

The Hidden Truth about Karbala

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The battle at Karbala is a well-known tragedy in human history. It is not fiction or legend but a historical fact. This is an excellent narrative that chronicles the injustices against the Ahlul Bayt and their followers through the ages until now.

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Dedication of the first Edition

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In The Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful

Presented at the feet of the most Noble and Immaculate Lady

Zainab bint Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.)

whose courageous eloquence,

in times of extreme suffering, while facing the tyrants,

has perpetuated the righteousness of the cause

and innocence of Imam Husayn (a.s.)

and those who were martyred with him.

Dedicated to my parents and my ancestors

who were rightly guided and who adored

the Immaculate and Infallible (Ma'soomeen) (a.s.)

Dedication of The second Edition

This Second Edition is Dedicated to the memory of

the stillborn child of the Noble and Blessed Lady Fatima (a.s.)

and those Martyrs whose names are lost in History

and who readily sacrificed their lives

for perpetuating the faith in the Vicegerency of Imam Ali (a.s.) and the Eleven Imams (a.s.) from his progeny

Preface to the First Edition

All praise belongs to Allah, the Sublime, the Merciful, Who provides guidance through His Chosen Ones (a.s.), who are Immaculate¹ and therefore Infallible. As the Vicegerents of Allah on earth, they wished, said or did only that which Allah pleased,² and in turn in His Majesty, Allah declared their words, deeds and wishes to be His Will.

When the question of succession to the Holy Prophet (S) arose, the Divine Will was forsaken, as if Allah and His Prophet (S) had left the matter of guidance in the hands of those who were themselves in need of guidance.

The word *Khalifa* (caliph) was sought to be interpreted in several ways only to accommodate those who occupied that seat. At-Tabari, ibn Khaldun and a majority of the *Sunni Ulema* interpreted the word ‘*Khalifa*’ as ‘one who came after’ or ‘those who succeeded one another after the predecessor’s death’. In this sense, the Qur’anic verse³ was sought to be explained by saying that Adam was the *Khalifa* [successor] of his predecessors, the Jinn or the Angels.⁴ The implication of such an interpretation is that, to be the immediate successor, the *Khalifa* need not be of the same kind or class as his predecessor, the Holy Prophet (S). In other words, the *Khalifa* need not be Immaculate and Infallible and can be anyone from the *Umma* (nation). To bolster this argument, the famous *Hadith* that states: “There shall be no prophet after me”, is pressed into service.

The above line of thought led Abu Bakr to declare, immediately on his ascension to the *Caliphate*, in his opening speech from on the pulpit, “*O People, I may fall into grievous error or I may not make any mistake. If you see me deviating from the right path, prevail upon me to return to it.* The Holy Prophet (S)

*was infallible, but I am not. There is a Satan riding over me, ever drawing me towards error.”*⁵

One of the earliest arguments put forth was that one could only be a vicegerent of an absentee and not of one who is present. The question of vicegerancy or succession, it was said, arises only after the demise of the predecessor. In this sense of the matter, it is argued, there can be no Vicegerancy of God who is Omnipresent. Subscribing to the above view, Abu Bakr declared that he was not the divinely appointed *Khalifa*. Instead, he claimed to be the *Khalifa* of the Prophet (S).⁶ But, the absurdity of the matter becomes evident when we consider on the same analogy Umar to be the *Caliph* of Abu Bakr, Uthman the *Caliph* of Umar and so on and so forth. The absurdity becomes patent when we notice that the institution of *Khilafah* ordained by God in the Empyrean was abolished by Mustafa Kamal Pasha of Turkey, in the year 1924!

A distinction is made between spiritual leadership (*Imamate*) and temporal leadership (*Khilafah*). The qualifications required to be an *Imam* are exempted for the *Caliph*. Thus, we find that the History of Islam is full of *Caliphs* who practiced what was prohibited and they prohibited what was permitted, for they considered themselves lawmakers. It is a common premise between the Shia and the Sunni that even the Prophet (S) himself did not have the power to legislate or amend the *Shariah*.⁷

After the Prophet (S), from Abu Bakr, the first *caliph*, to the last one – Mustafa Kamal Pasha, none, barring the single instance of Imam Ali (a.s.), claimed both Spiritual and temporal leadership together in one person. All the Sunni and Shia Ulema are in perfect agreement that Imam Ali (a.s.) was one among the five people declared Immaculate in the Qur'an.⁸

The dispute was and is always between the Divinely appointed Vicegerents such as Abraham, Moses...etc , and the self–proclaimed despots like Nimrod, Pharaoh...etc. There abound in the Qur'an efforts of the Prophets, Apostles and Saints to invite men to worship only One Unique God. In the Qur'an abound also the persecution of the Divinely appointed ones by tyrannical despots. These are not fables but part of history. The Holy Prophet (S) had forewarned his *Umma* that, on account of their faith and adherence to Islam, Muslims will be persecuted and slain. To such of those who are slain in the cause of Allah, the special title of *Shahid* [martyr] is given and they are promised everlasting life and abundant rewards. The tyrant is assured the maximum eternal chastisement.

Of late, a queer tendency has developed among Muslims, to forsake history altogether and invent justification for the tyrannical rule of a majority of the *Caliphs*, particularly the *Umayyads*, by saying that the atrocities they committed were invented by later historians under the rule of the Abbasid *Caliphs*.

A modern day writer Dr. Ghulam Nabi, at page 59 of his book “Khilafah in theory and Practice”⁹ writes: “Historical reports are generally anti-*Umayyad* because they were narrated, collected, and preserved during the Abbasid Khilafah by prejudiced reporters. Naturally, there are so many charges against them. Some prominent (charges) are that they made the Khilafah hereditary within the *Umayyad* family; that they were oppressors; that they attacked the holy cities of Mecca and Medina; that they

prevented non-Muslims to accept Islam by charging the *Jizya* [Taxes] to them; that they ruled by force and tyranny and that they usurped public treasury converting it into a private property.”¹⁰ He continues, “On the basis of these charges leveled against the *Umayyads*, a distinction between *al-Khilafah ar-Rashida* (the rightly-guided caliphate) ¹¹ and *al-Khilafah al-Umawiyyah* (the Umayyad caliphate), is vehemently made so much so that many scholars are not ready to call the *Umayyad* rulers as *Khulafa* (caliphs) and their rule as the *Khilafah*. They call them rulers [*Muluk*; kings] and their system of governance as the monarchy [*Mulukiyyah*].¹² A pertinent question arises here whether the charges of these scholars or the populist theories about the *Umayyad* rule are correct leading to the main question with regard to the Islamic *Khilafah*.¹³

If Mr. Ghulam Nabi is to be taken to be correct in his elucidation, then most of the *Sunni* Islamic literature will become suspect and unreliable. This raises another pertinent question as to why it should not similarly be assumed that the historical reports were indeed narrated, collected, and preserved by prejudiced reporters during the *Umayyad khilafah*. In effect, these assumptions will discredit all the reports collected during the *Umayyad* as well as the *Abbasid* periods. Once this happens, no record of the Prophet’s time, the *Sunna* would be available to the *Sunnis*, while the only Islamic literature to survive would be *Shiite* literature which traces its authority from the Immaculate and Infallible Masumin (a.s.), to the Prophet (S).

The present day tendency of people like Mr. Ghulam Nabi is probably due to the fact that, from times past, the *Shias* often relied on *Sunni* Islamic literature to support the *Shiite Creed*. Now these *Sunni* sources are sought to be wiped out by editing or at least rendering their suspect, only to withdraw the support they brazenly provided to *Shiite* theology. In this process, they attempt to conceal the atrocities committed by Yazid and accuse Imam Husayn (a.s.) of brewing a revolt.

Mr. Ghulam Nabi writes, “*Changes and charges apart, basic objective of the Umayyads was to maintain the unity of the Islamic Ummah and Muslim State. They were living in a time when uprising and insurrection started to shake off the unity of the Muslim world to eradicate or to expunge the civil wars the Umayyads maintained their rule within their own family by making their sons and brothers as their heir apparent.*”¹⁴

By saying this, Mr. Ghulam Nabi attempts to maintain the proposition that the *Caliph*, be he virtuous or vicious, once seated in power by whatever means, should be obeyed implicitly.¹⁵ Anyone opposing such a *Caliph* should be considered to have bred discord in Islam and therefore liable to be eliminated for the sake and unity of Islam. If this position is correct, then in the entire history of Islam Mu’awiya was the first person to take up arms against a rightly guided and duly elected *Caliph*. Instead of condemning, Mr. Ghulam Nabi, justifies family rule and atrocities initiated by Mu’awiya and perpetuated by his *Umayyad* successor. Mu’awiya was the first to divide Islam in the first instance to grab power, by opposing the person in authority. Yet, Mr. Ghulam Nabi attributes an honest intention to the *Umayyads* of trying to maintain unity in Islam.

The writer appears to be willfully ignorant of historical occasions when objections were taken by such highly respected person of the day, such as Aa’isha, Abdullah ibn Umar, Abdullah ibn Abbas, Abdullah ibn az-Zubair and a host of others when Mu’awiya sought to nominate his son Yazid, sowing the seed for family rule over Muslims.

