

First of Muharram
The beginning of the Muslim calendar

What is today?

What is the significance of today?

The majority of Muslims say, it is the "hijrah", the celebration of the emigration of Rasulullah saw from Mecca to Madinah. This occasion is marked as a public holiday in many Muslim countries, and Muslims celebrate in different ways. Some perform different adkhar, some recite the Quran, some recite Surah Yasin, others fast and yet others make sweets and serve special dishes, or spend the day in different ways - watching television, going to the mall, visiting friends or just simply staying at home to simply enjoy the free time.

The day goes by with various activities and different speeches.

When you look, do you learn from this day?

This is supposed to be the day that makes us think, reflect and contemplate. But where do we direct our thinking? What is the significance of today, and what should I ponder and contemplate on? By remembering today and the events which triggered this annual celebration, how do I learn from it? What is the lesson to be learnt, and how do I formulate my reflections so that it serves as a reminder which affects my life, my views, my vision of my life, my direction and what I'm thinking of?

Should I think about just myself? What about my neighbours, Muslim and non Muslim? What about society? What about my people? What about my ummah? What about mankind? Where are all these people in my life, my actions and my thoughts?

Historians query - what is the value of people or nations celebrating a day or an occasion which significance they do not comprehend? Some will claim that they know the significance of today, being the emigration of our beloved Prophet saw. But I want you to stop at this moment - we know the historical accounts of the emigration, but do we appreciate its magnitude?

Do we blindly commemorate an incident or situation which happened, and leave it at that? What is the value of the past if we do not learn from it? What is the value of a celebration if we do not grasp its meaning - are we just celebrating the past? How does the past impact our present? By right, this day should only be celebrated by the ones who were originally involved, the ones who made such significant achievements that it is marked on our calendars forevermore. But the original hijrah happened over 1400 years ago and those who made this historic journey are now long gone. Do we take pause to think: what is the value of us

celebrating something which we neither participated in, nor benefit from?

What is a celebration?

Any celebration only takes place after an achievement, the momentous triumph or accomplishment which gives rise to such celebration.

Some will be wondering: what do you want? I would like you to stop for a moment and think.

I would like you to think about the past and what happened.

I would like you to think about the present and ask yourself: what did I learn from my past, from my personal experiences, with family, society and the nation?

I would like you to think about where you are coming from and where you are going from here?

I would like you to think what your future is.

The people who originally emigrated did so for a purpose, a goal, and a cause. Their emigration was the pivotal point where strength conquered weakness. The weakness from within, the weakness of the status quo and the weakness from the opposition.

Why do we emigrate?

We do so to leave the hostility of our current environment and to generate a fresh environment which is healthy, just as the original emigrants emigrated to build the first Muslim nation on earth. It cost them a lot - their worldly belongings, their loves and their lives, their emotional attachments to the place they grew up and called home and their social and family ties. We are talking about everything that they possessed, but in comparison to the goal they were aiming for, even everything that they owned in this world was a small price to pay.

The goal was so high and precious that it made the price and sacrifice insignificant in comparison to the mission that lay ahead for them.

Hence I have to go back to you and to myself. Think about this day, in comparison to our current circumstances, what we are facing, what we are going through and where we are going. The original emigrants left a legacy to benefit mankind, which was to spread the divine guidance of the Almighty to all mankind. What are we planning to achieve?

Today we are imprisoned. We are in the jail of our own weaknesses, selfishness, greed and narrow mindedness. We are constantly bickering with each other, about one topic after another. We argue about different opinions, different understanding and different visions. We are divided physically, emotionally and mentally. We are weak and insecure. In turn, our families are divided, our friends

are divided and our nation is divided. There is division at all levels, young and old, male and female, one race to another.

Historical accounts have demonstrated time and again that division is the ultimate disease, weakening any nation, and making it vulnerable to attack, internally and externally. Study the downfall of Iraq in the era of the Mongolians and the Tartars; and see the damage and destruction they caused. Study the decline of the Muslim rule in Spain and how division tore the thread of the beautiful cloth of the nation.

When division eats the nation like termites, it eats from within until the nation is divided into different states, each state with a different ruler. History has many accounts of divisions of land, resources, people and wealth. There are ruptures and cracks in our fiqh and understanding, and division is now so far reaching and deep rooted that even a small state after a while can be divided into a semi state.

What is the result? Everyone is ruined, demolished and finished. What is the value of all disputes, division and ideology, if we allow these differences to be the cause of damaging and destroying each other like worms and parasites?

The result is that we start off weak, we become weaker and more vulnerable, prone to falling apart any time. It is not a matter of if, but when. In the current state of affairs, the total disintegration is coming, and it is inevitable.

Why does this occur? It is because we are not thinkers - analyzing and learning from the past, and trying to reflect over our status, our present, and see what mistakes we are making, how we can correct them or if there is another alternative to get out of this mess.

Again, we should stop for a moment for some critical self analysis. This day allows us to see and examine how the Prophet saw and his Companions faced all the challenges and how they became victorious from it to achieve their purpose and goal.

Today, what are we going to do with all the challenges, domestically and abroad, internally and externally? Is there a systematic way to approach these challenges and to solve them before we sink? Is this cause not worth it?

