

# Immigration and Jihad

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**Murtadha Mutahhari**

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This booklet is a record of a series of lectures the late author had delivered in gatherings held in Tehran for the annual commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (a.s.). The discussions in these three lectures revolve around the concepts of both immigration (hijra) and jihad (struggle, or fighting back).

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## Topic Tags:

[Jihad](#) [7]

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# Introduction

If we had come across this book twenty or thirty years ago, we would not have paid much attention to it. This is particularly true in the current climate where foreign lands, especially the Western world, have become the residence of millions of Muslims, the majority of whom have left their homelands to escape persecution and save their faith.

Therefore, immigration and jihad have become among the important topics that occupy the minds of Muslims in this time and age. It is not only because the subject is subtle, but a source of worldly aggravation.

It is for these reasons that we have decided to translate it into English, to make it an addition to the Mutahhari series published by Dar Al-Hadi, London, which has been created as a result of consultation with Hujjatul Islam as-Sayyid Jawad ash-Shahristani, the Chairman of Alul Bayt (a.s.) Foundation for Reviving the Heritage.

It has been decided that the translation of this work be among the first books that deserve to be

translated, not only because it is an important one, but because of its significance among the circles of young men and women.

In the end, I pray to the Almighty to bestow success on us in both this world and the hereafter. I would like to express my gratitude to Najim al-Khafaji for his translation and Hayder al-Khoei for his help.

Fadhil Bahrululum

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## Translator's Note

In undertaking the translation of this booklet, *Alhijrah wal Jihad, Immigration and Jihad*, by Martyr Ayatollah Murtadha Mutahhari, I have been keen on conveying the meaning to the English reader in Standard English from the Arabic text that was translated from Farsi. I hope I have succeeded in this task. I also hope that this translation will benefit people who are interested in acquiring knowledge about Islamic topics.

It is noteworthy, however, that the booklet is a record of a series of lectures the late author had delivered in gatherings held in Tehran for the annual commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (a.s.). Thus, and as has already been pointed out by the Arabic translator, the reader may come across some repetitions, that are characteristic of a sermon/lecture-delivering style, although I have done my best to minimize these to a level that, I think, is acceptable.

Where I thought the meaning of the text would be enhanced or rendered more intelligible, I have put the additional words, which do not constitute part of the original text, between square brackets, thus []. I did the same with other pieces of information I have provided that are, in my judgment, beneficial to the reader. On certain occasions, I felt the need to keep the Arabic word, which I enclosed between these ( ) brackets, alongside its English equivalent, so as to reinforce the meaning. On other occasions, I resorted to using them interchangeably.

In this translation, I relied on the first Arabic edition (1987), published by the Office of International Relations, Organization for Islamic Information, PO Box 1313/14155, Tehran, Iran.

**Najim al-Khafaji,**

BA, MIL.

London, UK, July, 2002

# Introduction to the Arabic Translation

This book is a record of a series of lectures given by the Islamic intellectual Martyr Ayatollah Murtadha Mutahhari in one of the mosques in the Iranian capital Tehran in 1975, i.e. some three years before the triumph of the Islamic revolution. It is noteworthy that those years witnessed the high point of the Shah's persecution of and clamping down on dissidents.

The discussions in these three lectures revolve around the concepts of both immigration (hijra) and jihad (struggle, or fighting back). The author's methodology of research was based on the following general guidelines:

Explaining the semantics of both the concepts of immigration and jihad and their importance within the system of Islamic rules.

Discussing examples of real life situations of both the concepts and the conditions when Islam makes it incumbent on its followers to pursue immigration and jihad as religious duties.

Facing up to the false arguments about and misconceptions of both the subjects. The author paid special attention to taking issue with the attempts to make redundant immigration and jihad in the context of Islamic sharia law. That is, the proponents of this trend, by giving more weight to the superficial meaning of the two concepts, seek to justify the recoiling from social work.

By reinforcing the lawful obligation of immigration, Professor Mutahhari has sought to demolish the pretexts clung to by many people who chose to go astray from the path of Islam. Those people seem to quote "force majeure", (or power that cannot be acted or fought against) to defend their deviant ways.

This book discusses these two subjects in a way which may leave you with the conclusion that the author is talking about identical twins. In this regard, Ayatollah Mutahhari has followed the Qur'anic approach in dealing with these two topics for they are hardly mentioned separately in the Holy Qur'an.

By opting to discuss these subjects from a practical perspective, the author has aimed to highlight this approach from an educational standpoint, as it is more beneficial than the purely academic theoretical approach; and once again, he had followed in the footsteps of the Holy Qur'an in this regard.

As regards the translation From Farsi into Arabic, I have resorted to the following:

I have done my level best as not to interfere with the original text, only insofar as the Arabic syntax necessitated.

I have opted for leaving some passages, which may seem as if the author is repeating himself, as they are. I believe there is no harm in so doing because of the nature of the original material, i.e. being

delivered by way of lectures on the one hand, and, on the other, by recapping on certain points, the lecturer/author had sought to add force to the argument by introducing new elements to the discussion.

And as is customary in the gatherings held to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (a.s.), [which usually take place during Muharram and Safar of the Islamic Hijri Calendar], the orator in these lectures had finished each lecture up by making references to certain aspects of the story of the martyrdom of the Imam (a.s.). This, I also have chosen to leave unchanged, above all, for its educational value.

Muhammad Ja'far Baqiri,  
Translator of the Farsi text into Arabic,  
Tehran, Iran, 1987.

## Lecture One

### ***In the Name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful***

Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds, the Creator of all beings, and may peace be with the servant of God, His Messenger, friend, the chosen one, the trustee of His secret and the transmitter of His Message, our master and prophet, Muhammad and his pure and infallible progeny.

I seek refuge in God from the reviled Satan,

***“He who forsakes his home in the cause of God, finds in the earth many a refuge, wide and spacious: Should he die as a refugee from home for God and His Messenger, his reward becomes due and sure with God: And God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.” (4:100).***

Immigration and jihad are two cornerstones on which Islam relies on in the social field. As is evident, the Holy Qur'an has, out of reverence for their sanctity, held them in high regard, wherever they are mentioned. Similarly, it has conferred great veneration and grandeur on the rank of immigrants and mujahideen (the fighters back).

Immigration (hijra), means leaving one's home, people, and homeland, for a new place of abode, with a view to saving one's faith from being compromised. In many Qur'anic verses, you will notice that both words are mentioned beside each other:

***“Those who believe, and adopt exile, and fight for the Faith, in the cause of Allah as well as those who give (them) asylum and aid, - these are (all) in very truth the Believers: for them is the forgiveness of sins and a provision most generous.” (8:74).***

In the early days of Islam, Muslims used to be divided into two groups: al-Muhajiroon (The migrants) and al-Ansar (The supporters or helpers). Al-Ansar were the inhabitants of Medina, previously known as Yetherb, who gave Al-Muhajiroon haven and aid. The latter were the ones who fled their homes and travelled to Medina in order to preserve their faith.

In common with jihad, immigration is an Islamic sharia rule that is not constant. That is, it becomes a performable religious obligation on Muslims when certain circumstances emerge and certain conditions are met.

To avoid misunderstanding and contradictions in understanding the rules of both jihad and immigration, we set out here to discuss the subject in some detail.

For both jihad and immigration different interpretations have been put forward, i.e. different from the one we have just mentioned. Immigration has been taken to mean, “the abandonment of misdeeds and sinning”; thus, “the immigrant is the person who emigrated from the camp of disobedience”.

How precise is this interpretation? Would the person, whose soul has been tainted with sins, he then repented a true repentance, become a deserter of misdeeds? If we accept this interpretation, all people of the world who repented would fit this description for they forsook the vile deeds they were committing, such as Faheel bin Ayyadh, Bishr al-Hafi and others.

Ibn Ayyadh, used to be a thief. He turned his back to this type of wrongdoing and turned to God in a true penitence. Having mended his ways, he became a great man, turning into a famous teacher and educationalist for many people. In the spell when he had taken to stealing, Ibn Ayyadh was in the process of breaking into a house with the intent to steal. While he was scaling the fence of the house, he noticed that the owner of the house was in the middle of a devotional prayer, reciting the Holy Qur’an in a submissive voice. He heard the man recite,

***“Has not the time arrived for the believers that their hearts in all humility should engage in the remembrance of Allah...” (57: 16).***

While listening to this Qur’anic verse being recited, he somehow felt that as though he were being addressed with those words. The words shocked him to the core, so much so that he retorted, “O Lord! Yea. O Lord! Yea. It is high time. And it’s up.” He then came down the fence, after he had been dissuaded from carrying out his raid.

This was the last time he carried out an offending, be it a criminal activity, consuming alcohol or gambling, and all other sins. He made a clean break with his unsavory past. And in order to wipe the slate clean and forget about his past, he made amends with the victims of his crimes and reached a settlement with them, i.e. compensating them for what he stole from them and asking their forgiveness. He further made amends with his Creator. Therefore, Ibn Ayyadh fits the definition of immigration, in that he abandoned the vile deeds he was hooked on.

In Baghdad, and during the lifetime of Imam Mousa al-Kadhim (a.s.), there was a well know man called Bishr al-Hafi. One-day, al-Kadhim was passing by the house of Bishr. It happened that one of his maids opened the door to leave a bag of rubbish in front of the house. The Imam asked her if the owner of the house was a slave or a freeman. She answered, without hiding her bewilderment at his question, that he was a freeman. The Imam said, “You are right. Had he been a slave he would have feared his Lord”. [1](#)

The Imam then left the scene. When the maid went back into the house, Bishr, who was in a drinking session, asked her as to what kept her so late. She told him the story. It seems that the words of the Imam descended on him like a thunderbolt waking him up from his deep slumber and forgetfulness.

After the maid had told him of the direction the Imam continued his walk in, he quickly set off trying to catch up with the Imam, so much so that he forget to wear his slippers. While he was in hot pursuit, he was saying to himself that the man who uttered those words must have been Imam Mousa bin Ja’far al-Kadhim (a.s.).

Indeed, he went to the house of the Imam and apologized to him. And while still weeping, declared in his presence that he wanted to repent and become a slave, not to anyone, but to God. He went on saying that he did not want any more the type of freedom he was used to, i.e. that which imprisoned in him his humanity and set forth the animal base instigations; that he did not want any more to chase lofty positions and repute; that he did not want to wade in the mire of sins and become their hostage; that he did not want to suffocate inside him the good innate nature and sound mind. He concluded that he wanted to be a true slave to God and a freeman when dealing with others.

Thus, Bishr announced his repentance at the hands of Imam al-Kadhim. From that point in time onward, he was never to relapse in his previous bad ways, i.e. he discarded his sins (hajara thunubah) and began a clean sheet, destroying all objects and symbols of wrongdoings, and turning to submission to and worship of God. Accordingly, Bishr met the criterion of immigration for he turned his back to all misdeeds and immoralities.

This definition of immigration (hijra) is similar to that of jihad for the mujahid (lit. maker of a great effort) which is “the one who is at odds with the inclinations of his tempting self”,[2](#) especially its bad suggestions. It is a known fact that the internal struggle is ever present between the soul and its preferences on the one hand and reason on the other; in other words, a constant warring between heart and mind.

