The Philosophy of Azadari

<"xml encoding="UTF-8?>

I have risen (against Yazid) as I wish to reform the ummah of my grandfather. I wish to" encourage the good and discourage the evil, and follow in the way of my grandfather (Rasulullah) and my father, 'Ali bin Abi Talib" - King of the Martyrs, Imam Husayn(as)

The memorable days of Muharram and Saffar have passed by with a river of tears and thunder of the matam. This is the remembrance of the King of the Martyrs, the remembrance that our Holy Prophet (saww) had promised:

When the Holy Prophet (saww) informed Lady Fatima (sa) of the Martyrdom in store for his grandson, she burst into tears as asked "O my father! when would my son be martyred?" "In such a critical moment," replied the Holy Prophet, "when neither I nor you, nor Ali would be alive." This accentuated her grief and she inquired again, "Who then, O my father, would commemorate Husain's Martyrdom?" The Holy Prophet said, "The men and the women of a particular group of my followers, who will befriend my Ahlul Bayt, will mourn for Hussein and commemorate his martyrdom each year in every century."

Brothers and sisters recently there have been many attacks on the different elements of mourning (azadari). It is baffling and quite shocking that people have started to label the Alam of Abbas (as), the cradle of Ali Asgher (as), the replicas of the Mausoleums of the Ma'mumeen (as) etc.,

as idols that are 'worshiped' by Shias as they were allegedly 'worshiped' in the Indian subcontinent. Even more shocking is that this is being perpetuated by so-called enlightened Shias. These people go as far as saying that calling upon Moula 'Ali for help is Shirk. This is the same group of people that have a problem with our different cultures and want to reduce the majaalis of Imam al-Husain (as) into mere lectures with no matam, no black clothing, no mourning, no outburst of cries, no emotion!

Well, beware of falling into this satanic trap because the cursed satan works not at the bars, but within the followers of the Ahlul-bayt (as).

This article will inshallah touch upon some Quranic references for Azadari. However, to begin with, we must rid ourselves from the understanding that calling upon Imam Ali (as) 'YA ALI MADAD' is shirk. When Imam is called upon, the caller KNOWS that Imam will come to his/her help ONLY via the authority given to him by Allah (swt). This is nothing but Ibadah of Allah (swt).

By the way, if you have a pill or see a doctor when you are ill and if you feel that this is the only thing that will cure me, then it is Shirk! So before we attack the fundamentals of the Shia faith, let us see how many idols we have worshiped in our lives: US Dollars, UK Pounds, Ego, The Doctor, Fame, Power, The West, Materialism, Celebrities, Sports Heroes, Capitalism, The Boss at work, etc.

Undoubtedly the misguided group that calls Alams and Julas as shirk have not understood the meaning of ibadah. If an Alam was to be understood as the entity that can make a difference in one's life, INDEPENDENT of anything else, i.e. totally removed from Allah (swt), than this is truly Shirk. However,

if the Alam is respected, kissed, and used as a method to bring about emotions, and it is done so because it symbolizes the Alam of Abbas (as) that fell in Kerbala, and that Abbas (as) holds the highest authority in the eyes of Allah (swt) after the Ahlul-bayt (as), and that it is only through the power and authority given to Hazrat Abbas by Allah (swt) that will make a difference in your duas, then this is nothing but worship - ibadah of Allah (swt).

The above explanation has failed to do justice to Sheik Arif Abdul Hussain's Majalis at the Jaffari Islamic Centre in Toronto, Canada on 8th Muharram, 1422 A.H. Please listen to the Majalis (8th night) as he has categorically explained the logical need and basis of taqleed, the historical roots of taqleed (right from the days of Rasulullah (saww),

what is Shirk and what is not, and the Status of Hazrat Abbas (as). Sh. Arif is the Howza (al-Mahdi seminary in Birmingham UK) founder and principal. Let us listen to this Majalis, and mature our understanding of the Shia faith. The sign of jahala (ignorance) will be subsequent attacks on azadari.

Having explained that respecting the symbols of Kerbala is NOT shirk, we will now address the Quranic basis for this. However, please rid the notion that is being fed to people that Alams, Jula, niyaz (the refreshments served in the name of Al-Husain (as)), etc. are all cultural and traditional practices of India and Pakistan. Whoever is saying this ought to get out more often! O people, realize that the Alam of Abbas is a global phenomenon for it is found in Asia, Australia, Europe, North America, South America, and even the most remote places of Africa. Know that the Alam is not just stick and cloth, but it is a philosophy within itself. Think, just think, how the Alam spread all across the world. There was no Alam conference, but there always will be the Duas of Fatima Zahra (sa). The Alam fell in Kerbala after the enemy severed the hand of Abbas (as), so let us pick up the Alam and raise it up high and call upon Abbas (as) and say, 'O Abbas, come and look at your Alam - it is raised up for eternity' So please, if you feel uncomfortable with the Alam, go elsewhere, but do not wage a war against the Mission of

Abbas (as)!

