام came, the Imām let him go without hesitation, despite his great affection for his son.

This is an example of complete submission to the will of God; and this level of submission was also evident in the last moments of his life when Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام fell off of his horse and lost his remaining strength. He placed his head on the earth of Kerbalā’ and supplicated to his Lord saying:

إِلَهِي! صَبْرًا عَلَى قَضَائِكَ يَا رَبِّ؛ لَا إِلَهَ سِوَاكَ؛ يَا غِيَاثَ
الْمُسْتَغِيثِينَ؛ مَا لِي رَبُّ سِوَاكَ وَلَا مَعْبُودَ غَيْرِكَ

“O my Lord! I am patient with what You have willed for me, O my God. I have no deity but You. O You who is there for those who need help. I have no God but you and none which is worshipped except for You.”⁸⁰

him and be in his company], I look at ‘Alī Akbar.” He was the first to be martyred from amongst the family members in Karbalā’.

⁷⁹ Kharazmī, Khatīb; *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn*, vol. 1, pg. 226

⁸⁰ Al-Musavi, Muqarrim, pg. 357

We learn to obey His commands, accept what He has willed. We learn not to have any say before Him, and place everything at His disposal.

THE CHARM OF BEAUTY

Chapter 8

Magnanimity, Self-Assurance, Honor and Greatness

When a person realizes the worth that God has placed in his essence, one will see the gem of his essence as more valuable than the entire world. One will not be willing to sell it for any price nor will one allow Satan to steal it (from him) or allow it to become corrupt. Rather, knowing one's true value, one will work on purifying one's soul in order to increase its value and spiritual beauty. In regards to this, Imām 'Alī عليه السلام said:

مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ جَلَّ أَمْرُهُ

“One who knows oneself will be exalted in status.”⁸¹

The Imām also said:

الْعَارِفُ مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ فَأَعْتَقَهَا وَنَزَّهَهَا عَنِ كُلِّ مَا يُبْعِدُهَا

“A true mystic is one who has realized one's reality, frees oneself of the attachments, and cleans oneself of everything which distances him of his reality.”⁸²

⁸¹ Al-Tamimī, 'Abd al-Wahīd al-'Amīdī al-Tamimī, *Ghurur al-ḥikam wa durar al-kalim*, vol. 5, pg. 208

He then says:

مَنْ لَمْ يَعْرِفْ نَفْسَهُ بَعُدَ عَنِ سَبِيلِ التَّجَاةِ وَ خَبَطَ فِي الضَّلَالِ وَ
الْجَهَالَاتِ

“Whoever does not know oneself will become distanced from the path of salvation and will be lost in darkness due to ignorance.”⁸³

Imām Sajjād عليه السلام was asked:

مَنْ أَعْظَمُ النَّاسِ خَطَرًا؟

“Who is the most momentous of people?”

He عليه السلام answered:

مَنْ لَمْ يَرَ الدُّنْيَا خَطَرًا لِنَفْسِهِ.

“[The most momentous] person is the one who does not see the world as his price.”⁸⁴

Imām al-Hādī⁸⁵ عليه السلام says:

مَنْ هَانَتْ عَلَيْهِ نَفْسُهُ فَلَا تَأْمَنُ شَرَّهُ

⁸² Al-Tamimī, ‘Abd al-Wahīd al-‘Amīdī al-Tamimī, *Ghurur al-ḥikam wa durar al-kalim*, vol. 2, pg. 48

⁸³ Al-Tamimī, ‘Abd al-Wahīd al-‘Amīdī al-Tamimī, *Ghurur al-ḥikam wa durar al-kalim*, vol. 5, pg. 426

⁸⁴ Al-Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī; *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 75, pg. 135

⁸⁵ Imām al-Hādī عليه السلام was also known as Imām ‘Alī an-Naqī عليه السلام and is the tenth of the twelve Imāms. (Figure 4, pg. 109)

“Do not consider yourself secure from the evil of the one who does not know his worth and belittles himself.”⁸⁶

The reason for the above statement from the Imām may lie in the fact that a person may commit the greatest of crimes for the smallest of prices.

Imām as-Sajjād عليه السلام told his companions:

لَيْسَ لِأَبْدَانِكُمْ ثَمَنٌ إِلَّا الْجَنَّةُ فَلَا تَبِيعُوهَا بِغَيْرِهَا فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ رَضِيَ
مِنَ اللَّهِ بِالْدُّنْيَا فَقَدْ رَضِيَ بِالْحَسَنِيسِ.

“Your bodies are worth nothing less than Paradise - hence, do not sell yourselves for anything other than it. One who is satisfied only with these worldly possessions has undervalued oneself.”⁸⁷

Therefore, one who knows his own value will not belittle himself due to threats or enticements and will never allow himself to be oppressed - one would rather die freely than live under oppression.

