

MUHARRAM and AASHURA

The Month of Muharram

Muslims begin their lunar “hijrah” calendar with the month of Muharram. The Islamic New Year is ushered in with the sighting of the new moon. The Islamic calendar consists of twelve months as indicated in the Holy Qur’aan:

إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ
اللَّهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرْمٌ

*“The number of months according to Allah is twelve (in a year)
so ordained by Him the day in which He created the heavens and the earth.
Among these (twelve months) there are four sacred”.*
(Qur’aan - Surah 9 Ayat 36)

The first month of Muharram is one of the four sacred months; the others being Zul-Qadah, Zul-Hijjah and Rajab. The specific mention of these four months does not mean that any other month has no sanctity, because the month of Ramadhan is admittedly the most sanctified month in the year. The sanctity of these four months was even recognised by the pagans of Makkah; right from the days of Prophet Ibrahim (A.S) as they held it unlawful to fight in these months, despite their frequent tribal battles. Muharram is a month of great reward and virtue and has certain characteristics.

Fasting during the month

Although the fasts in the month of Muharram are not obligatory, but the one who fasts in these days out of his own will and choice is entitled to a great reward by Allah Almighty. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) has been reported to have said: *“The best of fasts besides the month of Ramadhan is the fasting of Allah’s month of Muharram”*. In this month the glory of Allah is manifested and His blessings descend abundantly.

The Day of Aashura (10th Muharram)

Although the month of Muharram is a sanctified month as a whole, however the 10th day of Muharram is the most sacred among all its days. This day is known as “Aashura”. In a Hadith it is narrated that the noble Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) came to Madinah and found the Jews fasting on the day of Aashura. Hence the noble Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) inquired of them, *“What is the significance of this day on which you fast?”* They replied, *“This is a great day. On this day Allah miraculously saved Moosa (A.S) and his followers and drowned Pharaoh and his nation into the Red sea. Thus Moosa (A.S) fasted on this day as a token of thanksgiving, therefore we too fast on this day”*. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) said: *“We are more worthy of Moosa (A.S) and nearer to him than you”*. Thereafter, the noble Prophet (S.A.W) fasted on this day and ordered (his companions) that a fast is kept on this day.

Recommended Acts on the Day of Aashura **(10th of Muharram)**

- The Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) has exhorted and encouraged his ummah to fast on this day and has been reported to have said: *“This fast is a compensation for the (minor) sins of the past year”*. Therefore from the Hadith we can understand that one should strongly observe these fasts. It is advisable to fast for two days, 9th and 10th, or 10th and 11th of Muharram. The reason of this additional fast as mentioned by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W): *“Observe the fast of Aashura and oppose the Jews. Fast a day before it or a day after”*.
- One should also be extra generous to his family and dependants on this day and spend more on them, than what is normally spent. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) has been reported to have said: *“One who generously spends on his family on the day of Aashura, Allah will increase his provision for the whole year”*. (Baihaqi)
- On this day, one should do Ibaadat (worship), engage in making dua and also remember the poor people by giving Sadqa.

Actions to avoid

The following misconceptions with regard to Aashura are baseless and must be avoided:

- This is the day in which Adam (A.S) was created.
- This is the day in which Ibrahim (A.S) was born.
- This is the day in which Allah accepted the repentance of Ibrahim (A.S).
- This is the day on which the Qiyamah will take place.
- Whoever takes a bath on this day, will never get ill in the whole year.
- Some people take it as sunnah to prepare a particular type of meal on this day.

- Tragically Hussain (R.A) the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) was martyred on this day of Aashurah. The martyrdom of Hussain (R.A) was indeed a great tragedy in Islam, but many people attribute the significance of this day of Aashura **only** to the martyrdom of Hussain (R.A) and overlook the importance of this day. Therefore, the host of baseless customs to mourn, the martyrdom of Hussain (R.A) in a special congregation is against the Shariah (teachings of the prophet).

- Another misconception is that the month of Muharram is an evil or unlucky month, therefore marriage ceremonies are deliberately avoided in this month. This concept is also contrary to the teachings of the Holy Qur’aan and Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W).

***Let us observe this great day according to the way of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W)
and refrain from all innovations which deprive us of the blessings from Allah.***

Aameen.