

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

As you might be aware, a new Islamic year started last week on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2017. In fact, last Friday was the first day of the new year 1439 AH. The Islamic calendar as we know it has been established by Hazrat Umar the second caliph after the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) in the fourth year of his caliphate, namely the year 638. It appears from what is written in history books that the decision was taken as follows:

“17 years after the Hijra, a complaint from Abu Musa Ashaari prompted the caliph Umar to abolish the practice of named years and to establish a new calendar era. Rejected proposals included dating from the year of Muhammad's birth or death. Tradition credits Ali with the proposal to date from the year during which the Muslims established a new community (Ummah) in Medina. The order of the months within the calendar was then debated. Tradition credits Othman with the successful proposal, simply continuing the order of the months that had already been established, beginning with Muharram. Adoption of this calendar was then enforced by Umar.” (Wikipedia)

However, we should note that the Islamic Calendar does not start with the Hijra of the Holy Prophet to Medina but with the first Muharram of that year which corresponded to a date in April in the year 622 AD.

The beginning of the Muslim calendar has been commemorated especially among Shia Muslims as the days of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (ra). They relive or recount the events of the first ten days of Muharram and other days that follow to remember the martyrdom of the great Imam Hussein. If

you examine some of my past sermons which I have delivered during the month of Muharram in the previous ten years, you will come to know many things about the events that took place in 681AH in Karbala. It was there that the grandson of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) was murdered with a handful of his kith and kin because he refused to acknowledge the caliph of the time namely Yazid, the impure, son of Muawiya, as caliph. Hazrat Imam Hussein (ra) as an embodiment of courage preferred his head to be cut off rather than bow it in front of someone who was not worthy to represent his grandfather Hazrat Muhammad (saw). This example of Imam Hussein (ra) who refused to bow down to illegitimate authority when he was fully convinced he was right is a feat that has been a unique example in the face of adversity throughout the years since then and Allah knows for how long it will be in the future. Those who bow their head in front of human beings rather than exclusively to Allah should know that there are many people who accept trials and oppression rather than give way to those who want to show them their authority. Many people have sung the praise of Imam Hussein (ra) and I will tell you about some of them.

Some none Muslims who have studied these events have written about them. We start with **Peter J. Chelkowski**, Professor of Middle Eastern Studies, New York University. He said:

"Hussein accepted and set out from Mecca with his family and an entourage of about seventy followers. But on the plain of Kerbela they were caught in an ambush set by the ... caliph, Yazid. Though defeat was certain, Hussein refused to pay homage to him. Surrounded by a great enemy force, Hussein and his company existed without water for ten days in the burning desert of Kerbela. Finally, Hussein, 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."

From an old book written by **Simon Ockley** (1678-1720), Professor of Arabic at the University of Cambridge. He wrote:

"Then Hosein 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]

**Thomas Carlyle** wrote

"The best lesson which we get from the tragedy of Karbala is that Husain 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 Husain despite his minority marvels me!"

So, when the fight is between truth and falsehood, right and wrong numbers do not count at all. A minority of one is sufficient. This is the spirit of Islam that some through slavish obedience want to trample under their feet. Physically they may isolate, they may boycott but the spirit will always be kept alive because there will always be someone or some people who would always be ready to take up the banner of truth and righteousness.

One **Dr Sheldrake** has written:

"Husain marched with his little company not to glory, not to power or wealth, but to a supreme sacrifice and every member of that gallant band, male and female, knew that the foes were implacable, were not only ready to fight but to kill. Denied even water for the children, they remained parched under a burning sun, amid scorching sands yet no one faltered for a moment and bravely faced the greatest odds without flinching"

Now we will read what the poet **Muhammad Iqbal** (1877-1938) has said about him:

"When Khilafat strained its relationship with the Qur'an and abandoned Islamic and Qur'anic ideals by transforming it into a kingship and when freedom was poisoned, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) did not tolerate its injustices. Like a blessed cloud he marched forward and through his rain of blood transformed the desert into a garden of martyrs. By doing so he ended the reign of injustice and breathed new life into the garden of freedom."