Imam Ali (a.s.) has been quoted as saying,

**“The bravest of people is he who overcomes his leanings”[3](#)**

The real courage is demonstrated in this incident, which took place during the time of the Messenger of God, Muhammad (s.a.w.). He was passing by a place where he saw a group of youth competing with

one another over who could lift the heaviest rock. Aiming to make use of the occasion to preach to the youngsters, he approached them and offered to act as a referee between them in their contest. They accepted his offer.

He said to them, “No one of you should be in need to lift any rock so that they can be judged the strongest. Instead, I have a proposition for you, in that whoever among you can muster the strength and plug the courage to overpower his soul and prevent it from committing sins should be declared the strongest.” It therefore follows that the mujahid is the one who could win over his self and the brave is the one who could overcome his desires.

There is another example and lesson, which demonstrates true bravery, and which we could draw from the story of Poryay Wooly (sic), a famous wrestling champion. He sets a parable for what a true champion should be. He was the epitome of gentlemanly conduct and magnanimity. The story goes like this: One day, our champion arrived in a town where he was scheduled to meet in a contest with the top wrestler of that town. While he was on a tour in that town, he came across an old woman who was giving out pieces of sweets to passersby. She gave him a piece of chocolate and asked him for a prayer.

He asked her whether there was anything in particular she wanted him to pray for. She said to him that her son was the wrestling champion of their town and that he was going to meet later in the week, another wrestler who came from another town. She added that she felt apprehensive about her son’s chances of winning, in that he might lose, and that his defeat would not only be considered a setback for her son, but it would mean that their source of income would dry up. In short, his defeat would spell disaster for the family. Our champion told her to have peace of mind, in that he would pray for her son to win the match.

After that conversation with the old woman, he was in a reflective mood, calling to mind that “he who overcomes his inclinations is the bravest of people”. At the appointed time of contest between him and his opponent and as the contest progressed, he came to know that his opponent was much weaker than him and that if he wanted to, he could have defeated him in no time.

However, having reached a decision that he would let his opponent defeat him, he overindulged in evasive movements to give the impression that the contest was proceeding normally, and in the opportune time, he gave way and let his opponent defeat him.

The storyteller went on to say that at the moment of defeat, our champion felt that his heart became wide open for God, as though he were in His dominion. And because that man did battle with his soul and scored a victory over its inclinations, he had become among the friends of God. You might ask, why? The answer is because “the true mujahid is the one who does battle with his soul”, the “bravest of people is he who overcomes his desires”, and lastly, because he demonstrated the kind of courage and magnanimity that made him excel over all champions.[4](#)

More significant of the previous story is that of Imam Ali (a.s.) and Amr bin Wid, a battle-hardened

fighter, who earned the nickname of “the Knight of Yelyel.”<sup>5</sup> This story goes like this: At the battle of Khandaq (the Trench) the army of Muslims was on one side of the trench and that of the polytheists (mushrikeen) was on the other side. A group of infidels, among them Amr bin Wid, managed to cross over to the side of the Muslim army. Ibn Wid, mounting his horse, started yelling and challenging the Muslim fighters to fight him in a duel.

The Prophet (s.a.w.) turned to his companions, enquiring whether anyone of them was willing to fight the challenger. All were quiet, apart from Ali, who stood up and said, “I am his match.” The Prophet said, “He is Amr. Sit down.” Ibn Wid grew more vociferous, taunting the Muslims and making fun of their assertion that whoever was killed among Muslims would go to heaven.

For the second time, Ali stood up and volunteered to face him in combat. He was asked by the Prophet to sit down. Amr bin Wid shouted for the third time, throwing down the gauntlet. Ali picked up the gauntlet and asked the Prophet to give him permission to fight Ibn Wid.

The result of the swordfight was in favor of Ali. The high point of the combat came when Ali overcame Ibn Wid, by seriously wounding him, and wanted to deal him the last blow. Ibn Wid spat in the face of Ali who was sitting on his chest, prior to beheading him. Ali let go of him and moved away to have a stroll before returning to finish him off. While Ali was in the process of doing just that, Ibn Wid asked him as to why he moved away and came back. Ali replied that he was hurt and offended when Ibn Wid spat at him, preferring to move away as not to let his dealing him the last blow be considered as though it were for taking personal revenge. That is, killing him would not count in the cause of God.

So, the short time Ali took between the incident of spitting and moving away from the fallen foe and coming back to finish him off was for suppressing his anger, so that his killing him would be deemed in the cause of God, and not for Ali’s personal vendetta.<sup>6</sup>

In summation, the second definition of hijra (immigration) is forsaking sins and misdeeds and the second interpretation for jihad is battling with one’s own self, with a view to deterring it from driving one to committing that which is vile or improper. However, is this interpretation correct? The answer to this question is yes, in that in itself it is correct and, yet, it has been misunderstood. Our statement, “The immigrant is he who departs wrongdoings, and the mujahid (the battler) is he who is at odds with his tempting self”, can be found in the traditions (hadith) of the Infallibles (a.s.).

The Prophet (s.a.w.) describes battling one’s soul (jihadun nafs) as “the major jihad”. And yet, the mix-up and misinterpretation has come about as a result of some people’s resorting to annulling the first meaning by suggesting that the import of hijra is departing one’s misdeeds by mending their ways, and that the meaning of jihad is battling with oneself to dissuade it from committing what is unlawful, implying that there is no need for man to leave his home and kin when it becomes necessary.

That is, there is no point in fleeing to other countries when needs be. We should, instead, stay put; it would suffice that we abandon the crooked ways that leads to the commissioning of sins and would

therefore be eligible for the definition of muhajir (immigrant).

As regards jihad, some would like to argue that since jihad is doing battle with oneself, there remains no necessity for entering in war with the enemies of Islam; it would, they further allege, suffice that we stay at home and busy ourselves with wrestling with our internal struggle. This, in their view, is the jihad in the cause of God (aljihadu fi sabilillah). In their judgment, this type of jihad is far superior to the other one because it is “the major jihad” (aljihadul akbar) as opposed to the other one, which is “the minor jihad” (aljihadul asghar).

As is evident, interpreting hijra, as abandoning committing what is vile, has been taken as an alleged reason for dismissing as irrelevant hijra (immigration) according to the first meaning. Similarly, interpreting jihad as doing battle with oneself as an excuse for rejecting as redundant the jihad according to the first meaning. This is where deviation from the right reading of both the concepts has occurred.

It goes without saying that there are two types of hijra (immigration) in Islam; the same goes for jihad. Choosing [for convenience] any type at the expense of the other, i.e. in both the cases – jihad and immigration would entail departure from Islam and its injunctions.

Our great leaders of religion – the Prophet (s.a.w.), Imam Ali and the rest of the Imams (a.s.) were all among the immigrants (muhajir) in the Way of God in the sense of both types of hijra (immigration). And the same goes for jihad. However, tackling the subject from a semantic standpoint, we would come across gradations that cannot be reached without going through both the categories of jihad as well as immigration. That is, it is implausible that someone attains the rank of mujahid (fighter) before experiencing combat in the battlefield.

Likewise, one cannot be deemed “immigrant” without going through the process of real immigration, in the manifest meaning of term. This is God’s law with His creation; He has made man’s attaining maturity and advancement contingent on his passing educational/training courses.

For example, in the view of Islam, marriage is a sacred institution for a number of reasons, unlike contemporary Christianity that considers celibacy, [perhaps a reference to the institution of bachelorhood of the Catholic priesthood] as a sacred deed. So, why does Islam regard marriage a sanctified practice? The secret of attaching great importance to this tradition lies in its immense influence in cultivating man’s spirit.

For man’s soul to attain a sublime position of wisdom and perfection, marriage would contribute immeasurably to reaching that rank. Conversely, if men preferred to stay bachelor and women spinster till death, they would remain lacking in spiritual prosperity.

The reason for this is the absence of the educational dimension of marriage.

Such men and women will not be able to overcome this inadequacy even if they spent their entire lives in worship, meditation, and battling with their tempting selves. Islam has, therefore, considered the

institution of wedlock among its traditions, being one of positive influences on man's education and his pursuit of perfection. Thus, any effect of any factor that contributes in shaping man's character is limited to the area where it can be effective. Equally, any alternative factor would not have the same effect, if it were to be hoped to give the same results. And by the same token, any of these factors that are collectively taking part in the process of man's cultivation cannot be used interchangeably.

Immigration and jihad are among the factors that have a say in man's development towards perfection. It therefore follows that no other factor can replace them. Using the same rationale, jihad, in the sense of man's struggle with oneself, has its place, so does immigrating, i.e. turning one's back to committing sins. And yet, practical immigration is one of the educational factors that cannot be superseded by the type of immigration in the sense of abandoning committing sins. Similarly, jihad, in the sense of fighting back the enemies of God, can never be replaced by the second type of jihad, i.e. doing battle with one's tempting self and vice versa. In the eye of Islam, both are in the same rank of importance in Islamic education.

Here one may say that the living circumstances vary from one individual Muslim to another and that a certain Muslim individual may not be required to embark on either immigration or jihad against the enemies of God. What would become of such an individual, given the important positive influence of upholding these two tenets?

The Noble Messenger (s.a.w.) provides the answer for this question, saying that the religious duty on such a Muslim in such circumstances should be that he always has a true and sincere intention to embark on such a duty should circumstances change, in that there may arise the need for embarking on immigration or engaging in jihad as the case may be.

Thus, provided there is such intention and determination, such an individual should be able to meet the requirements of attaining the rank of immigrant (muhajir) and fighter (mujahid). This meaning can be gleaned from this prophetic tradition,

**“Whomever did not take part in battle [against the infidels] or did not contemplate such an eventuality, would die a hypocrite.”**

The Holy Qur'an has this to offer in this regard:

***“Not equal are those believers who sit (at home) and receive no hurt, and those who strive and fight in the cause of God with their goods and their persons. God hath granted a grade higher to those who strive and fight with their goods and persons than to those who sit (at home). Unto all (in Faith) hath God promised good: But those who strive and fight hath He distinguished above those who sit (at home) by a special reward, – Ranks specially bestowed by Him, and Forgiveness and Mercy. For God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.” (4:95–96).***

It is clear from this Qur'anic text that in its discussion, it does not talk about those who preferred not join

the fight [out of choice, and not for a good reason]. The reference to those “who sit at home” is confined to those believers who did not join others in the strife and fight because there is a sufficient number of mujahidin (fighters). So, when it comes to allotting ranks, the fighters are given loftier positions or ranks over those who stayed behind for a reason.

However, in the same vein, the Qur’anic verse confirms that this classification does not cover “Those who sit (at home) by a special reward”, i.e. those who stayed behind by virtue of their physical disabilities – such as blindness, paralysis, and illness. The Qur’an reiterates that those too may attain the rank of the fighters. They may as well overtake the fighters, should they have harbored sincere intentions and true determination to join in the fight. That is, if their valid reasons for not joining were lifted, they would have joined the war effort in person and wealth. This principle is sound, when its conditions are fulfilled.

