

Muharram Commemoration in the Shi'i Ismaili Tayyibi Dawoodi Bohra Tradition: An Academic Study

By: Qazi Dr. Shaikh Abbas Borhany al-Waleed

PhD (USA), NDI, Shahadat al Aalamiyah (Al Hawzah al 'ilmiyyah, Najaf, Iraq), M.A, LLM (Shariah)

Musheer: Fed. Shariat Court of Pakistan

Member: Ulama Council of Pakistan

Chairman: The Guardian Pakistan

The Writer is an Attorney at Law & a Religious Scholar

Website: www.durrenajaf.com

Academia: <https://durrenajaf.academia.edu/QaziBorhany>

Contact for spiritual help: najafspiritualcenter@gmail.com

Published: "Indo Gulf Times", Mumbai, India, 8 - 14 Oct. 2016

Revised: 2026

Abstract: This paper examines the first day of Muharram al-Harām, the opening of the Muslim Hijrah year and one of the four sacred months, as a ritual threshold where gratitude, authority, and communal belonging are publicly performed. It first situates Muharram within an older Arabian ethic of sacral time, in which hostilities were conventionally suspended, and then analyses the Fatimi Ismaili Court in Misr where New Year observances assumed a distinctive ceremonial grammar. Drawing on Ibn Taghribirdi's narrative in *al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, it reconstructs a procession that commenced at Bāb al-Dhahab: unmounted horses were led by selected grandees, ministers and Ismaili Du'āt flanked the Imam al-Muiz (as), and armoured cavalry and infantry advanced in recognisable uniform. The Imam exited al-Qāhirah via Bāb al-Futūḥ and re-entered through Bāb al-Naṣr as the city and its cantonments were adorned with curtains and drapes. Ritual redistribution followed-Sadaqah for the needy, 'Ināyah for elites, while Qari of the Qur'ān performed at the Imāmī Dahliz and were hosted. Courtiers, ambassadors, and dignitaries offered Tahniyāt, and coins minted at Dār al-Ḍarb in al-Muizziyyah al-Qāhirah were distributed, alongside a public banquet. The day concluded with Ziyārah to Shrines associated with the Ahl al-Bayt, signaling that renewal was inseparable from devotion. The paper then traces continuities and adaptations among Shi'i Fatimi Ismaili Tayyibi Dawoodi Bohras, for whom the New Year is marked briefly-restricted to the night and day of 1st Muharram-through Shukr, congregational Ibadah, and family conviviality. Devotional acts include beginning the year in the Masjid and offering Ṣalāt Ja'far al-Ṭayyār - Ṣalāt al-Tasbīḥ al-Azam, alongside practices of sending food to relatives, friends, and the underprivileged. The greeting "New Year and Ayyām al-'Azā Mubārak" frames joy within the imminence of mourning. A decorated Thāl, the "Ma'idat al-Muḥammad," gathers family members around symbolic foods without superstition, while communal leaders caution against isrāf. Together, these rituals illuminate how Fatimid memory is preserved through disciplined, socially embedded celebration. Foods including Lachka Halwa made from jiggery and wheat feature, and the round long plate, known as Thāl is arranged to include, where possible, mineral, plant, and protein items. The collective meal reaffirms the maxim that families who eat together live pleasantly, turning renewal into kinship.

Keywords: Muharram al-Harām; Fatimi Misr; al-Qāhirah; ceremonial procession; Ibn Taghribirdi; Sadaqah, 'Ināyah; Dār al-Ḍarb coinage; Ziyārah; Ismaili Tayyibi Dawoodi Bohra; Ma'idat Āal'e Muḥammad (food).

