



BLACK COLOUR AS A SYMBOL IN ISLAM: JUSTICE, EQUALITY AND THE ENDURING LEGACY OF KARBALA

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Abstract

This paper investigates the emblematic and symbolic meaning of the black colour in the Islamic teachings with special reference to the legacy of Karbala as a versatile, adaptable and universal logo of justice, equality and resistance against oppressive power and dictatorship. It demonstrates **that the black colour is symbolized not only by mourning but also by moral resilience, ethical commitment and the upholding of truth.** With reference to Islamic history in general and Shi'a tradition in particular, the study explores the symbolism of the Kiswah of the Ka'ba, the Hajar al-Aswad (Black Stone) and the traditions concerning the black banners traditionally regarded as the reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi. It draws attention to the pledge of Islam to equality through the inclusive ethos of Karbala and the exemplary lives of figures such as Bilal al-Habashi, Fizza and Jaun. The paper concludes that the black colour remains a timeless emblem of justice, human dignity and peaceful resistance against oppression and tyranny.

Key Words: Black Colour, Islam, Karbala, Justice, Equality, Resistance etc.



Introduction

The event of Karbala is acknowledged as one of the most iconic symbols and lasting representations of justice, moral courage and resistance against oppression in Islamic history. Its legacy crosses all historical and sectarian boundaries, promoting universally relevant ethical principles and articulating its framework that serves as an enduring inspirational value perseveres for human dignity, equality and social justice. Amid the constant symbols and timeless emblems of this legacy, the black colour has a distinguished position, unique standing place and prominent place manifesting not only mourning and remembrance but also steadfast support to maintain a staunch and powerful resistance against tyranny and an unwavering commitment to truth.

Throughout the Islamic heritage, the black colour preserves insightful religious and historical importance and relevance via linked to the Holy Ka'ba, the Black Stone (Hajar al-Aswad) and traditions with respect to the advent of Imam al-Mahdi having objective is to set up universal justice. It is also worth mentioning that the lives of the Holy Prophet Muhammad and the Ahl al-Bayt(holy Households of holy Prophet)reinforce the Islamic models of equality, human dignity and the repudiation of ethnic discrimination and racial prejudice, principles mirrored in the universal and the inclusive spirit and philosophy of Karbala.

This paper probes and explores the symbolism of the black colour in the observance of Karbala, advocating that it transcends its ceremonial function to serve as a timeless emblem of justice, resistance and ethical consciousness. By evaluating its religious, historical and moral dimensions, the study shows how the black colour serves as an enduring inspirational value to restore the universal pursuit and global aspiration for justice, peace and collective action of humanity to establish its solidarity.

Objectives of the Study

1. To observe the religious and symbolic worth of the black colour in the battle of Karbala.
2. To explore the symbolism of the black colour in Islamic teachings, with reference to the Holy Ka'ba, Hajar al-Aswad, Imam al-Mahdi, the Holy Prophet Muhammad and the Ahl al-Bayt.
3. To analyze how the black colour helps in promotion of the universal values of justice, human dignity, peace and resistance against oppression for consoling the tortured humanity with special reference to the Karbala.



Significance of the Study

Eyes cannot be closed on the significance and utility of black colour in the Allah created universe and manmade society. In our Indian culture it is considered as an armor of protection from evil-eye and the same black colour has been adopted for the judicial uniform right from the lower court to the supreme court all over the world, which means that it symbolizes as the colour of justice and peace. Sometimes it stands for the expression of sadness while sometimes it is used to register protest against injustice. Holy Prophet Muhammad while consoling the tortured and troubled humanity has made the prophecy that at the climax of injustice and oppression, Imam al-Mahdi who is the holy grand-grandson of the Holy Prophet would emerge from his long occultation to wipe out all the traces of social injustice and restore the desired order. His appearance will start from holy Ka'ba and he will be joined by highly pious men from all races and colours from all over the world. One of his supporters is said to be the army of Khorasan (Iran) under the commandment of Syed-e-Hasani, holding black banners to symbolize the end of injustice and proclaiming that the justice is going to prevail.

Historical Perspective

In the Islamic world, the black colour has been given central importance. The House of God 'Ka'ba' located at the sacred land of Mecca built by Holy Prophet Abraham and his beloved son Prophet Ismael. The House of God has very sacred stone which was brought down by Arch-Angel Gabriel. This stone is called 'Hajar al-Aswad' meaning black stone. The sanctity of the House of God (Ka'ba) is manifested by the fact that Muslims all over the world face toward it while saying prayer and regard it as their 'Qibla' and perform pilgrimage to it and kiss the black stone. With a view to preserve its distinction it is covered with a splendid black cover while their own houses remain uncovered. The cover is changed every year without changing its colour.

