

***A Topic related to***

***Moharram***

***from***

***Islamic Months***

***by***

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## The Month of **MUHARRAM**

Muharram is the month with which the Muslims begin their lunar Hijrah Calendar. It is one of the four sanctified months about which the Holy Qur'an says,

انَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ  
اللَّهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حَرَمٌ

"The number of the months according to Allah is twelve months (mentioned) in the Book of Allah on the day in which He created heavens and the earth. Among these (twelve months) there are four sanctified".

These four months, according to the authentic traditions are the months of Zulqa'dah, Zulhijjah, Muharram and Rajab. All the commentators of the Holy Qur'an are unanimous on this point, because the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in his sermon on the occasion of his last Hajj, has declared:

السنة اثنا عشر شهراً أربعة حرم، ثلاث متواليات:

ذوالقعدة، وذوالحججه، والمحرم ورجب .

One year consists of twelve months, of which four are sanctified months, three of them are in sequence; Zulqa'dah, Zulhijjah, Muharram, and the fourth is Rajab.

The specific mention of these four months does not mean that any other month has no sanctity, because the month of Ramadan is admittedly the most sanctified month in the year. But these four months were specifically termed as sanctified months for the simple reason that their sanctity was accepted even by the pagans of Makkah.

In fact, every month, out of the twelve, is originally equal to the other, and there is no inherent sanctity which may be attributed to one of them in comparison to other months. When Allah Almighty chooses a particular time for His special blessings, then it acquires sanctity out of His grace.

Thus, the sanctity of these four months was recognized right from the days of Sayyidna Ibrahim عليه السلام . Since the Pagans of Makkah attributed themselves to Sayyidna Ibrahim عليه السلام they observed the sanctity of these four months and despite their frequent tribal battles, they held it unlawful to fight in these months.

In the Shari'ah of our Holy Prophet ﷺ the sanctity of these months was upheld and the Holy Qur'an re-

ferred to them as the "sanctified months".

The month of Muharram has certain other characteristics peculiar to it which are specified below.

### 1. Fasting during the month

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

أفضل الصيام بعد شهر رمضان شهر الله المحرام

The best fasts after the fasts of Ramadan are those of the month of Muharram.

Although the fasts of the month of Muharram are not obligatory, yet, the one who fasts in these days out of his own will and choice is entitled to a great reward by Allah Almighty. The Hadith cited above signifies that the fasts of the month of Muharram are most rewardable ones among the *Nafil* fasts i.e. the fasts one observes out of his own choice without being obligatory on him.

The hadith does not mean that the award promised for fasts of Muharram can be achieved only by fasting for the whole month. On the contrary, each fast during this month has merit. Therefore, one should avail of this opportunity as much as he can.

### 2. The day of 'Ashurah'

Although the month of Muharram is a sanctified month as a whole, yet, the 10th day of Muharram is the most sacred among all its days. The day is named 'Ashurah'.

According to the Holy companion Ibn 'Abbas رضى الله عنه . The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , when migrated to Madinah, found that the Jews of Madinah used to fast on the 10th day of Muharram. They said that it was the day on which the Holy Prophet Musa (Moses) عليه السلام and his followers crossed the Red Sea miraculously and the Pharaoh was drowned in its water. On hearing this from the Jews, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "We are more closely related to Musa than you" and directed the Muslims to fast on the day of 'Ashura'. (Abu Dawood)

It is also reported in a number of authentic traditions that in the beginning, fasting on the day of 'Ahura' was obligatory for the Muslims. It was later that the fasts of Ramadan were made obligatory and the fast on the day of 'Ashura' was made optional. Sayyidah 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها has said:

فلما قدم رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم المدينة  
صامه وأمر بصيامه. فلما فرض رمضان كان هو  
الفريضة وترك عاشوراء، من شاء صامه ومن شاء  
تركه<sup>١</sup>

When the Holy Prophet ﷺ came to Madinah, he fasted on the day of 'Ashura' and directed the people to fast it. But when the fasts of Ramadan were made obligatory, the obligation of fasting was confined to Ramadan and the obligatory na-

ture of the fast of 'Ashura' was abandoned. One can fast on this day, if he so wills, or can avoid fasting, if he so wills.

However, the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to fast on the day of 'Ashura' even after the fasting in Ramadan was made obligatory. Abdullâh ibn Mas'ûd رضى الله عنه reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ preferred the fast of 'Ashura' to the fast of other days and preferred the fast of Ramadan to the fast of 'Ashura'. (Bukharî and Muslim)

In short, it is established through a number of authentic *ahâdith* that fasting on the day of 'Ashura' is *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and makes one entitled to a great reward.