1). The Shining Day of the New Muslim Year:

Muharram al-Har'am is the first among the four months of the Muslim Hijrah calendar which are considered sacred. Even during the time of Jahiliyyah (pre-Islamic era), Arabs never used to confront or wage a war in these months. The New Year's celebration on the first day of Muharram was a part of the Shi'i Fatimi Ismaili Court Culture from the beginning of the Fatimi dynasty's supremacy in Misr. A student of al-Maqrizi, Mamluk historian ibn Taghribirdi (d. 874/1470) discussed New Islamic Year's procession in his celebrated book: "al-Nujum al-Zahirah Fee Muluk Misr wal-Qahirah". The procession used to start from the Bab al-Dhahab. The unmounted horses were led by high ranked and selected dignitaries - Vazirs and Ismaili Du'at marched to the right and left side of the Shi'i Fatimi Ismaili Imam al-Muiz (as). The armed cavalry and infantry in their unique uniforms joined the parade. The Imam left Al Qahirah from Bab al-Futuh and re-entered the city through Bab al-Nasr. The entire city was decorated. Cantonment, which was out of the city walls, was decorated with curtains and drapes. When the Fatimi Imam re-entered the city, Sadaqah (charity) was distributed amongst the deserving and 'Inayat (gifted funds) was given to the high ranking. The Qaris recited the Qur'an at Imami entrance and they were also entertained. In the court of the Fatimi Imam, courtiers, Du'at, ambassadors and other dignitaries presented him Tehniy'at (greetings).

On this ceremonial occasion, the Fatimi Imam distributed gold and silver coins minted at Dar al-Darb, Al Muizziyah al-Qahirah, to dignitaries and the designated people. A banquet was also arranged on the first day of Muharram for the public. Then the Fatimi Imam left for the Ziyarah of the Shrines of Ahl al-Bayt (as), Mashhad Raas al-Imam al-Husain (as), Mashhad Sayyidah Zaynab bint Amir al-Mumineen Ali (as), Mashhad Sayyidah Ruqayyah bint Amir al-Mumineen Ali (as), and Mashhad Sayyidah Nafisah (as). This celebration began a few days before Muharram and culminated on the evening of 1st of Muharram.

Contrary to the practice of the Shia Ithna Ashar, the first day of Muharram is for Shukar and exchanging wishes for the children of the Shi'i Ismaili Tayyabi Dawoodi Bohras - where they prepare a variety of food dishes, just like Shia ithna Ashar prepare on the occasion of Navruz. Bohras exchange greetings of the New Year which is restricted till the night and day of 1st Muharram as follows:

"New Islamic Year and Ayy'am al-Aza al-Husain (as) Mubarak".

This translates to greetings of the New Year and proclaims that these are the days of Barakah and may Allah bless you with its Hasanat. On the first night of Muharram, children of the Fatimi Ismaili Tayyibi Dawah normally visit Masjid to perform Salaat and start their new year from the house of Allah. Many people offer the Sala'at of Tasbih al-A'azam on this night which is also known as Sala'at Jafar al-Tayyar (as). After completion of Sala'at, Bohra families gather for dinner and enjoy food which is one of the best ways to celebrate the New Year. Bohras are known for their close social ties and prefer celebrating every occasion through socializing. On the eve of the New Hijrah Year, followers of the Shi'i Fatimi Ismaili Tayyibi Daw'ah send different eatables to those nearest and dearest and also to those who are under privileged. Indeed, Muharram is the month of sacrifice and contribution.

On this night, Shi'i Ismaili Tayyibi Bohras usually decorate Thaal (a large stainless steel plate) with salt, sweet, fruits (fresh and dry), fish, meat, honey, dates etc. (one from each - mineral, plant and protein, if available). It is however not true that ignoring any particular food item will bring any kind of bad luck. "Lachka" is a popular Halwa which is included on the menu of the majority and prepared with Jiggery and wheat. The decorated Thaal of the New Year Eve is called "Ma'aidat'o A'al'e Muhammad (as)" (Dastar Khawn of the children of Muhammad-Ahl al-Bayt). All family members sit together, circling the Thaal. The one endearing characteristic about any Bohra meal is the principle:

"Families that eat collectively, live pleasantly".

If there is a community in the world which truly lives by the maxim of "Eat with Love", it is the Shi'i Fatimi Ismaili Tayyibi Dawoodi Bohras. This however doesn't denote that Israf (extravagance) is encouraged as far as Thaal decoration is concerned; the Da'i al-Zaman strictly warns his followers against doing the same.

