

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
**Imam Husain and the Event of Karbala:
Manifestation of Divine Love
Az-Zahraa Islamic Centre
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I. Tragedy of Karbala vs. Greek Tragedy: The Fall and Rise of the Infallible Hero

As mentioned before, the sacrifice for Allah (swt) must be the best of the best, and purest of the purest. This is what distinguishes the event of Karbala from all other forms of tragedy.

Here are some points about tragedy in general:

1. **Tragedy:** Tragedy as defined by Aristotle in the *Poetics* is “the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself.” Aristotle set down the guidelines for tragedy which consists of:
 - i) The tragic hero who should be of high worth or standing, **but not perfect.**
 - ii) A tragic flaw, weakness, or transgression (hubris) in the hero which leads to the hero’s downfall.
 - iii) The recognition scene where the hero realizes what he has done.
 - iv) The effect of the inevitable disaster (catastrophe) on the spectators is the cleansing (catharsis) The cleansing process is due to the emotions of pity for the tragic hero and terror through what they have seen.

2. **Definition of a Tragic Hero:**

A tragic hero has the potential for greatness but is doomed to fail. He is trapped in a situation where he cannot win. He makes some sort of tragic flaw, and this causes his fall from greatness. Even though he is a fallen hero, he still wins a moral victory, and his spirit lives on.

TRAGIC HEROES ARE:

BORN INTO NOBILITY

RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR OWN FATE

ENDOWED WITH A TRAGIC FLAW

DOOMED TO MAKE A SERIOUS ERROR IN JUDGEMENT

EVENTUALLY, TRAGIC HEROES FALL FROM GREAT HEIGHTS OR HIGH ESTEEM

REALIZE THEY HAVE MADE AN IRREVERSIBLE MISTAKE

FACE AND ACCEPT DEATH WITH HONOR

MEET A TRAGIC DEATH

THE AUDIENCE IS AFFECTED BY PITY and/or FEAR

II. The Journey unto Allah (swt)

1. The Commune with Allah:

يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا فَمُلَاقِيهِ (الإنشقاق 84:6)

(O Man! Verily you art ever toiling on towards your lord- painfully toiling,- but you will meet Him.)

We are destined to meet Allah (swt). Thus, the journey towards Him is happening with each inhalation and exhalation, albeit voluntary or involuntary.

2. Distinct Destinations and Diverse Directions:

مَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ أَجَلَ اللَّهِ لَآتٍ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (العنكبوت 28:5)

(He who hopes to meet Allah [must know] that the term of Allah is coming. He is the hearer, the knower.)

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا (18:110) (الكهف)

(Say I am only a human like you, revealed to me is that your god is one God. Let him who hopes for the encounter with his lord do good work, and not associate anyone with the worship of his lord.)

Everyone has a unique destination toward which he/she is moving. Some meet Allah (swt), others meet their lord, i.e. *some* Names of God, and not 'Allah' (in the complete sense of the Name). Thus, people take different paths relative to their end destinations.

3. The Commune with Allah will not be unless after Death:

To meet with Allah (swt) and commune with Him, with one's Lord, one has to die. Prophet Mohammad (sa) said: He who loves Allah's meeting, Allah loves his meeting, and he who detests Allah's meeting, Allah detests his meeting.

مَنْ أَحَبَّ لِقَاءَ اللَّهِ أَحَبَّ اللَّهُ لِقَاءَهُ وَمَنْ كَرِهَ لِقَاءَ اللَّهِ كَرِهَ اللَّهُ لِقَاءَهُ

And Allah called upon Jews who considered themselves friends of Allah to wish for death:

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ هَادُوا إِنْ زَعَمْتُمْ أَنكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ لِلَّهِ مِنْ دُونِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوْا الْمَوْتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ وَلَا يَتَمَنَّوْنَهُ أَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمْتُمْ أَيْدِيَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ قُلْ إِنْ الْمَوْتُ الَّذِي تُفِرُّونَ مِنْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مُلَاقِيكُمْ ثُمَّ تُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (الجمعه 62:6-8)

(Say O ye that stand on Judaism! If ye think that ye are friends to Allah, to the exclusion of (other) men, then express your desire for death, if ye are truthful! But never will they express their desire (for death), because of the (deeds) their hands have sent on before them! And Allah knows well those that do wrong! Say: "the death from which you flee will truly overtake you. Then, you will be sent back to the knower of things secret and open, and he will tell you (the truth of) the things that you did!")