On the return of Imam Ali (a.s.) from the battle of Siffeen [fought against Mu’awiyah],<sup>7</sup> a man, among the rank and file of his army, asked him, “O Commandar of the Faithful! I have a brother whom I would have loved that he be among us, so that he could achieve the favour of your companionship.” The Imam replied, “What was the intention of your brother, his resolution, the inclination of his heart? Had he a valid reason that prevented him from joining us?” The Imam then provided the answers for all these questions, saying, “Had he no valid reason and did not join us, his not being with us is better for us.<sup>8</sup>

Had he a good reason for not being with us and yet his heart was with us and his resolution was to join us once the reasons that had prevented him from joining us were lifted, he would be judged as though he were with us.” The man answered in the affirmative. The Imam (a.s.) said, “Not only your brother alone was with us. Verily, other men who are still in the wombs of their mothers; rather, those unborn men [who are still, in the form of sperm in the semen] of their fathers, are with us.”

This is an unshakeable truth till the Day of Judgment, that any person who is intent on wishing that he were at the time of Ali and that he would have, with firm will, joined him in his army in Siffeen, he must rest assured that he would be deemed among his supporters, even though he did not witness the battle.

## **Awaiting relief from suffering**

What does waiting for the happy ending mean? And what does the statement, “The best of works is looking forward to the happy ending” mean? Some people mistakenly believe that waiting for relief from suffering (faraj), which is the best of deeds, means that we should look forward to the reappearance of the Awaited Imam, al-Mahdi (May God hasten his reappearance) who would do so with a group of his disciples, totaling 313 men, with scores of followers.

And once they appeared on the scene, they would wage war against the enemies of Islam, cleanse the earth of their uncleanness and vile deeds, establish the rule of justice and security in the land, and make available freedom and prosperity for all. And once this is done, they would invite us to enjoy their toil!! It

seems that some people would like us to believe that this is what is meant by “Waiting for the happy ending (faraj)”, describing it as the best of good deeds.

However, the true waiting for faraj is that we should expect the reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi and be drafted in his army and fight under his command even if we get martyred in the process. The genuine waiting is in man’s whole aspiration to be party to the jihad in the cause of God. That is, not the kind of waiting that entails dependency on the Imam to solve our problems by performing all the intractable tasks, and once these are out of the way and the time for reaping the fruit of the toil comes we would then emerge to enjoy the harvest. This is not the right approach.

This is the reasoning of the followers of Prophet Moses (a.s.). As for the followers of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.), they said to him: O Messenger of God! We are not going to address you in the same manner the Israelites did with Moses when they got to the approaches of Jerusalem, Palestine and found out that there was an army waiting for them:

***“.. O Moses! We shall never enter it as long as they are in it. Gof thou, and thy Lord, and fight ye two, while we sit here.” (5:24).***

To that, Moses (a.s.) retorted: What is your responsibility then? You should be liable to drive out the transgressors who occupied your land and sent you into exile. In contrast, the followers of Muhammad (s.a.w.), such as al-Miqdad, did not replicate the position of Moses’ followers. They said: We believed in you and bore witness that what you call for is the truth, and swore allegiance to you to be obedient.

Therefore, set forth to wherever you have decided and we will be with you. We swear by Him Who sent you with the truth, should you decide to push your way in this sea we would have done so with you, without a single one of us turning back. We are not averse to the orders to engage in combat an enemy tomorrow.[9](#)

As such, genuine “waiting for the happy ending” is that we should be full of hope and determination to succeed in joining the army of the Awaited Imam (May God hasten his reappearance), so that we be in a position to contribute to reforming the world.

“We wish we were with you, so that we could have achieved a great victory”. We always repeat this statement, addressing Imam Hussain (a.s.). Yet, do we really pay attention to its actual meaning? It simply means,

***“O Aba Abdillah! We wish we were with you so that we could have attained the rank of martyrdom fighting on your side and under your standard, and thus we would have achieved a great victory.”***

Are these just words or do they underline a sincere intension and a true desire? Although there are people who utter the words and truly mean what they are talking about, yet the majority of us recite these words in the book of visitations, paying lip service to them.

Imam Hussain (a.s.) uttered these words, in commendation of the sincerity of his companions,

**“I am not aware of any companions who are better than my companions both in kindness and loyalty.”<sup>10</sup>**

An outstanding Shia scholar used to cast doubt over the authenticity of the statement, in that it might have not emanated from Imam Hussain. His rationale for dismissing it as unauthentic goes thus, “Having pondered the question, I have reached this conclusion: The companions of Imam Hussain did not do an exceptional deed. It was the enemy who demonstrated debased attitude and practice. Knowing that Imam Hussain is the grandson of the Prophet, the son of Imam Ali and Fatima, the Imam of his Age, etc., it goes without saying that any ordinary Muslim would have come to his rescue, seeing him in that situation. So, the band of people who fought beside him did not do anything out of the ordinary. On the contrary, those who did not come to his aid were very bad people”.

He went on to say, “It seems that Allah wanted to deliver me from this inattention, ignorance, and misguidance. In my dream, I saw myself witnessing the battle of at-Taf, i.e. Karbala. In response to his appeal for support, I declared to Imam Hussain my readiness to side with him against his enemy.

The Imam asked me to wait for his instructions. In the meantime, the time for prayer became due.<sup>11</sup> The Imam said: We want to say our prayer. You are required to keep a vigil in that corner, so that you can forestall any attack by the enemy that could be coming from there. I said: Go ahead O son of the Messenger of God! He started saying the prayer. I stood in front of him. After a short while I saw an arrow coming in my direction. I, unconsciously, ducked it. The arrow crashed into the Imam. I said: I seek forgiveness from God and repent to Him, what a preposterous act I have just committed.

This incident happened on three more occasions, where I, time and again, took evasive action to avoid the arrow hitting me and instead let it hit the Imam every time. On turning my head towards the Imam, I noticed that he was looking at me with a smile on his face and said: (I have never seen any companions better than my companions both in kindness and loyalty)”.

The Imam then added, and the narrative is still that of the Shia scholar was relating, “Sitting at home repeating the words: (We wish we were with you, so that we would achieve a great victory) is worthless if you do not put it into practice. Are you like this? My companions were people whose actions spoke louder than words. They were not mincing their words.”

[Going back to that part of the story of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (a.s.)], on the tenth of Muharram (Aashoura’), the Imam said the last Dhuhr (noon) prayer before he was martyred. Most of his comrades in arms were martyred earlier that day, in the exchanges of volleys of arrows between the combatants. Thus, he was left with the immediate members of his family and a small band of his companions.

The fighting force of the Imam totaled some seventy-two warriors. And yet, despite their small number, they were enjoying high morale and showing exemplary gallantry. Being the commander of this small

army, Imam Hussain did not show any sign of weakness or despondency.

He planned for the showdown with the enemy by positioning three main groups of his soldiers into a central segment (the heart), right and left flanks, as any other regular army did in those circumstances. Zuhair bin al-Qayn was appointed commander of the right flank, Habib bin Mudhahir was charged with the responsibility of defending the left flank. His brother al-Abbas (a.s.) was made the standard-bearer.

The companions of Imam Hussain (a.s.) were eager to start the fight. However, the Imam was insistent on not launching the first strike, leaving it to the enemy to do so. That starting shot came at the hands of Omar bin Sa'ad.

Ibn Sa'ad was keen on holding both the spiritual and the materialistic at the same time. He was aspiring to securing Ibn Ziyad's offer of appointing him the governor of Ray, but without staining his hands with the blood of al-Hussain. Because of this soul-searching and struggle to subdue his inclinations, he embarked on a string of letters to Imam Hussain with a view to avoiding the bloodshed.

When the news reached Ibn Ziyad, he wrote to him a stern letter, ordering him to quickly kill the Imam. He threatened him that he would sack him and appoint someone else in his place, should he choose to ignore his instructions. Ibn Sa'ad could not rid himself of his bondage to the materialistic world. So, since he was given a choice between this world and the next, he opted for the former, selling his faith in return. Thus, he acquiesced to the order of Ibn Ziyad. In so doing, he demonstrated dishonorable qualities and treachery and committed one of the most heinous crimes in the history of mankind.

Ibn Ziyad's justifications for committing some of those atrocities was that he was seeking to be seen taking a position of neutrality, i.e. by not siding with Imam Hussain (a.s.). In order to show his loyalty to Ibn Ziyad, especially in the light of the latter's receiving many reports accusing him of showing reluctance in fighting the Imam, he embarked on a killing spree, massacring the Progeny of the Prophet (a.s.).

When the two adversarial armies pitched their fighters opposite one another, Ibn Ziyad took a bow and arrow from one of his bowmen, or archers, placed an arrow in the bow and shot in the direction of al-Hussain's camp, remarking, "Bear witness for me with the Prince [Ibn Ziyad] that I was the first one to shoot". [12](#)

This is the story of the first arrow that was shot in the battle of Karbala. However, whenever I reach thus far in telling the story of the battle, I remember a saying by our friend the great scholar the late Ayati. I either heard him say it or read his words somewhere. He used to say,

**"The battle of Karbala was started with a shot of an arrow and was ended with another shot of an arrow".**

Indeed, it started with the shot/arrow of Ibn Sa'ad and ended with a poisoned three-pronged arrow that

was shot at Imam Hussain, who was already badly wounded and very thirsty, which lodged into his heart, putting an end to his jihad. The Imam was on the verge of collapsing, but for his last few words, in which he was addressing his Lord, “In the Name of God and by God, and on the religion of the Messenger of God.”<sup>13</sup>

Another of the Imam’s companions was Aabis bin Shabeeb ash–Shakiri, who was filled with high spirit and valour. He took the centre stage of the battlefield and issued a challenge to the army of Ibn Ziyad, if there was any one among them who was prepared to fight him in one–to–one combat. No one dared to respond to his challenge. Having repeated his call several times, but to no avail, and realizing that the coat of arms and headgear he was wearing were proving cumbersome, he parted with them. Thus, he mounted attacks on the enemy soldiers who were fleeing before him. They were not able to kill him, only by stoning him and shooting him with torrents of arrows. Thus, he was martyred.

On the day of the Battle of Karbala, all the companions of Imam Hussain (a.s.), men and women, depicted the most vivid portraits of gallantry and sacrifice. They left their indelible marks in the chapters of history of mankind, only to be revered and emulated. Had their equivalent been found in the history of the West, they would have held them in a very high regard.

Abdullah bin Omeir al–Kalbi was another of the companions of Imam Hussain. In his company were his wife and mother. He was a gallant warrior. When he wanted to join the battle, his wife, a newly wed woman, tried to prevent him and pleaded with him, “With whom you are going to leave me? Who is going to take care of me? Please do not leave me behind for bereavement.” On hearing her, his mother intervened, “O my son! Do not listen to her. Go and fight in defense of the son of the Messenger of God, so that he would tomorrow, on the Day of Judgment, be your intercessor. I will not be pleased with you until you got killed fighting with al–Hussain.” He assaulted the enemy and got killed in the process.

His mother plucked the courage, arming herself with a pole, and embarked on attacking the enemy. Al–Hussain prevented her from doing so, saying, “May all members of your family be rewarded with that which is best. Go back and join the rest of the women. May God have mercy on you. Being a woman, you are not required to do jihad.”

As the battle progressed, more massacres took place. The enemy beheaded Abdullah bin al–Hussain, [who was just an infant], hurling the severed head towards his mother. She held it and wiped the dirt off it, hugging and kissing it, and saying, “O my son! I am pleased with you, I am pleased.” She then tossed the baby’s head towards the camp of the enemy, saying, “What we give away in the Way of God, we do not reclaim.”