"Moses and Pharaoh and Hussain and Yazeed. These forces have been in struggle from the beginning. The lamp of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) has always faced off with the spark of Abu Lahab."

"I have learned the secrets of Qur'an from Hussain. I have inflamed my lamps through Hussain's candle"

“The story of Kaaba despite being plain and interesting sounds strange. Its foundation was laid by Hazrat Ibrahim (AS), in its early days Hazrat Ismaeel (AS) rubbed his feet out of thirst. It was cleansed of idols by Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Its sanctity was protected until the day of judgment through the ultimate sacrifice of Imam Hussain”

“Message of truth and justice is alive due to the sacrifice of Hussain who defeated injustice forever. It was to save justice and truth that Hussain and his companions bathed in their own blood. By following this path, they renewed the foundations of Islam”

Now I will relate to you some comments of the Promised Messiah, **Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad** (as) (1835-1908). In a pamphlet written in 1905, commenting on a letter that he had received he said:

“It has been reported to me that some uneducated people who are among my followers say that, God Forbid, since Imam Hussein refused to make allegiance with the caliph of the time namely Yazid, therefore he was a rebel and Yazid was right. May Allah’s curse be upon the liars. I cannot expect that any righteous person among my followers could say any such filthy words..... Anyhow through this pamphlet I want to inform members of my Jamaat that we believe Yazid to be a person who had an impure disposition; he was a worm of the earth and he was unjust. He was not a believer as we commonly qualify someone who has some specific qualities to be a believer. To become a believer is not an easy task at all. Allah says of such people *wa qalatil aa’rabo aamanna qoul lam tou’menou wa lakin qoulou aslamna.*(The arabs say we have believed. Say ‘you have not believed but say “we have submitted.” Believers are those people whose actions are a witness over their faith. They are those people whose faith is written on their heart. They are those who give preference to their God and His Pleasure to everything else. They strive to tread the subtle and difficult path of righteousness. They lose themselves in Allah’s love. They try to

stay as far as they can from anything which like an idol separates them from their lord whether it is their moral state or sinful actions or negligence or laziness. But unfortunate Yazid did not qualify himself with such characteristics. The love of this world blinded him but Hussein (ra) was pure and holy and there is no doubt that he was among those chosen people whom Allah purified with His own hands and filled them with His Love. Undoubtedly he is among the leaders of Paradise. And to bear any grudge against him will make one lose one's faith. The Godfearingness, love for Allah, patience and forbearance, piety and worship of such an Imam is an excellent example for us all. We are of those who follow the guidance that this innocent Imam received. Destroyed is that heart which bears him enmity and successful is that heart which manifests his love in a practical way and who tries to reflect in himself his faith, his good morals, his courage, his Godfearingness, his perseverance and his love for God in perfect followership just like a clean mirror reflects a beautiful person's image. These people are hidden from the world. No one knows their status but those who are of them. The eyes of this world cannot recognize them because they are far away from the world. That is why Hussein (ra) was martyred because they did not recognize him. Has the world ever recognized a pure and chosen one during his time for it to recognize Hussein? The point is that it is utter villainy and lack of faith to dishonor Imam Hussein (ra)." (Ishtehaar Vol 3 Page 543)

So, in these days of Muharram it is good for us to remember these fearful events that took place almost 1336 years ago and which still have consequences up till today. Even these days Muslims who have power do not hesitate to mete out great pain on other Muslims. Just take an overview of the world and you will easily understand how despite being Muslims there are many who ignore the teachings of Allah and carry on inflicting pain on other Muslims. What is most unfortunate in this situation is that the group which was supposed to show the world that it has the better teaching and the better

behaviour, namely the Ahmadis have also been a victim to the same ignorance and the same despicable behaviour. They labor under the delusion that they are serving Islam. May Allah protect all of us from such a stupid understanding of Islam. May we be among those who tread the path of the grandson of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) incha Allah.