

## GCSE RS: Islam endorsements

*Hussain and the Struggle for Justice* is an excellent and accessible resource for RE teachers to develop their subject knowledge about Ashura and aspects of Islam in general. It is especially useful for teachers who deliver Islam at GCSE or A-Level but also for anyone who wishes to continue their professional development in gaining more subject knowledge. Not only does it provide an easy-to-understand historical narrative of Ashura, it goes beyond this and delves into why the event of Ashura is of great significance to Shi'a Muslims and connects it to various aspects of Islamic theology. It further draws out the contemporary significance of Ashura, recognising its relevance in modern-day issues around justice, peace and other themes. The way Dr Hewer presents Ashura in this work cannot be found in other written resources for RE teachers and it is something I would strongly recommend every RE department has in their library. It will help teach Ashura as authentically as possible, avoiding a surface-level presentation of it as a historical event with some rituals attached to it. Instead, it will help classrooms understand that it is something that is of deep significance in the psyche of many Shi'a Muslims and will, as a natural by-product, improve student outcomes.

Zameer Hussain

Head of RE in London

National Association of Teachers of RE Executive Committee

Author of *GCSE Religious Studies, Shi'a Islam: Beliefs and Practices*

Arguably, the event of Ashura has been of the greatest significance for Shi'a Muslims and a tragedy lamented by Sunnis down through the ages. However, one of the greatest concerns regarding the event of Ashura is the concern for authenticity. As the event has touched the feelings of Muslims regardless of their denomination, it has been marred by a great number of passionate misrepresentations by both Sunni and Shi'a authors. That is why we are in need of books like Dr Chris Hewer's *Hussain and the Struggle for Justice* to provide us with an accurate account of the event. Dr Hewer brings alive the central message of Ashura by drawing on the most authentic historical sources available. All credible Sunni and Shi'a books which have recounted the event have drawn on the first-hand account of Abu Mikhnaf (d. 786) who had seen and interviewed many of those who were present on the Day of Ashura. That is why the Sunni scholar al-Tabari's (d. 922) account and the Shi'a scholar al-Mufid's (d. 1021) account are almost identical since both have used the same source. Dr Hewer has meticulously followed al-Mufid's version and has provided the most authentic account of the event in the English language. His book contains many direct references to speeches as they have been handed down to us by Abu Mikhnaf and sets the whole series of events within the wider context of the first fifty years of Islam. In addition to all that, what makes the book unique is that it gets behind merely recounting the events to unpack the spirit, faith and motivation of Imam Hussain and his companions and shows the forces of corruption at work in deceiving and coercing

others to their bidding. It exemplifies the strength, courage and example of the women of Karbala during and after the massacre and shows how all this is relevant to our lives today.

Shaykh Mohammad Saeed Bahmanpour  
Sometime Principal of the Islamic College for Advanced Studies, London