For the *Shias* their faith is simple. They rely only on the designated twelve *Khulafa* who are attested by the Qur’an as being Immaculate. Imam Husayn (a.s.) is the third of the twelve Immaculate and infallible Imams. His martyrdom was not a secret affair. It was witnessed by thousands of people of all faiths. Once again, the *Umayyads* are spreading their net. The result is that Muslims are sought to be lured into the Satanic trap of accusing Imam Husayn (a.s.) of attempting to revolt and justifying his massacre as a necessity to protect Islam.

Much is sought to be made out of the silence of the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) and other nobles of *Mecca* and *Medina* during the black days of the *Harra* incident. The insinuation is that the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) acquiesced in or at least did not object either the *Harra* incident or the perpetrator of the incident.^{[16](#)}

The argument is silly because in the present day context, future historians would be justified in writing that all the Muslim countries approved the activities of Israel against its Muslim neighbors. In a fallacious conclusion, such thinking would lend credence to assume that God, by his silence, approves the acts of every tyrant and therefore the tyrant would not be punished. The oppressed were advised to bear the atrocities with patience. Such fatalism was imbibed into the Muslim mind only to absolve the rulers of the time from the atrocities they perpetrated. This again undermines the very concept of Divine Justice and the reward or punishment so repeatedly promised in the Qur’an.

We should understand, in the correct perspective, without prejudice and with reliance upon historical facts, the circumstances in and the cause for which Imam Husayn (a.s.) sacrificed his life along with his infant son and other martyrs. There can be no justification to kill the infant with arrows. There cannot be argument as to why the infant’s body was exhumed, its head severed and mounted on a lance to be paraded from Karbala to Damascus. We should also realize that the cruelty with which the noble ladies and children from the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) were treated after *Ashura*, had great silencing effect on the Muslims. Every despot rules by the extent of the cruelty he and his cronies practice and the terror they generate. Yazid heads the list of all tyrants and despots. To justify him is to abet him.

It is high time that we refresh our memories with the Facts and Philosophy behind the battle at Karbala, in which Imam Husayn (a.s.) was forced to fight against a huge army with the support of only a handful of his relatives and followers. The infant *Ali al-Asghar*’s martyrdom is an eloquent proof of the barbarity and injustice of the enemy, which people are now trying to render suspect as a prelude to obliterating history.

My ancestors bore the brunt of Aurangzeb’s tyranny at Bijapur, when they were impaled in walls merely because they adored the Masumin (a.s.). They had to resort to dissimulation [*Taqia*]. Only since 1958,

my family declared its *Shiite* origin and practice. Even in these enlightened times in several countries like Iraq, the murder of *Shias* is considered a religious duty. The *Shias* do not seek retribution. They only protest against the mutilation or suppression of truth.

I was fortunate to have the guidance of my brother Sayyid Muhammad Musavi, retired Professor of English. Any amount of thanks will not relieve me of my obligation to him. I am obliged and thankful to Sayyid Zameer Ahmed Abedi alias Husayn, Editor / Proprietor of *Alawiyat*, [an excellent monthly magazine] for his assistance in taking out references and for his valuable suggestions in improving the form and substance of this humble effort.

A.K. Ahmed

August 2006

1st Sha'ban, 1427 AH

- [1.](#) Qur'an, 33:33.
- [2.](#) Qur'an, 76:30, 81:29.
- [3.](#) Qur'an, 2:30.
- [4.](#) Dr. Ghulam Nabi, 'Khilafah – In Theory and Practice', p.21 quoting at-Tabari's *Jami'ul Bayan*, vol. 1 p. 449–451.
- [5.](#) At-Tabaris' *Tarikh*, vol. 2 p .460, Ibn Hisham's *Seerah*, vol. 4 P. 34, ibn Kathir's *al- Bidaya*, vol. 6 p. 303, ibn al-Athir's *al Kamil*, vol 2, page 129.
- [6.](#) *Musnad* of Ahmed bin Hanbal, vol 1 p.10, *Muqaddimah* of ibn Khaldun, Tr. Rosenthal, vol. 1 p.388–89.
- [7.](#) Qur'an, 10:15.
- [8.](#) See commentaries of the Shia as well as the Sunni on the verse 33 of Sura 33 al-Ahzaab.
- [9.](#) Adam Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi. [2005].
- [10.](#) Mawdudi, *Khilafato Mulukiya*, Delhi, 1974, pp. 145–175.
- [11.](#) The first four caliphs after the Prophet (S).
- [12.](#) Mawdudi, *Khilafato Mulukiya*, Delhi, 1974.
- [13.](#) 'Khilafa in theory and Practice' by Ghulam Nabi, page 59, Adam Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi [2005].
- [14.](#) Ibid., p.65–6.
- [15.](#) Ibid., p. 112, quoting Muhammad Fu'ad Abdul Baqi, p.79.
- [16.](#) Dr. Ghulam Nabi's *Khilafa in Theory & Practice*, p.69, quoting Ibn Kathir, vol. 8, p.232–233.

Introduction to the First Edition

Imam Husayn ibn Ali (a.s.) had to quit Medina because the Yazidite army wanted to kill him. Yazid demanded a complete submission to his tyrannical regime. The Imam (a.s.), as the personification of *Haq* (Righteousness), the lofty similitude of the Almighty – the *Noor* (Light), refused to accept the supremacy of the Apollyon. According to the Qur'an,[1](#) if *Haq* bows down to earthly demands, there will be utter corruption and chaos in heaven and earth and their inhabitants. Therefore, God's ambassador, the personification of *Haq*, the very essence and symbol of Truth, never submit to the evil powers. Thus it is that Imam Husayn (a.s.), like his father Imam Ali (a.s.) and other prophets of yore and the Imams who

succeeded him, never submitted to the tyrannical regimes of their times. Noah, Abraham, Moses, Zechariah and Jesus all suffered at the hands of the tyrants, but never submitted to their demand to abandon their mission of propagating the faith in One Unique God who will raise the dead and hold everyone to account.

While leaving Medina, Imam Husayn (a.s.) explained: "I leave Medina to bid the good and to forbid the wrong [al-Amr bil Ma'roof, wen-Nahi anil Munkar].² This in fact is the entire corpus of religion and the quintessence of Truth and the fundamental philosophy of faith. Imam Ali (a.s.) said that every worship is like a droplet in the abysmal ocean when compared to al-Amr bil Ma'roof and an-Nahi anil Munkar.

Karbala is an eternal Truth where *Haq* could not be coerced into submission, even at the cost of sacrificing lives. When shown a preview of the events that were to take place at Karbala, from Adam (a.s.) down to every succeeding Prophet (S), it was to admit the greatness of Husayn's sacrifice.³

The afflictions that Imam Husayn (a.s.) had to face and which were echoed in the voice of Lady Zainab in her mission [as attempted to be portrayed by Mr. A.K. Ahmed] were, in fact already prophesied. Karbala is an ocean. No single book or in fact any number of books can fully do justice to the subject. Mr. A.K. Ahmed deserves to be complimented for his effort. He has been working on the subject for over three years. As a friend, he has an interesting personality. Being a close relative of my brother Mr. Asghar Sa'eed, I have had great moments when I could bridge up the aesthetic distance'.

25th Rajab, 1427 AH

Sayyid Muhammad Ali Musavi

[1.](#) Qur'an, 23:17.

[2.](#) Haeri's Balaghatal Husayn, Tr. In Urdu by Baquer Naqvi, P. 108–118, Lucknow, 1.

[3.](#) Qur'an, 57:22, Bihar, vol. 2 p. 34– 35, Nawasikhut Tawarikh, vol. 6, p.470–471.

Preface to the Second Edition

All praise belongs to Allah, the Sublime, the Merciful, Who provides guidance through His Chosen Ones (S), who are Immaculate and therefore Infallible. As the Vicegerents of Allah on the earth, they wished, said, or did only that which Allah pleased, and in turn in His Majesty, Allah declared their words, deeds and wishes to be His Will.

I did not expect the first edition to go out of stock so soon. We are thankful to the Masumin (a.s.) for their blessings.

Fallible as I am, there were several mistakes, though not in content, that needed to be rectified. I have

carried out the correction to the extent of my limitations. I have added two important Chapters in this edition. Chapter 25 deals with the incidents relating to the burial after Ashura, 61 AH. Chapter 27 deals with the Persecution of the Shia through the centuries. The last mentioned chapter is relevant in the context of the present liberal atmosphere in several countries, which tend to obliterate the torture and suffering the Shia were put to, throughout history, even as lately as the last decade when Saddam carried out wholesale annihilation of thousands of Shias.

Through the ages, our ancestors had preserved and passed on the Shiite traditions at the risk of their lives, by word of mouth, from one generation to another, fearing at every step, as to which relative, which friend would betray them to the government of the time. I have heard the Moulvis at Madras, at the end of the day of the procession on the seventh of Muharram, thanking the Government for allowing us to openly mourn Imam Husayn (a.s.). We tend to forget that during our ancestor's times it was a crime to mourn for Imam Husayn (a.s.) and people were executed for it. The sacrifices made by our ancestors should not be forgotten, for they are the very foundation on which our faith has been preserved.

I heartily welcome any suggestions, corrections etc. that will be certainly incorporated to bring out a more comprehensive edition.

I thank the Almighty and the Masumin (a.s.) and pray that in their Benevolence and Grace, they may forgive my lapses and accept this humble effort.