Among the other supporters of al–Hussain was a boy, aged either ten or twelve years, whose father was killed earlier on in the fighting. Armed with his sword, he approached the Imam and asked for permission to enter the fight. The Imam did not grant him permission out of sympathy for his mother who had just been bereaved of her husband, saying, “The father of this boy was killed in the first campaign, and

maybe his mother does not like him to be killed.” The boy replied that his mother had agreed to his taking part in the fighting and that she would be pleased with him, if he got killed in defense of al-Hussain.

That boy was of an outstanding character, demonstrating his moral fiber in the battle. His way of joining the battle was different from the manner the rest of the fighters, who were coming forward for their debut in the battle. They introduce themselves and their lineage by way of reciting war poetry in a roaring style (rajz). That boy did not follow in the footsteps of the fighters who preceded him and introduced themselves in that pattern. Instead, he recited a couplet, singing the praise of his connection with al-Hussain (a.s.) and being one of his soldiers per se,

“My lord is Hussain, the pleasure that descended on the heart of the bearer of good tidings, the warner [Prophet Muhammad]. Ali and Fatima are his parents. Do you know of anyone thus pure-bred?”

[Approaching the end of the lecture, it is customary to end it on this note, i.e. a supplication],

**“O Lord! Grant us the success to be submissive to You, keep our distance from committing what is vile, be truthful in our intensions, and make us recognise that Your Mercy knows no bounds. Be gracious to us by bestowing on us guidance and straightforwardness. Guide our speech towards that which is right and wise. Fill our hearts up with knowledge and mindfulness. O Lord! Illuminate our hearts with the light of faith. Make us among the true immigrants (muhajirs) and fighters (mujahids) in the way of striving to make the word of Thy religion rule supreme.**

**O Lord! Grant the Muslims victory over their enemies in all the fronts.”**

- [1.](#) When the maid opened the door, the sound of singing and clamor could be heard by the passersby.
- [2.](#) Wasail’ush Shia, vol. 11, p. 124.
- [3.](#) Nahjul Balagha. Imam Ali (a.s.) has an adage, serving the same theme, “It is not a winner whose sins catch up with him, and if the evil one overcame, he would eventually taste defeat.” Nahjul Balagha, Beirut new edition, Catalogued by Dr. Subhi as-Saleh, axiom No. 327, p. 533.
- [4.](#) No doubt many champions, heroes, and ordinary people find in Imam Ali a role model, because, above all, he was fighting on two fronts – The external enemy and the enemy within, i.e. his tempting soul.
- [5.](#) The reason why he earned that title is that he was in a caravan with other members of the tribe of Quraish. When the caravan reached the valley of Yelyel, near Badr, it was ambushed by a group of men of the tribe of Banu Bakr. Amr bin Abdi Wid asked his travelling companions to slip away. He single-handedly faced up to the attackers and defeated them. (at-Tabataba’i, al-Mizan Qur’anic Commentary, Chapter 33, al-Ahzab vol. 16, p. 297).
- [6.](#) The story we traced has been related by al-Majlisi in his Biharul Anwar, vol. 41, p. 51, Beirut new edition, that goes like this: When he gained the upper hand over Amr bin Abdi Wid, he did not deal him the final blow. The companions of the Prophet criticized Ali for not finishing him off. Huthaifa spoke in defense of Ali. The Prophet asked him to keep quiet, adding that Ali would put them in the picture as to why he paused before dealing his foe the last blow.

When he finally killed bin Abdi Wid and went back to join the other combatants, the Prophet asked him about the delay in finishing his enemy off. Ali said that bin Abdi Wid called his mother names and spat in his face, and that had he killed him under the spur of the moment, it would have counted as though he killed him in revenge of his honor. Thus, he added, that he gave himself a respite to cool down in order that his killing him would be in the cause of God.

[7.](#) The story as it is told in Nahjul Balagha explains that this dialogue took place while the Imam was returning from Basrah after God granted him victory over the adversaries in the Battle of the Camel, and not after Siffeen, as the author had mentioned. (Nahjul Balagha, Beirut new edition, Catalogued by Dr. Subhi as-Saleh, vol. 1, p. 55).

[8.](#) “If they had intended to come out, they would certainly have made some preparation therefore; but God was averse to their being sent forth; so He made them lag behind, and they were told, "Sit ye among those who sit (inactive). If they had come out with you, they would not have added to your (strength) but only (made for) disorder, hurrying to and fro in your midst and sowing sedition among you, and there would have been some among you who would have listened to them. But God knoweth well those who do wrong.” (9/46–47).

This is in respect of the first group. As regards the second group, which the Imam made reference to, the Holy Qur’an describes them, thus:

“There is no blame on those who are infirm, or ill, or who find no resources to spend (on the cause), if they are sincere (in duty) to God and His Apostle: no ground (of complaint) can there be against such as do right: and God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. Nor (is there blame) on those who came to thee to be provided with mounts, and when thou said, "I can find no mounts for you," they turned back, their eyes streaming with tears of grief that they had no resources wherewith to provide the expenses.” (9/91–92).

In Sunan Ibn Majah, the Book of Jihad, vol. 2, p. 923, it has been related from the Prophet, after his return from expedition of Tabuk towards the approaches of Medina, “There are people in Medina, who, whatever distance you have covered, they would be with you.” They asked, “O Messenger of God! Even if they were in Medina?” He replied, “Yes, even if they were in Medina. They have a good reason for not being with us.”

[9.](#) Those words were Sa’ad bin Ma’ath’s in reply to a question put by the Prophet, who asked the opinion of the Ansar (Supporters, i.e. the people of Medina) about the proposition of taking on the army of the polytheists at the Battle of Badr. See Ibn Hisham’s Prophetic Biography, the Battle of Badr, in the closing pages of vol. 2 of the Beirut edition.

[10.](#) This is the text the author has quoted, however, what we found in the books of history is that Imam Hussain (a.s.) gathered together his companions and members of his household on the eve of the tenth of Muharram and gave an oration, among whose contents were these words, “Now then, I am not aware of any companions more superior than my companions, neither a household that are more caring and loving than my family. May God reward you all on my behalf.”

[11.](#) The historiographers of battles assert that Sa’eed bin Abdullah al-Hanafi and a group of other combatants formed a circle around Imam Hussain and his companions while they were saying their prayers. (Abdullah Shubbar’s Jala’ul Uyoon, the Chapter concerning His Arrival in Karbala until His Martyrdom.)

[12.](#) It is worth noting that Sa’ad’s father was a companion of the Prophet. He was a consummate archer and had a good reputation among Arabs. He had a very good record in the battles of Islam and rendered noble services to Islam in this regard.

[13.](#) Abdullah Shubbar’s Jala’ul Uyoon, on which we relied heavily to cross-check the text relating to the Battle of Karbala throughout the three lectures.

## Lecture Two

### *In the Name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful*

Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds, the Creator of all beings, and may peace be with the servant of God, His Messenger, friend, the chosen one, the trustee of His secret and the transmitter of His Message, our lord and prophet, Muhammad and his pure and infallible progeny.

***“He who forsakes his home in the cause of God, finds in the earth many a refuge, wide and spacious: Should he die as a refugee from home for God and His Messenger, his reward becomes due and sure with God: And God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.” (4/100).***

In the last lecture we discussed immigration and jihad, which have been mentioned repeatedly in the Holy Qur’an almost together. In this lecture we aim to continue the discussion about the significance of both these tenets, not least for their influence in cultivating man’s character in his progress towards perfection and particularly in the moral domain. However, we may, as the discussion develops, discuss the social dimension of these principles.

As you may recall, we have already examined the misinterpretation of the concept of immigration and jihad and explained their true meaning and parameters. Should we aim for the spirit, [not the letter], of both the concepts in all fields, be they materialistic or moral, we should conclude that by immigration (hijra), we mean forsaking the things that became part of man or he became attached to them.

The immigrant (muhajir) is the person who is capable of turning his back to any practice he has become hooked on, should the sharia law make it incumbent on him to do so. By jihad, we mean struggle, strife, and exertion, be it external, i.e. against the enemies of God, or internal, man: travel or staying put? Of course, one should not infer from this question that man i.e. against one’s own tempting self.

Without immigration and jihad man’s lot would be nothing other than degradation and misery. For man to be free in the full sense of the word, he has to free himself from all the shackles of humiliation that surround him. He should not let himself be enslaved by anything he might feel very close to his heart. Otherwise, he who submits to the circumstances that may govern his living and show weakness in getting rid of them cannot be deemed free at all. Rather, he is a prisoner of that state of affairs.

Embarking on discussing the semantics of immigration, especially its core constituent, i.e. travel, we would soon find ourselves confronted by this question: Which is better for should always be on the move, i.e. without permanent abode or home. Perhaps, we should paraphrase the question thus: Is it better for man to reside in his hometown/country without ever travelling abroad, or is taking to travel beneficial to him, being a kind of immigration? From an Islamic standpoint travel, in itself, is praiseworthy.

Although Islam discouraged wandering aimlessly in the land,<sup>1</sup> yet this does not mean that man should spend all his life in his village or town without venturing outside them, to other towns and countries. This status quo is liable to weaken one’s spirit, making it subservient to the conditions being lived.

In contrast, the person who takes to travelling, travel is bound to broaden his horizons and sharpen his wit, especially when the aim is aspiring for personal advancement, acquiring new virtues and that which is capable of contributing to perfectly shaping one’s personality. Travel has five benefits:

**1. Releasing the pressure:** Travel provides the tourist with an opportunity to unwind by relieving

tension, grief and sorrow. As long as man stays put in the climate he has got used to, it would make him live and remember all the bad things and regrettable incidents. This is bound to put him under immense pressure. So, by venting out such pressure, the person would be able to recharge their batteries.

**2. Looking for work:** The smart among people is he who can win his bread by relocating. New opportunities will certainly arise where immigrants could better their lot in their host countries.

**3. Pursuit of knowledge:** This is yet another valuable benefit that comes with travel. Setting out in search of knowledge and scholarship beyond your hometown or country should provide you with new experiences. [When it comes to religious learning], each and every scholar [alim, plural ulema] is unique in his own right.

No doubt, the ulema in your town are great, and yet each flower has its own distinctive scent, in that the alim of a particular town could not be as knowledgeable as the one in your town. Nevertheless, he could have his own area of expertise. Should you decide to meet with him, you would find out that he has a brand of knowledge the alim of your town does not possess.

**4. Attainment of moral excellence:** You cannot acquire all morals depending entirely on abstract sciences and by staying in the same environment. By the same token, shorn of any foundation of knowledge, travel alone is not going to prove a panacea for claiming the high moral ground. Getting a blend of both would lead to good results. A traveler is bound to see and experience new situations he was not used to in his own hometown or homeland. The spiritual maturity gained through travel cannot be had by any other means, including reading.

There may be people who could claim that they can gain new knowledge and expertise without travelling abroad. In their judgment, reading books about the intended countries, for example, should provide them with the required information. Without a shadow of a doubt, reading is beneficial. And yet, it cannot make the same impact travel and witnessing things first hand can.