Hāfiz has stated the following in one of his famous poems:

“Beneath the azure vault, I am slave of the resolve of who is free from whatever taketh color of attachment.”⁸⁸

Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام said to his step-brother ‘Atraf:

⁸⁶ Al-Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī; *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. 72, pg. 300

⁸⁷ Al-Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī; *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. 1, pg. 144

⁸⁸ Hafiz, 37

وَاللَّهِ لَا أُعْطِي الدِّينَةَ مِنْ نَفْسِي أَبَدًا

“By God, I will never let myself be humiliated or oppressed.”⁸⁹

In the same way, on the second day of Muḥarram, Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام told his companions:

إِنِّي لَا أَرَى الْمَوْتَ إِلَّا سَعَادَةً وَالْحَيَاةَ مَعَ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا بَرَمًا

“Indeed I see death [in the way of God] as nothing but bliss, and life with the oppressors as nothing but contempt.”⁹⁰

When Ḥurr ibn Yazīd al-Riyāhī ⁹¹ threatened Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام, the Imām told him:

لَيْسَ شَأْنِي شَأْن مَنْ يَخَافُ الْمَوْتَ، مَا أَهْوَنَ الْمَوْتَ عَلَى سَبِيلِ نَيْلِ
الْعِزِّ وَإِحْيَاءِ الْحَقِّ. إِنَّ نَفْسِي لَأَكْبَرُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَهَمَّتِي لَأَعْلَى مِنْ
أَنْ أَحْمِلَ الصَّيْمَ خَوْفًا مِنَ الْمَوْتِ

“My stance is above that of someone who fears death. How easy is death in the path of obtaining greatness and reviving

⁸⁹ Al-Ṭāwūs, Radī ad-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Yaḥyā; *al-Lūhūf*, pg. 23

⁹⁰ Kharazmī, Khatīb; *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn*, vol. 2, pg. 5

⁹¹ Ḥurr ibn Yazīd al-Riyāhī was the commander of Yazīd’s regiment. He was responsible for blocking Imām Ḥusayn’s عليه السلام way near Kūfa, but after a short while, he understood that he had made a grave mistake and spent all his time repenting and feeling very guilty for having obstructed the way of the grandson of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, and ultimately he blamed himself for bringing Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام to Karbalā’. He eventually joined Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام and his companions and was martyred along with them on the day of ‘Āshūrā’.

the truth. Surely my soul is greater than this and my endeavor is not that of one who bears oppression out of fearing death.”⁹²

On the day of ‘Āshūrā’, Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام said:

لَا؛ وَاللَّهِ لَا أُعْطِيهِمْ بِيَدِي إِعْطَاءَ الدَّلِيلِ وَلَا أَفِرُّ مِنْهُمْ فِرَارَ الْعَبِيدِ
 “I swear by God, I will not make the oath of allegiance to my enemies like abject people; neither will I run away from them like slaves.”⁹³

He stated elsewhere:

أَلَا وَإِنَّ الدَّعِيَّ ابْنَ الدَّعِيِّ قَدْ رَكَزَ بَيْنَ اثْنَتَيْنِ، بَيْنَ السَّلَّةِ وَالدَّلَّةِ وَ
 هَيْهَاتَ مِمَّا الدَّلَّةُ! يَا بِيَّ اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ وَرَسُولُهُ وَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَ حُجُورٌ
 طَابَتْ وَ ظَهَرَتْ وَ عُنُوفٌ حَمِيَّةٌ وَ نُفُوسٌ أَبِيَّةٌ مِنْ أَنْ تُؤَثِّرَ طَاعَةَ
 اللَّئَامِ عَلَى مَصَارِعِ الْكِرَامِ

“Indeed, the illegitimate son of the illegitimate [Yazīd] has put us between two options – between unsheathing [the sword] and humiliation, and how impossible it is for us to surrender! God, His Prophet, and the believers do not accept this (humiliation) from us; the pure laps (of the mothers who raised us), the exalted spirits who do not surrender to oppression, and people with resolved determination also

⁹² Al-Balādhurī,³ Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, *Ansab al-ashraf*, vol. 3, pg. 171

⁹³ Al-Balādhurī,³ Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, *Ansab al-ashraf*, vol. 3, pg. 188

prevent us from preferring to obey the villainous group over martyrdom with honor.”⁹⁴

The greatness that Imām as-Sajjād عليه السلام and Lady Zaynab عليها السلام showed in the court of Ibn Ziyād and the palace of Yazīd is another display of the loftiness which exalted status of their souls.⁹⁵

Therefore, another lesson that can be learned in the fields of spirituality and morality in the school of ‘Āshūrā’, is the lesson of greatness and honor and not yielding oneself to any kind of oppression.

⁹⁴ Kharazmī, Khatīb; *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn*, vol. 2, pg. 7

⁹⁵ After the massacre in Karbalā’, the army of Yazīd took all of the surviving members of the camp of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام as captives and made them walk from Karbalā’ to Kūfa and then to Shām (present-day Syria and the surrounding region) to be present in the court of Yazīd.

