

# (The Night of Homeless (Sham-e-Ghareeban

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It was after Asr on the day of Ashura. Imam Hussain (pbuh) lay dead. The earth had trembled! Furaat had broken its banks! From the camp of the family of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) such lamentation arose as had never been heard before!

'Umar son of Saad' received a letter from 'Ubayd Allah son of Ziyad'. The Governor of Kufa instructed that they should not be satisfied with the death of Imam Hussain (pbuh). His body must be subjected to the ultimate insult of being trampled by the hooves of horses. And this was done to the Grandson of the Holy Prophet (pbuh)!

As the sun was setting in the horizon, the soldiers rushed to Imam Hussain's camp in search of booty. They looted every tent. Every lady and every girl was stripped of her veil. Fatima's daughters were left bareheaded. Sakina's ear-rings were pulled off her ears, splitting her ear lobes. When the little girl pleaded for her veil to be left untouched, she was slapped. Surely they would stop now? But they did not. They set fire to all the tents. Bibi Zainab (pbuh) was very distressed. She turned to Imam Zainul Abideen (pbuh) and said "You are our Imam now. Tell us what we should do now, should we stay in our tents and burn, or go out without our veils?" Imam Zainul Abideen (pbuh) told her that it was their religious duty to try and save their lives. Bibi Zainab (pbuh) gathered everyone and waited outside, while their tents burnt down. When the fire was out, they took shelter under one of the tents which had not been completely destroyed.

'Humayd son of Muslim' describes how he saw a little girl with her dress on fire, her ears bleeding, running from the scene of carnage. He says: "I ran after her. I took her by hand. Put out the fire in her dress. I wiped the blood off her ears." She looked at me and said, "You seem like a kind person, are you a Muslim?" I told her I was. She thought a while and then said, "Can you please show me the way to Najaf?" I asked, "Why do you want to go to Najaf at this hour and in this state?" She said, "I want to go and complain to my Grandfather 'Ali son of Abu Talib' about how they killed my father." Realizing that she was Hussain's daughter Sakina, I took her back to her aunt Zainab (pbuh).

As the night descended, Bib Zainab gathered all the ladies and children, into one small space in between the gutted tents. Imam Zainul Abideen (pbuh) lay on the ground surrounded by these widows and orphans. There was no fire, no light. Only the moon cast its dull light. 'Umar son of Saad' asked Hurr's widow to take some food and water to the ladies and the

children. As she neared to where they were resting, Bibi Zainab (pbuh) recognized her. She stood up, went towards Hurr's widow and offered her condolences for the death of Hurr. This gesture on the part of Zainab (pbuh), who had suffered so much, lost so many, and carrying so much grief in her heart, is a lesson in Islamic ethics which the world should never be allowed to forget. When Bib Zainab (pbuh) saw the bread and water she cried.

"Imam Hussain and his brave soldiers had died hungry and thirsty, and now the same people who martyred them were bringing bread and water to their widows and orphans." She looked at the sky and prayed to God to give her courage. Zainab (pbuh) remembered the words of her brother to give water first to Sakina (pbuh). Zainab (pbuh) took the jug of water. She went to Sakina (pbuh) who had fallen into a fretful sleep.

Gently she stroked the girl's disheveled hair. Sakina opened her eyes. Zainab (pbuh) said, "Here is some water, Sakina. Please drink a little. You have been thirsty for so long!" On hearing the word 'water' Sakina cried out hopefully, "Has my uncle Abbas come back?" When she was told that Hurr's widow had brought the water, she got up, went to Hurr's widow, thanked her and then asked Zainab: "Have you all drunk water?" Zainab shook her head as no.

Sakina asked, "Why then do you ask me to drink water?" Zainab said, "Because, my dear, you are the youngest." Sakina replied, "No! No! Ali Asgher is the youngest!" Sakina took the jug of water, ran towards where Ali Asgher lay buried, crying "Wa Asghera! Wa Asghera!"

This was how the homeless spent their night in Karbala. They had lost everything. Their men had died. Their children had been martyred.

In this desolate desert fourth Imam, the women and the remaining children are huddled where only a few hours before had stood their camp. Abbas, Qasim and Ali Akbar had taken turns to guard the camp. Now Zainab and Kulthoom lay awake to make sure that Imam Zainul Abideen (pbuh) and the children were not attacked.