2. Revival of Majalis al-Hikmah:

The 51st Al Da'i al-Fatimi, Dr. Sayyiduna Taher Saifuddin, infused a new spirit in the Majalis al-Aza (singular: Majlis) of Al Imam al-Husain (as). He gave a fresh outlook to the Majalis al-Aza by following the "Majalis al-Hikmah" (sessions of wisdoms) of the Da'i al-Du'at, Baab al-Abw'ab of the Shi'i Fatimi Ismaili Imam al-Mustansir (as), Sayyiduna Al Muayyad al-Shirazi (ra) from the 2nd of Muharram. Under the instruction of the Da'i today Ulama arrange Majalis worldwide in around more than 1000 places, worldwide. The reason behind these Majalis is Talim and Tarbiyyah of the children of the Daw'ah by Ma'arif of the Shariah. These Sessions of Majalis have been a good source to unite the Mumineen in the fold of the Dawah for centuries. When the cry of "Ya Husain" in the Majlis is raised, it energizes the spirit of every Mumin which encourages them to practice the unadulterated Islam of Muhammad (S).

It is noteworthy to explain that the Majlis of the Shi'i Fatimi Ismaili Tayyibi Dawoodi Bohras provides a platform to the Bohra Community to ignite their quest of Talim along with socializing. These Majalis prepare and produce generations of obedient devotees who follow the instructions of the Shariah. One of the unique features of these Majalis is the complete 'Ban on Tahrif - distortion' in Zikr al- Husain (as), which is noticeable outside the Shi'i Ismaili Daw'ah Majalis on a large scale. Our Awliya instructed us to abstain from Ghulu (exaggeration) and Qulu (minimization). The Qur'an guides us that Tahrif is a habit of the Jews and this should not be allowed even in Masa'ib Bay'an of Moula al-Husain ibn Ali (as) and his Ahl al-Bayt (as). Majalis of the Shi'i Fatimi Ismaili Tayyibi Daw'ah are pure from words said to provoke reaction. This is because its focal point is to communicate 'ilm of the Shariah as much as possible to the children of the Im'ani Daw'ah with in the short period of eight days, as the ninth Majlis is of A'ashurah, which is fixed for the Maqatal Bay'an.

3). Commencement of the Ayyam al-Aza:

Zuljanah, the horse of Husain (as), stopped at the land of Karbala on the 2nd day of Muharram 61 AH. The grandson of Rasulullah (S), Moula Al Husain (as), along with his Ahl al-Bayt (as) and Ash'ab (ra) went through heart-rending hardships and torture in Karbala to save the religion of

his grandfather during those days. With the 'izan (permission) of Al Imam al-Husain (as), his Ahl al-Bayt (as) and Ash'ab (ra) embraced Shahadat. Al Imam al-Husain (as) for the sake of protecting Kalimah al-Shahadat sacrificed his life. In his final Sajdah he offered Dua, the Barakah of which shall continue for the seekers of Shafa'at and Naja'at till the day of Qiyamah. Furthermore, observing Sawm on the 2nd Muharram has distinguished importance. It was by the Wasilah of Al Imam al-Husain (as) that Allah answered the Dua of Zakariya (as) and granted him a son, Yahya (as), in his old age. Allah answers the wishes of the one who observes this Sawm with devotion and takes Wasilah of Moula al-Husain (as).

Majlis al-Wa'az al-Husain (as) begins from 2nd Muharram and goes on till the day of A'ashurah. Majlis al-Husain (as) is akin to Jannah on Earth where the Malaek descend towards the Mumineen who listen about the Zikr (account) of Al Imam al-Husain (as) and commemorate his Gham (mourning). Rasulullah (S) says for a Mumin who sheds tears on Al Imam al-Husain (as): "Whoever will weep, make others cry or express the grief and sadness on his face upon my son Husain will indeed confirm his destiny in Jannah."

