The Message of Karabala

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The form of our gathering tonight is to show allegiance to the message and the conduct of the Ahl ul-Bavt. In every aspect of life there is an outer form and an inner meaning. Form and meaning are always connected, but not always in the right balance. We are gathered. as many others around the world are gathered. to remember the meaning of Imam Husayn's martyrdom at Karbala. If we do not join the form of our commemoration with the meaning of Karbala, then we have disrupted the balance in existence. If we do not live what we teach, that teaching will become barren. If we do not adhere to the message of Islam in every way. that message will be distorted, and will end up being yet another religion far removed from the source.

I would like to quote from the Qur'an to share with you the responsibility that is on our shoulders:

Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe, those who establish the prayer, give zakat and bow down (in prayer). (Surat ul-Ma'idah:55)

Many of you know the historical event about which this ayah was revealed in Medina. The event occurred in the Prophet's mosque during the time of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Au. It was while Amir 'Mi, peace be upon him, was in prayer, in ruku', that a man began to ask for sadaqa (charity). While still in ruku', Amir 'Au lifted his hand on which he wore a ring and held it toward the beggar.

What measure of man, so deeply absorbed in prayer, could, at the same time, be aware of the presence of a beggar seeking physical, niaterial sustenance? Many commentaries have been made on this ayah. Many have expounded on its overall meaning concerning how the two qualities of the inner and outer states were combined in Arnir al-Mu'minin. the greatest of the believers in prayer, yet aware of what existed around him.

Amir 'Mi, peace he upon him, was a man of tawhid. He was in this world, but not of it, and was utterly cognizant of its totality. It was he who said "You think you are a small universe, and in you is folded up the entire cosmos." Amir 'Mi was simultaneously in a state of prayer, yet aware of who was in front of him and who was not. This is the state of a man who is in total abandonment, and therefore in pure consciousness, unified with the entire creational reality.

It is about Arnir 'Mi that it is said: "It is he who gives drink and drinks, and is not distracted by his drunkenness. His joy in that state does not distract him from his companion, or from his Beloved, nor is he distracted by the cup." Nor was he distracted, like most of us are, by our

lives. our troubles, our mission, or our good works. His drunkenness, or his joyfulness obeyed him — he was a fully awakened being. He was in the state of completeness. He is the man whom we try to emulate, to imitate, and to follow in the dust of his footsteps.

The culture of the Ahl ul-Bayt heralds for us the meaning of Islamic life. It is a complete model of reality. If we want to know aspects of reality, then we have no other option than to take on the path of those who have achieved it.

This is the only step that anyone with sense and respect for himself will take. As charity begins at home, so each individual must begin with himself, to enter the party and join the caravan, to be as though he is amongst the Ahl ul-Bayt: to be in taqwa, in fearful awareness; to be aware of death at all times; to be willing to face the next life, joyfully, by the fact that he has done his best, and there is nothing left but to see the face of Allah.

The affliction of Imam Husayn, peace be upon him, is the same as our affliction. With us, however, because our dedication to the path of Allah is not as complete as his, the affliction is not seen as sharply as in the case of Karbala. Nevertheless, we are at all times confronted by test and trial.

Do men think that they will be left alone by saying we believe, and not be tried? (Surat Ankabut:2)

The fitna (affliction) upon us is in order that we may sort out those lower aspects of the nafs (self) which must be left behind, so that the desired higher aspects become our habit, our tradition, and our way of life. Our affhction in this life is a positive situation in order that we may evolve toward that realm which will ultimately lead us to the final point of tawhid, seeing nothing other than the blessedness that comes to us from the One and Only Creator.

The man of true Islam, a man of submission, sees only goodness in this life that comes to him from his Creator. If he dislikes anything, he sees it as coming from himself, from his ignorance. Thus, at all times, he is content with his knowledge, and he acts outwardly as courteously as possible.

Fitna is for the benefit of our evolution, our upbringing. If it occurs in a revolutionary manner, then our evolution comes about more rapidly. If it occurs as Karbala did, with every door and option closed, then the sincerity of our dependence on Allah is fully tested. At that time we should be in hamd (praise) and shukr (gratitude). It is only then that we are given the opportunity to say and truly mean, La hawla wa la quwwata illa billahi I.

i4li-l-‘Azim (no strength and no power but by Allah, the Exalted, the Great), be. cause we cannot turn anywhere. We cannot depend on our neighbor, on our friends, or on anybody else, as was the case with Imam Husayn and the Ahl ul-Bayt.

We are constantly given opportunities to reach a point within us, experientially, that we may transcend the physical event of the moment. Not that every day, or every moment is Karbala, but we must go beyond Karbala itself: to be with the eternal martyr. he who took the name of destruction and turned it into the everlasting, whose death became the fruit of the perfect example for us to follow, to taste, in order to transcend to that realm which is the station of true abandonment.