As a mark of social revolution, the White House of United States of America has given entry to a black man for the first time in 2009 in American history. This leads us to remember how our Prophet of Islam had made 'Belal' a black man mount the roof of the Holy Ka'ba to call the white Arabs to prayer. This was to do away with any discrimination based on colour. By this, he wanted to suggest that dignity of man lies in character not in colour. We have another black man 'Najashi', the Christian king of Ethiopia, who professed Islam after listening to the verses of the Holy Quran



(Chapter 19; Sura-e-Maryam) recited by Hazrat Jafar, son of the Prophet's beloved uncle Hazrat Abu Talib in which the character of holy Mary and her holy son Prophet Jesus is highly glorified. Hazrat Fatma Zahra who was the beloved daughter of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, followed the example of her father and took the responsibility of teaching a black princess and the virtuous lady of Africa and transformed her from Maimoona (her name) to Fizza (a lady of brilliant learning). Maula Ali who was the first cousin, son-in-law and Divine caliph of the Holy Prophet and his holy son Imam Hasan maintained the Prophet's tradition of uplifting the blacks by giving them their due rights with freedom and dignity.

Quite a few companions of Imam Husain who were the holy grandson of Prophet Muhammad, at the battle-field of Karbala were black men. Some of them were slaves. Imam Husain had made them free and asked them not to lay their lives and go back to their home and family, but none of them conceded and were bent upon sacrificing their lives for the sake of Imam Husain. The most famous among them was 'Jaun' whom was not permitted by Imam Husain to go and fight till his last breath. Having been denied permission, he said to Imam Husain that he was denied permission because Imam did not like his inferior blood to be mixed with his own superior blood and because his black skin smells bad. Having heard this protest Imam Husain immediately allowed him to go to battlefield and lay his life. No sooner, he fell his horse as martyr, Imam Husain went to his corpse in a flash and raised his head and put his cheek on his cheek and prayed to Allah "O My Lord! Jaun had misunderstood me and thought that it was his black colour that prevented me from giving him permission to fight, so I beseech you to make his skin as bright and good smelling as possible." Husain's prayer was immediately answered and Jaun's face began to radiate with light and his body started transmitting a fragrance of unknown sweetness. Likewise Imam Husain's holy sister Hazrat Zainab took Fizza, the black maid-servant of her mother and gave her the status and respect of a mother and kept her along her side throughout her struggle against the injustice in the court of Obaidullah son of Ziyad at Kufa and at the court of Yazid son of Muawia, the cruel dictator at Damascus (Syria). It was Fizza who moved the hearts of all the black-slaves serving Yazid at his court in Damascus. She filled the hearts of the black-guards of Yazid with so much courage that they raised their sword against Yazid and said that any misbehavior towards Fizza the black lady of Africa would force them to drench the whole court with blood. Such a courage of the black slaves



against injustice was unknown and beyond imagination. This shows that the stability of the human society lies in the equality and harmony of the blacks and whites.

This also indicates that Karbala is an event to inflame the human spirit with fearless awakening against all kinds of inhuman dictatorship.

Imam Husain and his companions the seventy-two (72) martyrs of Karbala presented the best example of their unity and integrity and proved that there was no issue of black and white in the battle of Karbala. There is an age-old conflict between 'the black heart and the white blood'; proverbially black heart stands for jealousy and white blood stands for cruelty. It is the black hearts (jealous men) and the white bloods (cruel men) who join together to give birth to Terrorism.

As Universal Clarion Call

By wearing the black clothe, we register our protest against all kinds of cruelty and jealousy and we announce our deepest support for the oppressed of Karbala who were made the victims of envy (black heart) and cruelty (white blood). By commemorating Karbala, we express our love to all the lovers of justice and vow to fight all the votaries of cruelty and oppression and this is exactly the Divine scheme and the dream of all the prophets of peace waiting to be fulfilled by the followers of Imam Husain. This is the universal clarion call of Karbala to rise and blow the last trumpet to finish every trace of terrorism and restore the climate of peace and save humanity. This is the final goal for which Imam Husain and his companions sacrificed their homes, their wealth's, their children, their comforts and their lives in order to serve the humanity at large.

Conclusion

The symbolism of the black colour in the Islamic worldview is not limited to its binding up with mourning, giving concrete expression to stand the test of time with justice, equality, moral courage and resistance against oppression. The universal footprint of Karbala functionalizes as a transcendent digital alert of Imam Husain's steadfast loyalty and faithfulness to truth, human dignity and social justice. The broad-based core value of Karbala, which wiped out racial hierarchies and social boundaries, gives strength to the universal appeal of Islam for equality and compassion. Hence, the black colour continues not to be just a symbol of remembrance but a powerful far-reaching global



clarion call to reinforce justice, safeguard the dignity of oppressed to empower them and create a peaceful, inclusive and equitable society.

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