The logic of expressing “Salaam” unto Imam al-Husayn

Muhammad-Reza Fakhr-Rohani

Associate Professor of University of Qum

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It is a simple but highly recommended ritual to express "salaam" on several occasions. One such occasion is after drinking water. Granted that the Umayyads and many ‘Abbasid rulers tried to prevent people from going on pilgrimage to the tomb of Imam al-Husayn at Karbala, Iraq, the Infallible Imams did their best to encourage people to go on pilgrimage and express their ardent feelings and enact the pilgrimage rituals by the tomb of Imam al-Husayn. Hence, a formulaic sentence that expresses such sincere feelings in

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such prayer-like "ziarat-texts" is as "May salaam be bestowed upon/ unto you, O Aba ‘Abd Allah!".

This salaam-expressing formulaic sentence that can be pronounced in almost any situation is readily convenient in that it requires no other accompanying ritual. With this instruction that is available in a number of ziarat-performing instructions issued and taught by the sixth Infallible Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq, the memory of Imam al-Husayn has since got fixed for good and all in the historical memory of the Muslim community. There are at least two situations wherein such a formulaic sentence is recommended to be pronounce, namely, when a believer wishes to express her or his devotion to Imam al-Husayn, and after each and every instance of drinking water. By issuing such a convenient instruction, Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq has successfully accomplished the eternalization of the memory of Imam al-Husayn. It follows that so long as anybody desires to pay homage to Imam al-Husayn, and more importantly, so long as anybody needs water, whether for survival or for quenching one's thirst, the memory of Imam al-Husayn gets renewed. Certainly the tyrants who whimmed to put an end to commemorating and/or remembering Imam al-Husayn until the end of time could hardly imagine to receive such ban easy set-back.

Islamic sources indicate awe-inspiring rewards for remembering Imam al-Husayn, e.g., the rewards of performing hajj and ‘umrah and jihad. Yet, attaining such abundant rewards can be easily achieved by pronouncing "salaam" unto and in favor of Imam al-Husayn.

Viewed from this perspective, the act of expressing "salaam" unto Imam al-Husayn means much more than a means for obtaining the rewards indicated. Politically speaking, it is an act of renewing one's covenant with Imam al-Husayn, an act that guarantees the believer's felicity both in this world and in the hereafter.

There is another intriguing aspect. As a faithful person pronounces a "salaam" unto Imam al-Husayn, she or he would be entitled to receive a salaam back from Imam al-Husayn. This is because since answering a "salaam" is

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incumbent on the pardon who receives it, Imam al-Husayn certainly answers back the "salaams" he receives from his devotees and admirers. What a great honor for anybody to receive at least a "salaam" from Imam al-Husayn.

May we be reckoned amongst those who constantly receive the honor of pronouncing "salaam" unto Imam al-Husayn, and receive his graceful "salaams" back.

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