A.K. Ahmed

20th March 2007

9th Rabee'ul Awwal, 1428 AH

Chapter 1: Preamble

The battle at Karbala is a well-known tragedy in the human history. It is not fiction or legend, but a historical fact, chronicled by several historians who were present in the battlefield, of whom Abu Makhnaf an independent reporter and Hamid ibn Muslim, the imbedded reporter of Yazid's army, are the best known.

The battle at Karbala is unique in several respects. At Karbala, Imam Husayn (a.s.) changed the very meaning and connotation of the terms 'victory' and 'defeat', 'life' and 'death'. He and his small group of his companions redefined human nature itself. They redefined the limits of human endurance of sufferings for a noble cause. In sacrificing their lives, they set an example to those who fight against anarchy and materialism to protect the freedom and independence of mankind. At Karbala, the conqueror became the loser and the vanquished became the victor. By sacrificing their lives, the martyrs

of Karbala became immortal, while Yazid by killing them was erased out of the good books of history.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) showed that numbers and odds do not matter. What really matters, is the propriety, nobility and nature of the cause itself. Imam Husayn (a.s.) showed that truth and righteousness are ineffaceable and that the killing of a few persons, does not and cannot obliterate the truthfulness and nobility of their cause.

Before Imam Husayn (a.s.) and his companions sacrificed their lives in the battle at Karbala, a victorious person was the one who stood with a fluttering banner in his hand, while the vanquished lay slain on the ground, his flag lying limp beside him. The victor assumed the mantle of a successful mission, while the loser was clothed with the infamy of defeat and his unjust cause. Success in the battle was proof of victory of justice over anarchy and oppression. Victory was synonymous with a just and popular cause and the victor commanded the love, adoration and respect of the public. The victorious and their cause became immortal. The vanquished was buried in history, only to be remembered as a lesson to posterity, his defeat considered the defeat of his unjust cause.

Mothers loved to name their children after the victor and shunned the name of the vanquished. The victorious became heroes and the vanquished were treated as villains in the everlasting memory of a nation, country, tribe or culture. The epics, Iliad, Maha Bharatha, and Ramayana are some examples, depicting truth and justice as personified in the triumphant hero.

All these concepts were changed by Imam Husayn (a.s.). For the first and perhaps the last time in history, the battle of Karbala established that the vanquished might also be the victorious in his cause. The triumphant were the ones who lay beheaded in the battlefield, their lifeless bodies, proclaiming the victory of a living cause of immortal truth.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) and his small group of companions redefined human nature itself. Generally, power and wealth attract people anxious to pick up the crumbs. Those who lose power or wealth, find only deserters. Karbala reversed this notion. None from the small group of Imam Husayn's companions deserted him, though they knew that at the end of the day only death and no worldly gain awaited them. On the other hand, even at the last moment before the battle commenced, several warriors from Yazid's huge army, crossed over to Imam Husayn's camp, despite knowing fully well that only death awaited them though worldly gain in the form of the spoils of war would have been within their easy reach, at the end of the day.

It is natural for every person facing immediate and imminent threat to his life, to seek and gather people for his support and assistance. It is more so where a war is planned and the leader gathers as many men as he could find to form an army capable of facing the threat.

Quite contrary to this human nature, Imam Husayn (a.s.) at every stage of his journey from *Medina* to *Karbala*, dissuaded people from joining him, saying that what Yazid sought was only his blood.

It is obvious that, firstly, Imam Husayn (a.s.) was convinced of the threat to his life and yet dissuaded people from joining him to form an army; secondly, he had no intention of waging a war; thirdly, he wanted to avoid bloodshed or at least to mitigate the loss of life; lastly, by taking ladies, children, his close relatives, a few aged companions, and the least number of able bodied youth, Imam Husayn (a.s.) wanted to show that though the small band of people held no threat to his empire, the cruel, atrocious, unjust and evil nature of Yazid and his huge army would certainly commit the most horrendous murder and atrocities without any excuse..

Imam Husayn (a.s.) showed that truth and justice do not always lie on the side of the victorious majority. He showed that numbers do not count and a handful of persons, standing up to oppression at the cost of their lives, do in fact represent truth, justice, independence, and freedom. He showed that truth is irrepressible, eternal, and would manifest itself even from the trampled and lifeless bodies of the martyr. Their death is not defeat but is in fact the victory of truth, righteousness, justice, and the very spirit of freedom of mankind.

In as much as its other aspects, the uniqueness of Karbala extends even to its pathos. There is not a single human relationship that was left out from the list of martyrs. The relationship of the patriarch and his family, between the leader and his followers, parent and child, newly wedded husband and wife, between siblings, between cousins and children of cousins, bond between friends, master and servant, rider and steed etc., were all successfully put to test.

Historians, normally, are patronized by the winning party that assumes power and write the chronicles of the victorious. History may also record a few instances of individual valor of some opponent, but popular Historians never espouse the cause of the vanquished. Karbala is unique in this respect also. Without exception, every chronicler records the justness of Imam Husayn's cause, the cruel and unjust abuse of his dead body and the torment that the remaining members of his family and friends, particularly the widows and orphans suffered after the tragedy.

Any historian attempting to eulogize the cause of the defeated forces would be branded a traitor. Such historians and their records would be, mercilessly burnt and put out of circulation. However, at and after Karbala, the atrocities were so open and rampant that Yazid and his evil advisors, despite their tyrannical suppression and torture had no means or courage to prevent the tragedy of Karbala being related, recorded, repeated, and passed on to posterity.

In his speeches, letters, and discussions Imam Husayn (a.s.) made it clear that he was leaving Medina only in response to the call of the *Kufians* who had written thousands of letters and sent hundreds of emissaries complaining that they had no *Imam* to guide them in matters of faith and that, as the *Imam*, it was incumbent upon Husayn (a.s.) to hurry to their guidance. Their complaint against Mu'awiya first, and later against Yazid, was not so much regarding the physical or monetary suffering but against the willful distortion of the principles of Islam. Therefore, it became obligatory for Imam Husayn (a.s.) to leave Medina and go to rescue the faith from being mutilated and corrupted by Mu'awiya and his son Yazid.

There was absolutely no political motive in this.

Later, when al-Hurr's cavalry surrounded Imam Husayn's caravan, sealing off all roads except the one leading to *Kufa*, a false propaganda was made by Yazid that Imam Husayn's journey was an affront to the political power of Yazid. Imam Husayn (a.s.) made it clear that he was invited by the people of *Kufa* for religious guidance and that he had no political aspirations, and said that he would move out to any far-off land beyond the domain of Yazid's rule. This demand to be permitted to go out of Yazid's dominion was repeatedly made by Imam Husayn (a.s.) till his last moments, signifying that he had no political aspirations and that his only intent was to preserve and propagate the faith in its true form, as revealed by his grandfather the Prophet (S).¹

For those who believe in miracles, numerous instances of the Divinely inspired foresight of Imam Husayn (a.s.) and several miracles performed by him are found in Karbala. Collecting water, in advance for al-Hurr and his army, long before they arrived thirsty; the sudden shying of the horse and throwing the taunting enemy soldier into the burning ditch; the fountain of water which gushed when Imam Husayn (a.s.) struck his toe on the ground to show his daughter Sakina (a.s.) that he had the supernatural power to procure water; the intense and valiant fight by Imam Husayn (a.s.), a man fifty-eight years old, before whose eyes his friends and children were slain; the reciting of Qur'an by the severed head of Imam Husayn (a.s.) throughout its long journey from *Karbala* to *Kufa* to Damascus and back; the radiant light that was witnessed by hundreds, which emanated from the niche wherever the severed head of Imam Husayn (a.s.) was kept during night and many more such instances of supernatural events are recorded in history. The recitation of the Qur'an by the severed heads carried on lances or slung in the necks of horses and camels provide the only proof of the Qur'anic verse that declares that those who are martyred in the way of God, are not to be counted among the dead, but that they are very much alive and are sustained by God.²

Even today, one can witness Husayn's miracle, when mourners inflict themselves with blades, pieces of broken glass bottles picked up from the ground, chains and swords, and exchange those articles without even cleaning before using them in the *Muharram* processions. Their wounds are cured without recourse to medicine. Another unique and miraculous feature is that, even to this day, the processions consist of heart patients, diabetic patients, and those who suffer from severe hypertension. None of them is known to have died from the self-inflicted injuries or breast beating in the religious processions during the commemoration of Imam Husayn's martyrdom, anywhere in the world. All these are signs of Imam Husayn's continuing miracles. While self-flagellation is considered in Christianity as a means of expiating for sins, it is practiced only by highly revered priests. Among the *Shias*, it is a common practice during *Muharram*.

Curiously, it is called a 'battle', but there were no two armies waging war at *Karbala*. On one side was Imam Husayn (a.s.) with a few tens of persons, including an infant six months old and several teenagers. Opposing this small group was a huge army of infantry, cavalry, and other regiments. The

nobility and intensity of purpose and the vigour and valour with which the small band of people fought a huge army, gave it the shape of an unforgettable epic battle. Today, Imam Husayn (a.s.) and his small band of supporters are universally acknowledged as innocent martyrs, while Yazid and his huge army are disgraced for their abominable acts of large-scale massacre and torture of men, women and children.

