

## HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF GAMAY SHAH AND ITS BOND WITH KARBALA AND ASHURA

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper covers the historical importance of Karbala Gamay Shah with the sanctity of “Ashurah” in the holy month of “Muharram”. This paper provides very simple information of performing rites of an Islamic sect of “Shia” who holds mourning ceremonies in the memory of martyrdom Hazrat Imam Hussain every year in the Holy month of Muharram with special reference of Gamay Shah whose mausoleum is located in Lahore. Article throws light on the religious care of “Shia” sect for the mausoleum of “Gamay Shah” located in Lahore as it is called Karbala Gamay Shah. “Shias” arrange processions, exhibit “Tazias”, and hold “Majlises” in the month of Muharram and their processions culminate at the tomb of Gamay Shah. Keeping in view the significance of Ashura and the historical background of Karbala Gamay Shah, this analysis digs out the status of monument of Karbala Gamay Shah located in the busiest city of Lahore.*

**Keywords:** *Gamy Shah, Ashura, Karbala, Moharam*

### INTRODUCTION

Question comes up to why the “Word” Karbala is associated with the mausoleum of Gamay Shah located in Lahore and why do the processions of Ashurah proceed from different Amam Baras of Lahore, particularly from Nisar Havali and Mubarak Havali bring to an end at the tomb of Gamay Shah with great religious warmth. In fact, Lahore is a land of the memorial of many saints. This city always attracted the great “Sufis” to reside here. A very popular saying of Persian weighs up the value of Lahore very well “*Agar Lahore nabood, Asfahaan nisf jahaan bood*” (if there were no Lahore, Isphahan would have been half of the World). Therefore, Lahore attracted many powerful personalities of Central Asia, Iran and other countries to reside here in Lahore. A Persian verse associated with Mughal Queen Mlika Noor Jehan states the beauty of Lahore and her love for it.

*Lahore ra be jaan barabar khareedah am  
Jaan dada am o jannat khareeda am (Rehmani, 1998; 04)*

*(We got Lahore by giving our soul; perhaps we bought a paradise  
in exchange for our life)*

Here in Lahore, Muslims of many sects live happily and commemorate their sanctified days liberally. A multiplicity that is a trademark of Lahore City must be maintained and encouraged. Among these sects' people associated with the faction of "Shia" follow strictly their rituals in the holy month of Muharram. Other than "Shia" sect, all the Muslims of the World have the great reverence for Ahl-e- Bait (AS) and stop any kind of blissful get-togethers in the Holy month of Muharram and particularly from 1<sup>st</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> of Muharram.

The Islamic year begins with Muharram-ul-Haraam. The word Muharram means, "Forbidden". Before Islam, this month was known as a sacred month, in which unlawful acts were prohibited, particularly bloodshed. Although the whole month of Muharram is sanctified, yet one day of this month is the most sacred. "People believe that marriages would never be successful if they are arranged in the Holy month of Muharram. People even avoid to construct their new houses in this month". (Rehmani, 1998; 286)

## **ASHURAH**

Word "Ashurah" is an Arabic word means ten days. These first ten days of our first Islamic month of Muharram represent a mournful event of martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA), the son of Hazrat Ali (RA) and grandson of the last Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SAW), during his battle with the Syrian army under Yazid, in AH 61(October 10, 680) in Karbala now Iraq. "Then fire was set to their camp and the bodies were trampled by the hoofs of the horses; nobody in the history of the human kind has seen such atrocities" (Chelkowski, 1977; 31). No doubt, the martyrdom of Hazrat Hussain (RA) is one of the most tragic episodes of our history. Yet the sanctity of Ashura cannot be ascribed to this event for the simple reason that the sanctity of "Ashura" established during the days of Holy Prophet (SAW) much earlier than the birth of Hazrat Hussain "Think not of those who are slain in God's way as dead. Nay, they are living, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord." (Qur'an 3:169)

The "Shia" a sect of Muslims holds lamentation and mourning ritual in the memory of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) across the world. The event of Ashura in Lahore is especially observed with unusual grief and sorrow. The "Shias" exhibit Tazias, the effigies of tombs of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA); Alams (a symbol of a hand); and Zuljinah, a representation of wounded horse of Imam Hussain (RA). Many processions comprising Zakirs, singers of elegies, Tazias and Alams along with Zuljinah, reach Karbala Gamay Shah from different areas of Lahore. The history of these processions goes back to the era of Sikhs, yet it increased in splendor and magnificence during the British period.

