

Al-Hussain in the Eyes of Humanity

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Charles Dickens - (1812-1870) English novelists of the Victorian period

"If Hussain fought to quench his worldly desires, then I do not understand why his sisters, wives and children accompanied him. It stands to reason therefore that he sacrificed purely for Islam."

Thomas Carlyle – (1795-1881) Famous British historian

"The best lesson which we get from the tragedy of Karbala is that Hussain and his companions were the rigid believers of God. They illustrated that numerical superiority does not count when it comes to truth and falsehood. The victory of Hussain despite his minority marvels me!"

Muhammad Iqbal – (1873-1938) philosopher, poet, and political thinker

"Imam Hussain uprooted despotism forever till the Day of Resurrection. He watered the dry garden of freedom with the surging wave of his blood, and indeed he awakened the sleeping Muslim nation. If Imam Hussain had aimed at acquiring a worldly empire, he would not have travelled the way he did (from Medina to Karbala). Hussain weltered in blood and dust for the sake of truth. Verily he, therefore, became the bed-rock (foundation) of the Muslim creed; La ilaha illa Allah (There is no god but Allah)."

Mahatma Gandhi - (1869 – 1948) lawyer, leader of the uprising in India

In a statement published in 'Young India,'1924:

"I wanted to know the best of the life of one who holds today an undisputed sway over the hearts of millions of mankind.... I became more than ever convinced that it was not the sword that won a place for Islam in those days in the scheme of life. It was the rigid simplicity, the utter self-effacement of Hussain the scrupulous regard for pledges, his intense devotion to his friends and followers, his intrepidity, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in God and in his own mission to save Islam. These and not the sword carried everything before them and surmounted every obstacle.

He also said: "I learned from Hussain how to be wronged and be a winner."

Robert Durey Osborn - (1835-1889) Major of the Bengal Staff Corps.

"Hussain had a child named Abdallah, only a year old. He had accompanied his father in this terrible march. Touched by its cries, he took the infant in his arms and wept. At that instant, a shaft from the hostile ranks pierced the child's ear, and it expired in his father's arms. Hussain placed the little corpse upon the ground. 'We come from God, and we return to Him!' he cried; 'O Lord, give me strength to bear these misfortunes!' ... Faint with thirst, and exhausted with

wounds, he fought with desperate courage, slaying several of his antagonists. At last he was cut down from behind; at the same instance a lance was thrust through his back and bore him to the ground; as the dealer of this last blow withdrew his weapon, the ill-fated son of Ali rolled over a corpse. The head was severed from the trunk; the trunk was trampled under the hoofs of the victors' horses; and the next morning the women and a surviving infant son were carried away to Kufa. The bodies of Hussain and his followers were left unburied on the spot where they fell. For three days they remained exposed to the sun and the night dews, the vultures and the prowling animals of the waste; but then the inhabitants of a neighbouring village, struck with horror that the body of a grandson of the Prophet should be thus shamefully abandoned to the unclean beasts of the field, dared the anger of Obaidallah, and interred the body of the martyr and those of his heroic friends."

[Islam Under the Arabs, Delaware, 1976, pp. 126-7]

Peter J. Chelkowski - Professor of Middle Eastern Studies, New York University.

"Hussain accepted and set out from Mecca with his family and an entourage of about seventy followers. But on the plain of Karbala they were caught in an ambush set by the ... caliph, Yazid.

Though defeat was certain, Hussain refused to pay homage to him. Surrounded by a great enemy force, Hussain and his company existed without water for ten days in the burning desert of Karbala. Finally Hussain, the adults and some male children of his family and his companions were cut to bits by the arrows and swords of Yazid's army; his women and remaining children were taken as captives to Yazid in Damascus. The renowned historian Abu Reyhan al-Biruni states; "... then fire was set to their camp and the bodies were trampled by the hoofs of the horses; nobody in the history of the human kind has seen such atrocities."

[Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran, New York, 1979, p. 2]

Simon Ockley - (1678-1720) Professor of Arabic at the University of Cambridge.

"Then Hussain mounted his horse, and took the Koran and laid it before him, and, coming up to the people, invited them to the performances of their duty: adding, 'O God, thou art my confidence in every trouble, and my hope in all adversity!'... He next reminded them of his excellency, the nobility of his birth, the greatness of his power, and his high descent, and said, 'Consider with yourselves whether or not such a man as I am is not better than you; I who am the son of your prophet's daughter, besides whom there is no other upon the face of the earth. Ali was my father; Jaafar and Hamza, the chief of the martyrs, were both my uncles; and the apostle of God, upon whom be peace, said both of me and my brother, that we were the chief of the youth of paradise. If you will believe me, what I say is true, for by God, I never told a lie in earnest since I had my understanding; for God hates a lie. If you do not believe me, ask the

companions of the apostle of God [here he named them], and they will tell you the same. Let me go back to what I have.' They asked, 'What hindered him from being ruled by the rest of his relations.' He answered, 'God forbid that I should set my hand to the resignation of my right after a slavish manner. I have recourse to God from every tyrant that doth not believe in the day of account.'

[The History of the Saracens, London, 1894, pp. 404-5]

Ignaz Goldziher - (1850-1921) Famous Hungarian orientalist scholar.

"Ever since the black day of Karbala, the history of this family ... has been a continuous series of sufferings and persecutions. These are narrated in poetry and prose, in a richly cultivated literature of martyrologies - a Shi'i speciality - and form the theme of Shi'i gatherings in the first third of the month of Muharram, whose tenth day (ashura) is kept as the anniversary of the tragedy at Karbala. Scenes of that tragedy are also presented on this day of commemoration in dramatic form (ta'ziya). 'Our feast days are our assemblies of mourning.' So concludes a poem by a prince of Shi'i disposition recalling the many mihan of the Prophet's family. Weeping and lamentation over the evils and persecutions suffered by the 'Alid family, and mourning for its martyrs: these are things from which loyal supporters of the cause cannot cease. 'More touching than the tears of the Shi'is' has even become an Arabic proverb."

[Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law, Princeton, 1981, p. 179]

Sir William Muir - (1819-1905) Scottish scholar and statesman. (Held the post of Foreign Secretary to the Indian government as well as Lieutenant Governor of the North-western Provinces.)

"The tragedy of Karbala decided not only the fate of the caliphate, but of the Mohammedan kingdoms long after the Caliphate had waned and disappeared."

[Annals of the Early Caliphate, London, 1883, pp. 441-2]

Edward Gibbon - (1737-1794) considered the greatest British historian of his time.

"In a distant age and climate the tragic scene of the death of Hussain will awaken the sympathy of the coldest reader."

[[The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, London, 1911, volume 5, pp. 391-2]