Yet, Imam Husayn's battle at *Karbala* is often distorted by prejudices created over centuries of adverse propaganda carried on by suppressive regimes. The consequent mutilation of real facts led to the dilution of knowledge of the historic events, resulting in an unfounded belief that it was a battle between two powers for succession fought between the Umayyads represented by Yazid son of Mu'awiya, and the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) represented by Imam Husayn (a.s.).

The Shrine of Imam Husayn (a.s.) was razed to the ground at least on eight occasions. Even the lotus tree that marked the grave was cut down and the soil tilled, so the people may not be able to identify the spot. Yet after every demolition, a new and more elaborate structure came up. How did people identify the spot in the absence of any trace? It is reported that the aroma and fragrance emanating from the spot lured people to identify the spot. In the famous *Hadith of al-Kisa*, Imam Ali, Imam Hasan, and Imam Husayn (a.s.) detected the presence of the Prophet (S) from the aroma and fragrance that emanated from the body of the Prophet (S). On another occasion, the Noble Lady Fatima (a.s.) wanted to give a present to one of her friends who was getting married. The Prophet (S) took out a few drops of his sweat that was applied to the bride. Not only the bride but also seven generations among her children carried the incense of the Prophet's sweat. Jabir ibn Abdullh al-Ansari was blind when he visited the shrine at Karbala soon after *Ashura*. He identified the grave by the aroma and fragrance that emanated from it.

Among the Twelver Shia, their *Majilises* [meetings], are veritable universities of their theology, where the basic Shiite tenets, conceptual and philosophical teachings of the twelve Imams (a.s.) in addition to scientific and historical facts revealed by the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) are taught and orally transmitted. An early effort in English, in the detailed study of the life of Imam Husayn (a.s.) and the battle of Karbala, available perhaps only in some libraries, was the pioneering work of my mentor, master and guide, the late Al-haj Moulvi Mirza Ghulam Abbas Ali Sahib of Madras. He was a lecturer of the then Government Muhammadan College [Govt. Arts College], Madras. He was well versed in Arabic, Persian, and English. He was also a great orator among the *Twelver Shia* of South India.

In the preface to his book '*Life of Husayn the Saviour*' Alhaj Moulvi Mirza Ghulam Abbas Ali wrote: "Several authors have attempted to give vivid pictures of stories, whose chronology is not yet traceable and whose antiquity has led many to doubt the reality and genuineness of the stories themselves and to suspect them as of the production of intelligent heads for the inculcation of high moral and ethical principles to the common folk in the most appealing and dramatic fashion. But eye witness facts, as true as the day, occurred a thousand years ago among the so called 'most intelligent people of the middle ages', recorded in history by authors of the age, are relegated to darkness and are not compiled to form

a readable volume in English literature.”

S. V. Mir Ahmed Ali Sahib Vafakhani is another great luminary from Madras, which fortunately is also my place of birth. S.V. Mir Ahmed Ali Sahib joined clerical service in the Government Muhammadan College Madras and later obtained his Bachelor’s Degree in Oriental languages and also his M.Ed in Psychology. Mir Ahmed Ali Sahib’s English translation with commentary of the Holy Qur’an printed by *Tahrike Tarsile Qur’an* from New York in 2002, is quite popular, especially with reference to the Holy Bible. He was a contemporary of Mirza Ghulam Abbas Ali Sahib. At page 11[a] of his Introduction to the Translation of the Holy Qur’an, S.V. Mir Ahmed Ali Sahib mentions several contemporary leading Shia scholars of Madras and refers to Alhaj Mirza Ghulam Abbas Ali Sahib and his book ‘Life of Husayn’, which was first printed in 1931.

It appears that S.V. Mir Ahmed Ali Sahib Vafakhani had first published in the year 1925, a booklet of 25 pages under the title ‘*The King of Martyrs*’ which was reprinted four times by the year 1964. Its popularity prompted him to write a second book ‘*Husayn – the Savior of Islam*’ which was first printed in 1964. Its second edition is printed by Ansariyan Publications, Qum, Iran in the year 2005. This book makes many references to the Bible and Christian dogma in regard to the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (a.s.).

Another book on the subject is the excellent work of Sheikh Abbas al Qummi, under the title ‘*Nafasul Mahmoor*’. It has been translated into Urdu. Aeiaz Ali T. Bhujwala translated it into English. The best book in Urdu on the subject is ‘*Akhbar-e-Matam*’ published in Ramadan, 1947 A.D. It is available in the Salar Jung Library, Hyderabad. A very enlightening, popular and well-researched book on the subject in Urdu is Bilgirami’s ‘*Zibhe Azeem*’.

Ansariyan Publication, Qum, Iran has published in 2002 a very well documented and well-written book of Yasin T. al Jibouri. The book in English bears the title ‘*Karbala and Beyond*’ is very useful, particularly with reference to the incidents that took place after *Ashura*. Other books published by Ansariyan Publications are, the English translation of Ali Nazari Munfareed’s book under the title ‘*Imam Husayn (a.s.) and the Saga of Karbala*’ and Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi’s book, translated into English by Sayyid Ather Husayn S.H. Rizvi under the title ‘*Understanding Kerbala*’.

The popular source for eyewitness accounts of the battle at Karbala are the ‘*Maqaatil*³ of Abu Makhnaf, and Hamid ibn Muslim, the latter being a scribe embedded with the army of Yazid. They meticulously recorded not only the events but also the conversation, sermons and challenges in the battlefield called ‘*Rajaz*’.⁴ If anyone of these two chronicles omitted a particular event or a dialogue or sermon, found elsewhere, it may be due to the scribe’s absence from that place and time. But, over all, their records are authentic and have never been disputed as the coinage of a fertile imagination.

The chief source for the Twelver Shia are the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) – members of the Prophet’s family – who were present at Karbala in Imam Husayn’s camp and related the correct versions which was then passed on to successive generations by the Infallible and Immaculate Imams (a.s.). The present book is

an attempt to understand the correct facts and philosophy behind the Battle of Karbala, in the *Shiite* perspective.

[1.](#) Biharul Anwar, Vol. 44 p. 329.

[2.](#) Qur'an, 2:154, 3:169, 3:195.

[3.](#) Maqtal literally means the 'Manner (or\and Place) of Massacre'.

[4.](#) Rajaz is the customary manner in which an Arab warrior addresses his opponent, in single combat, introducing himself, his lineage, his military exploits, combat acumen and success in earlier wars.

Chapter 2: Historical Background

One has to look beyond the canvas of the battlefield itself, into the early days of Islam, in order to understand the cause and the facts and circumstances, which led Imam Husayn (a.s.) to face an enormous army at Karbala and the reason and philosophy behind his refusal to submit to an apparently simple demand for allegiance to Yazid. From a reading of the following pages, the reader will understand that the seed for the battle of Karbala was sown long prior to the birth of Imam Husayn (a.s.) and later the battle was ultimately forced upon him. This is brought out by the repeated assertions of Yazid's army that though Imam Husayn (a.s.) himself had done nothing against them or against Islam, they had gathered to seek revenge for their ancestors who were killed by his father Imam Ali (a.s.) in the battles of *Badr*, *Uhud*, *al-Khandaq* and *Honain*.

During the life of the Prophet (S) all disputes, whether they led to a fight or not, were between believers and non-believers or the opponents of Islam. Chief among the opponents of Muhammad (S) and the religion he preached, were the *Banu Umayya* (the Umayyads) headed by Abu Sufyan the father of Mu'awiya and grandfather of Yazid. Abu Sufyan's wife Hind is the most infamous woman in the history of Islam, who plucked out and chewed the raw liver of the martyr Hamza in the battle of 'Uhud'.[1](#)

History does not record any serious conflict, except petty jealousies, between the *Banu Umayya* and the *Banu Hashim* (the Hashemites), prior to the proclamation of Islam. The *Banu Umayya* never believed the Prophet (S) to be the Messenger of God. They suspected that under the cloak of religion, a mighty empire was in the making under their cousin Muhammad (S). The *Banu Umayya* only desired and planned to appropriate the leadership of the empire from Prophet Muhammad (S). They had nothing to do with Muhammad's Message. Before ostensibly accepting Islam, when Abu Sufyan saw the zealous followers of the Prophet (S), he exclaimed, "*Indeed our cousin has built a powerful army.*"

The Prophet's uncle Abbas rebuked Abu Sufyan saying that it was not an army but a small group of devout followers of the Message of Muhammad, the Prophet (S). Abu Sufyan replied, "*Call it by whatever name you will, for me it is a mighty army with immense potential to create an empire.*" Abu Sufyan's attitude never changed throughout his life, though he claimed to have professed Islam and

ingratiated himself among the companions of the Prophet (S). Years later, when Uthman became the third *Caliph*, Abu Sufyan jumped with joy seeing his dream come true in the shape of the leadership of Islam falling in the hands of his kin, Abu Sufyan gleefully advised Uthman: “Now that the Caliphate has fallen into your hands, toss it around like a ball and fearlessly perpetuate it among your own kin, the Banu Umayya, for there is neither paradise nor hell.”²