In the Holy Qur'an reference is made to "touring the land", such as "Travel through the earth" (3/137) and "Say: travel through the earth" (6/11). Historians are unanimous in their interpretation of these holy verses, in that they suggest the familiarization with and drawing lessons from historical events. However, the Holy Qur'an does not confine achieving this objective to reading history annals. Rather, it calls on us to do that which is more tangible, i.e. to experience first hand the historical relics on the ground and draw the lessons thereof. In these two lines of poetry, which are attributed to Imam Ali (a.s.), he says:

**Emigrate from your native country in pursuit of loftier positions, for there are five benefits to be had from travel: Alleviating anxiety, working for a living, acquiring knowledge, attaining moral excellence and the companionship of distinguished people.**

So, travel far and wide and do not be like a caged bird. Travel and let your goal be gaining knowledge about the people and the countries you are heading for. For sure, you are going to experience new sets

of morals and social norms, which you may sometimes find superior than your own and which you can make use of, or at least be in a position to compare between the two and, maybe, be in a position to select the more superior.

**5. The companionship of distinguished people:** In travel, you may come across more illustrious people and forging relationships with such distinguished people may benefit you, not least in shaping your character through the positive influences such associations would leave.

Friendship here does not necessarily mean that of imparting knowledge by someone and receiving it by the other, i.e. teaching/learning relationship. Rather, it means good companionship and what would come out of it, i.e. gaining practical experience.

When the Imam (a.s.) establishes the aim of travel by “seeking higher status”, this should not mean that, in travel, one should restrict one’s attention to finding the best food, hotels and the like. The aim should be attaining moral excellence, learning, knowledge, human consummate conduct and intellectual maturity. So, let these be the fruits of travel and migration.

History tells us that the scholars who made journeys or immigrated to other countries, especially after they had gone through the early stages of their maturity, gained new experiences in their progress towards perfection.

Examples of such luminaries abound. Ash–Sheikh al–Baha’ie, for instance, occupies a special place among the ulema. He was an encyclopedic scholar who excelled in various disciplines. Among outstanding poets, the name of Sa’adi features high. He stood out in the different departments of poetry – love, mysticism, and heroism to name but a few. The secret of his brilliance in all those poetry genres is attributed to his vast mine of education and knowledge.

Sa’adi lived some ninety years. He spent thirty years of his life in schooling, education and acquiring knowledge. The second thirty years, he spent in travel, and the third thirty years witnessed the stages of his intellectual and literary maturity, prowess, and achievements.

In his divan, or collection of poems, Bustan, he has this to say about his globetrotting and the benefits he had reaped from it, “I travelled all over the world and enjoyed the company of each person I met a number of days. I benefited something from every corner I happened to be in and garnered from every field a spike of grain.”

In his short stories, Gulstan and Bustan, he said, “I was in a mosque in Baalbek, [ancient Heliopolis, village in East Lebanon], when such and such happened.” In another place, he said, “I was in Kashmir when so and so took place.” So, you may ponder the distance that separates the two places. In a third place, he said, “I was in India when thus and thus occurred.” In a fourth place, he said, “I came across a man whose behavior was such and such. We were in each other’s company on the way to Hijaz [modern day Saudi Arabia].”

Most of this imagery found its way to Sa'adi's poetry. No doubt, the poet's spirit would roam in new heights with these experiences. Indeed, this is true in Sa'adi's case, in that his travels contributed to his poetic and literary genius. This characteristic, you find in Mawlawi's poetic works. This was made possible by his wide travels that netted him diverse knowledge and experiences about other nations. Some of these were reflected in his poems, which boast some of those nations' culture, expressions and impressions. Thanks to his travels, he learned several languages.

In contrast with this, you do not find this quality in Hafiz's poetry. In spite of the fact that we hold him in high regard, as he was a mystic and notwithstanding his excellence in divine love poetry, so much so that, compared to him in this poetic genre, Sa'adi could not match him; his skill shined in that type of poetry. Maybe, this was because Hafiz stayed put in his hometown and never left it because he was attached to it. He even admits that attachment to his hometown, Shiraz, "Although Isfahan is the spring of life, yet Shiraz is far superior."

In his poetry, he often sings the praise of Shiraz and the beauty of its places. Although, he lived almost the entire of his life in Shiraz, it is reported that he ventured out of it once by travelling to Yezd. Yet, he was melancholic and felt homesick only to hurry back to Shiraz. He recorded his feelings in one of his poems where he expresses a wish to return to his hometown where he equates his seat there with the seat of Solomon, and expresses a wish to free himself from the prison of Alexander. Hafiz borrowed this metaphor from history. Fables have it that when he invaded Iran, Alexander, the Macedonian [Great] made Yezd a dumping ground for his prisoners, whereas, of old, Shiraz used to be described as the Seat of Power of Solomon.

This may exert some light on both the feelings of the poet vis-à-vis Yezd and Shiraz.<sup>2</sup> Some of his poems bear witness to the fact that the poet's dislike for Yezd had nothing to do with its inhabitants; rather, it was to do with his affection for his hometown, Shiraz. The evidence is found in his poetry where he spoke highly of Yezd's people and their hospitality. However, when Hafiz was offered a trip to India to stay somewhere close to the seaside, he declined it outright.

No doubt a scholar as famous as ash-Sheikh al-Baha'ie, who travelled the world over, stands head and shoulders above others who did not venture out of Najaf, [in Iraq, the well known seat of Shia Muslim learning and scholarship] all of their lives. Sheikh al-Baha'ie got in touch with the followers of different faiths and schools of thought and came to know a lot about their beliefs, cultures, and customs. There are others of our ulema (scholars), like al-Baha'ie, who came in contact with people of other faiths, persuasions, men of letters, professors, and other disciplines.

History books tell us that those who took to travel and in the process came into contact with other people of different backgrounds benefited a lot from this cross germination of experiences and ideas, so much so that it enriched their knowledge, sharpened their wit, and broadened their intellectual horizon.

In contrast, there had been great ulema, who were as erudite, genius, and loyal as the aforesaid group

of ulema, if not more superior, and yet they did not avail themselves of journeying outside the boundaries of their usual domicile. It goes without saying that members of the latter group were less experienced than the former.

This should lead us to conclude that there is another meaning for immigration (hijra) that is different from the patent one. This meaning has come out in the hadith (traditions) of the Infallibles (a.s.). It can be found in these words, "The immigrant is he who has turned his back (hajara) to committing that which is vile". And yet, one should not get the wrong end of the stick. That is, this interpretation does not, by any way, make the manifest meaning of hijra redundant.

On the contrary, the second meaning corroborates the fact that, in Islam, there are two types of hijra(immigration), one is patent and the other latent. In other words, the Islamic immigration is not restricted to leaving behind your family and homeland for a new destination as is dictated by the interest of Islam or for the aim of freeing oneself from becoming enslaved by one's own circumstances; should it be the latter, this could encroach on one's sole servitude to God Almighty, and thus one must break free from the clutches of circumstance.

Thus, the second type of immigration is getting rid of the yoke of [bad] customs and traditions on which one is brought up from a tender age, so much so that they become part of their very being. Inasmuch as one should not become prisoner to one's own spiritual climate, they should not be held hostage to the surrounding spiritual climate. Consequently, freeing oneself from this form of captivity is the type of immigration that should be gleaned from the second meaning, i.e. that which has been talked about in the hadith.

Man may become used to certain norms of personal habits or conduct as a result of the influence of social custom. He may become so attached to what he acquired from society that the acquired habits become part and parcel of his personality.

Let us, for example, take smoking as a habit of a personal choice. Although the dangers of smoking to one's health are well known, yet when some people become ill as a result and are advised by their doctor to kick the habit, they find it difficult to do so, because they got addicted on it and that giving it up would exasperate the situation. Off course, this is some sort of idle talk. Nevertheless, "The immigrant is he who has turned his back (hajara) to committing that which is vile". That is, a real person is he who could give up that which they got used to doing, including smoking.

The late Ayatollah Hujjat, May God elevate his station, could be described as a chain smoker. When he fell ill and was taken to hospital in Tehran, the doctors advised him to quit smoking because he was diagnosed with chest infection and continuing smoking would complicate matters for him. He jokingly remarked, "I need my chest for smoking. If I stop smoking what need will there be for a chest!?" He enquired, "Is it true that smoking is bad for my health?" The doctors answered him in the affirmative. He then said that he would never smoke again. Thus, in a word, he turned his back to a habit of almost a

lifetime.

It has been reported that al-Ma'moun [the Abbasid Caliph] was suffering from the habit of devouring dust. Conventional remedies were doomed to failure. In a gathering, people were talking about al-Ma'moun's habit and how he could not give it up. Among those present was a dervish who shouted that he had the remedy for al-Ma'moun's habit. The people turned their eyes in his direction and asked him as to what could this magic potion be. He answered, "A firm will of the sort kings are capable of." When the story of the dervish reached al-Ma'moun, he said that the man was right and took a decision to give the habit up completely and forthwith.

Therefore, it is incumbent on man not to become a hostage to any [bad] habit. It is regrettable to say that this is more widespread among women. They cling vehemently, i.e. more so than men, to social customs relating to ceremonies of marriage and memorial services. Whenever they are told off, in that it is not right, they, without any hesitation, answer that they cannot trample social norms and practices. And when they are asked about the benefit that could be reaped from those norms and practices, they say that they just cannot abandon those social customs. This simply means blind following and submission to those customs and entails a lack of willpower and sheer enslavement. Man ought not acquiesce to these impositions.

Sensible people should subject their behavior and the positions they take to the judgment of their intellect and common sense. It is noteworthy, at this juncture, to point out that it is not right, of some people, to dismiss outright as irrelevant all social customs and therefore the necessity to rebel against them. This is a kind of extremist view. We do not reject all social customs; rather, some of them, i.e. those which go against the sensibility of the human mind and common sense.

Islam, therefore, looks upon immigration (hijra) as a fundamental pillar in the life of people, the objective of which is the revival and the shaping of man's character. The other aim is to combat one of the most salient factors which could thrust man into slavery, humiliation, and submission to the environment he lives in, or materialistic or abstract things he becomes used to doing.

It is not expected of man to become a slave to the environment in which he was born and brought up. It is incumbent on him, instead, to preserve his integrity, freedom and independence. In so doing, he would ensure that he would never become a slave to immoral practices and be shackled to bad social norms. That is, "The immigrant is he who has turned his back (hajara) to committing that which is vile". And immigration means breaking clean with all the unsavory things that surrounds man, worldly or non-figurative. Thus, immigration is an important educational tool in molding man's personality.

## Jihad

Jihad means struggle (or battling with someone). However, the other definition of jihad is that of doing battle with one's tempting self. In as much as man should not fall under the sway of his own

environment, he should not surrender to the impediments and difficulties, found in such an environment as a matter of course, which may encounter him in his life. Man has been created with a built-in mechanism to deal with these barriers and overcome them to reach maturity and perfection.

