

Self-Flagellation

(Matam / Zanjeer/Qamah Zani)

Mourning rituals and self harm as found in the Qur'an

We read in Surah Nisa 004.148

YUSUFALI: Allah loveth not that evil should be noised abroad in public speech, except where injustice hath been done; for Allah is He who heareth and knoweth all things.

We read in Tafseer Ibn Katheer Volume 2 page 20 Surah Nisa, under the commentary of this verse:

"Ali bin Abi Talib(a.s) said that Ibn Abbas commented on the Ayah and said,

'Allah does not like that the evil should be uttered in public, He does not like that any one should invoke Him against anyone else, unless one is wronged. In this case, Allah allows one to invoke Him against whoever wronged him. Hence Allah's statement Allah loveth not that evil should be noised abroad in public speech, except where injustice hath been done'

A similar narration can also be located in Saheeh al Bukharee Volume 2 page 820 on the authority of Muhammad ibn Kab.

This verse makes it clear that the public's relaying of injustice is permissible. Relaying the suffering of a victim is permissible. The tradition from Bukhari proves that mourning is permissible when one is citing the pains inflicted on the aggrieved party hence any tradition that contradicts this must be ignored.

Major efforts are made to prove that the term mourning is proof that Matam is Haraam under the Shari'ah. On the contrary breast-beating, bloods letting all come within the term mourning and its purpose is to convey the pains inflicted on the victim, something which the Quran has sanctioned. We the Shi'a perform all these acts as Allah (swt) has permitted us to do so, and the opposition is only on account for their love and support for Imam Husayn (as)'s killers.

Mourning and shedding blood is the Sunnah of Prophet Adam (as)

We read in Ahl'ul Sunnah's authority work Ma'arij al Nubuwwa Chapter 1 page 248:

Hadrath Adam was so distressed that he smashed his hands onto his knees and the skin from his hands caused gashes from which bone could be seen.

Those who deem the act of self-harm to be batil should look at the bloodletting actions of Hadrath Adam (as). If Hadrath Adam (as) can do this why cannot the Shi'a when mourning for Imam Husayn (as)?

Mourning and hitting one self is the Sunnah of the Prophet (s)

As evidence we shall cite the following works:

1. Saheeh al Bukharee Volume 2 page 50
2. Sunan al Nasai Volume 3 page 305
3. Adhaan al Mufreed page 426
4. Saheeh al Muslim Volume 1 page 291
5. Musnad Abu Awana Volume 2 page 292

All these books state:

"Rasulullah (s) was in a state where he was hitting his chest."

Ibn Hajr Asqalani in the commentary of this tradition in Fathul Bari Volume 3 page 90 writes:

"This Hadeeth demonstrates that it is permissible to bang your hand at a moment of distress".

If hitting oneself is Haraam then what Fatwa do the Nasibis have for the Prophet (s)? The Pillar of Shari'ah is himself hitting his chest, so if the Shi'a do the same, why are their actions Batil?

Thigh beating is the Sunnah of Maula 'Ali (as)

We read in Taufah Ithna Ashari page 523 published in Karachi:

"When Ayesha(I.a) was defeated and Ali(a.s) saw the corpses on the ground he began to beat his thighs"

Taufah Ithna Ashari, page 523

Proof of head beating from the Qur'an

In Surah adh-Dhaariyaat we read that Hadrath Sara (as) struck her face when she was told that she would conceive a baby.

"Then came forward his wife in grief, she smote her face and said (what! I) An old barren woman?"

Quran 51:29

"Faskath" does not just mean rub or touch, it means slap and this is evidenced from Saheeh

Muslim Book 030, Number 5851, Bab Fadail Musa:

Beating oneself at a time of distress is the Sunnah of Prophet Adam (as)

We read in Mudharrij al Nubuwwa page 221:

"When life was breathed into the spirit of Adam he hit his hand on his head and cried. He made this tradition of beating one's head with one's hand and crying in times of trouble for his descendants."

Hitting one's head in times of trouble is the Sunnah of Prophet Yusuf (as)

We read in Tafseer Kabeer Volume 5 page 158:

"On one occasion Gibrael approached Prophet Yusuf (as) in Zundh and conveyed the news that his father had become blind on account of his weeping for him. Yusuf hit his hand on his head and said 'O I wish my mother did not give birth to me, so that I would have not become the cause of such sadness to my father'".

We have proven that the acts of hitting one's head are not Jahiliyya or Un-Islamic. In fact it is the Sunnah of Prophets Adam (as) and Yusuf (as).

The Shi'a mourn Imam Husayn (as) as a form of remembrance. We seek to remember and share his suffering and pain, since assisting one in trouble is a recommended (Mustahab) act and a kind of worship. We also deem mourning and presenting our sincerity to Imam Husayn (as) to be a form of worship.