Apart from Aza, the Wa'az (sermon) of Muharram also includes the Bay'an of Anbiya (as), Awsiya (as), Aimmah (as) and Du'at. It is a perfect blend of Nasiyah (advice) and Hikmah (wisdom). It is a complete guide for a Mumin in the beginning of the New Muslim Year about how to lead a meaningful life abiding by the Shariah. Devotees should never miss this spiritual food which is needed for the purification of the soul. For nine days, Majlis in Shi'i Fatimi Ismaili Tayyibi Daw'ah is an Amanat (trust) of Sayyidah Zaynab (as). It is the following of the tradition of "Majalis al-Hikmah" of the Fatimi era in which several topics are discussed in light of the Qur'an, Ahadith and Akalim Amir al-Mumineen Ali (as) in an inter-related manner. Each day's four hour Wa'az covers numerous issues of interest. The Qasas al-Qur'an and Haqaiq (Asrar 'ilahiyyah or ultimate reality) of Anbiya is discussed. From 2nd Muharram, Bay'an starts from Adam (as) whereas the 3rd Muharram is fixed for Nuh (as), 4th for Ibrahim (as), 5th for Musa (as) and Essa (as). From the 6th, history of Al Khamsat al-Athar (Muhammad, Ali, Fatimah, Hasan, and Husain) begins.

These Majalis al-Wa'az cover numerous topics in which the following are prominent:

- i). Tafsir of the Ayat of the Qur'an, Ahadith, Kalam of Amir al-Mumineen and Aimmat Tahireen.
- ii). Fiqh, Hikmah, Nashiyyah, Manaqib Ahl al-Bayt, etc. In each Wa'az, one can learn some new points of 'ilm which help in distinguishing right from the wrong.
- iii). The history of Anbiya, Awsiya, Aimmah and Du'at, especially the history of Al Khamsat al-Athar, with reference to Sayyid ush-Shuhada Moula Abi Abdillah al Imam al-Husain (as), his Ahl al-Bayt (as) and Ash'ab (ra).
- iv). The 'ilm of Aal'e Muhammad (as) which is transferred from generation to generation and Du'at save it in their hearts and in the form of manuscripts. This legacy continues till today. This 'ilm guides us on how to spend time in this material world with dignity and prepare our luggage for the long journey of the A'akirah in following of the Shariah and instructions of the Hadi of the time. The 'ilm that is discussed with the permission of the Da'i helps children of the Daw'ah in leading a spiritually healthy life.

*The Wa'az begins with the recitation of the following famous Arabi Nuha in a mournful tune:
"Khayr ul-Anaam'e Muhammadun wa Wasiyohu;
Wal Barrat uz-Zahrau wal-Hasanan'e."*

*Muhammad and his Wasi Ali are the most excellent and outstanding;
And the virtuous Zahra and Hasan'an (Hasan and Husain)*

This Marthiyah was composed by Sayyiduna Ali bin Hammad (ra), Hujjah Jazirah (a high ranking official in the Ismaili Daw'ah hierarchy) of Ray, part of today's greater Tehran. He was the predecessor of the great Ismaili intellectual Da'i, Sayyiduna Abi Yaqub al-Sijistani (ra). The writer of the Marthiyah was an exemplary learned philosopher and intellectual who had command over various languages, and branches of sciences. It appears that the above Marthiyah was not written by the drops of ink, but by the blood of the Da'i. This Marthiyah is recited in a chorus by every attendant of the Majlis aloud; it is an old Shi'i Fatimi Ismaili Tayyibi Daw'ah tradition which turns the entire atmosphere mournful within seconds.

4. Clarion Call of the Da'i for Zikr al-Husain (as):

The 52nd Al Da'i al-Muqaddas, Dr. Sayyiduna Mohammed Burhanuddin started a movement to invite the community in each Bay'an towards "Hifdh al-Qur'an" and thousands of children responded. Special sessions of Hifdh al-Qur'an are conducted using modern methodology during Muharram. This Majlis al-Wa'az is not a mere ritual but a commitment to Moula Abi Abdillah al Imam al-Husain (as). It is a response to Husain's final clarion call:

"Hal Min Nasirin Yansurna? Is there anyone who can help us?"