The real cause for the jealousy and blood feud between Banu Umayya and Banu Hashim is best set out in the words of Abu Sufyan’s son Mu’awiya. It is reported that *Mutawwaf* and his father *al-Mughira* visited Mu’awiya who was reclining on his couch, and advised him to be considerate and less harsh towards the *Ahlul Bayt*, now that he was in power. At that very moment, the *mu’azzin* (the caller who calls out the azan) shouted the call for prayers. Mu’awiya abruptly sat up and declared: “*It is impossible that I take kindly to the Ahlul Bayt. What memory do I leave behind when I die? Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman ruled for long periods during their caliphates. After their death, does anybody remember them, except occasionally to say that they were the caliphs? Many people benefited from Uthman but they have forgotten his bounties and even what had happened to him. When I die, the same thing will happen and I will be completely forsaken. But, look what Hashim’s offspring has done – five times every day, till Doomsday the minarets of every mosque around the world will echo, twenty four hours every day, the proclamation ‘I bear witness that Muhammad is the prophet of God’. What difference does it make if I lead a pious or vicious life?.*”³

A similar incident is reported with reference to Mu’awiya’s father Abu Sufyan. It is related that Abu Sufyan had grown old and blind. He was sitting in the mosque along with Abdullah ibn Abbas and several others. The *Mu’azzin* started calling for the prayers. When the *Mu’azzin* reached that part of the call testifying the Prophethood of Muhammad (S), Abu Sufyan said, “*Look where my cousin Muhammad has placed his name.*” Imam Ali (a.s.) who heard this retorted, “*Muhammad placed his name not out of his own fancy but as commanded by God.*”⁴ This rancor in the hearts of the *Banu Umayya* that Prophethood is only a pretense to worldly power persisted through out centuries and continues to do so till date.

Though Abu Sufyan, Mu’awiya, Yazid and their ilk spared no effort, they could not prevent the proclamation of the Prophet’s name and Mission, five times every day, all over the world in the *Azan*. Regarding this, the Qur’an reveals, “*They desire to blow out [extinguish] the light of Allah, but Allah seeks to perfect His light, though the infidels abhor it.*”⁵ Long after the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) had returned to Medina after the tragedy of Karbala, Ibrahim bin Talha bin Obeidillah asked the fourth Imam al-Sajjad (a.s.): “*Who won the battle at Karbala?.*” Imam al-Sajjad (a.s.) replied, “*When the time for prayers comes and when the Azan and Eqama [the two calls before every prayer] are called out, you will know who the winner is.*”⁶

Having failed to remove the Prophet’s name or substitute some other name in its place in the *Azan*, Mu’awiya invented a novel way of taking revenge against the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.), particularly Imam Ali

(a.s.). Mu'awiya made it obligatory, in all the provinces under his control, that five times every day, after prayers Ali (a.s.) should be abused and cursed from the pulpits [over seventy thousand pulpits according to some reckoning] by the leaders of the congregations. Inventors of stories demeaning Ali (a.s.) or coining false traditions in favour of the *Banu Umayya* were lavishly rewarded. Abu Huraira and Amr ibn al-Aass earned so much wealth by this process that Umar had to confiscate their huge unaccounted wealth.⁷

Some of the close companions doubted the wisdom and infallibility of the Prophet (S), for they considered him to be an ordinary mortal like themselves.⁸ Historians record the fact that in his last moments when the Prophet (S) demanded a pen and parchment to write down his last will and testament, Umar, one of the companions, not only refused to oblige but also even prevented others under threat from complying, stating that the Prophet (S) had become delirious in his death throes and that the Qur'an is sufficient for guidance of Muslims.

After the Prophet (S), serious dissensions were created as to succession. One party asserted that the Prophet (S) had clearly nominated his successor while the opposite party contended that the Prophet (S) did not nominate anyone and had left the matter of succession in the hands of the Muslims. The nomination of Imam Ali (a.s.) by the Prophet (S), which they had personally witnessed on numerous occasions, was very fresh in the minds of Muslims. They saw the Prophet (S) nominate Imam Ali (a.s.) from the very first day when he invited the tribe of Quraish to the 'Feast of Youm ad-Dar (day of warning)'.⁹ Again, for reciting before the non-Muslims of Mecca the Chapter 'Bara'a' which in effect sets out the policy in Islam, Ali (a.s.) was entrusted with the task while the Prophet (S) declared that God had ordained that such an important task could be carried out either by the Prophet (S) himself or by Ali (a.s.);¹⁰ during the confrontation with the Christians of Najran in what is called 'Mubahala'; and on the occasion of his last pilgrimage at a place called Khum the Prophet (S) nominated Imam Ali (a.s.) as his successor and made obedience and love of Imam Ali (a.s.) obligatory on the entire Muslim Ummah.¹¹

As the very first step towards nullifying the Prophet's nomination of Ali (a.s.) as his successor, over the dead body of the Prophet (S), Umar unsheathed his sword and brandishing it, shouted that he would behead anyone who said that the Prophet (S) was dead. Umar declared that Muhammad could not die and that he had simply gone, like Moses before, to meet his Lord.¹² Thus, very cleverly an impression was created that the question of succession to the Prophet (S) had not yet opened, since the Prophet (S) was not dead!

Shortly after the receipt of the news of the Prophet's passing away, Abu Bakr returned to Medina, from Suk where he was living with his newly wedded wife. He proclaimed that Umar's contention that the Prophet (S) could not die and that like Moses, he had simply gone to meet the Lord, is quite contrary to the Qur'anic verses which declare that one day, like any other person, Muhammad (S) was also destined to die.¹³

Even as the body of the Prophet (S) was being prepared by his family members for burial, Umar and

Abu Bakr left for the place called ‘*the Saqifa*¹⁴ of Bani Sa’ida’ as they considered the matter of succession far pressing and urgent than the burial of the Prophet (S).¹⁵ At the Saqifa, Abu Bakr was declared by Umar as the leader [*Caliph*] of the Muslims.¹⁶ Later on when the group returned to the Prophet’s house, they found that he was already buried by Imam Ali (a.s.), his children, relatives, and close companions of the Prophet (S), who performed the funeral rites. The ever-scheming Abu Sufyan unsuccessfully tried to incite Imam Ali (a.s.) by saying that he would support Imam Ali (a.s.) and provide sufficient men and weapons so that Imam Ali (a.s.) might, with Abu Sufyan’s support, challenge Abu Bakr. Imam Ali (a.s.) asked Abu Sufyan to desist from his favorite and evil games of sowing sedition and discord among Muslims. Imam Ali (a.s.) said that Islam was still in its infant state and any precipitate action at that stage, even though justified, would still be harmful to Islam.

For those who aspired to succeed to the Prophet (S), it became necessary to stop repeating, if not completely obliterating from the memory of the public, the numerous occasions when the Prophet (S) nominated Imam Ali (a.s.), openly and publicly as his successor. One of the first orders issued by Abu Bakr on becoming the *Caliph* was that traditions should neither be related, recorded, nor propagated, on the ground that the *Hadiths*, if related, were likely to confuse and disillusion the public. Umar continued this edict and went to the extent of threatening to behead not only those who tried to relate traditions, but also those who listened to them. In fact, Umar imprisoned ibn Mas’ud, Abud Darda, and Abu Mas’ud for relating *Hadith* in defiance of his orders.¹⁷ When Uthman succeeded Umar, he followed the earlier caliphs and continued the embargo on relating, collecting, or publishing *Hadith*.¹⁸

Mu’awiya, during his tyrannical tenure, went one-step further. He not only prohibited relating of any *hadith* extolling the virtues of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.), but also encouraged invention and propagation false and fictitious tales about the Prophet (S) and his progeny (a.s.). Imam Ali (a.s.) was made a special target by bribing people to openly defame and abuse him five times a day from every pulpit. The *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) were portrayed as anti-Islamic mutineers (*baghi*). In addition to this, absurd traditions were invented, intending to extol the virtues of the three caliphs, which in fact were derogatory of the Prophet (S). For example, it was said that Umar asked the Prophet (S) to see that his wives were veiled but the Prophet (S) did not listen to him until the commandment for *hijab* was revealed, in support of Umar.¹⁹ Another tradition related that Satan was not afraid of the Prophet (S), but was mortally scared of Umar.²⁰ Some of the invented traditions were outright slanderous and brought down the honor and dignity of the Prophet (S), so much so that the Prophet (S) came to be portrayed as a sexual pervert.²¹

Mu’awiya, during his long regime, pretended that he was the only surviving relative of the Prophet (S). To some extent, he succeeded in obliterating from the public mind, the existence of the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) in Syria, Iraq, and the newly conquered Spain and Rome. The malicious and false propaganda by Mu’awiya was so intense that when the people of Syria learnt that Imam Ali (a.s.) was martyred while leading the Morning Prayer in the Mosque in Kufa, they exclaimed ‘*What was Ali, who never prayed, doing in the Mosque!*’ As a result of the calumny, in a short span of time people failed to recognize Imam Husayn (a.s.) the beloved grandson of the Prophet (S). Therefore, in every sermon or discussion Imam

Husayn (a.s.) made it a point to introduce himself as the Prophet's grandson and the surviving heir of the Prophet (S).