Beating and mourning by the wives of the Sahaba

Allamah Shibli Numani al Hanafi is a renowned Sunni scholar from the Indian subcontinent. In his Sirat-un Nabi (Eng translation Volume 2 pg 74) quoting Sirat Ibn Hisham we read the following about Hadhrath Hamzah (as) martyrdom:

"The Holy Prophet (P) returned to Madina and found the whole city gone into mourning. Whenever he went, he heard wailing and lamentation in every house. He was grieved to find that all who were martyred in the battle had their mourners doing their duty to the memory of their dear ones. But there was none to mourn the death of Hamzah (ra). Overwhelmed with grief, the words that there was no one to mourn the loss of Hamzah escaped his lips. The Ansâris were touched to the core when they heard this remark from the Prophet(s). They asked their women to go to the house of the Prophet (S) and mourn for Hamzah. The Prophet (p) thanked them for their sympathy, prayed for their well-being, but added that it was not permissible to lament in memory of the dead. (Women in Arabia were used to wailing and lamenting aloud, they would tear off their garments, dig their nails into their cheeks, slap themselves on the face and put up loud screams. This undesirable practice was from that day stopped for future)"

The mourning of Janab-e- Fatima al-Zahra (as)

In Madharij al Nubuwwa Vol 2, page 163, Sheikh Abdul Haq Mohaddis Hanafi Dehlavi recorded that:

"Fatima Zahra (as) hearing the rumour of the martyrdom of the Holy Prophet (s) at Uhud came out of her house running and beating her head".

Does it not transpire from the above that beating of head during the act of mourning for a martyr is allowed by the religion as Sayyida (as) was well aware of the religious code and was also infallible according to Ayah Tatheer (33:33). In addition an action of any member of Ahl'ul bayt is a Sunnah for the Ithna Ashari Shi'as. Thus mourning is not bidah but is a Sunnah of Sayyida Fatima al-Zahra (as).

The mourning of Bilal (ra)

We read in Madharij al Nubuwwa Volume 2 page 441, whilst discussing the death of the Prophet (s):

"When the situation of the Prophet worsened, Bilal emerged beating his head and loudly wailing, 'I wish my mother had not given birth to me, and that if she had I wish that I had died before this day'"

The extreme mourning of Hadrath Uways al-Qarni (ra)

The most explicit proof of self-inflicted injury comes from Owais al-Qarni the great Muslim Sahabi, praised by both Shi'a and Sunni erudite. He had an immense love for the Holy Prophet (s). When the news reached him in Yemen that two teeth of the Holy Prophet (s) were broken in the battle of Ohad, he extracted all his teeth. When the Holy Prophet (s) got the news in Medina that Owais had struck down all his teeth, he (s) exclaimed, **"Indeed Owais is our devoted friend"**. This event can be found written in 'Seerate Halbia' vol II, page 295.

The renowned Scholar Shiekh Farid al Din Attaar in 'Tadhkhirathul Awliya' Urdu translation page 17 and 18 writes:

"Hadrath Uways Qarni (ra) said to Umar(I.a): 'If you were true in friendship than why on the day when the holy teeth of the Prophet (s) were broken didn't you break your teeth in companionship? Because, it is a condition of companionship.' Then he showed his teeth all of which were broken and said 'I broke all of my teeth without seeing you (O Prophet) and in the state of Ghaybah in your companionship. I had broken one tooth but couldn't get satisfaction so kept on breaking them one by one until I had broken them all '"

An Arabs mourning before the Prophet (s)

Malik's Muwatta

Book 18, Number 18.9.29:

Yahya related to me from Malik from Ata ibn Abdullah al-Khurasani that Said ibn al-Musayyab said, "A Bedouin came to the Messenger of Allah, (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) beating his breast and tearing out his hair and saying, 'I am destroyed.' The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'Why is that?', and he said, 'I had intercourse with my wife while fasting in Ramadan.' The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked him, 'Are you able to free a slave?', and the man said, 'No.' Then he asked him, 'Are you able to give away a camel?', and the man replied, 'No.' He said, 'Sit down,' and someone brought a large basket of dates to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and he said to the man, 'Take this and give it away as Sadaqa.' The man said, 'There is no one more needy than me,' and (the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace), said, 'Eat them, and fast one day for the day when you had intercourse.' "

Worthy of note is the fact that Darr Qathani in his Sharh of Muwatta Volume 2 (this tradition) adds that that **'he was placing mud in his hair'**.

The incident should be considered in the light of the following facts:

1. The Bedouin being a Muslim was Sahabi (companion) of the Holy Prophet (s).
2. He was beating his chest and tearing his hair in presence of Holy Prophet (s) who neither objected to it nor reprimanded him for the same.
3. The action of the Bedouin was a result of spiritual pain he suffered as his fast was invalidated.
4. Sunni traditionists have authentically recorded this incident.