Attendees of these Majalis respond by Matam (beating their chest):

"Labbayyka Ya Husain". We are here, O Husain. We are with you.

This Matam is a powerful slap on the face of Yazidiyat. Majlis is the commitment in which all children of the Daw'ah pledge (Ahd) to uphold the values of Islam of Al Khamsat al-Ath'ar (as), to subordinate their hearts to the wishes of Moula al-Husain (as). Attending the Majlis means responding to the call of Sayyidah Zainab bint Ali (as) and to follow her Talim to become good human beings and Muslims in order to lead a dignified life.

Unlike other communities, the Shi'i Fatimi Ismaili Tayyibi Dawoodi Bohra Muslims around the world attend Majlis in a uniform; men in traditional "Lib'as al-Anwar" which is the Dai's own costume and women in traditional "Rida" or "Hij'ab". The Majlis presided by the Da'i or assigned by him has now turned into a socio-religious ceremony where community members from across the globe assemble and meet each other. New ties of business and fresh social contacts of their children's future are often born through these Majalis. Spiritual children of the Da'i dream and hope to follow and practice what their spiritual father has and continues to teach. The spirit of Walayah increases every day until the awaited day comes. As we see the tears of our Da'i, our hearts melt as we try and imagine the tragic event that occurred 1400 hundred years ago. After every day's Majlis, Niyaz meal is served as Tabarruk in the traditional manner. Sabeel serves rose flavored water and delicious Sharbat or milkshakes.

5. Marthiyah of the Du'at:

The 51st Al Da'i al-Fatimi, Dr. Sayyiduna Taher Saifuddin, composed innumerable Aby'at and Marathi (singular: Marthiyah) in the Zikr of Moula Abi Abdillah al Imam al-Husain (as). One of his famous Marathi is "Ya Sayyid ash-Shuhada'e" which is a masterpiece of Arabi Literature. The Arabi Marthiyah is a poetic miracle of the 51st Da'i, the Lahn (tone) of which is Hindi (Indian). Till the day of Qayamah, those who will recite it with tears will be answered by the son of Fatimah (as). Mas'aib Biy'an in Wa'az normally begins with the recitation of the relevant stanza of this above mentioned Marthiyah, in Daw'ah Majalis, which refreshes the memories of the episode of Karbala in the hearts and minds of listeners.

The 52nd Al Da'i al-Muqaddas, Dr. Sayyiduna Mohammed Burhanuddin, also composed a Marthiyah, the transliteration of which is as follows:

*Fulk ul-Husain'e Be-Karbala
Mulk ul-Husain'e Be-Karbala
Nusk ul-Husain'e Be-Karbala
Misk ul-Husain'e Be-Karbala
Abkyka Maulayal Husain
Afdyka Moulayal Husain
Moulayal Moulayal Husain*

Recitation of a single stanza of this Marthiyah instantly creates an atmosphere of Huzn and Buka upon al Imam al-Husain (as). Sayyiduna Mohammed Burhanuddin had composed and recited this Marthiyah on Thursday 4th Zilqadah, 1430 (AH), at Karbala on the Maqsurah of Moula al-Husain (as). Each verse consists of seven lines, with the final three lines recurring in all 52 verses. In the Marthiyah's opening verse, Sayyiduna al-Muqaddas summarizes the importance and eternal nature of Karbala in four words:

- i). Fulk (ship - Safinat un-Naja'at)*
- ii). Mulk (Kingdom Daw'ah)*
- iii). Nusk (Ibadah - Zahirah and Batinah)*
- iv). Misk (Musk - Shafa'at)*