The Holy Qur'an says:

***"He who forsakes his home in the cause of God, finds in the earth many a refuge, wide and spacious..." (4: 100) [3](#)***

However, in the same verse, the above-quoted statement is immediately followed by this one:

***"Should he die as a refugee from home for God and His Messenger, his reward becomes due and sure with God: And God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful." (4: 100).***

The Holy Qur'an's approach to this subject is unique, in that it talks, in verse 98 of the same Chapter, i.e. just three verses ahead of the aforesaid verse, about those who were deemed weak (mustadh'afeen):

***"When angels take the souls of those who die in sin against their souls. They say: In what (plight) were ye? They reply: Weak and oppressed were we in the earth. They say: Was not the earth of Allah spacious enough for you to move yourselves away (from evil)?" (4:97).***

This discusses, in a dialogue mode, the pretexts of those who went astray of the path of right and guidance by condoning the status quo, i.e. of staying in the climate of injustice and vice.[4](#)

When the angels of death come to take their souls away, they find out that their records have turned black with the vile deeds and when they ask such people as why their balance sheets are full of debits, they reply, "Weak and oppressed were we in the earth." That is, they were living in conditions conducive to misconduct and since they were deemed weak, they could not do anything to alleviate their situations. The angles' reply comes in no time, "Was not the earth of Allah spacious enough for you to move yourselves away (from evil)?"

This sort of excuse given by those people may, for a good reason, be accepted from trees whose environment became polluted, so much so that their leaves withered away and eventually died, having no choice of moving away since they were deep rooted. However, this cannot be accepted from man.

Even animals do not entertain such excuses. There are great numbers of migrating animals, such as birds, that got used to moving away from their natural habitat when the weather changes. There are some species of fish which migrate twice a year pursuant to the change of climate, i.e. from summer to winter and vice versa, covering thousands of kilometers in the process. Locust is yet another example of migrating animals. So, animals refuse to get bogged down in their habitat, taking to migration instead.

Thus, it is repugnant of man to give as pretext the unbecoming surroundings to justify his staying in the mire and falling prey to the temptations and immoral practices that engulf him, blaming the sins he has

committed on the environment he has become part of, rather than himself.

This goes against the divine logic "He who forsakes his home in the cause of God, finds in the earth many a refuge, wide and spacious..." (4:100). That is, you can get to the land where you would be able to fight back (or wage jihad) against the enemies of God in the same way they fight you to deny your beliefs and principles. You should fight back against the enemy's beliefs and principles; in other words, you engage them in struggle (or jihad).

The other definition or interpretation for the concept of jihad is governed by the same principle of struggle. The difference being that you are battling with your tempting self, i.e. the enemy within. Some people have become compulsive liars and when you take issue with them as to why they do it, they say: Is there anyone who does not lie? No doubt, man can, sometimes, be driven to lying. Among other examples are those who you turn to and ask them to lower their gaze, i.e. not to look at that which God has ordained haraam (unlawful). They reply in astonishment, "Can any person not do that?"

You counsel another person among the faithful to set their hearts and minds towards God in prayer, and not to be distracted by mundane issues. They reply that it is impossible. And yet, should this appeal have been far-fetched, God would have not ordained it. The problem is that some people have become used to paying lip service to some devotional acts, especially prayer, not even trying to concentrate on the job in hand, and do away with inattention, while they are in audience with their Creator. If they had tried they would have said their prayer in complete submission, humility and attention.

Provided that you remain watchful for your own self and battle with it against its temptations, you should be in control of your intellectual capacity and conscience. Imagination is a transient state of mind and thus is not capable of overcoming your intellect, if you did not want that and make it possible.

Should you be in control, you would be able to restrain your mental power and prevent it from becoming victim to lack of concentration. Why should man become a slave to others while God has created him free from any bondage to any one? God has endowed man with power, freedom and independence. Consequently, if he so desires, he would be able to set himself free from everything; rather, it is in his power to control everything. Yet, this requires genuine willpower and jihad (struggle), not least with the enemy within, i.e. one's own self, which is inclined to beautify committing what is evil. It requires going against one's love for comfort, good living and the enslavement to lust. He who is not prepared to engage in such a struggle is not worthy of acceptance and respect.

God has bestowed on man the gift of reason. Thus, it is incumbent on him to choose one of two paths – either battling with his tempting self, which is often inclined to lure you to do what is vile, and put it under the control of your intellect, and this is the road of perfection and advancement. The second alternative is giving up that struggle in return for leaving the tempting soul rule supreme where the result would inevitably be that you become subservient to its own whims. This is the road that leads to the lowest point of the low. If you do not keep it preoccupied, it will engage you and keep you on your toes and at

its service.

What was the philosophy of Imam Ali's (zuhd) asceticism (or indifference to worldly things)? It revolves around activating the power of freedom man enjoys and controlling his ego. Imam Ali (a.s) hated to be defeated in combat by external foes, such as Amr bin Wid and Marhab. Similarly, he hated to give in to the enemy within, i.e. his own ego and inclinations. That is, he did not want his desires to achieve a victory over him.

It is related that one day the Imam (a.s.) was going through a marketplace when he passed a butcher's shop. The butcher said to him that he had fresh meat that day and pressed him to buy some of it. The Imam answered that he did not have money on him then. The butcher said that he would sell him the meat on credit. The Imam said, "Rather, I would say to my stomach to be patient. And if I cannot do that to my stomach, I would rather ask you to be patient until I got the money. Nevertheless, I shall say to my stomach to be patient." Speaking of his philosophy of asceticism (zuhd), he had this to say, "If I wanted, I would have found the way to enjoying the best produce of honey, wheat, and linen."

Thus, Ali (a.s.) could, if he wanted, acquire the best of this world's enjoyments, for he knew the way to them, and yet he did not want to. Why? This is his answer to this question, "How preposterous! I am not going to let my inclination win over my resoluteness." He then turned his attention to the life of this world and addressed it, thus, "O Life of this World! Leave me alone. I have given you free rein. I have managed to extricate myself from your clutches and slip away from your snares."<sup>5</sup>

[This is an epilogue to the lecture, i.e. going back to telling part of the story of the Karbala tragedy – the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (a.s.)]:

The eleventh of Muharram, 61 AH. [Circa 680 CE.] was one of the worst days that the Progeny of the Prophet (a.s.) had witnessed. Examining the tragedy of Karbala from its both ends, i.e. the shining side that is full of vivid images of bravery, patience and sacrifice in the cause of God and the dark side that teems with the ugliest imagery of treachery, vileness, and crime, the implications of the dialogue between God and the angels when He was informing them of Adam's creation, would become manifestly clear,

***"Behold, thy Lord said to the angels; I will create a vicegerent on earth. They said: Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? Whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)? He said: I know what ye know not." (2:30).***

All that which the angels saw of the nature of man and his ability to do mischief, his capacity for going astray and arrogance, was demonstrated at the battle of Karbala. And yet, alongside that evil, the epitomes of virtue and sublimity were also established. The angels did not see these luminous aspects of man, when God Almighty addressed them, thus, "I know what ye know not."

Indeed, Karbala was a strange battleground for trials. The criminals committed the most heinous crimes.

Among those was the act of violence perpetrated against children and young people, beheading them and tearing their corpses to pieces before the eyes of their mothers. Those who were massacred in this way on that day in Karbala were eight, three youth and five children. Among those eight victims was Abdullah bin al-Hussain, who was still an infant. He was martyred in front of the tent that housed the members of al-Hussain's family.

It has been reported by the historians of wars that Imam Hussain called on his sister, Zeinab and said to her, "Bring me my infant baby to bid him farewell." As al-Hussain was taking the baby in his arms, cuddling it, Ibn Sa'ad shot him with an arrow that was embedded in his neck, slaying him.

Al-Qassim, son of Imam al-Hassan (a.s.) was another of the Karbala martyrs, whose killing, in that gruesome way, was witnessed by his mother. As for Laila, the mother of Ali al-Akbar, [the eldest son of Imam Hussain (a.s.)], she was not present on that day, despite the fact that there have been reports confirming her presence.

Awn bin Abdulla bin Ja'far was another martyr who was killed in the same way. His mother, Zeinab, [daughter of Imam Ali (a.s.)], witnessed his killing.<sup>6</sup> Zeinab had demonstrated a noble character and sublime upbringing, in that historians are almost unanimous in confirming that she did not mention anything about her son, be it before or after his martyrdom, as she must have been aware of what was going to happen to her brother, Imam Hussain (a.s.). So, she treated the sacrifice of her son as a small contribution towards defending her brother and the principles he stood for. This self-denial was evident when she came out of her tent in the wake of the martyrdom of her nephew, Ali al-Akbar, lamenting his death.

Another of the martyrs of Karbala was a boy, aged ten. Historiographers have it that the boy came out of his tent disorientated after the martyrdom of Imam Hussain. He was distraught because the events, which were unfolding before his eyes, overwhelmed him. He was spotted by one of the enemy camp who descended upon him, beheaded him and snatched two earrings he was wearing. This happened in the presence of his mother, who went out to look for him.

Another young boy met his death that day in a shocking manner. It was Abdullah bin Imam al-Hassan (a.s.), who was around ten years old. It is said that when his father died he was either still in his mother's womb or a suckling sibling. He was brought up by his uncle, Imam Hussain (a.s.). That is why there was a strong bond between uncle and nephew.

Although Imam Hussain ordered members of his family not to venture out of their tents, yet he could not bear staying put after his uncle fell to the ground having been fatally wounded in the battle. He broke free from her aunt's hands, Zeinab, who was trying to restrain him, and ran towards his uncle, shouting, "By God! I am not going to part with my uncle." Having reached the place where his uncle fell, he threw himself on his uncle's chest. Imam Hussain (a.s.) showed utmost forbearance and hugged the boy. In the meantime, a soldier of the enemy's camp was about to drive his sword into the body of Imam

Hussain when the boy yelled at him, saying, “O son of the evil one! Are you killing my uncle?” He then raised his arm to prevent the sword blow from reaching the body of his uncle. The full force of the blow fell on his arm, severing it. The boy shouted, “O Uncle! Help!” [While still lying, suffering from his wounds], the Imam embraced his nephew tighter, saying to him, “O my nephew! Show patience for what has befallen you. God will soon unite you with your pure fathers and forefathers – The Messenger of God, Ali, Hamza, Ja’far and al-Hassan.”

[It is customary to conclude lectures, such as this one, given to big gatherings, with the following prayer (supplication)]:

O God! Fill our hearts up with the light of faith. Fill them up with Your love and the love of your friends. O God! Increase our faith and make our hearts fast set on Your religion. O God! Grant the sick among the faithful a speedy recovery and shower our dead with Your forgiveness and mercy. O God! Accept our works and the works of those who seek, with effort and/or money, to hold commemorative assemblies for the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (a.s.) and glorify Your worship and propagate His injunctions. O God! Out of Your Grace, give us of the sustenance of this world and the next. There is neither power nor refuge except with God Almighty. And may peace be with Muhammad and his Pure Progeny.

1. The type of moving around that is not commendable is that the person wanders aimlessly about just to be aloof from people, with the intention of retiring to remote areas and mountains for exclusive “worship”.

In Al-Hur al-Amili’s *Wasa’il ush-Shia*, vol, 11, p. 10, it has been reported that Othman bin Madh’oun approached the Prophet and expressed a wish to retire to the mountains. The Prophet said to him, “O Othman! Do not do it, the journeying of members of my ummah (community) is jihad. ”

Also, in Sheikh an-Nouri’s *Mustadrakul Wasa’il*, vol. 2, p.245 (lithograph) it is related that a man took to a mountain to retire for worship. His family brought him to the Messenger of God (s.a.w.), [complaining of his behaviour]. The Prophet discouraged him from so doing, and said, “If a believer shows resilience and perseverance in jihad for only one day, it is more meritorious for him than a forty-year worship”.