THE CHARM OF BEAUTY

Chapter 9

Ethical Beauty

Morality is the foundation of one's actions and the goodness of one's moral character is reflected in one's actions. Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ says:

إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ لِأَتَمِّمَ مَكَارِمَ الْأَخْلَاقِ

“I have been appointed (to prophethood) to raise ethical standards to the highest level of perfection.”⁹⁶

In addition, God says in the Holy Qur'ān:

﴿لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ﴾

“There is certainly in the Messenger of God an excellent exemplar for you.”⁹⁷

Also, God introduces Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ in the following manner in the Qur'ān:

﴿إِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ﴾

“And indeed, you possess a great moral character”⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Nūrī, Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad Taqī; *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, vol. 11, pg. 187

⁹⁷ *Al-Qur'ān*, 33:21

When treading the path of mysticism - purifying one's soul and developing good moral character are necessary conditions.

The most effective method for spiritual progress is being associated with, and following the steps of, a great role model who himself possesses sublime moral character and conduct.

In mysticism, the role model should be a perfect mystic who attracts the seeker and is loved by him. This love and attraction will help the seeker try to resemble and imitate his role model.

In the events of 'Āshūrā', the most beautiful ethical scenes were manifested and the love of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام and his companions should motivate their admirers and followers to develop and manifest the same beautiful moral traits.

The well-known Egyptian writer 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād, wrote, "On the day of 'Āshūrā', there was a rivalry amongst the different virtues of Imām Ḥusayn such as patience, satisfaction, compliance, sincerity, bravery, calmness, zeal, etc. All of these traits rivalled within Ḥusayn to manifest themselves."

Thus many of the noble and exemplary moral traits were beautifully displayed in the events of Kerbalā'.

For example, in the field of courtesy and respect, 'Abbās ibne 'Alī's عليه السلام loyalty and courtesy towards Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام was remarkable. He used to address the Imām as, "My Master" until the last breath of his life. It was only in his final moments upon a request by the Imām that he called out, "O brother! Come help your brother!"⁹⁹

⁹⁸ *Al-Qur'ān*, 68:4

⁹⁹ Kāshānī, Ḥabibullāh Sharīf; *Tazkrat al-Shuhadā*, vol. 1, pg. 595

In the field of self-sacrifice, the example of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام and his companions was astonishing. They placed all that they had in the plate of sincerity, and offered it to their Beloved Lord.

Concerning good will, on the day of ‘Āshūrā’, Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام did not begin the attack upon the enemy. Rather, he waited for them to start the battle. In addition, he did not stop preaching to them until the final moments of his life. It was because of his benevolent and eloquent sermons that thirty men from the soldiers of ‘Umar ibn Sa‘ad’s ¹⁰⁰ army joined the side of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام on the night before ‘Āshūrā’. Moreover, on the day of ‘Āshūrā’, a figure like Ḥurr ibn Yazīd al-Riyāhī, who was a commander of the enemy army, decided to join the Imām along with his son and servant.¹⁰¹

Another example of ethical beauty in Karbalā’ was equality – meaning that all of those who were present were considered and treated equally. When his servant John¹⁰² was on the verge of martyrdom, Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام treated him similar to the way he treated his own son ‘Alī Akbar عليه السلام.

When it came to generosity, Imām Ḥusayn’s عليه السلام example was inimitable. Even though Ḥurr and his army blocked Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام from reaching Kūfa and forced him to move towards Karbalā’, when Ḥurr and his army were thirsty, the Imām offered Ḥurr, his men, and even their horses the entire water reserve that they had

¹⁰⁰ ‘Umar ibn Sa‘ad led the troops who murdered Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام in the tragedy of Karbalā’.

¹⁰¹ See footnote 103

¹⁰² His full name was John ibn Jowey. He came to Karbalā’ with Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام and was responsible for preparing the weapons. He fought with the Imām until he was killed, and at his death, the Imām sat near his dead body and prayed for him.

collected to quench their thirst. A few days later, the Imām ﷺ and his companions were deprived of water and suffered from intense thirst.¹⁰³

In the field of forgiveness and magnanimity, the way that Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ forgave Ḥurr¹⁰⁴ was remarkable. It was the actions of Ḥurr that cut off the water supply and caused the Imām and his companions to be surrounded in Karbalā'. However when Ḥurr approached the Imām, repenting and hanging his head down in shame, the Imām told him, "Hold your head up. Today is not the day to be ashamed - because you have joined us."¹⁰⁵

In the field of chivalry, many lofty examples can be found in the events of 'Āshūrā'. For example, on the night before 'Āshūrā', when Shimr¹⁰⁶ was close to the tents of the Imām's army and in the proximity of their camp-fire, Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ ordered not to attack Shimr and his group, and said: "We will fight them equitably and honorably tomorrow."¹⁰⁷

Likewise, when Ibn Ziyād¹⁰⁸ went to the house of Hānī ibn Urwah¹⁰⁹, despite the prior plan of Hānī ibn Urwah and Muslim ibn

¹⁰³ On the 7th day of Muḥarram the water storage in Imām Ḥusayn's ﷺ camp was disrupted. Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ asked 'Umar ibne Sa'ad's army to allow him and his companions to have access to water, but his request was denied.

