



"If Hussain had fought to quench his worldly desires... then I do not understand why his sister, wife, and children accompanied him. It stands to reason therefore, that he sacrificed purely for Islam,"
– Charles Dickens

"Of that gallant band, male and female knew that the enemy forces around were implacable, and were not only ready to fight, but to kill. Denied even water for the children, they remained parched under the burning sun and scorching sands, yet not one faltered for a moment. Husain marched with his little company, not to glory, not to the power of wealth, but to a supreme sacrifice, and every member bravely faced the greatest odds without flinching,"
– Dr K Sheldrake

"Though Imam Hussain gave his life years ago, but his indestructible soul rules the hearts of people even today,"
– Dr Radha Krishnan

"No battle in the modern and past history of mankind has earned more sympathy and admiration as well as provided more lessons than the martyrdom of Hussain in the Battle of Karbala,"
– Antoine Bara (Lebanese writer)

Imam Hussain had stepped out of the tent to appeal to whatever shred of humanity was left in the cold and cruel hearts of Yazid's soldiers for a little water for the parched throat of the baby.

The story of Karbala is universal, the struggle true to all oppressed. Poet says, "Let humanity awaken and every nation will claim Hussain as their own. In the martyrdom of Imam Hussain lies the death of Yazid, for Islam resurrects after every Karbala."

The so called 'victors' left the battlefield on their horses, monstrous in their arrogance, trampling and mutilating

the martyred, under the hooves of the horses, leaving them unrecognisable. The evil forces buried their dead and disrespectfully left the Imam and his martyred companions decapitated on the burning sands of Karbala. They looted and burned the tents of Imam Hussain, and looted the women and children still alive.

The survivors were chained and made to walk barefoot on the burning desert sands, all the way from Karbala to Kufa, and from Kufa to Damascus, Syria. Throughout the journey the women and children were heinously tortured.

Karbala symbolises struggle against injustice: non-violent resistance, with grace and supreme determination, at the ultimate price— not taking a life, but sacrificing your own, for Islam.

In the modern era, Imam Hussain is remembered for just that. A great mausoleum was made for the martyred in Iraq, near Baghdad and Karbala. Millions go to Imam Hussain and his companion's shrine on the day of Ashura (10th of Muharram) and Arba'een (Chehlum, "the fortieth day", is a religious observance that occurs forty days after the Day of Ashura).

The Karbala martyrs proved that no matter how small the number, truth and justice shall ultimately prevail, even against the most formidable evil.

The spirit of Karbala and Imam Hussain live on to inspire and guide, and the palaces and forts of Yazid with all the wealth have perished and disappeared from the face of the earth. Such is the power of the blood of the martyrs of Karbala — Imam Hussain and his kinsmen, that it remains for all eternity, a defining moment in the history of Islam, the love for Hussain and his men etched in the hearts of all Muslims.

By Ali Kumayl Khan
Photo: LS Archive/ Sazzad Ibne Sayed

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But suddenly I thought of Imam Hussain and the Karbala movement. Imam Hussain gave me strength to stand for the right of freedom and liberation and I did."

The tragedy of Karbala is an unparalleled event in the history of mankind. The great sacrifice made by Imam Hussain, the grandson of the Holy Prophet (S), on Ashura (The 10th of Muharram 61 AH) and the steadfastness shown by him is a beacon for all oppressed, everywhere.

At Karbala, the small travelling party of Imam Hussain was besieged by more than 20,000 armed men of the tyrant Yazid ibn Muawiyah, a usurper of the caliphate. Imam Hussain denied him his allegiance, and as a result, Yazid's men carried out unspeakable torture on Hussain, his family, and entourage, until an almost complete annihilation of the group.

Yet, this impossible stand by a small group of steadfast people, and the torture carried out on them, is what ultimately struck the mightiest blow to the foundation of the oppressive Umayyad Dynasty, as it ignited a series of revolts. Although, Imam Hussain and his companions were martyred and their family members, especially the women of the household and Imam Hussain's only surviving son, Imam Zainul-Abeddin were taken as prisoners, history clearly shows the true victor— righteousness.

On Ashura, the world mourns Imam Hussain and his kith and kin. Imam Hussain, the symbol of truth, piety and justice had been representing Islam in its entirety stood on one side of the river Euphrates with his small group of only 72 comprising of his brothers, sons, nephews and companions, old and young. There was even one, Habib Ibne Mazahir, a friend of Hussain, being eighty years old but steadfast in his mission.

Opposite them, blocking access to water for days, stood Yazid's commander Umar ibne Saad, with thousands of well-armed soldiers.

Before the prayers of Asr on that fateful day in October, 680 AD, the Battle of Karbala was over. The 72 male companions of Imam Hussain were martyred along



with Imam Hussain's six-month-old son, Ali Asghar. He was killed by a three headed arrow that was used to hunt wild animals in the desert, shot by the enemy's ace archer Hurmullah Ibn Kahil Al Asadi Alkoofi.