Abu Sufyan, Mu'awiya, and Yazid changed the philosophy and teachings of Islam. They openly permitted what was prohibited and neglected what was enjoined. Corruption and debauchery in high offices and oppression of the pious and the poor became the order of the day. It is in this context and situation where the hypocrites and opponents of Islam sowed and nurtured the seeds of distortion of Islam, that the Battle of Karbala becomes a milestone in the history of Islam. It is another story that Abu Sufyan, Mu'awiya, and Yazid could not succeed in removing the name of Husayn's grandfather, the Prophet (S), from being proclaimed five times every day. Just as anticipated by Mu'awiya himself, today he is forgotten and if at all remembered, his name is linked only to hypocrisy, cunning, evil, and irreligion. Today, mothers shun naming their children after Mu'awiya or Yazid. It is interesting to note that the word '*Mu'awiya*' though used for a male – the son of Abu Sufyan, literally means 'a bitch'²².

1. Tareekh at-Tabari, vol. 3, p. 22 &23 [s] Egypt, Seeratun Nabi, vol. 1 p. 273, al-Istee'ab, vol. 2 p. 286, al-Majlisi's Hayatul Qulooob, 253.

2. Tarikh at-Tabari, vol. 11, p. 357, al-Mas'udi's Muruj ath-Thahab vol. 1 p. 440, Tarikh al-Khamees, Vol. 2 p. 97, Ask Those who Know, p. 42.

3. Al-Muwafaqiyat, p. 576, al-Mas'udi's Muruj ath-Thahab vol. 2, p. 341, Ibn Abil Hadid, vol. 5, p 130, al-Ghadir, vol. 10, p. 283, Ask Those Who Know, p.43-44.

4. Al-Mas'udi's Muruj ath-Thahab, vol. 6, quoted in Mufti Jafer Husayn's preface to the English translation of Nahjul Balagha, p67.

5. Qur'an, 9:32.

6. Al-Amali of Sheikh at-Tusi, p.66, al-Jibouri's Kerbala & Beyond, p.131.

7. K. Ali, A Study of Islamic History, page 144.

8. Al-Bukhari, vol. 2 p.14, Tareekh al-Khamis by Dayar Bakhti – vol 2 p. 32, Madarijun Nubuwwa, vol. 2 p. 286–287, History of Islam p.357, 358.

9. Musnad of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal vol. 1 p.331, Abul Fida, Part 1, p.116, at-Tabari, vol. 2 p. 217, ibn al-Athir, vol. 2, p.22, Mustadrak of al-Hakim, vol. 2 p. 133, Habib Al-Sayyar, vol. 2, Part 3, p.160, ibn Kathir's Tarikh, vol. 3, p. 40, Kanzul Ummal, vol. 6 p. 392, 397, 401 and 408, Rawdatus Safa, vol. 2 p. 278 and 279, Ibn Taimiya's Minhajus Sunna vol. 4, p. 80, al-Mohibbuddin at-Tabari's ar-Riyadul Nadira, Part 2 chap. 4 Section 6 p. 168, 202, 203.

10. Al-Bukhari, Kitab as-Salaat, p. 238, at-Tabari, vol. 3 p. 154, ibn Sa'd's Tabaqat, vol. 2, Part 1 p. 121, Abul Fida, vol. 1 p.150, Habibus Sayyar, vol. 1, part 3 p. 72, Tarikh al-Khamis, vol. 2, p.156, Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani's Fat-h al- Bari, vol. 8, p.241, Madarijun Nubuwwa, vol. 2, p.492, ibn Khaldun, vol. 3, p. 222–225, Tarikh of ibn Kathir, vol. 7, p. 337, 357, ibn al-Athir, vol. 2 p.111, The Caliphate, p. 58.

11. Sahih of Muslim, vol. 7, p. 122–123, Musnad of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal vol. 3, p. 14,17, 26, and vol. 4, p. 367, 371, vol. 5 p.182, 189, Jalaluddin al-Suyuti's al-Jami'ul Kabir, Kanzul Ummal vol. 6, p.390 and vol. 3 p. 61, Musnad of Abu Dawud p.23 tradition No.154, Amir Ali's Spirit of Islam, Part 2, Ch 8, p. 292–293, The Caliphate, p 178–185.

12. Al-Bukhari, chap., Ashabun Nabi, vol. 2, p. 193, Musnad of Ahmad bin Hanbal vol. 1, p. 334, Tabaqat of ibn Sa'd, vol. 2 Part 2, p.55, Shibli's Al-Faruq, vol. 1, p.65, Ibn Khaldun vol. 2, Supp. P.63, ibn Hisham, vol. 4, p.334, Abul Fida's Qasasul Ambiya, p. 418.

13. Ibn Hajar al-Makki's as-Sawa'iq, p.5, ibn Hisham, vol. 6, p.5.

14. A shed; a covered communal place appropriate for conversation and discussion.

15. Shibli's al-Faruq, vol. 1, p.66 quoting at-Tabari, vol. 3, p.208; Abul Fida's Qasas, p. 417.

16. At-Tabari, Vol. 3, p.200–210, al-Bukhari, Bab Rajm al Hubla, Musnad of Ahmad bin Hanbal vol. 1, p. 55, Ibn Hajar al-Makki's as-Sawa'iq chap. 1 Section 1, p. 5, al-Kamil of ibn al-Athir, vol. 2 p. 124, Tarikh ibn Kathir vol. 5, p.245, al-Mohib

at-Tabari's *ar-Riyadun Nadira*, Part 2, Section 3, p. 164. ibn Hisham, vol. 4, p. 338, *Tadhkiratul Huffaz* by ath-Thahabi – vol. 1 p.2, 3, 5 and 7, *Sunan of ibn Maja*, vol. 1 p. 12, *Sunan of ad-Darimi*, vol. 1 p. 85. Shibli's *al-Faruk*, Part 2, p. 223, 225, Agha Muhammad Sultan Mirza's *The Caliphate* p. 58.

[17.](#) Abdul Salaam al-Nadwi's *Tarikh al-Fiqh al-Islami*, p. 161–162, ath-Thahabi's *Tathkirat al-Huffadh* Vol. 1 p. 7.

[18.](#) *Musnad* of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal vol. 4, p. 64.

[19.](#) Al-Bukhari, vol. 1 p. 46.

[20.](#) Al-Bukhari, vol. 4 p.96, vol. 8 p. 161.

[21.](#) *Sahih* of Muslim, vol. 2, p.157, *Sahih* of al-Bukhari, vol. 1 44, 171, 123, vol. 2 p. 65, 71, 232 and 234, & vol. 4, p.68, vol. 7 p. 29, quoted in *Ask Those Who Know*, p. 67–68.

[22.](#) Cf. Al-Munqid, p. 694.

Chapter 3: The Antagonists

Before the advent of Islam, *Mecca* was an international trade center populated by Jews, Christians, Idol worshippers, atheists, and a motley crowd professing several other philosophies and religions. When the Prophet (S) propagated the concept and ideology of Islam, the immediate opposition was to the concept of One Unique God. Barring atheists, most *Meccans* were willing to accept Muhammad (S) as the Messenger or Representative of God or even as an incarnation of God, for they had inherited such beliefs from their ancestors. What they were unable to digest were the concepts of One Unique God, a life after death, and accountability for one's deeds in an eternal afterlife.[1](#)

Until the advent of Islam, most of the Arabs were idolaters, having a pantheon of three hundred and sixty deities. They could not comprehend the Islamic philosophy of One Unique God. They assumed that by teaching a new philosophy the Prophet (S) was obliquely hankering after worldly power and glory. They offered to make him their leader with as much wealth as he wished in addition to proposals of arranging his marriage with the most beautiful girl of his choice, provided he gave up his Mission. The Prophet (S) refused, saying, “*Even if you put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left hand, I will not give up the Mission to which I am commanded.*”[2](#) Then the *Meccans* enforced a social boycott and later put him to mental and physical torture.

Justice Murtaza Hussain in the footnote to his English translation of Ali Naqi's book, 'The History of Islam' writes, “*The Prophet's message is Islam – submission to the Will of God. Its distinctive features are two: [1] A harmonious equilibrium between the temporal and spiritual [the body and soul], permitting a full enjoyment of all the good that God has created [Qur'an 7:32], enjoining at the same time on everybody duties towards God, such as worship, fasting, charity... etc. Islam was to be the religion of the masses and not merely of the elite. [2] A universality of the call – all the believers becoming brothers and equals without any distinction of class or race or language. 'The only superiority which Islam recognizes is a personal one, based on greater fear of God and greater piety' [Qur'an 49:13].*”[3](#)

Among the *Meccans*, it was the Banu⁴ Umayya (the Umayyads) who bore utmost personal enmity against the Prophet (S), followed by the Banu al-Mughira, and the Banu Makhzum.⁵ Maulana Shibli, a Sunni scholar writes, “*The Prophethood of Muhammad (S) was considered by the family of Bani Umayya as the victory of its opponents, Bani Hashim, and on that account they opposed the Prophet (S) to the maximum.*”⁶

Since the Prophet (S) first preached Islam to the Arabs, they were the first to take a leading part in opposing him and his Message – Islam. *Quraish*, the Prophet’s own tribesmen, took active part in his persecution as they found that Islam was contrary not only to their pagan beliefs but also that it put restrictions upon their vagrant ways of life.