¹⁰⁴ See footnote 103

¹⁰⁵ Ibn Mikhnaf 121

¹⁰⁶ Shimr was one of the commanders of the Ibn Ziyād army during the Battle of Karbalā'. In battle, he was responsible for beheading Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ. He was also instrumental in pillaging the camp after raising the Imām's head on a spear to declare his victory.

¹⁰⁷ Nūrī, Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad Taqī; *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, vol. 11, pg. 80

¹⁰⁸ See footnote 35

‘Aqīl (the envoy of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام), Muslim¹¹⁰ did not attack and assassinate Ibn Ziyād because he was an invited guest at Hānī’s house, such act was considered to be dishonorable as it violated the principles of chivalry.¹¹¹

In the field of zeal, on the day of ‘Āshūrā’ when Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام was alone and moved towards the banks of the Euphrates¹¹² River to get some water, someone yelled out a false accusation saying, “O Ḥusayn! You are worried about water for yourself while our army has attacked your tents?!”¹¹³ The Imām left the river at once and rushed toward the tents of his family and friends.

In the final moments of the Imām’s life, with the army of ‘Umar ibn Sa‘ad incessantly attacking Imām Ḥusayn’s عليه السلام tents, this rightful inheritor of the legacy of the Prophet ﷺ gathered whatever remaining energy that remained in him, and using a broken sword, boosted himself from the ground and shouted: “Even if you want to live without religion, then at least live like free and honorable men!”¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Hānī ibn Urwa was one of Imām Ḥusayn’s عليه السلام companions in Kūfā who was killed by the orders of Ibn Ziyād.

¹¹⁰ See footnote 41

¹¹¹ Shahidī, Sayyed Ja‘far; *Pas az Panjah Sal*, pg. 134

¹¹² The Euphrates (al-Furāt) is the longest and one of the most historically important rivers of Western Asia. Together with the Tigris, it is one of the two defining rivers of Mesopotamia (Iraq). Originating in eastern Turkey, the Euphrates flows through Syria and Iraq to join the Tigris in the Shatt al-Arab, which empties into the Persian Gulf. (Figure 1, pg. xxiii)

¹¹³ Al-Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī; *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 45, pg. 51

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

These are but a few of the examples of the many scenes of ethical beauty in Karbalā' for the lovers and followers of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام.

THE CHARM OF BEAUTY

Chapter 10

Love and Self-Sacrifice

The act of creation is nothing but the manifestation of God's names and attributes, reflected in the mirror of creatures. The reason behind creation is God's desire to manifest His beauty and perfection. Therefore, the essence of creatures is mixed with the love and desire for God.

By nature, all human beings like and desire beauty and goodness and God is the Absolute and Infinite Beauty and Goodness:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ جَمِيلٌ

“Surely, God is beautiful.”¹¹⁵

Therefore as the human knowledge and understanding of God increases, his love for God also increases. God says in the Holy Qurʾān:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ﴾

“And the faithful have a more ardent love for God.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Al-Kulaynī, Muḥammad Yaʿqūb; *al-Kāfi*, vol. 6, pg. 438

¹¹⁶ *Al-Qurʾān*, 2:165

Religion is the ultimate school for the attainment of perfection; perfection comes from self-sacrifice, and self-sacrifice is the fruit of loving God. From this, the essence and truth of religion is nothing but love: love of God, love of His actions, and love of His creations. In this regards Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir¹¹⁷ عليه السلام says:

هَلِ الدِّينُ إِلَّا الْحُبُّ؟ أَلَدِّينُ هُوَ الْحُبُّ وَالْحُبُّ هُوَ الدِّينُ

“Is religion anything other than love? Religion is love and love is religion.”¹¹⁸

‘Āshūrā’ was the scene of the manifestation of the deepest, truest, and purest emotion of love and the field of the sincerest self-sacrifices for the sake of God; even today Karbalā’ is the altar of the most ardent lovers of God.

Returning from the battle of Siffin¹¹⁹, when Imām ‘Alī عليه السلام passed by the land of Karbalā’, with tears in his eyes he told his companions:

¹¹⁷ Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Bāqir عليه السلام was the fifth Imām of the Twelver Shi‘as, and the son of Imām as-Sajjād عليه السلام and Fāṭima bint Ḥasan. He is respected by Shi‘a Muslims for his religious leadership and status as being the successor of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, and is highly esteemed by Sunni Muslims for his extraordinary knowledge and Islamic scholarship as a leading jurist of the city of Medina, the city of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. [Figure 4, pg. 109]

¹¹⁸ Al-Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī; *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. 66, pg. 238

¹¹⁹ The Battle of Siffin was fought between Imām ‘Alī عليه السلام and Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abū Sufyān on the banks of the Euphrates River.

هٰهُنَا مَصَارِعُ عُشَّاقٍ لَا يَسِيْقُهُمْ مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَهُمْ وَلَا يَلْحَقُهُمْ مَنْ
بَعْدَهُمْ

“This is the place of the martyrdom of God’s lovers - those who are superior to the people of the past and the future generations.”¹²⁰

Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام is a perfect example of one who had true love for God, as he gave the ultimate sacrifice, and thus was the light of God.

On the day of ‘Āshūrā’, he and his devoted companions manifested their wholehearted love and sincere self-sacrifice for the cause of God and the true path of Islām.

