

The Philosophy of Ashura Movement

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Political and social movements throughout history have carried messages and ideals which are usually limited to specific time, place and circumstances. But the uprising of Imam Hussein (a.s.) and Karbala brings everlasting messages for the entire humanity. The ideals of this glorious and unique uprising are shining like a bright light for mankind showing the way towards prosperity in life and salvation in the hereafter. The emphasis is on freedom in Islam. Imam Hussein (a.s.) in his statements stressed that the reason for his uprising was to revive the lofty teachings of Islam and the genuine practice of his grandfather Prophet Mohammad (Blessings of Allah upon him and his progeny).

Among the teachings of Islam are attention to social supervision in the community, invitation to good and abstention from corruption and selfishness. During his travel from Medina to Makkah and thence to Karbala, Imam Hussein (a.s.) worked for the revival of religious teachings.

The Imam reminded people that a Muslim or even a non-Muslim should not yield to any hegemony or oppression. Actually, this is considered one of the important principles in the Imam's uprising.

According to Imam Hussein (a.s.), a human being enjoys status and dignity and his high human value should never be undermined. In the viewpoint of Islam, human beings, particularly the faithful, enjoy high dignity and honor. In part of Surah Munafiqun, Ayah 8, the Holy Quran says: 'And to Allah belongs the might and to His Apostle and to the believers.'

For this reason, Imam Hussein (a.s.) does not accept the trampling of people's dignity and honor by the corrupt regime of the libertine Yazid ibn Mua'wiyah.

All Muslim scholars stress the dignity of the human being and say that a true believer submits to God alone. Imam Ali (a.s.) says: 'Do not be the servant of anyone since God has created you free.'

Of course one should not think that the freedom desired by Islam is the uninhibited animal freedom preached by the liberal democracy of the West. In the western liberalist thought, since human being and his freedom are the axis of all things, individuals can do everything for their interests even though the moral and human values are trampled.

But in Islam, freedom is not uncontrolled. This freedom has been defined within the framework of high religious teachings and values that guarantee the interests of human being.

The freedom desired by Islam liberates the human being and causes his growth and sublimity. Thus, it rids the human being from the obstacles that prevent his or her moving toward perfection.

Selfish and oppressive governments are also considered among the obstacles in the growth and sublimity of human beings and people's deliverance from the hegemony of such governments is among the objectives of Islam. Imam Hussein (a.s.), thus defended freedom with emphasis that the community should be led by a pious leader and not any wicked or selfish persons however clever or articulate they may be as politicians.

The Imam confronted the despot Yazid for his open corruption and incompetence. The issue was so important for the Imam that although he could have saved himself by compromising with the oppressive government of Yazid, he rose for the interest of Islam and Muslims and sacrificed his life and that of his near and dear ones so that humanity could have an eternal model. Thus, the movement of Imam Hussein (a.s.) is not confined to his times. It is for all eras and every place. The Imam explicitly said: 'I did not rise for rebellion, but for reforming the Ummah of my grandfather Prophet Mohammad (s.a.w.a.).'

The negation of oppression and campaign against it has a special status in the views of Imam Hussein (a.s.). According to the Imam, one should neither yield to oppression. In the Holy Quran God has several times censured oppressors and warned them of divine punishment. Opposition to oppression and rebellion is not confined to local despotism, but the aggression of an alien country and occupation of a country by foreigners are a double oppression towards which one cannot be indifferent.

According to Imam Hussein (a.s.), any kind of oppression whether local or foreign should be resisted. In Surah Nisa, part of Ayah 141, the Holy Quran says: 'And Allah will by no means give the unbelievers a way against the believers.'

Thus, not only military hegemony but even economic and cultural domination of infidels over Muslims is rejected and unacceptable. In this way, the school of Islam and Imam Hussein (a.s.) teach Muslims not to submit to colonialism and foreign occupation and to fight the aggressive occupiers. Now in the Islamic world, attention to the liberating guidelines of the Ashura uprising is well felt. The people in some Islamic states, under despotic governments have lost their freedom and some others like Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine are under the occupation of America and the Zionist regime.

Under such circumstances, adherence to the liberating teachings of Imam Hussein (a.s.) in countering oppression and defending human dignity and honor can guide Muslims towards real freedom from local dictatorship and foreign occupation. Among the other lessons of

Karbala uprising is that one should properly know his enemy to find the right way of countering him.

The statements and letters of Imam Hussein (a.s.) show that he well knew his enemy Yazid and his followers and was fully aware of their evil intentions. For this reason, the Imam's movement was not a blind uprising that ended with his martyrdom. It was to be an eternal movement inspiring all generations to come