The Bedouin's actions were a direct result of the agony he was going through. It led him to beat, his chest, tear his hair and place dirt in his hair. We suggest to those who deem mourning for Imam Husayn (as) Bidah to look at these Rafidi acts that were performed in the presence of the Prophet (s). If it was Haraam why did not the Prophet (s) tell him to refrain from such actions?

Islamic Law

When the Imam of a Fiqh permits an act, then it is not permissible for those of other Madhabs to raise their objections. We deem Ahl'ul bayt (as) our Imams and uphold their words. If they ruled on the permissibility of Azadari, then we care little what the Imams from Mu'awiyah and Yazeed's lineage have to say against it.

Imam Jafar-e-Sadiq (a.s) allowed the mourning of Imam Husayn (as)

We read a tradition from Wasail ai Shi'a as quoted in Jahaur aur Kalaam Volume 4 page 370:

"Imam Jafer(a.s) said 'the daughters of Fatima(s.a) would slap their faces and

shriek. It is permissible to beat yourself and shriek for a pure soul such as Husayn(a.s)"

The mourning of Banu Hashim

We read in Tareekh Kamil Volume 4 page 42

Umar ibn Sa'd appeared following the killing of Husayn, stayed for the night in Kerbala and then headed in the direction of Kufa. He was accompanied by Husayn (as)'s children and his sisters were also captives. When they passed by the bodies of Husayn and his companions, the women cried and slapped their faces. Zaynab said 'O Muhammad!'

Sayyida Zaynab (s.a) beat herself on three separate occasions

First Occasion

1. Al Bidaya wa al Nihaya Volume 8 page 176
2. Tareekh Kamil page 29

"When the enemy planned to attack the camp of Husayn(a.s), Zaynab(s.a) went to Husayn(a.s) and asked 'what is this noise outside our tents?' Imam Husayn [a.s] replied 'I just saw a dream wherein the Apostle of Allah(s.a) told me that he would reach me by tomorrow. Upon hearing this Sayyida Zaynab(s.a) became aggrieved and slapped her face"

Second occasion

1. Al Bidaya wa al Nihaya, Volume 8 page 177
2. Tareekh Kamil Volume 4 page 30
3. Tareekh Tabari Volume 7 Page 324.

"When Sayyida Zaynab(s.a) listened to the verses from her brother that indicated his death, she mourned by beating her face, tearing her clothes and losing her senses by falling to the ground"

Third occasion

1. Al Bidaya wa al Nihaya Volume 8 page 93
2. Tareekh Kamil Volume 4 page 42
3. Tareekh Tabari Volume 7 Page 370.

Qurat bin Kas narrates that when the women of Bani Hashim(a.s) passed by the battlefield they wept bitterly by beating their faces.

When the grand daughter of the Prophet (s) was brought into the city of Kufa as prisoner her calamity became more severe. When she saw the head of Imam (as) on the pointed end of lance, she stroke her head on the wooden part of the saddle in extreme grief and blood started flowing from her head.

The skies shed blood in grief of Imam Husayn (as)

Allamah Ibn Hajar Makki writes:

"Abu Said says that on the day of the martyrdom of Husayn(a.s), there was fresh blood found under every stone lifted; and the sky also rained blood whose result was evident on clothes for ages. Abu Naim says that on the day of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (as) our containers (of water) were full of blood."

Sawaiq al-Muhriqa, Page 192

It is written in Tafseer al-Jalalayn, on page 411, Annotation no.7 (Print. Karachi): Under "Fama Bakta Alaihim Sama" Sa` di has been quoted as saying:

"When the oppressed Imam was martyred, the sky wept on his martyrdom; the weeping of the sky is its being red and anger is the reason behind the bloody tears."

Examples of self-beating in the Bible

The Bible, Isaiah 22:12 - shows that this type of mourning was ordained by God

"On that Day the Lords called for weeping and beating the breast, shaving the head and putting on sack cloth"

"You are now at ease, be anxious; tremble, you who have no cares. Strip yourselves bare; put a cloth round your waists and beat yourselves"

The Bible, Isaiah 32:11

"Howl, Heshbon, for Ai is despoiled. Cry aloud you villages round Rabbath Ammon, put on sack cloth and beat your breast and score your body with gashes"

The Bible, Jeremiah 49:3

"The crowd that had assembled for the spectacle, when they saw what had happened went home beating their breasts"

The Bible, Luke 23:48

It is quite clear that holding mourning of Imam Husayn (as) by means of Matam (chest beating) or Zanjeer (blood letting) expresses nothing but love and loyalty for the Ahl'ul bayt (as).