This manifestation of love, and the willingness to be martyred for Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام reached its climax on the night before ‘Āshūrā’. When the Imām eliminated the oath of allegiance from his companions and allowed them to leave Karbalā’. He tried to give his companions excuses to leave, saying, “Each of you can take one member of my family and leave. The enemy is only after me.” To this, the companions answered in ways that showed their true love and willingness to sacrifice themselves for their Imām.

‘Abbās ibn ‘Alī عليه السلام¹²¹ and his brothers stood up and said, “Why would we want to stay alive after your martyrdom? God forbid we live after your death!”^{122 and 123}

¹²⁰ Al-Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī; *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 41, pg. 295

¹²¹ See footnote 80

¹²² Kharazmī, Khatīb; *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, vol. 1, pg. 246

¹²³ See footnote 56

When Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام told the children of Muslim ibn ‘Aqīl¹²⁴ to return back, they responded:

“What will people say if we leave you? We would have to tell them that we abandoned our master, that we did not help him in battle even by throwing a shot or spear, that we did not fight for him with our swords and do not know what happened to him. We swear by God that we will never do such a thing! We will sacrifice our lives, belongings, and family for you and we will fight for your cause until we are martyred. We hope that we will not stay alive after your death!”

Muslim ibn Awsaja¹²⁵ said, “Do you want us to leave Karbalā’ and remain alive after your death? How will we justify this to our Lord? By God, as long as I have a lance in one hand and a sword in the other, I will put them to use for your cause and against your enemies; and when I do not have any weapons left, I swear by God, I will defend you with stones.”

Sa‘īd ibn ‘Abdullāh al-Ḥanafī¹²⁶ said, “O Ḥusayn! I swear by God that I will not abandon you. If I knew that I was to die for you, be

¹²⁴ See footnote 41

¹²⁵ Muslim ibn Awsaja was one of the faithful companions of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم. He was also one of the most prominent supporters of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام in Karbalā’ and was martyred there.

¹²⁶ Sa‘īd ibn ‘Abdullāh al-Ḥanafī was one of the individuals who stood to protect Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام. On the day of ‘Āshūrā’, at noon, as the Imām prayed, the enemy archers aimed their arrows and spears at him. Sa‘īd, who was worried for his Imām’s life, stepped forward and defended his Imām using his own body as a shield. He followed every arrow that came towards his Imām and let them pierce his own body. He continued to do so until the prayer was over. He then fell down before his Imām, and had

brought back to life, burn alive, and my ashes be spread in the air, I would never abandon you, even if it was repeated seventy times!”

Zuhayr ibn Qayn¹²⁷ said, “I swear by God that I wish I could be killed for your cause and come back to life and be killed again a thousand times to prevent your death and martyrdom.”¹²⁸

From this we see that each of the Imām’s companions showed their love and devotion for Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام in their own way.

Another companion of the Imām, Ābis ibn Abī Shabīb al-Shākiri¹²⁹ was an old man, and the enemy did not dare fight him whenever he went to the battlefield. As he entered the field of battle, he ripped off his armor and fought bravely - and when he was asked if he had become crazy or mad, he replied that it was the love of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام that had made him mad and passionate!

One hadith reads:

succeeded in defending him, for Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام was not injured while praying.

¹²⁷ Zuhayr ibn Qayn was a noble chieftain of his tribe, and a man of great influence in Kūfa. He was attached to the third caliph ‘Uthmān and one of his ardent supporters. Once, returning from the ḥajj pilgrimage, he met the Imām and became a staunch devotee of him. He is the one who bade goodbye to his wife, liberating her with a divorce to go to her relatives, after which he joined the army of the Imām and was also martyred in the tragedy of Karbalā’.

¹²⁸ Al-Majlisi, Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī; *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. 44, pg. 392

¹²⁹ Ābis was one of the bravest and most loyal men in the army of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام in Karbalā’. Ābis was so old that he had to tie a piece of cloth around his forehead just to keep his eyebrows from drooping over his eyes. He was martyred in the tragedy of Karbalā’.

إِنَّ لِلْحُسَيْنِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ مَحَبَّةً مَكْنُونَةً فِي قُلُوبِ أَوْلِيَائِهِ

“Surely for Ḥusayn, peace be upon him, there is a hidden love in the hearts of his friends.”¹³⁰

This love which is manifested in weeping and mourning for Imām Ḥusayn (عليه السلام) gives motivation and impetus for everyone to follow the path of this exemplary personality – the path of love and servitude of God until ones’ last breath.

¹³⁰ Kāshānī, Ḥabibullāh Sharif; *Tazkrat al-Shuhadā*, vol. 1, pg. 42



“Evening of ‘Āshūrā’,” is a popular painting painted by a famous Iranian painter, Mahmoud Farshchian in 1976. This Painting refers to the time when Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام and his loyal companions had been martyred and the Imām’s horse came back to his family’s tent wounded and without its rider. This silent message evokes deep sorrow on the eve of ‘Āshūrā’.