Migration

The Prophet (S) had, during the course of about forty years of his life in *Mecca*, earned the reputation, in the entire community of the *Meccans* without exception, of being truthful (*Sadiq*), honest and trustworthy (*Amin*). In spite of their opposition to his Message, the Prophet (S) was considered the most trustworthy. As a result, they entrusted not only their valuables but also their affairs to the Prophet (S). The fact that the Meccans offered to give unlimited resources and offered to get him married to the wealthiest and most beautiful girl of his choice⁷ shows that, for the *Meccans*, the Prophet (S) was a noble and venerable person. However, what the *Meccans* abhorred was not the Messengership of Prophet Muhammad (S), but the Message he propagated.

The Prophet (S) along with those who had accepted Islam endured severe torture, for over ten years, at the hands of the infidels of *Mecca*. During this period, the persecution and hardened attitude of the *Meccans*, made it difficult to peacefully spread Islam. The Prophet (S) then received the Divine Commandment directing that the oppressed Muslims should migrate to safer places.⁸ Thereupon, some Muslims migrated to Abyssinia. According to Baqir al Majlisi, the number of those who migrated at that time, was either seventy-two or eighty-two men besides women and children.⁹ The pious and peaceful way of Islamic life practiced by the Migrants not only endeared them to the Abyssinians but also brought quite a few converts. This was the first migration in Islam. A group of infidels from *Mecca* met the Abyssinian King and tried to persuade him to hand over the migrants. However, Ja'far, the Prophet’s cousin, put forth a convincing argument against deportation, which earned the appreciation of the King.¹⁰ Negus (the king of Abyssinia) refused to hand over the Muslims to the *Meccans*. The infidels returned disappointed. However, since Abyssinia was far away, the migration did not cause much concern to the infidels of *Mecca*.

When one is faced with oppression, the Qur'an makes migration obligatory upon man. The Qur'an reveals, “*Unto those whom the angels cause to die, having been unjust to themselves, the angels will ask: 'In what state were you (on earth) ?' They will reply, 'We were oppressed in our land'. The angels will say, 'Was not the earth of Allah spacious enough for you to find refuge [from oppression] ?' Hell*

*shall be their home; an evil refuge. Excepted are those such as infirm men, helpless women, and children who have neither the strength nor the means to escape. [Such are] Those [whom] Allah may pardon; He is Ever Pardoning, Forgiving.”*¹¹

Another verse assures, “*Those that have embraced the faith and migrated from their homes and fought for the cause of Allah with their wealth and their persons are held in high esteem by Allah. They are the triumphant ones. Their Lord has promised them joy and mercy, and gardens of eternal bliss where they shall dwell forever.*”¹²

Regarding the *Muhajireen* (migrants) and the *Ansar* (helpers), the Qur'an reveals, “*Those that have embraced the faith and migrated from their homes and fought for the cause of Allah and those that have sheltered them and helped them – they are the true believers. They shall receive Mercy and a generous provision.*”¹³

About those who die during migration the Qur'an reveals: “*He who migrates from his homeland for the sake of Allah and His Prophet (S), and then encounters death, has his assured reward with Allah. Allah is most Forgiving and Merciful.*”¹⁴

In yet another place the Qur'an reveals: “*To those who migrated after they had been persecuted and were patient in their strife, your Lord is surely Forgiving and Merciful.*”¹⁵

Thus, as a first step to protect humankind against oppression, migration is made obligatory, with a Divine promise of safety and abundance in this life and an assured reward in the life to come.

The people of Medina were literate and had already heard from their Jewish and Christian friends about the awaited Redeemer /Savior/Comforter. When news about the Holy Prophet's unique Message reached them, they sought and met the Prophet (S) and were convinced that he was the awaited Redeemer. Not only did they accept Islam, but they also pledged their support to any Muslim who wished to migrate to Medina. The Muslims from Mecca who migrated to Medina are called the *Muhajireen* and the Muslims of Medina who pledged their support to the migrants are called the *Ansar*. The Prophet (S) directed the suffering Muslims to migrate to Medina. Soon, only a few Muslims were left in Mecca.

The infidels of Mecca soon realized that, not yielding to their pressures, the Prophet (S) was already in the process of establishing a center away from Mecca, conducive to the successful propagation of his Mission. They also noticed that several Muslims had already migrated to Medina. Since the Holy Prophet's Mission was anathema to them, the infidels of Mecca collectively hatched a conspiracy to physically eliminate him and thus bring an end to his Mission. They were further emboldened by the sad demise of the Prophet's guardian, guide, and paternal uncle Abu Talib (a.s.), who was the only obstacle in their way of harming the Prophet (S). Within three days of Abu Talib's demise, the Prophet (S) suffered another serious blow in the sad demise of his wife Khadija (a.s.).¹⁶ The Prophet (S) declared the year as 'The Year of Mourning'. The Prophet (S) received the revelation about the plot hatched by

the infidels¹⁷ and the Divine Command to migrate. He appointed Imam Ali (a.s.) as his vicegerent and deputy, handed over all the articles entrusted to him by the *Meccans*, and instructed him to sleep in his place and in the morning to discharge his trust. The infidels surrounded the Prophet's house during night and assumed that it was the Prophet (S) who was sleeping. In the morning, they were surprised to find Imam Ali (a.s.) in the bed instead of the Prophet (S).¹⁸

One of the bodily miracles of the Prophet (S) was that when he walked on soft soil, no footprints were left, while on hard stones his footprints appeared prominently. On his way, the Prophet (S) did not leave any footprints. Thus, the infidels could not have traced the route taken by the Prophet (S). However, Abu Bakr who accompanied the Prophet (S) left his footprints. The Arabs, who were expert trackers, traced the single track of Abu Bakr's footprints to the mouth of a deserted cave. The attempts of the infidels to apprehend the Prophet (S) would have succeeded, but for Divine intervention in which, miraculously, the cave came to be covered with thick cobwebs and a pair of doves sat hatching their eggs in their nest.

There is a general misconception that the plot to kill Muhammad (S) was the cause for his migration. This implies that the Prophet (S) was more concerned with his personal safety than that of his congregation, which is a slur on the Prophet (S). As a result of this misconception, western writers term the Holy Prophet's migration as 'Muhammad's **flight** to Medina'. Some writers use the words 'Muhammad's **escape** to Medina'.

The term '*hijra*', which is used in the Qur'an, is mistranslated as 'flight' or 'escape'. The Arabic word for 'flight' or 'escape' is '*firar*' and not '*hijra*'. The misinterpretation is wanton and mischievous. The implication in the mistranslation is that, fearing for his life the Prophet (S) fled to Medina. If the Prophet (S) were to leave Mecca for his personal safety, he should have been the first to migrate. On the other hand, the Prophet (S) was one of the last persons to leave Mecca, leaving behind Imam Ali (a.s.) and the members of his (the Prophet) family to follow him. By that time, on the instructions of the Prophet (S), all Muslims had already migrated to Medina or at least had left Mecca on their way to Medina.

Every prophet (S) faced with persecution migrated. In fact, the whole community along with Moses (a.s.) migrated. The large-scale migration is called exodus. Historical evidence regarding the Prophet's *Hijra* (migration), completely disproves the notion that it was an impulsive act to save his life. The migration, as noted earlier, was planned long before the Prophet (S) himself migrated to Medina. In fact, it was Imam Ali (a.s.) and the family members of the Prophet (S) who were the last to migrate. From this, it is obvious that the Prophet (S) did not migrate for fear of his life, but it was a planned migration under Divine Command that was carried out systematically over a long period of time.¹⁹ Therefore, it is not an impulsive action on the part of the Prophet (S), for the Prophet (S), of his own accord, does not even speak, let alone act out of his personal desire [Qur'an 53:3].

Under the Divine Command, the Prophet (S) was among the last to migrate to Medina. Therefore, it is evident that the plot of the infidels to assassinate the Prophet (S) was the result of their realization that most Muslims had already migrated and the Prophet (S) himself was about to do so. To say that the

Prophet (S) migrated because of the plot of the infidels of Mecca to kill him, is absolutely fallacious and a historical subversion of facts, introduced by later historians under the rule of *Banu Umayya*, *Banu Abbas*, and *Banu Fatima*. The falsehood is carried on till date, due to ignorance and slavish following of earlier misguided historians.

During that time, the Jewish tribes of *Bani Quraydhah*, *Bani an-Nadheer*, and *Bani Qaynuqa*' in addition to some smaller ones, formed part of the population of Medina. They were aware that their sacred scriptures foretold the coming of the Comforter–Prophet. However, as they feared that their power would be lost or at least minimized, they chose not to openly accept Muhammad (S) as the awaited Prophet. Their skills at astrology warned them that the new religion would soon reach great heights. Therefore, the Jewish tribes of Medina preferred to enter into a peace treaty with the Prophet (S). The terms of the treaty were reduced into writing and many copies of the document were distributed between the parties.

According to the early Shia historian Ali bin Ibrahim bin Hashim, under the treaty it was mutually agreed that firstly, in the event of an attack by people from outside Medina, the Jews would not support the outsiders and secondly within Medina the Jews and Muslim would not interfere with the affairs of each other. Other historians state that there were as many as thirty-five covenants in the treaty. The infidels of Mecca learnt of the treaty and considered it a defeat for them and a great victory for Muslims. At Medina, Islam spread quickly. The Prophet (S) proclaimed a bond of brotherhood between Muslims, who formed a well-knit fraternity, pursuing a peaceful and God-fearing life.