We are aware of the conditions which led up to the events at Karbala. Karbala was a result of man's apathy, of the complacency and indifference of the Muslims of that time. They had reverted, after establishing Islam in their lives, to the habits of their old way' of life. To know the state of the Muslims then, one need only look at the state of many of those in different parts of the Muslim world today.

What the din (life transaction) of Muhammad did was to transform that fibre of human behavior into a much higher level, the ultimate and only way that it is possible to exist, and that befits man in this life. In the din, one is given the opportunity to worship, moving into a state of adoration toward a higher state of tawhid, until one does not recognize that he is in constant li/tad (striving, struggle). At that point, one is living his/iliad, he is constantly in a state of inne[revolt, and therefore is constantly evolving. His heart is turning his heart is not attached. He is free, and yet constrained by his Creator.

He is tethered, but that tether gives him his freedom: the freedom of no-choice. He has no choice in his abandonment. He does not have to ponder, or to think, before he acts. His is not a process of thought in time which is electromagnetically and biologically constricted. His actions are spontaneous, fitn (innate). His actions are by Allah. for Allah, to Allah, because he is a man who has moved into the station of the Khalifah of Allah.

Imam Husavn, peace be upon him, was born not on the third of Sha'ban when Islam was at its pinnacle, but on the tenth of Muharram in the 61st year of the Hijrah. The martyrdom of Imam Husayn was the occasion of his true birth, for it signified his life and his destiny. His martyrdom clearly revealed a man faced with no option as the events in the final days of his life unfolded.

Yet, a mortal like all of us, Imam Husayn had to go through the form, with the possibility that something could strike compassion in the hearts of the enemy — the sight of a child dying of thirst, pr of the helpless being attacked. Irnam Husayn lived through every moment; he followed the entire model in its fullness until he realized the truth of the prophecy and the inevitability of his destiny. He continued on until he recognized that the din of Muhammad was not going to be put back onto the straight path except through the blood that would be shed at Karbala.

Then the ever-blossoming tree of Islam would begin to grow again.

On the last day of his life Imam Husayn addressed his small group of followers: “Glory be to Allah, He Who created the world and made it a home that will pass away.”

Everything in this world will pass away, nothing in this world will last. lmam Husayn spoke of the path and the true meaning of man’s life, imploring his followers to submit to Allah. With his death only hours away, he tried to bring the message of truth through to them. There is only Allah; Allah was at the beginning, He will be at the end, and He is with us now if only we could see.

“I see you have embarked on an affair by which you have already brought the wrath of Allah upon you. He has turned His glorious face from you.

By this, Imam Husayn meant that they were already in the Fire.

“Allah has brought upon you His niqma (vengeance), and He has taken away from you His rahma (compassion).” It is up to us to seek the rahma of Allah, and to enter into the bounty and abundance of His mercy by truly abandoning ourselves. “Glory be to the Lord, the Sustainer. You have professed your obedience and trust to the Prophet Muhammad, but now you rise. I see you have said one thing and you are acting upon another.”

That is. they had professed allegiance to the Prophet, but now they are about to slaughter his family. ‘Shaytan (that energy that can lead everyone to destruction) has taken over your hearts, and has made you forget the remembrance of Allah.”

These are people who deny the truth, deny the absolute mercy of Allah after they have expressed or professed their trust and their iman (belief). Therefore, how far away they’ are by their injustice.

We are all enjoined to follow the injunction of the Prophet, who said: “People will still be well if they enjoin upon each other goodness and avoid that which is evil, and if they cooperate on any good deed, and be fearful of transgressing the bounds. If they do not follow this injunction, the baraka (blessing) will leave them; the mercy, the conducive life will leave them. Some will end up controlling others and there will be no victory for them, either in this world or the next.”

To follow this injunction we must truly live it; otherwise, it is hypocrisy.

This world is a prison for the one who trusts in Allah and the life hereafter, and it is the garden for the one who denies Allah and the hereafter. The denier knows his time is limited and thus runs rampant, creating more sensation. more sensuality, more excitement, arrogance and show of power, because these are what he is investing in. The man of Allah recognizes that he is constricted and has only come to this life to die. What then is the point of accumulating

anything?

Imam Ali shows us the garden of the believer and the Ahl ul-Bayt when he says:

“Leave covetness of this world, and in your life do not harbor greed and do not accumulate wealth, for you do not know for whom it is you are collecting.”

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lmam Husavn exemplified by his life and sacrifice, as does the true believer, contentment with the decree of Allah. The true believer is content that he has done his utmost. There is nothing more for him to do but await the blessed face of his Creator.