The city of Karbalā' with the two sacred shrines of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام and his brother, 'Abbās ibn 'Alī عليه السلام as seen from Google Earth.



A view of passionate pilgrims visiting the shrine of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام.



Photo by
Ali Aziz

azizkarbala.deviantart.com

In the foreground stands the minarets of the shrine of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام, while in the background is the shrine of his brother, ‘Abbās ibn ‘Alī عليه السلام. Each year, millions and millions of people visit the holy land of Karbalā’.



اَلسَّلَامُ عَلٰى الْحُسَيْنِ
وَعَلٰى عَلِيٍّ ابْنِ الْحُسَيْنِ
وَعَلٰى اَوْلَادِ الْحُسَيْنِ
وَعَلٰى اَصْحَابِ الْحُسَيْنِ

Peace be on Ḥusayn,
and on ‘Alī son of Ḥusayn,
and on the children of Ḥusayn,
and on the companions of Ḥusayn.

THE CHARM OF BEAUTY

Epilogue

In conclusion, it should be noted that the responsibility of the followers of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام is not limited to weeping and mourning over the tragedies of Karbalā'. Even though these are very important, we must follow the Imām's عليه السلام character and conduct in our lives, as he is one of our greatest role models. With the greater acquaintance that we gain about the events of 'Āshūrā', we have to become more like Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام and act more like him, as much as possible.

The movement of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام is made up of two dimensions: One side is spiritual and moral; and the other is the social and political dimension of fighting against oppression and corruption. To become a true follower, the devotee of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام must emulate both of these dimensions - that is, one must combine the mystical spirit with the oppression-fighting body of the Ḥusaynī movement.

I pray that with the help of God and attention from Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام, the lovers of the Imām are able to make their souls and lives like those of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام and his loyal companions.

THE CHARM OF BEAUTY

Glossary

- ‘Abbās ibn ‘Alī He was one of the sons of Imām ‘Alī عليه السلام and the step-brother of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام.
- ‘Abdul Raḥmān ibn ‘Abd al-Rabbih He was one of the companions of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام in Karbalā’ who was martyred on the day of ‘Āshūrā’.
- Ābis ibn Abī Shabīb al-Shākiri Ābis was one of the bravest and most loyal men in the army of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام in Karbalā’. He was martyred in the tragedy of Karbalā’.
- Ahlul Bayt A Qur’ānic term which is found referenced in chapter 33 (Sūratul Aḥzāb), verse 33 and also used extensively by Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ to refer to certain specific Divinely-chosen and purified members of his

family - they include his daughter Lady Fāṭima عليها السلام, her husband Imām ‘Alī عليه السلام, and their sons, Imām Ḥasan عليه السلام and Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام. As an extension, the nine Imāms which came from the progeny of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام are also a part of the Ahlul Bayt.

‘Alī Akbar

The son of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام whom historians write resembled Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ in his form, physique, method of speaking and his conduct. He was the first to be martyred from amongst the family members in Karbalā’.

‘Alī Aṣghar

The youngest child of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام whom the Imām had taken into the battlefield to show the enemy how this 6-month-old child was dying of thirst due to lack of water for many days. Tragically, instead of being given water, he was given a three-headed arrow which instantly killed him, shot by the marksman, Hurmala.

‘Āshūrā’

Literally, the word means ‘10’ and in the context of Islāmic history, it refers to the tenth day of the first lunar Islamic month of Muḥarram which is the day of martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام, his family members and companions.

Burayr

He was amongst the martyrs of Karbalā’ and was known for reciting the Qur’ān and teaching it to others. He was killed early on the day of ‘Āshūrā’ in Karbalā’.

Euphrates

The Euphrates (al-Furāt) is the longest and one of the most historically important rivers of Western Asia. Together with the Tigris, it is one of the two defining rivers of Mesopotamia (Iraq). Originating in eastern Turkey, the Euphrates flows through Syria and Iraq to join the Tigris in the Shatt al-Arab, which empties into the Persian Gulf.

Lady Fāṭima

The daughter of Prophet Muḥammad  through his

- first and most beloved wife, Khadijah bint Khuwaylid; she was also the wife of Imām ‘Alī عليه السلام.
- Hānī ibn Urwa One of Imām Ḥusayn’s عليه السلام companions in Kūfā who was killed by the orders of Ibn Ziyād.
- Ḥurr ibn Yazīd al-Riyāhī Originally the commander of Yazīd’s regiment. He was responsible for blocking Imām Ḥusayn’s عليه السلام way near Kūfa. He eventually joined Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام and his companions and was martyred along with them on the day of ‘Āshūrā’.
- Ibn Ziyād Commander of Yazīd’s military and ordered to take control of the city of Kūfa as a response to Imām Ḥusayn’s عليه السلام popularity there.
- Imām ‘Alī The first cousin and son-in-law of the final Messenger of God, Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, as well as his rightful and immediate successor.
- Imām al-Mahdī The ultimate savior of humankind and the final Imām in

the lineage of the twelve Imāms. The Shī‘a who follow the twelve Imāms believe that al-Mahdi was born in 869 CE and has not yet died, but rather was concealed by God in 941 CE and will later emerge with Prophet ‘Isā (Jesus Christ) in order to fulfill their mission of bringing peace and justice to the entire world.