The Da'i explains that Shahadat of Moula al-Husain ibn Ali (as) allowed the survival of his Fulk (ship), the Safinatun-Naja'at that is sailing towards the shores of Jannah. Due to the Shahadah of Moula al Husain (as), his Mulk (kingdom) of Imamah will continue forever. Sayyiduna Mohammed Burhanuddin recalls the son of Fatimah's Nusk in Karbala, especially on the eve of A'ashurah. It is this Nusk that has ensured that the 'ibadah of Allah shall be performed eternally. Lastly, Sayyiduna al-Muqaddas informs us that the scent of the Misk of Moula al-Husain (as) bestowed to his Ahl al-Bayt (as) and Ash'ab (ra) on the night of A'ashurah shall remain till the last day. The first verse, like every other, culminates with, "I will continue to weep upon you, my Moula Husain! My Taf'adi (sacrificial spirit) for you is eternal, my Moula Husain! My Moula! My Moula Husain!"

Muharram, indeed, is a month of purification which is attained by the Zikr of Moula al-Husain (as). It may be observed in any way - either by attending the Wa'az of the Da'i or listening to his

Wa'az in any town, giving money in the Niyaz, contributing time for the Khidmah of Mumineen etc. There are numerous things which children of the Daw'ah can do in the name of Moula al-Husain (as). There is Majlis at night from 2nd Muharram to 9th Muharram in which Zakireen recite Marthiyah and Nuha. Participation and contribution of the young generation in Azadari activities is inspiring; it is an announcement that all ages will remember the sacrifice of Moula al-Husain (as).

6). Eid al-Kabat wal-Huzn of Ikhwan al-Safa:

Moula al-Husain ibn Ali (as) elevated his Ash'ab on the night of A'ashurah in the Tartib (sequence) of Daw'ah hierarchy as a reward for their loyalty. It is therefore the best night to elevate our spirit through Ibadah and Izha'ar of Huzn and Buka upon Moula al-Husain (as). This is one of the blessed nights to get the answer of Dua from Allah by Wasilah of Husain (as) as Ahl al-Bayt (as) and Ash'ab al-Husain (as) spent the same night in ibadah. Sayyid'at and the women at Karbala cried the entire night because they knew well that they will not see their Moula the following night. Innocent children wept on the night and evening of A'ashurah but not for water and food; instead, they cried remembering that Moula Ali al-Asghar (as) will embrace Shahadah by a three pronged arrow. Such was the devotion and loyalty of Ahl al-Bayt (as) and Ash'ab (ra) that they kept waiting for the Raza (permission) and Rida (pleasure) of Moula Al Imam al-Husain (as) to go to the battlefield of Haq versus Batil and sacrifice their lives for the survival of Islam. Mumineen should offer Sala'at al-Tawassul along with Sala'at Nisf al-Layl and Tahajjud on this night. They should take the Wasilah of Moula al-Husain (as), implore Allah for Istaghfar and recite Ziyarah A'ashurah which has great significance.

"Al Shakhs al-Fadil, Saheb al-Rasael" Ikhwan al-Safa, the 9th Shi'i Fatimi Ismaili Imam, Ahmad al-Mustur (as) discussed four Eids in "Ikhwan al-Safa":

i). Eid al-Fitr

ii). Eid al-Adha

iii). Eid al-Ghadir al-Khum

iv). Eid al-Kabat wal-Huzn

Eid means to assemble and A'ashurah is a gathering where Zikr al-Husain (as) is at its zenith which is why it is known as Eid al-Kabat wal-Huzn. The meaning of Kabat, the root word of which is K-A-B with Hamzah in between Kalimah of Ayn denotes Hazin (sorrow) in Arabic. Hujjah Jazirah of Ray, Sayyiduna Abi Yaqub al-Sijistani (ra), explained the meaning of Huzn in one of his books as follows:

"Sadness, grief, anxiety, sorrow, apprehension etc."

The word Eid comes from the word Awdah (to turn, to recur, to come again and again since it returns every year). A'ashurah is the day of Qayamah for the Mumineen in which their Moula was slaughtered brutally by the unsharpened dagger of Shimar (L) in order to provide Mumineen the ultimate liberation.