2. However, if we examine his statement from a spiritual perspective, we would find out that he was aspiring to shake off the yoke of materialism in order to roam in the noble world of spiritualism. In the metaphor, he likened the materialistic world to Alexander’s prison and the sublime spiritual life to the kingdom of Solomon.

3. “Finds in the earth many a refuge, wide and spacious” means that the earth is vast, that is, it is not confined to the vicinity where the person lives. “Muragham”, which came in the context of the verse, means fine dust or sand. “Dipping one’s nose in the dust or the like” is a metaphor for the voluntary practice in prayer, as an expression of humility before God.

4. The power of the expression/argument in this verse lies in the fact that it does not only set out to demolish the reasons “those who were deemed weak in the land” had put forward for going astray, i.e. the general decadence of society, but gives the alternative – the way out – to break free from the status quo. That is, commending the act of immigration in the cause of God, in that the immigrant’s reward would come from God; it also sets out the benefits arising from taking to immigration (hijra). That is, the immigrant would find in the land more space to observe one’s acts of worship.

5. The text is part of the letter Imam Ali (a.s.) sent to his governor of Basrah, Othman bin Hanif. (Vol. 4, p. 590, Darul Andulus, Beirut, as noted by Sheikh Muhammad Abdah). You may also look it up in *Nahjul Balagha*, Beirut new edition, Catalogued by Dr. Subhi as-Saleh, Letter No. 45.

6. Abdullah bin Ja’far, Zainab’s husband, had two sons who were martyred in the Battle of Karbala. One was Awn, who was

Zainab's son and the second was by another wife.

## Lecture Three

### *In the Name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful*

Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds, the Creator of all beings, and may peace be with the servant of God, His Messenger, friend, the chosen one, the trustee of His secret and the transmitter of His Message, our lord and prophet, Muhammad and his pure and infallible progeny.

I seek refuge in God from the reviled Satan,

***“He forsakes his home in the cause of God, finds in the earth many a refuge, wide and spacious: Should he die as a refugee from home for God and His Messenger, his reward becomes due and sure with God: And God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.” (4/100). who***

Among the subjects that the Holy Qur'an paid attention to, as did Islamic jurisprudence, is the question of immigration (hijra). In the opinion of the majority of us, hijra revolves around a special historical incident that took place in the early days of Islam. That event was the migration of the Great Messenger (s.a.w.) and his companions from Mecca to Medina. That event marked the Hijri calendar [For those who want to have some idea of the date according to the Western dating system, a rough guide is to add some 620 years to the Islamic date.].

No doubt this event is very significant because it represents a milestone in the history and development of Islam. However, is the importance of hijra limited to this event?

Do all the references made in the Holy Qur'an to hijra and deeming the muhajirs (migrants) in rank on a par with the mujahideen (fighters), such as ***“Those who believe, and emigrate, and fight for the Faith, in the cause of Allah..” (8:74)***, belong to that particular historical event and that there is left no other signification to be inferred after that event? Is this really the situation with hijra, or is it not, in common with belief and jihad, governed by any particular time or place?

No doubt, there is no way the meaning of hijra (immigration), like jihad and belief, can be confined to what happened in the early days of Islam.

Whatever meaning was attached to hijra in those days, and in the same measure was true of jihad, makes both general and constant rulings. That is, they are not the exclusive preserve of a particular time or place.

Imam Ali (a.s.) has discussed this topic in Nahjul Balagha (The Path of Eloquence). [A collection of his

sermons, letters, and axioms] and said, “Hijra is commensurate with its first meaning.” (al-hijra qa’ima ala haddihal awwal),<sup>1</sup> meaning that hijra is not restricted to a particular time or place. And as the Prophet (s.a.w.) found it necessary to emigrate from Mecca to Medina, his followers must do the same, should circumstances make it necessary for them to emigrate. Our reading of Imam Ali’s statement is that we cannot argue that there are no practical expressions for hijra post the Prophet era.

Now, let us dwell on the definition and significance of hijra. As we have already mentioned, immigration means moving away from home, family and friends in order to preserve one’s faith. What is self-evident is that since this is the definition of the concept, you cannot restrict it to a particular time or space.

This is the Islamic standpoint of hijra. Taking the cue from the definition, it becomes obligatory on the person to flee his place of abode where they may endanger their religious life if they stayed. So, if you are presented with one of two alternatives, in that you either lose your faith, or find somewhere else to practice it freely, Islam obligates his followers to embark on hijra to protect their religion.

In the Holy Qur’an, there is a verse that discusses ‘force majeure’, [or power that cannot be acted or fought against]. Many among our people, who have grown accustomed to doing what is vile, seem to cite this principle as an excuse for their going astray and being overwhelmed by social custom. That is, even though some social norms go against the grain of religion. So, when you take issue with someone and ask them why they do not seem embarrassed by joining in parties where, for example, alcohol is being served and consumed, an act that is unlawful (haraam), their answer comes ready, “Society’s customs push us to do so. There is nothing we can do. Society is afflicted with corruption and deviant practices.”

Indeed, the pretext of “force majeure” has become a scapegoat for many sinners. Islam rejects these reasons, on the whole and in detail. Islam outlines for us clearly defined positions vis-à-vis corrupt societies, making it a religious duty of the Muslim to do his level best to reverse the decadence and degeneration of society and rehabilitate its members to live a moral life in accordance with the path and ideals that have been mapped out by Islam. Nevertheless, should it prove that we are facing an uphill struggle, in that there is no hope in making the profligate society in which we live mend its ways, that we reached a conclusion that our present and future generation might be adversely affected, Islam offers us a way out – immigration to some other place where we can safeguard our religion.

It is noteworthy that immigration could prove sufficient if one moves out from one’s usual place of abode to some other neighborhood. That is, you do need to contemplate moving out from your own hometown or homeland, for that matter. This is particularly true of metropolises like Tehran, for example, where you can find neighborhoods where children can be brought up in an Islamic climate. This is in contrast to other areas within the same city where you can hardly come across any hint of Islamic life. Families who moved houses to such districts would be confronted with unsavory scenes, let alone the absence of Islamic institutions, such as mosques and seminaries.

It is quite possible that such unbecoming environments might not negatively influence the adult population among us, especially those who have been brought up in Islamic climates and who have become immune to such influences. Nevertheless, what would the consequences for young children be? Those children will open their eyes on climates plagued with deviation and corruption. So, there is a risk that such children will not emerge true young Muslims.

Here, there is a question that begs for an answer. What is the religious duty vis-à-vis this issue? The answer is that in the beginning every effort should be made towards turning those societies into Muslim ones. For example, if there was no mosque in that neighborhood, a real effort should be made to build one. However, the mosque alone is not an end in itself. It should be a hub for religious activity, i.e. in the form of acts of worship, giving lectures, and holding preaching sessions. Whoever discharged their duty in this regard, they will be deemed among the propagators of Islam. However, if we cannot succeed in our mission, what should our religious duty be? At this juncture, Islam orders us to run away from that society that has become accustomed to immoral practices, for we might get caught up in the state of things as they are, if not become part of it. The Qur'anic logic rejects seeing us remorseful, by hiding under the umbrella of 'force majeure', for losing our religion. This has been made manifestly clear by this Qur'anic verse:

***“When angels take the souls of those who die in sin against their souls. They say: In what (plight) were ye? They reply: Weak and oppressed were we in the earth. They say: Was it not Allah’s earth spacious enough for you to move yourselves away (from evil)?” (4:97).***

The holy verse talks about that group of people, whose records the angel found appalling, not least by doing themselves injustice, asking them: What has happened to you? Why did the records of your deeds become so disgraceful? Since they have nothing of substance to come up with, they resort to the same old excuses: “we were deemed weak in the land”.

They go on to say, “We were living in corrupt societies, where it was not possible for us to know about pristine Islam and what it stands for; we lacked knowledge; there were no teachers of Islam we could turn to,” The angelic answer comes crisp and clear, “Was it not Allah’s earth spacious enough for you to move yourselves away (from evil)?”

You have yourself only to blame, not least for condoning those corrupt climates. Not all the corners of the world were as bad as the environments you allowed yourselves to be hostage to. There were places that were conducive to that which is good and commendable. So, why did not you emigrate to them?

Just to reiterate that Islam attaches great importance to immigration, in the sense of abandoning family and homeland, with a view to preserving one’s religion and practicing it in freedom. According to this meaning, immigration is a constant law, in that it is not limited to a particular time or place and that it is not confined to the immigrants of the early Islamic era.

However, it seems that some people have gone to extremes in interpreting the meaning and the concept

of hijra (immigration) as is mentioned in the above–quoted verse. They argue that the verse has it, “Should he die as a refugee from home for God and His Messenger”. That is, while the verse mentions the point where the hijra takes place, it does not mention the destination where the immigrant intends to go, mentioning instead “God and His Messenger”. They further maintain that the latter is an abstract destination and not material, i.e. it is in the mind and the conscience.

Thus, they conclude that the significance of the word entails that this type of hijra is a notional one in which man exerts himself towards attaining that which is sublime and which brings him closer to God; in other words, it is a journey towards God that does not require actual physical travel away from family and homeland. That is, man could make this journey from the coziness of his home through striving with his tempting self to reaching perfection, not least by keeping up prayer, fast, supplication, and other forms of worship that are capable of bringing him closer to his Creator.

Yet, when the exponents of this brand of interpretation are asked as to the objective of such a journey, they say God and his proximity, for whose purpose man does battle with his own self and tries to cultivate his spiritual life in order to be nearer to God. They, therefore, maintain that there is no need to cover the distances, leaving behind family and home, as, to their mind, the home mentioned in the verse is not the real home; rather, a figurative one, i.e. the abode of the soul and the boundaries of the ego.

To sum up, their interpretation of the verse can be put thus: Whoever breaks free from the bondage of his own inclinations and emigrates to God, his reward would come from Him. This, of course, is a misconception and an erroneous reading of the verse.

In this verse, the Holy Qur’an talks about the two types of hijra (immigration). Here, there is an example of the inimitable style of the Qur’an; the home (house) which the Qur’an mentions in the verse is the physical structure we all know. And yet, it wants to say to us: O you who emigrate from your home! Be it from one neighborhood to another, from one hometown to another, or from one homeland to another, let it be known to you that your objective (final destination) should be God alone. Otherwise, your immigration will not be of any value, even if you travel from one end of the globe to the other, and sacrifice everything in the process, i.e. your home, family and worldly possessions, and were contented with poverty instead.

This is the Qur’anic logic that is corroborated by the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) in this hadith, “Who intended his immigration for God and His Messenger, then it would be deemed so. And yet, whoever embarked on immigration, seeking a financial benefit or a [heart of a] woman he wanted to win, his immigration would be judged by the intended end.”<sup>2</sup>

It looks as though the Prophet (s.a.w.) wanted to say, “I welcome the immigrant who had a covenant with God that what he did was for His sake. Physical migration of a group of people to the target destination, i.e. Medina, shorn of good and pure intentions that their migration was in His Cause alone, is worthless.” This is true of the concept of jihad, for it is not sufficient for man to brandish his sword and

fight the enemies of God. This should go hand in hand with the intent and purpose of seeking the pleasure of God and in His Cause.