Imām al-Hādī

Also known as Imām ‘Alī an-Naqī and is the tenth of the twelve Imāms.

Imām Ḥusayn

The third infallible successor to the Messenger of Islām, Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. He is the son of the daughter of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, Lady Fāṭima عليها السلام and Imām ‘Alī عليه السلام.

Imām Ja‘far as-Ṣādiq

The sixth successor or Divinely-appointed leader of the Muslim community after Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.

Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir

Imām Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Bāqir عليه السلام was the fifth Imām of the Twelver Shī‘as, and the son of Imām as-Sajjād عليه السلام and Fāṭima

bint Ḥasan.

Imām as-Sajjād

The son of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام, as well as the fourth Shī‘a Imām. He was one of the only me whose life was spared during the massacre at Karbalā’, since he could not take part in the fighting due to his severe illness.

John ibn Jowey

A freed slave, he came to Karbalā’ with Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام and was responsible for preparing the weapons. He fought with the Imām until he was killed.

Karbalā’

The name of the once-barren area located in present day Iraq, approximately 55 miles southwest of modern-day Baghdad and close to the western banks of the Euphrates River. Historically it was known by many names, however its most famous and current is that of Karbalā’.

Kūfa

Kūfa is a city in Iraq, about 170 kilometres (110 miles) south of Baghdad, and 10 kilometres (6.2 miles) northeast of Najaf.

- Medina Medina is a city in the Hejaz region of the western part of Saudi Arabia. It is the second most important city in Islam and is where Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and many of his noble companions and family members are buried.
- Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abū Sufyān The father of Yazīd.
- Muḥarram The first month of the lunar Islāmic calendar.
- Muslim ibn ‘Aqīl The first-cousin of Imām Ḥusayn ؑ and his envoy to the city of Kūfa. Muslim ibn ‘Aqīl, along with his two children, were murdered in the city of Kūfa by the governor, Ibn Ziyād, who was appointed by Yazīd.
- Muslim ibn Awsaja One of the faithful companions of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. He was also one of the most prominent supporters of Imām Ḥusayn ؑ in Karbalā’ and was martyred there.
- Najaf Najaf is a city in Iraq about 160 km (roughly 100 miles) south of

Baghdad. It is widely considered the third holiest city of Shī‘a Islām and houses the shrine of Imām ‘Alī عليه السلام.

Prophet Joseph

Known in Arabic as Yūsuf, he was the son of Prophet Ya‘qūb (Jacob). His story is recounted in the Qur’ān in chapter 12.

Sa‘id ibn ‘Abdullāh al-Ḥanafī

Sa‘id ibn ‘Abdullāh al-Ḥanafī was one of the individuals who stood to protect Imām Ḥusayn.

Shimr

Shimr was one of the commanders of the Ibn Ziyād army during the Battle of Karbalā’. In battle, he was responsible for beheading Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام. He was also instrumental in pillaging the camp after raising the Imām’s head on a spear to declare his victory.

‘Umar ibn Sa‘ad

‘Umar ibn Sa‘ad led the troops who murdered Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام in the tragedy of Karbalā’.

Zaynab bint ‘Alī

Zaynab bint ‘Alī was the daughter of Imām ‘Alī عليه السلام and

Lady Faṭīma , and the granddaughter of Prophet Muḥammad . She is known for her courageous and eloquent role supporting her brother at the time of his martyrdom in the tragic events of Karbalā'; and went on to defend the remaining family members in their forced journey to Kūfa and later on to Shām (Syria).

Zuhayr ibn Qayn

A noble chieftain of his tribe, and a man of great influence in Kūfa. He joined the army of the Imām and was also martyred in the tragedy of Karbalā'.

THE CHARM OF BEAUTY

Index

- ‘Abbās Maḥmūd al-‘Aqqād, 72
- ‘Abbās ibn ‘Alī, 56, 72, 79, 84, 85, 89
- ‘Abdul Raḥmān ibn ‘Abd al-Rabbih, 45, 89
- Ābis ibn Abī Shabīb al-Shākiri, 81, 89
- Ahlul Bayt, xiii, xxii, 34, 51, 89, 103
- ‘Alī Akbar, 61, 62, 73, 90
- ‘Alī Aṣghar, 50, 90
- Archangel Gabriel, 37
- ‘Āshūrā’, xxv, xxvi, 28, 30, 34, 35, 38, 39, 40, 41, 45, 47, 49, 52, 57, 61, 62, 68, 69, 70, 72, 73, 74, 75, 78, 79, 80, 83, 87, 89, 91, 92
- ‘Atraf, 67
- Baghdad, xxii, xxiii, 34, 94, 95
- Battle of Siffin, 78
- Burayr, 45, 91
- Euphrates, xxii, 75, 78, 91, 94
- Fāṭima bint Ḥasan, 78, 93
- Ḥāfiz, 32, 56, 67
- Hānī ibn Urwa, 74, 75, 92
- Hejaz, 41
- Hurmala, 50, 90
- Ḥurr ibn Yazīd al-Riyāhī, 68, 73, 74, 92, 105
- Ibn Ziyād, 34, 39, 74, 75, 92, 95, 96
- Imām al-Hādī, 66, 93
- Imām ‘Alī, xxi, xxii, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 54, 55, 56, 65, 78, 89, 91, 92, 93, 95, 96
- Imām ‘Alī an-Naqī, 66, 93
- Imām al-Mahdī, 47, 92
- Imām as-Ṣādiq, 49, 54, 56
- Imām as-Sajjād, 45, 66, 67, 70, 78, 93, 94