7). A'am'al and Ziyarah A'ashurah:

Children of the Shi'i Fatimi Ismaili Tayyibi Daw'ah keep "Faqah" on the day of A'ashurah. Sawm is illegal on this day as Yazidians keep Sawm on this day in the victory of Umayyads. The Niyyah of Faqah should be as a tribute to Moula al-Husain (as) and his Masa'ib. Can a Mumin forget

the thirst of the children of Ahl al-Bayt (as) for three long days? Faqah and Matam is the sign of support in the presence of Imam that 'O Moula! We are with you.' After Sala'at al-Zuhr, Mumineen offer two Raka'at Sala'at al-Tawassul of Al Imam al-Husain (as) - approaching Allah with the Wasilah of Husain (as) and offering Dua to fulfill their Haja'at and get his Shafaat. The person authorized to conduct Wa'az normally appoints another person to recite the Ziyarah A'ashurah, which has immense value. It is the best source to approach Allah with the Wasilah of Moula al Husain (as) to fulfill Hajaat (desires). Children of the Im'ani world recite Ziyarah A'ashurah and announce Wilayah of Husain (as). They also declare open Bara'at with Yazid (L) and his supporters and send Lanah upon them.

8. The day of A'ashurah:

On the day of A'ashurah after Sala'at al-Asr, usually the Aalim who conducts the Wa'az comes towards Masjid for delivering Maqtaal Bay'an in a Maukib (procession) which is an old historical tradition. Devotees recite Nuha and do Matam, and the entire crowds of the mourners respond. The person who is assigned for Wa'az on behalf of the Fatimi Da'i sits on a simple mat instead of the comfortable cushioned seat to commemorate Aza on the day of A'ashurah. The major narration of the Wa'az is based on the Maqtaal Abi Mikhnaf - tragic episode of the slaughter of Ash'ab, Ahl al-Bayt (as) and Sayyid ush-Shuhada (as). The Aalim recites the Shahadat very briefly of each Shaheed and sends Rahmah (not simply 'mercy' but something deeper - an emotion closely tied with motherhood) of Allah upon him while sending La'anah (eternal curse) upon his murderer; this is repeated by the entire crowd of Mumineen.

This Majlis culminates on the Shahadat Bay'an of Moula al-Husain ibn Ali (as). The children of the Daw'ah offer Sajdah and do Matam till the time of Az'an of Maghrib. Faqah is broken after Sala'at al-Maghrib in remembrance of the children of Ahl al-Bayt (as) who broke their Faqah when the wife of Hurr al-Riyahi (ra) brought water with some food, after Salaat al-Maghribayn. Before breaking Faqah, Mumineen recite the following two Ady'at (singular: Dua):

i). Ya Muhsin'u Qad Jaak al-Masee.....

ii). Allahhumma Ya Mutiyas Suwalaat...

After Sala'at, everyone heads for Niyaz. It is an old tradition that Mumineen eat a simple meal like Cholai (vegetable) with bread, Suji Halwa and Khichdra (prepared from wheat, grains and beef). Its origin is based in the tradition that when the wife of Hurr (ra) brought some food for the Ahl al-Bayt (as) and others, Sayyidah Zaynab (as) said that they didn't want to derive pleasure by tasting a particular dish so the food was mixed and then taken only with the intention to survive.

9. Majlis: a Sacred Institution of Talim and Tarbiyyah:

Majlis is an institution of Talim and Tarbiyyah for the followers of Ahl al-Bayt (as). These Majalis are a source of inspiration on how to live in this world as enemies try to destroy the values of real Islam - the Islam of Muhammad(S) for which Al Khamsat al-Atha'ar (as) embraced Shahadat. The real Islam is discussed here which allows us to understand how hostile people have created a distorted version of Islam for their nefarious purposes. The Majlis of Al Imam al-Husain (as) is the most auspicious thing which a Mumin should never miss. This is because it not

only deals with the account of Moula al-Husain (as) but also portrays a complete picture of what a Mumin should do in this world – to be successful in Duniya and A’akhirah.