It is possible that you find, in the ranks of Muslims, a combatant who shows unparalleled zeal in the battle, and yet if you divulge his secret you would find that his real purpose behind showing that fervor was driven by self-aggrandizement; he sought to gain personal fame, in that he aspired for his picture to be circulated and history sings his praise. Another example is that of him who takes part in the war effort in the hope that they do not get killed, only to enjoy the materialistic privileges, and thus they would score victory on both the tracks, i.e. that of this life and the hereafter.

All these appearances do not count as jihad in the cause of God. Of course, man could win in this world by virtue of jihad, provided that his ultimate end is not securing a place in it.

In one of the battles, some companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.) commended the effort of one of the combatants, called Qazman, i.e. how good, brave and sincere he was. The Prophet did not pay attention to such commendations. He used to say, "He is among the inmates of hellfire." When the news of his death in the battle came to the Prophet, he remarked, "God does whatever He wills."

Another version of the story of how he was killed reached the prophet. It was reported that he committed suicide. The Prophet said, "I am the Messenger of God!" This is how the story was told: He fought very valiantly, so much so that he killed some seven people among the infidels. Having sustained serious injuries, he managed to stagger as far as the neighborhood of Bani Dhafar.

The Muslims spoke good of his "heroism" and that he would be rewarded. He retorted: I fought only in pursuit of personal fame and in defense of the honor and pride of my kinsmen. Had it not been for that, I would have never joined in the battle. Having, experienced severe pain due to his serious wounds, he reached out for his arrow kit, pulled an arrow and killed himself with it.<sup>3</sup>

After the people heard about the fate of Qazman, they realized why the Prophet was not impressed by all the reports about his heroism in the battle. This should reinforce the true meaning of jihad, i.e. it has to be purely in the cause of God. By the same token, immigration (hijra) has to be so. In other words, immigration, in the sense of physically removing oneself from their roots and moving away, should go hand in hand with the intention of moving towards God to achieve His pleasure and be closer to Him. Islam encourages both types of hijra, and the Holy Qur'an mentions them both,

***"Should he die as a refugee from home for God and His Messenger"***

This verse talks about immigration on two levels, one in body and the other in spirit. The immigrant travels in body from one place to the other, while his spirit departs from the phase of egotism to the phase of sincere loyalty to God Almighty. A refugee of this type is the one whom God has promised with reward, "His reward becomes due and sure with God." How profound this description is! God means that the reward of this refugee is far greater than that which the intellect can comprehend; it is far greater

than words can explain.

In one of the commentaries on this particular verse, it has been said that a good example of the immigrant meant by the verse is a theology student who leaves behind family and friends and travels to a new place in pursuit of Islamic knowledge and scholarship. The aim of this theology trainee is to attain new levels of learning, so that he becomes better equipped to impart religious knowledge, revive the faith and spread the Word of God, doing away with personal gain, fame, and looking down on others. The said student is deemed an immigrant in the cause of God, so long as his objective behind travel was God, and for the sake of meeting the needs of Islam and Muslims.

That said, this is not confined to theology students; rather, it covers the students in other fields, such as medicine and engineering, provided the aim is discharging one's religious duty, i.e. by way of *wajibun kifa'ie* (A collective obligation imposed on the Muslim community, and yet if any of its members discharged it, other Muslims become absolved from the responsibility).

For example, a person moves out of his homeland to some other foreign country to train to become a physician out of his feeling the need of society for Muslim doctors and also out of a sense of duty (*wajibun kifa'ie*). This student is deemed an immigrant in the cause of God, provided that earning His pleasure was his intention, and not worldly gains of this sort or the other, "Should he die as a refugee from home for God and His Messenger, his reward becomes due and sure with God." So, should they meet their death while in the host town/country, their reward would come from God, and their rank would be close to that of *mujahideen* (fighters).

As we have already mentioned, the Holy Qur'an speaks about the two types of immigration in the same breath. Now, let us pose this question: When would the person qualify for both the descriptions, i.e. an immigrant and a *mujahid* at the same time? The answer to this question is that the description is true of the person who takes to immigration in the way of God and whose aim is to come to the rescue of the faith and the spiritual life of society. Thus, such a person would meet the criteria set in this Qur'anic verse,

***"Should he die as a refugee from home for God and His Messenger, his reward becomes due and sure with God."***

By the same token such a person would be covered by all the Qur'anic verses that talk about *jihad*, such as:

***"Allah hath purchased of the believers their persons and their goods; for theirs (in return) is the Garden (of Paradise): They fight in His Cause, and slay and get slain: A promise binding on Him in Truth, through the Torah, the Gospel, and the Qur'an: And who is more faithful to his covenant than Allah." (9/111).***

Imam Hussain (a.s.) is the best of examples of a *muhajir* (immigrant)/*mujahid* (fighter), in that he moved

away from his hometown and waged genuine jihad in the cause of God, i.e. in defense of Islam not to undergo deviation and the faith of the Islamic umma (community), lest it should be lost. Moses, son of Imran (a.s.), was another immigrant in the cause of God for he left his country, Egypt, and headed for Medyen. The same goes for Abraham, ***“He said: I will go to my Lord! He will surely guide me!”*** (37/99). He left his homeland of his own accord. However, what puts Imam Hussain (a.s.) in a different league is that in his immigration, he was both an immigrant and a mujahid (fighter).

The immigrants of the early days of Islam were immigrants per se. That is, before the Divine order of jihad was issued, they were only immigrants. However, after the Divine instruction, the description of “mujahid – fighter” was applied to those of them who took part in jihad.

In a dream, the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) said to his grandson, al-Hussain (a.s.) that God has promised him with a rank that was not going to be achieved only with martyrdom by way of getting slain in His cause”.

En route from Mecca [in present day Saudi Arabia] to Karbala [in Iraq], Imam Hussain [and members of his family and some companions] spent twenty-three days travelling. Before his departure from Mecca, he gave a sermon to the people mentioning in it his immigration and jihad and said, “The similitude of the inevitability of man’s death is that of a necklace worn by a young woman. I therefore yearn to have reunion with my predecessors in the same way Jacob was yearning to be united with [his son] Joseph.”

What the lord of the free wanted to say is that he did not fear death and getting martyred in the cause of God and His religion, and that faith is a source of pride for man in as much as the necklace that adorns a woman’s neck, and that he could not wait to join his predecessors.

The Imam went on to tell them about how he was going to be martyred, “It is better to meet my death, as I have a feeling that I will be torn to pieces by the desert beasts between Nawawees and Karbala.” The Imam (a.s.) moved to another topic to talk about how he, and members of his household had been immersed in God’s love and said, “Seeking our, i.e. the Progeny of the Prophet’s, pleasure is seeking the Pleasure of God.

We forbear His affliction, only to reward us with the recompense of the forbearing. What He loved we love, what He allotted to us, we accepted. Should He have chosen for us safety, we would love it. Yet, should He have afflicted us with hardships and illness, we would accept.

Should He have chosen for us to keep silent, we would oblige. Should He have wanted for us to talk, we would oblige. Should He have chosen for us stillness, we would oblige, and yet, should He have decreed that we should move around, we would oblige.”

After that, he declared that he was intent on emigrating in the way of God, calling on the people to join him, if they had resolved that they were doing it for God, provided that they were prepared for jihad and sacrificing their blood for His cause, “Those of you who have reached a conclusion that they are going to

sacrifice themselves for our cause, making their mind up that they will reunite with God, let them join us, as I am determined to set forth tomorrow morning, God willing!”

In the beginning huge crowds accompanied the convoy of Imam Hussain (a.s.), among whom some who were still reluctant to accept the statement of the Imam about what would be in store for him and his companions, and that there was still hope that they would scrape through.

On the way through his journey, other groups of people joined him. As he had made it clear to everyone that whoever chose to accompany him in his fateful journey should be ready for the ultimate sacrifice and the hope to meet with one's Lord, he did not want in his company any of the fainthearted, who were not ready for martyrdom.

Accordingly, he used to remind everybody who was with him, on different occasions and stages of the journey, as to the gigantic task ahead. This was with the aim of winnowing the wheat from the chaff, giving the chance for those who were not up to the responsibility to melt away. In so doing, the Imam had wanted to ensure that those who would remain with him to the end were those whose hearts God had tried with true faith, so much so that they submit to His Will, come what may.

When it reached the crunch, none stuck it out with him other than a band of loyal companions among the true believers, to whose bravery and integrity he had these words of praise, “I do not know of any companions who are more superior to mine.”

This testimony of the Imam means that he was trying to say to his companions: If I were given an option to choose between you and the companions of the Prophet in the battle of Badr, I would have chosen you over them. Were I given a choice between you and the companions of Ali in the battle of Siffeen, I would have preferred you to them. You are the lords, and the crowns over the heads, of all martyrs.

On the eve of the tenth of Muharram [62 AH, 680 CE] Imam Hussain (a.s.) gave permission to his companions to leave him under the cover of darkness, saying to them, “I think our appointment with those (the enemy) is tomorrow. So, I give you leave to go away, having no liability on you. Darkness is spreading and engulfing you; so, why do you not make use of it and slip away.

And let each one of you take a man of my household with them. May God compensate you with the best of rewards. Scatter among the masses and in the towns. Indeed, the enemy is after me; thus, if they were successful in getting me, they would forget about you. Bring to mind the killing of Muslim [bin Aqeel, his cousin, and emissary to Kufa], which would be sufficient. Please leave.”

This was the last test the Imam put the loyalty and truthfulness of his companions through. He absolved them from the covenant of allegiance they made with him; he set them free from their religious obligation, in that it was incumbent on them to be on his side in the war.

However, they all refused to accede to his request, insisting that they preferred to die defending him.

The first to declare that position was his brother al-Abbas, who said, “May God let us not ever witness that!” These were reassuring words for Imam Hussain for they demonstrated the fact that they shared his aim, vision, belief and determination. At that juncture, Imam Hussain (a.s.), once again made clear to them as to what he was expecting to happen come tomorrow, “Tomorrow, I will be killed, so will you. No one will be spared, even al-Qassim and Abdullah, the infant.”

On the tenth of Muharram, Imam Hussain (a.s.) awarded his comrades in arms medals and honor whose memory would not go away. In the dying moments of the battle of Karbala and the last throws of his life, after almost all male members of his family alongside his companions were martyred, the Imam stood, amid the multitudes of the enemy, turning his eyes around, only to see that there was neither a supporter nor a helper, apart from the grisly sight of dead bodies strewn all over the battlefield. At that point in time, he was reported as saying something like this: I do not see on this ground a living person except those mutilated bodies, in reference to the dead bodies of his companions.

Thus, the Imam considered those dead bodies the truly living beings that were worthy of his cry for help, thus, “O heroes of Safa! And knights of war! Rise from your sleep, O sons of the honorable ones! Fend off the thugs from encroaching upon the noble ladies among the Progeny of the Prophet.” That cry for help was made after the enemy attacked and ransacked the tents where members of Imam Hussain’s family, mostly women, were sheltering. And yet, the Imam responded to his own call for help and apologized for them on their behalf, “How could they answer, when they were turned into headless corpses.”

- [1.](#) Nahjul Balagha, Beirut new revised edition, catalogued by Dr. Subhi as-Saleh, Sermon No. 189.
- [2.](#) al-Bukhari Authentic Compendia of Hadith, p.22, vol. 1.
- [3.](#) Ibn Hisham’s Prophetic Biography, vol. 2, p. 88.

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