Is it time to stop and think about how I can emigrate from my own weaknesses, and to question myself on what I am doing to support my own people and mankind. How can I emigrate from my weaknesses and paralysis? What steps do I need to take to strengthen myself and be a nucleus and pillar of strengthening the future of my people and my nation?

Today, I would like you to think – do you have a goal, a message? Are you acting

or merely reacting? If you follow the news, every time there is a crisis in the Muslim ummah, we react, but once the crisis has passed, we fall into a slumber, into a deep sleep, and we remain comatose until the next crisis occurs. We are like a can of soda, it fizzes when opened, but becomes flat if we let it sit.

The early people were people of action and determination. They had a message. They knew the responsibility of the message, and were in a state of action, not reaction. They used to act firmly and decisively, not in response to an external challenge or opposition, but in line with and according to the message they were carrying and trying to elevate.

We need to realise that whatever is weakening us - we have to get rid of. Whatever is strengthening us - we have to spread. We cannot achieve the above unless we think.

Once we have achieved this, then we have the cause and the right to celebrate – the true migration. It is only then when we have earned the right to celebrate the achievements of overcoming our weaknesses, our egos, our arrogance and our self benefit, for the benefit of others.

Look at the Messengers and the Prophets - they sacrificed everything to spread the light, mercy and guidance of the Creator. They should be our role models.

This leads us to today, the Islamic new year. What happens if I have lost sight of the message, the meaning of the message, the purpose of the message, the value of the message, the responsibility of the message? What is the significance of this message to me, to my family, to society, to my nation and to mankind?

How often do we repeat history?

Historians have questioned: what is the value of the youth of any nation if they do not learn from their elders? What is the value of any nation if it does not learn from its own history?

History repeats itself, this is self evident. If we believe in the Qur'an, almost one third of the Qur'an sets out historical accounts about many nations and civilizations before us, many eras in different places and different times. Whether the examples are individual or collective, the Almighty has explained to us, and reminded us to take heed and learn from the events of the past. This is for a simple reason: the way the Almighty deals with circumstances will never change. In other words, the way our Creator deals with us is formulaic. Every individual or nation that behaves a certain way can expect to receive certain repercussions or rewards – this pattern does not change.

Our Creator has given us sufficient warning, individual and collective, of past generations which rose and fell. What will happen become of us if we do not take

heed and learn from our predecessors? The Almighty gave us the model of success and the model of the lost and destroyed - of individuals, families and nations. There are plenty of examples to draw upon, if we take the time and effort to think.

What is the point?

Do you get my point? Are you now reflecting - do you stop and think who am I, where am I and where am I going? What is the purpose of my life, what am I trying to achieve? What is my final destination? What is my legacy, what do I accomplish and what am I leaving behind?

Am I a consumer or a producer? Consuming what or producing what?

Do I affect others or am I affected by others?

Am I an inviter or an invited? And, an inviter to what and invited to what and by whom?

Am I an emigrant or a supporter? From where to where, for what purpose, and for what goal?

What is my goal in life? Do I even have one? Young and old, male and female, single or a family member, all these questions apply to me.

Who is my role model in life?

Again, it is time to think.

We, as an ummah or a nation, are under siege. We have a lot of enemies, planning very well. They spread the termites of destruction, waiting for us to get weakened, little by little, to destroy us and whatever is left over.

Why does Allah allow this to happen – for there is no doubt this is already happening everywhere. It is because we are in heedlessness, we are going too fast on the wrong road, the road of destruction, to the point that it does not even occur to us to make a U turn, to stop to make a dramatic change immediately and start traveling again in the right path.

We have the map, the medication, the tools and the means. We have everything to lead us to the road of success, the road of achievement, the road of strength and finally the road to celebration. We have the tools to guide and lead mankind, but are we ready to shoulder this responsibility?

Are we ready to get over the nonsense and the bickering, the differences of opinion and understanding, the slavery to material life and the slavery from our weaknesses within? Are we ready to stop, think, wake up once and for all where everyone will say "I'm responsible, I have to do something, I have to be responsible, firstly in the journey of awakening and alertness, to myself, my

family and my society"?

Our house is on fire, with a plenty of people sleeping inside. Someone has to wake them up and save them from the fire. This is not the time to blame them for sleeping, or ask them why they are sleeping, or why they cannot wake up or why they do not hear you.

No, it is the time to save. Save the maximum we possibly can. Don't say "why me?" for this is the time - everyone is collectively responsible. The damage will be more severe and the loss will be humongous in this life and in the hereafter if we don't wake up and take charge.

The responsibility is very high, as is the trust of the covenant of the message. It is higher than all else that we live for. This is the true emigration.

The Prophet saw and his Companions emigrated from Mecca to Madinah, and they were able to do so because of their devotion and commitment to message - the survival of the message and the carrying of the message. To live the message and to spread the message was the ultimate goal for them. That is why they emigrated.

Today we need to emigrate from the status of heedlessness, blindness, slavery to material life, quarrelling, arguing, We need to emigrate from the division to the message of the Almighty to the love of the Almighty, carrying the responsibility and the duty to each other and to mankind.

Every one of us is a brick, and we are all very important to be a part of building a wall. None of the above will be achieved without the unity of the message, the unity of purpose, the unity between each other, the unity to achieve the goal of carrying the message and spreading it. And this is the true day of celebration.