According to another *hadith*, it is more advisable that the fast of Ashura should either be prefixed or suffixed by another fast. It means that one should fast two days: the 9th and 10th of Muharram or the 10th and 11th of it. The reason of this additional fast as mentioned by the Holy Prophet ﷺ is that the Jews used to fast on the day of 'Ashurâ' alone, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ wanted to distinguish the Islamic-way of fasting from that of Jews. Therefore, he advised the Muslims to add another fast to that of 'Ashura'.

Some traditions signify another feature of the day of 'Ashura'. According to these traditions one should be more generous to his family by providing more food to them on this day as compared to other days. These traditions are not very authentic according to the sci-

ence of *hadith*. Yet, some Scholars like Baihaqi and Ibn Hibban have accepted them as reliable.

What is mentioned above is all that is supported through authentic sources about *Ashura*. However, there are some legends and misconceptions with regard to *Ashura* that have managed to find their way into the minds of the ignorant, but have no support of authentic Islamic sources, some very common of them are these:

This is the day in which Adam عليه السلام was created.

This is the day in which Ibrahim عليه السلام was born.

This is the day in which Allah accepted the repentance of Sayyidna Ibrahim عليه السلام .

This is the day on which the *Qiyamah* (dooms-day) will take place.

Whoever takes bath in the day of '*Ashura*' will never get ill.

All these and other similar whims and fancies are totally baseless and the traditions referred to in this respect are not worthy of any credit.

Some people take it as *Sunnah* to prepare a particular type of meal in the day of '*Ashura*'. This practice, too, has no basis in the authentic Islamic sources.

Some other people attribute the sanctity of 'Ashura' to the martyrdom of Sayyidna Husain رضى الله عنه during his battle with the Syrian army. No doubt, the martyrdom of Sayyidna Husain رضى الله عنه is one of the most tragic episodes of our history. Yet, the sanctity of 'Ashura' cannot be ascribed to this event for the simple reason that the sanctity of 'Ashura' was established during the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ much earlier than the birth of Sayyidna Husain رضى الله عنه.

On the contrary, it is one of the merits of Sayyidna Husain that his martyrdom took place on the day of 'Ashura'.

Another misconception about the month of Muharram is that it is an evil or unlucky month, for Sayyidna Husain was killed in it. It is for this misconception that people avoid holding marriage ceremonies in the month of Muharram. This is again a baseless concept which is contrary to the express teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. Such superstitions have been totally negated by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. If the death of an eminent person in a particular day renders that day unlucky for all times to come, one can hardly find a day, free from this bad luck, out of 365 days of the whole year, because each and every day has a history of the demise of some eminent person. The Holy Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ have made us free from such superstitious beliefs, and they should deserve no attention.



Another wrong practice related to this month is to hold the lamentation and mourning ceremonies in the memory of martyrdom of Sayyidna Husain رضى الله عنه. As mentioned earlier, the event of *Karbala* is one of the most tragic events of our history, but the Holy Prophet ﷺ has forbidden us from holding the mourning ceremonies on the death of any person. The people of *Jahiliyyah* (Ignorance) used to mourn over their deceased relatives or friends through loud lamentations, by tearing their clothes and by beating their cheeks and chests. The Holy Prophet ﷺ stopped the Muslims from doing all this and directed them to observe patience by saying إنا لله وإنا إليه راجعون. A number of authentic *ahâdîth* are available on the subject. To quote only one of them:

ليس منا من ضرب الخدود، وشق الجيوب، ودعا  
بدعوة الجاهلية<sup>١</sup>

"He is not from our group who slaps his cheeks, tears his clothes and cries in the manner of the people of jahiliyyah."

All the authentic jurists are unanimous on the point that the mourning of this type is absolutely impermissible. Even Sayyidnâ Husain رضى الله عنه shortly before his demise, had advised his beloved sister Sayyidah Zainab رضى الله عنها not to mourn over his death in this manner. He said:

١ - صحيح البخارى كتاب الجنائز .

يا أختي إني أقسم عليك ، لا تشقى علي جيبا ، ولا  
تخمشي علي وجهها ولا تدعى علي بالويل والثبور  
إن هلكت<sup>١</sup>

"My dear sister, I swear upon you that you, in case I die, shall not tear your clothes, nor scratch your face, nor curse anyone for me or pray for your death".

It is evident from this advice of Sayyidnâ Husain رضي الله عنه that this type of mourning is condemned even by the blessed person for the memory of whom these mourning ceremonies are held. Every Muslim should avoid this practice and abide by the teachings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his beloved grand child Sayyidna Husain رضي الله عنه.