## LOCATION OF KARBALA GAMAY SHAH



Fig.01, 12 Gates Lahore

The building of Karbala Gamay Shah is situated outside the Bhaati Gate, one of the twelve historical gates of Lahore. Karbala Gamay Shah is in the south of the Mausoleum of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh (RA). Entrance is on the main and the busiest road of Old Lahore. Within a walled enclosure, there is cenotaph of Hazrat Gamay Shah beneath a high dome building. According to historical record, Qazalbash family purchased this particular land, where Karbala Gamay Shah is located and Sufi Gamay Shah is buried. Qazalbash family built an Imambargah there in 1877. “According to Tehqeeqat -e- Chisti Karbala Gamay Shah is the oldest Amam Bara of Lahore.” (Rehmani,1998; 287).



Fig.02 Bhati Gate

However, who was the Hazrat Gamay Shah and why does the building of Karbala Gamay Shah stand for a centre of unity for the “Shia” sect of the Muslims of Lahore. Karbala Gamay Shah is a famous monument recognized as a place of great sanctity for the Shiite. “It is a popular opinion that Hazrat Gamay Shah came to Lahore with Hazrat Data Ali Hajveiri Sahib (RA) and Imam Bara of Gamay Shah was built in Sikh period”.(Rehmani,1998; 287)

It is said the original name of Gamay Shah was Baba Ghulam Ali Shah. He belonged to a Sayed family. He did not marry throughout his life. He passed most of his time by reciting the qualities of Hazrat Ali (RA). He would make a “Tazia” of a paper in the start of Muharram every year. On 9th of Muharram, he would put it on his head and go to Mochi Gate, one of the thirteen gates of Lahore from where he would come back there to his home, now Karbala Gamay Shah, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Muharram along with other Malangs (devotees). Baba Gamay Shah preferred this place currently recognized as Karbala Gamay Shah for his devout exercise. He always dressed up in black as a symbol grief. Baba Gamay Shah was famous for his continual sorrow for the Ahle Bait (AS), a ‘zarih’ an outer coffin of the holy shrine of Hazrat Imam Hussain (AS) has also been fixed next to the grave of Baba Gamay Shah.



Fig.03 Grave of Hazrat Gamay Shah



Fig.04 Zarih

At that time, Raja Ranjeet Singh ruled different areas of the Subcontinent and was facing many problems in Amratsar now in India due to religious intolerance between the Sikhs and the Shia. When he came to know that another man in Lahore also exhibited the Tazia, he came to Lahore and asked Hazrat Baba Ghulam Ali Shah not to do so; but all in vain. However, Hazrat Baba Ghulam Ali Shah exhibited the Tazia on 9<sup>th</sup> of Muharram according to his customary practice. Rattan Singh, the Governor of Lahore, arrested Hazrat Baba Ghulam Ali Shah and put him in prison. It is said that Rattan Singh left horror and remained uncomfortable all night. This condition made the Governor very upset. Next morning, he released Hazrat Baba Ghulam Ali Shah and allowed him to exhibit Tazia every year. Therefore, from that time the present building of Karbala Gamay Shah is famous for the event of Ashurah.



Fig. 05 Outer Gate of Karbala Gamay Shah with mourning Procession

Today from different ‘Imambargahs’ and ‘Havalis’ of Lahore, many processions reach at Karbala Gamay Shah on 10<sup>th</sup> of Muharram. Among them, ‘Mubarak Havali’ and ‘Nisar Havali’ are famous. . Large processions proceed from Mubarak Havali and Nisar Havali towards Karbala Gamay Shah with full religious zeal and zest.