Aza (remembrance of the tragic Shahadat of Moula al-Husain) and Buka (crying) in Majlis is an open declaration of Bara’at from Shait’an which is compulsory for each Mumin who wishes to attain Naja’at. Those who are bed-ridden should remember their Imam and believe firmly that they will get Shafa’at of Husain (as) after death. May Allah grant each one Tawfiq to come and join the Saff (row) of Azadar of Moula al-Husain (as) (mourners upon Husain ibn Ali) during Ayy’am al-Aza (the 9 days of Muharram). Azadar should bring with them their children to encourage them to understand the significance of Asharah Mubarakah and the Haqaiq of Shahadat. Even an infant should not remain away from the Barakah of Matam. Rasulullah (S) didn’t demand anything from his Ummah as a reward of Hidayat.

When Muslims came to pay Rasulullah (S) in return reward in form of gold, beautiful slave-girls and other valuables and offer gratitude, the following Ayah was revealed:

“Qul La Asalokum Alayhi Ajran ‘illal Mawaddata Fil-Qurba”

“I do not ask any reward from you (Ummah) upon this Hidayah (guidance), except the Mawaddah (Love) for my Ahl al-Bayt”.

Instead of following injunction of the Qur’an, the so-called Muslims beheaded the grandson of Rasulullah (S). The Matam sessions are a declaration of Bara’at with the enemies of Husain ibn Ali (as). This is not crying on the dead bodies but a way of expressing our sentiments on the brutality of the so-called Muslims who gave such Ajr (reward) to Muhammad Rasulullah (S). This Matam is in response to the sentence of Sayyidah Zainab bint Ali (as) which she said in the court of Taghut (the rebel of Allah) of Sham, the accursed Yazid:

“Do whatever is in your capacity, but Wallah you will never stop people from remembering us.”

10. Concluding Discussion:

It is a humble appeal to the devotees that they should design and contribute in various projects of welfare in the name of Moula al-Husain (as). Every penny spent in the name of Al Imam al-Husain (as) is a Hasanat (good deed) for which the reward is gained in the form of Jannah. From 2nd Muharram to the day of Arbayyn (20th Safar), Mumineen avoid extravagance in their routine life. Due to Gham (grief) of Husain ibn Ali (as), Mumineen dress simply till Arbayyn, and completely shun fun activities, eat simple food, and avoid non-religious activities. The month of Muharram gives Talim to fight the Zalim (tyrant), whosoever he is. Furthermore, Karbala teaches us to support the Mazlum (oppressed). No doubt, Muharram is the month which teaches us to differentiate between Haq and Batil and expose the ugly face of the enemies of Husain (as), the Umayyads, who killed Husain (as) and ruled in the name of Islam.

The sacrifice of Husain (as) was not only for the spiritual preservation of any particular community but for the protection of humanity and its real freedom. There is no day more memorable than the day of A’ashurah. In this world, if we attend an educational conference of some sort, we spend a lot of money. The ‘ilm that we will gather in each of these nine days of A’asharah is a thousand times more precious than that of any other worldly conference that we

might attend. If there is to be a certain amount of cost involved in attending this most valuable spiritual conference, it will be only for our own benefit, not only in this Duniya but in the A'akhirah as well. In fact it would be too little even if we gave our life for such an Abadi (everlasting), Ilda'i (eternal) benefit. It is pertinent to note however that commemorating Muharram is meaningless until we realize the essential message and deep philosophy of the mission of Al Imam al-Husain (as):

"Fighting unto death is more honorable than submitting to tyranny and injustice."

Note: Effort has been made to trace all the copyright holders, but if any have been inadvertently overlooked, the publishers will be pleased to make the necessary arrangement at the first opportunity. This document may be used, only with this copyright notice included. Permission is granted to circulate among private individuals and groups, to post on internet forums, and add in not-for-profit publications subject to the following conditions: (1) Material used must be produced faithfully in full, without alteration or omission; (2) The author's subject title must remain unchanged, in whole or in part; (3) Material must be attributed to the author. Contact the author for all other rights, which are reserved. **Copyright © 2026 Qazi Dr. Shaikh Abbas Borhany al-Waleed**