Suddenly, Bibi Zainab (pbuh) notices that Sakina (pbuh) has disappeared. She is alarmed. She looks around but Hussain's darling daughter is not to be seen. Zainab (pbuh) slowly walks to the battlefield. She comes to where Abbas (pbuh) lay. "Abbas! Abbas! My dear brother, have you seen Sakina?" There is silence! She makes her way to where Hussain's headless body lay.

There, hugging her father, she finds Sakina, deep in sleep!

Attention of Bibi Zainab (pbuh) towards Imam Zainul Abideen (pbuh) during the Journey: The night of calamity passed away and the ladies of Imam Hussain's household were made captives the next day. They were made to wait in the hot sun while the enemy spent the rest of the day burying their own dead.

They were made to mount saddle-less camels like common criminals. Imam Zainul Abideen

(pbuh) was sent towards Kufa hands and feet clasped together in iron and wearing a barbed iron collar and made to walk barefoot on the hot desert sand, even though he was sick. The caravan passed through the battlefield where the bodies of the martyrs lay without shroud, mixed in dust and blood. It was here that Imam Zainul Abideen (pbuh) would have died of grief. He turned a pale yellow. Bibi Zainab (pbuh) consoled her nephew, "Be patient! What am I witnessing? You are the Imam of the time." She reminded him of the tradition of Holy Prophet (pbuh) to Umm-e-Aiman which had explained the divine covenant.

At the front of the caravan the guards carried spears with the heads of Imam Hussain (pbuh) and his loved ones. The guards beat the prisoners, if they complained of anything. They did not even spare the youngest. Some children died along the way, and their bodies were left in the desert. By the time they reached Kufa they were bruised all over their bodies. When Bib Zainab (pbuh) saw Kufa, remembered the period of her father.

The caravan reached the court of Ubayd Allah son of Ziyad on the 12th of Muharram 61 Hijra. Ubayd Allah son of Ziyad, the governor of Kufa ordered the streets to be decorated, while there was a huge crowd on the streets of Kufa, jeering and making fun of the prisoners. There was commotion in the court of Kufa due to the oration of Bibi Zainab (pbuh). The speeches of Bibi Zainab (pbuh) where she commented on the faithlessness and cowardice of the Kufees made them cover their faces in their clothes in shame and misery.

But when some of the people saw the head of Imam Hussain (pbuh) on the spear they turned their heads and started to cry. They felt guilty that they allowed this to happen to Imam Hussain (pbuh) when this same Imam was ready to help them when they needed him. It was noon and the sun was blazing hot. The children were crying of hunger and thirst. As the caravan reached the Governor's palace, Bibi Zainab (pbuh) faced the crowds and said "Do you know who your governor has killed? We are the Grandchildren of your Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

When your Governor killed the Prophet's loved ones, the skies cried and the earth shook. Where were you then?" There was complete silence in the crowd. Some of the people realized their mistake and started to cry with shame. When 'Umar son of Saad' saw what was happening he quickly led the prisoners into the palace.

When Ubayd Allah son of Ziyad saw Imam Zainul Abideen (pbuh) in the palace he ordered him to be killed straight away. Bib Zainab (pbuh) ran in front of him and said "You will have to kill me first. How dare you sit on this throne which does not rightfully belong to you and insult us?

Listen, O son of Ziyad we are the Grandchildren of the Prophet. You should be ashamed of yourself. You claim to follow the Prophet's teachings, yet you have

done everything to destroy his family." Ubayd Allah son of Ziyad was surprised at how brave this lady was. He thought that after all that they had suffered; they would not have the strength to face him. More and more people started to realize that what Bib Zainab (pbuh) was saying was true. Ubayd Allah son of Ziyad ordered the prisoners to be taken to the prison next to the palace immediately. He told Shimr and Khooli, who were the leaders of this caravan, to make preparations to take the prisoners to Syria (Damascus) before they had a chance to speak out in public again.

The caravan of Bib Zainab (pbuh) left for Syria on the 13th of Muharram. Along the route, there were several altercations between the forces of Yazid and the supporters of Ahlul Bayt. As the caravan was leaving Kufa, people watched from the rooftops. Bib Zainab (pbuh) and other prisoners continued to tell the people about what had happened in Karbala. Many people started to speak out against Ubayd Allah son of Ziyad.

On the journey the prisoners again suffered in the hands of the guards. When the caravan reached Syria, the prisoners had to wait in the hot sun while Shimr went to Yazid's palace to announce their arrival. Yazid had declared that day as a day of celebration. Every corner of the city was decorated