Moulana Jawed Jafri recently explained the Quranic basis of some of the practices in Muharram. He enlightened youths with these concepts at a discussion in Muharram 1421 A.H.

Firstly, Allah (swt) declares in the Holy Quran:

"... and whoever respects the signs of Allah, verily it is (the reflection) of the piety of their hearts" (22:32) According to the ayah, a person who offers respect toward the signs of Allah, actually does so due to the piety and taqwa in his/her heart. We have explained how the Alams etc. are related to Allah (swt) as Kerbala was the place where Islam was saved.

Everyday we place our forehead onto the soil of Kerbala in salaat. Again, this is nothing but Ibadah of Allah (swt)! Thus, don't call those who kiss the Alam as blind followers, rather their respecting the signs of Allah (swt) and it is a reflection of tawqa in their hearts as per the above verse.

Consider Surah Al-Adiyat (The Chargers):

By the chargers (who are heavily breathing);
And those that dash off (their hoofs) striking fire;
And those who scour to the attack at dawn!
And stir thereby the dust aloft
And penetrate through (the foe) all of them;

History has recorded that these verses were revealed after Imam Ali (as) led an army to give the enemy a crushing defeat in the early morning. All Ulema will tell you that when Allah (swt) swears by something in the Holy Quran, He is displaying its importance. Well brothers and sisters,

not only has Allah sworn in these verses by the chargers (warriors fighting in the way of Islam), and their act of dashing, and by the fire under the attacking horses, but Allah (swt) also swears by the dust that is beneath the horses that the solders were sitting upon! What magnificent symbolism the Holy Quran is showing - that the dust beneath the hoofs of the horses used in the Jihad of Allah (swt) is worthy of being an entity by which Allah (swt) swears to convey and important message.

Because these were the warriors fighting in the way of Allah (swt), everyone associated with their charge becomes a sign and symbol of Allah. So how about Kerbala - the event that saved Islam forever. How about the Flag of Imam Husain (as) - the Alam of Abbas (as). How about the cradle in which the six month old martyr slept? How about the sand upon which the pure blood of the Imam was spilled? Do you see now that the symbols and replicas of Kerbala are worthy of respect! And respecting them is the sign of the taqwa and piety of the heart.

In Surah As-Saba, Ayah 13 states: "They (the Jinn) made for him (Prophet Sulaiman) whatever he willeth of fortress and models, and basins as large as reservoirs, and huge cooking cauldrons immovable from their places, 'Act ye gratefully, O family of David! and very few of My servants are grateful'"

The words Mahreeb and Tamatheel (models) in tafsir are considered the basis for the replicas of the Mausoleums of the Holy Ahlul-bayt (as). Again, these replicas serve us as a reminder of the actual Mausoleum (Roza) of our beloved, however they act as symbols to us for us to do ziayarat from across the world.

In Surah of As-Shams Ayah 13, the Camel of Prophet Saleh was referred to as Allah's camel. Does this mean Allah (swt) rides of the camel? NO of course not!, rather it is showing us that everything that strives or is used in the in the path of Allah (swt) becomes a sign and symbol of Allah (Swt), including Zuljanah. This has Quranic basis.

There are many more examples, and brothers and sisters are invited to go deeper in the Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Ahlul-bayt (as) to appreciate the significant of Kerbala and its symbols. A concept that can be researched by the seeker of knowledge is the meaning behind 'taboot' in 2:248. According to the ayah, the heritage of Prophet Musa and Prophet Haroon are in the taboot that the angels carry; and this is a sign for the believers. How is this different from the taboot we raise in Julus and processions in Ashura?

Thus, let us understand our religion and not be the ones who are the oppressors of the true faith. Indeed if there is one person who was against the Azadari so Imam Hussain (as), it is the cursed Yazid (la). Let us not leave the Husayni camp by throwing arrows at the practices and institution of azadari.

In conclusion, there is no Marja or Mujtahid is the Islamic world that has condemned azadari like we hear condemnation from some common self-proclaimed experts. Azadari is what has kept the religion alive. Think: when you went to the masjid on 8th Muharram; when will you ever see so many people again - what is it that brings them to engage in azadari. And what are the consequences for those who try to undermine the Eternal Philosophy of Kerbala!

"The love of us (Ahlul-bayt) is faith, and the hatred of us is infidelity"

(- Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as