Mubarak havali is one from where the first procession of Ashurah starts. It is situated near Akbari gate and was built by King Muhammad Shah. After his death, this Havali came under control of Ranjeet Singh.



Fig. 06, Mubarak Havali

After Ranjeet Singh, British Government took over the control of it. In 1847 AD, Ali Raza Khan Qazalbash came here from Afghanistan. He was an Iranian and belonged to the Shia family. He bought a vast area on Raiwind Road and built many mosques in different villages. He also built Kachi Kothi and Pakki Kothi which are very famous. When he came to Lahore, he observed that many Shiite families were settled there. He bought Mubarak Havali for them. He made good arrangements to start Ashurah Majlises there. It is said that before the arrival of Ali Raza, the only concept of Tazia existed in Subcontinent and he was first who gave the concept of Zuljanah.

Qazalbash was a rich man. He used to feed the poor free of cost in Muharram. At that time many Kashmiri labourers lived in Akbari Mandi, who would work the whole day in the markete and eat food from Mubarak Havali in the evening, where they would also attend the Mjllises. To attract the Kashmiris of Lahore, Qazalbash also invited many debaters from Kashmir, who delivered their monitions in Kashmiri language. Qazalbash

came to know that a saint lived in Lahore named Hazrat Baba Syed Ghulam Ali Shah who regularly exhibited Tazia in every Holy month of Muharram.

Qazalbash bought the area around his tomb and built a beautiful mosque there. later on, he started visiting the tomb of Gamay Shah along with the large procession every year on 10<sup>th</sup> of Muharram. After his death, it became a custom for his family and now big-crowded visits Gamay Shah. The procession passes through Chohhta Mokhti Baker, Dehli Gate, Kashmiri Gate, Rang Mehal, Dabi Bazar and Bhaati Gate to culminate at Karbala Gamay Shah.



Fig. 07, A big Procession going towards Karbala Gamay Shah

Ali Raza Qazalbash transferred Mubarak Havali to his son Matwaish Ali Khan, who also built many mosques in Lahore. Later, Nisar Ali Khan got its charge. He also bought a vast property in Different areas of Lahore. Nisar Khan appointed his nephew Fattah Ali Khan as his follower. After a few days a dispute arose between Nisar Khan and Muhamad Ali Khan son of Nawab Nisar Ali Khan. British Government gave the control of Mubarak Havali to Muhammad Ali. Then Nawab Nisar Khan built a new Havali in Lahore, which is called Nisar Havali. After his death, his daughter Madam Afser Raza Khan continued to run the affairs for a long time. Now Nawab Zada Jan Ali Khan is the licensee of the main procession. He has also built many mosque sand institutions in Lahore.

## CONCLUSION

Amam Bara Mae Anga, Amam Bara Sayeday Shah, Amam Bara Sayyad Rajab Ali Arastu Jah, Amam Bara Sayyad Akbar Shah, Amam Bara Matam Sarai, Amam Bara

Alaf Shah, Amam Bara Doulat Ali Shamsi, Amam Bara Katrah Wali Shah, Amam Bara Saifi, Amama Bara Shair Ghurian, Amam Bara Chiragh Ali Shah, Amam Bara Sayyad Wajid Ali Shah, Amama Bara Doulay Shah, Amam Bara Sayyad RazaSha Pehlvi Lal Khooh, Amam Bara Hakeem Alam Shah are the famous Imamam Baras of historical City of Lahore. Among these Amam Baras, Karbala Gamay Shah is the oldest and well-known Imam Bara of Lahore where the burial place of Hazrat Gamay Shah exists.

In Lahore, on 10<sup>th</sup> of Muharram, a large procession of Zuljinah springs out from Delhi Gate, passes through the different Amam Baras and converts into a big mourning cortege. Ultimately, this procession comes out from Bhati Gate and reaches at Karbala Gamay Shah. Infact this is the last ritual of Ashurah-e-Muharram at Lahore that ends here with prayer. Baba Gamay Shah used to wail for the martyrs of “Karbala” by walking around the Walled city of Lahore back in pre Colonial Period of Lahore and made it a religious tradition for the Shia sect of Lahore forever.

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