- Imām Ḥasan, xxii, 89
- Imām Ḥusayn, xi, xiii, xvii, xix, xxi, xxii, xxiii, xxv, xxvi, 27, 28, 29, 33, 34, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 49, 50, 51, 52, 56, 57, 61, 62, 67, 68, 69, 70, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 87, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96
- Imām Ja‘far as-Ṣādiq, 27, 49, 54, 56, 93
- Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir, 78, 93
- Iraq, xxii, xxiii, 28, 34, 61, 75, 91, 94, 95
- Jami, 32
- Jesus Christ, 47, 92
- John ibn Jowey, 73, 94
- Karbalā’, xiii, xxii, xxiii, xxv, 28, 39, 40, 42, 44, 45, 61, 62, 68, 70, 72, 73, 74, 76, 78, 79, 80, 81, 84, 85, 87, 89, 90, 91, 94, 95, 96, 97
- Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, 91
- Khasimayyah, 28
- Kūfa, 28, 33, 34, 38, 39, 40, 42, 68, 70, 73, 75, 81, 92, 94, 95, 96, 97
- Lady Fāṭima, xxi, xxii, 28, 34, 89, 91, 93, 96
- Mecca, 39, 42, 46, 51, 61
- Medina, 40, 41, 78, 95
- Mesopotamia, 75, 91
- Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abū Sufyān, xxi, 78, 95
- Muḥammad ibn Hanafiyyah, 40
- Muḥarram, xix, xxii, 50, 56, 68, 74, 91, 95
- Muslim ibn ‘Aqīl, 39, 75, 80, 95
- Muslim ibn Awsaja, 80, 95
- Mysticism, xxvi
- Najaf, 34, 94, 95
- Persian Gulf, 75, 91
- Prophet ‘Isā, 47, 92
- Prophet Joseph, 50, 96
- Prophet Muḥammad, xviii, xxi, xxii, 27, 28, 33, 37, 41, 53, 55, 61, 68, 71, 78, 80, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 95, 96, 107
- Prophet Ya‘qūb, 96
- Sa‘dī, 29
- Sa‘īd ibn ‘Abdullāh al-Ḥanafī, 80, 96

Saudi Arabia, 41, 95
Shām, 28, 70, 96
Shaqūq, 28
Shatt al-Arab, 75, 91
Shimr, 74, 96
Syria, 28, 70, 75, 91, 96
Tarmah ibn Uday, 33
Tigris, 75, 91
Turkey, 75, 91
‘Umar ibn Sa‘ad, 73, 74, 75, 96
‘Uthmān ibn Affān, 81
Yazīd, xxi, xxii, 34, 38, 39, 68,
69, 70, 92, 95
Prophet Yūsuf, 96
Zaynab bint ‘Alī, 28, 34, 70, 96
Zubālah, 39
Zuhayr ibn Qayn, 81, 97

THE CH^{ARM} OF BEAUTY

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THE CHARM OF BEAUTY

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The Family Tree of the Prophet's Lineage

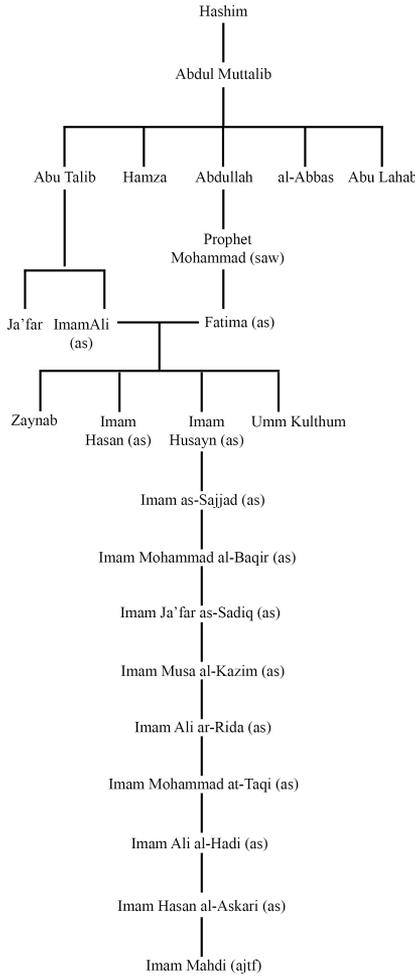


Figure 4: The family tree of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ going back to his great-great-grandfather and culminating with his 12th successor, Imām al-Mahdī.