Thus, a sign of one's love for Allah (swt) is to wish for death!

4. Journey unto Allah as a form of Death:

In this context, death is negation of the self and one's attachment to the world. A voluntary return to Allah involves one's negation of one's self and detaching from everything but Allah (swt).

5. From Madinah to Karbala: The Journey from the Self to Allah:

When the caravan of Imam Husain's Household returned from Shaam (Damascus) to Madina, Imam Ali ibn al-Husain (as) told Bashir ibn Jazlam to go and announce the news... (See the appendix). He recited a poem which referred to a verse from the Holy Quran:

وَإِذْ قَالَتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَا أَهْلَ يَثْرِبَ لَا مُقَامَ لَكُمْ فَارْجِعُوا وَيَسْتَأْذِنُ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمُ النَّبِيَّ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّ بُيُوتَنَا عَوْرَةٌ وَمَا هِيَ بِعَوْرَةٍ إِنْ يُرِيدُونَ إِلَّا فِرَارًا (الأحزاب 33:13)

(and when a party of them said: “O people of Yathrib (Madinah), there is no place for you here, therefore return. And a party of them asked leave of the prophet, saying: 'our houses are exposed' whereas they were not, they only wished to flee.”)

In the erfanic literature, Madinah is considered as the city of humanity and a symbol for it. Thus, the pronouncement that there is no dwelling place for the citizens of the city is a reference to the endless Journey of human beings towards Allah.

6. **Journey towards Allah and His Manifestations:**

The journey towards Allah (swt) involves three kinds of negations on the part of His servants and three kinds of Manifestations on His part: (i) with manifestations of Allah’s deeds (*Af’al*), the servant negates his own deeds; (ii) with manifestations of Allah’s attributes (*Sefa’at*), the servant negates his own attributes; (iii) with manifestations of Allah’s self (*Zaat*), the servant negated his own self.

7. **Two Kinds of Manifestations:**

Each of the three types of manifestation, mentioned above, can be either *jamali* (beautiful) or *jalali* (majestic). Note that the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) has been quoted saying:

حَفَّتِ الْجَنَّةُ بِالْمَكَارِهِ وَحَفَّتِ النَّارُ بِالشَّهَوَاتِ

“Heaven is wrapped with unpleasant things and the Fire is wrapped with pleasant things”!

And Imam Ali (as) has been quoted saying:

سَبَّحَانَ مَنْ اتَّسَعَتْ رَحْمَتُهُ لِأَوْلِيَائِهِ فِي شِدَّةِ نَقْمَتِهِ وَاسْتَدْبَرَتْ نَقْمَتَهُ لِأَعْدَائِهِ فِي سَعَةِ رَحْمَتِهِ

“Glory to Him who extends His Mercy to His friends through intense hardships by Him and intensifies His revenge on His enemies through his extended blessings”!

8. **Suffering as a Necessary Element of the Path to Allah (swt):**

All forms of self-negation, at some points, are painful, associated with some kind of suffering, but the sufferings of those who love God are mixed with some forms of beauty. And this is why they do not escape it. The Holy Quran describes the giving of the birth and the pain associated with it as:

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا وَوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا وَحَمَلُهُ (46:15 الأحقاف)

(We have charged the human to be kind to his parents. With much pain his mother bore him, and with much pain she gave birth to him)

Mothers carry children with *korh* not *karh* (pain associated with love, not dislike).

And Imam Husain (as), on the day of Ashora, told his companions:

صبرا صبرا يا بني الكرام فما الموت الا قنطرة

“Patience O sons of Honor, for death is nothing but a bridge”

III. **Those without Journey to God**

1. **Journey to vs. Orbiting around :**

Those who are far, journey towards Allah, but those who are near they have a different relation with Him:

وَإِذْ بَوَّأْنَا لِإِبْرَاهِيمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ أَنْ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِي شَيْئًا وَطَهِّرْ بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْقَائِمِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ (22:26 الحج)

(Behold! We gave the site, to Abraham, of the House, (saying): "Associate not anything with me; and sanctify my house for those who compass it round, or stand up, or bow, or prostrate themselves (therein in prayer).