The peace-treaty between Muslims and the Jews of Medina created an impotent rage among the infidels of Mecca. Historians unanimously record that Yazid's grandfather Abu Sufyan, who was the chief among *Banu Umayya*, not being content with torturing Muslims at Mecca, consistently incited the people of Mecca to wage war against the Prophet (S). He was at the head of every skirmish and battle that the Prophet (S) had to face repeatedly. As an antagonist of Islam, Abu Sufyan commanded the infidels in the battle of Badr, Uhud, al-Khandaq, and other smaller confrontations like the one at Hudaibiya...etc., at regular intervals.

Abu Sufyan incited the Jews of Medina into flouting the peace treaty. He incited the Jews to attack Muslims from within Medina, while Abu Sufyan himself with his army planned to attack the Muslims from outside Medina. The Prophet (S) through Divine Revelations learnt about the conspiracy and warned the Jews, a majority of whom voluntarily left Medina and went to their ancestral forts cumulatively known as *Khaibar*. Those Jews who chose to remain in Medina initially desisted from helping Abu Sufyan, but later attacked the Muslims on the incitement of Abu Sufyan.

In subsequent wars, the womenfolk of the infidels of Mecca were barbaric and equally inimical towards the Prophet (S) and the philosophy of Islam. The animosity and barbarism of Abu Sufyan and his family is recorded in History when Abu Sufyan's wife and Mu'awiya's mother Hind, plucked out and chewed the raw liver of the Prophet's uncle, the martyr Hamza in the battlefield of Uhud.²⁰ Abu Sufyan's incitement of the Jews had its effect and led to the famous battle of *Khaibar*. In all the battles, Imam Ali

(a.s.) stood as the sole protector, shielding against the onslaught of the enemy and defending Islam and on the person of the Prophet (S).

Having tasted defeat and unable to stop the steady progress of Islam, the infidels of Mecca tried to prevent the Muslims from performing their annual pilgrimage at Mecca. Even from ancient times, bloodshed at the precinct of Mecca was prohibited. The Muslims proceeded towards Mecca to perform *the Haj*. They did not carry any weapons, but had about seven hundred camels for sacrifice. The Muslims were purely motivated by religious zeal and had no thought whatsoever of any war.

Seeing the Muslims coming from Medina in large numbers, Abu Sufyan misled the infidels of Mecca to assume that war was imminent. They sent Khalid bin al-Waleed with a huge army, to intercept the Muslims. When al-Waleed's army appeared, Muslims felt offended and being fresh from various victories and impelled by religious fervor, they wanted to fight al-Waleed's army. The Prophet (S) restrained them and wanted a peaceful settlement. Several people, like Umar, owing to their shortsightedness and lack of wisdom, doubted the Prophet's wisdom in agreeing to a peaceful settlement in the *Treaty of Hudaibiya*.

Reaching *Hudaibiya*, the Prophet (S) sent his emissary to impress upon the infidels that he and his companions only wished to perform the *Hajj* and did not intend to fight. Thereupon, the Meccans sent Suhail bin Amr as their representative. Though he could have easily captured Mecca at that time, the Prophet (S) preferred a peaceful solution and gave several concessions in the well-known terms of the treaty of *Hudaibiya*, between the Muslims and the Meccans, which was written down.

In the treaty, it was agreed that the Muslims should return back to Medina without performing the *Hajj* that year, and that from the next year onwards the infidels would vacate Mecca for three days and allow Muslims to perform the *Hajj* peacefully. Another term of the treaty was that those Muslims, who wished, should be allowed to live peacefully in Mecca, without any interference from the non-Muslims.

In Mecca, there were two tribes; the *Bani Khuza'ah* and the *Bani Bakr*, who were always at loggerheads with each other. The tribe of *Khuza'ah* chose to support the Prophet (S) and the tribe of *Bani Bakr* supported the infidels of Mecca. The Prophet (S) arranged for a 'no war' pact between the *Bani Khuza'ah* and *Bani Bakr*. In view of this, the *Bani Khuza'ah* disarmed themselves. On the other hand, Abu Sufyan incited and provided arms and men to the tribe of *Bani Bakr* and incited them to take advantage, attack, and kill the unarmed men of *Bani Khuza'ah*. This was against the ancient pre-Islamic tradition that there should be no bloodshed within the precinct of the Ka'aba.

Under Abu Sufyan's evil advice and active support, the *Bani Bakr* attacked and killed some unarmed men belonging to the tribe of the *Bani Khuza'ah* when they were performing their religious act of circumambulating, within the precincts of the sacred *Kaaba*. The infidels of Mecca, in helping *Bani Bakr*, committed a flagrant violation of an important covenant of the treaty of *Hudaibiya*.

Amr bin Salim of the *Bani Khuzza*, escaped the massacre and reported the incident to the Prophet (S).

The Prophet (S) did not rush to declare war, though he had a large following of men anxious to avenge the sacrilege. Instead, in order to find an amicable solution, he wrote to the infidels of Mecca offering two alternatives, namely, [1] to pay compensation for those who were killed by *Bani Bakr*, and stop helping *Bani Bakr*, or [2] to proclaim that the Meccans themselves have chosen to rescind and abandon the truce of *Hudaibiya* and thus declare a state of war.

It is said that, later, Abu Sufyan and Khalid bin al-Waleed and some others regretted their act of helping the *Bani Bakr* with arms and men. Such regrets are akin to the regret expressed by the drowning Pharaoh who said, “*Now I believe in the God of Aaron and Moses.*” He received the reply: “*What now, at this hour?*”²¹ However, having committed the act, the *Meccans* were loath to acknowledge their shameful deed. They chose the second alternative and proclaimed that they had rescinded the terms of the treaty of *Hudaibiya*.

However, Abu Sufyan secretly sought to get the treaty renewed by going to Medina, where his daughter Umm Habiba, married to the Prophet (S) was living. He went with the great expectation that his daughter, out of love for her father, will not only accommodate him but also recommend him favorably to the Prophet (S). Reaching the Prophet’s house, he was about to sit on the rug of the Prophet (S), when Umm Habiba, quickly snatched away the rug, telling her father, contemptuously, that being an infidel, Abu Sufyan was unclean²² and therefore unfit to sit on the Prophet’s rug. Disheartened, Abu Sufyan returned to Mecca and informed its inhabitants that a military conflict with the Muslims was then inevitable and that they should immediately prepare to wage war against the Muslims.

Since the infidels of Mecca had rescinded the truce of Hudaybia and committed acts of aggression in killing the innocent Bani Khuza’ah, there was no option for the Muslims except to face the aggressors. Any inaction on the part of the Prophet (S) would have been construed as an infirmity.

When the Muslims reached and camped outside Mecca, Abu Sufyan with some of his companions went to reconnoiter the Muslim army. It was at that time, according to the Sunni source *Sahih of al-Bukari*, that Abu Sufyan and his companions were arrested by the Muslim troops and produced before the Prophet (S). Abu Sufyan, mortally scared for his life, offered to accept Islam by testifying that there is no God but Allah. He did not acknowledge Muhammad (S) as the Prophet (S) of God. Abbas, the Prophet’s uncle, told Abu Sufyan that unless he also acknowledged the Prophethood of Muhammad (S), the acceptance of the faith will be incomplete and that the Muslims will surely kill Abu Sufyan.²³ Very reluctantly and only outwardly to save his skin, Abu Sufyan acknowledged Muhammad (S) as the prophet of God.

Abu Sufyan requested Abbas to show him the strength of the Muslim army. The words uttered by Abu Sufyan, on seeing the army, spoke eloquently about the quality of his Islam. The sight of such a large and devoted gathering, brought visions of presiding over a vast kingdom. Abu Sufyan exclaimed, “Indeed, my cousin has built up enormous military power!” To this, Abbas replied, “What you see is not a king’s army, for Muhammad (S) is not a king but the Messenger of God. It is the Message and

Prophethood of Muhammad (S) which has attracted such huge numbers of sincere followers.” Abu Sufyan murmured, “I do not care by what name you call it –Kingship or Prophethood. The sight of such a grand army is indeed very pleasing.”²⁴ He was indeed impressed by the military strength and craved for the chance of usurping power, if not by himself immediately, at least later by his progeny.

However, his subsequent conduct, throughout his life, is proof that Abu Sufyan continued to be the infidel and trouble-shooter that he really was, and that he never cared for Islamic tenets of a peaceful and pious life. Long after he ‘embraced Islam’, Abu Sufyan on seeing the Muslims defeated and running helter skelter, gleefully cried, “*At last the spell of magic cast by Muhammad has waned. The fleeing Muslims will not stop till they reach the sea.*”

Much is said and written about Abu Sufyan and his ilk of accepting Islam. The actual word used by the Prophet (S) while referring to them, is recorded in history. The Prophet (S) used the Arabic word ‘*Tulaqa*’ which means ‘emancipated’ or ‘freed from bondage’ and is used exclusively to refer to the enemy who has capitulated and begged to be spared in life.

Imam Ali (a.s.), an eminent and truthful eyewitness to the character of such people, said: “*They did not accept Islam. They had simply capitulated [istaslama] before Islam, keeping their infidelity in their hearts.*”²⁵ ‘Islam’ is defined as surrender of one’s self before God.²⁶ ‘*Istislam*’ means capitulation in defeat, before men. The Prophet (S), faced with the ostensible declaration of faith by Abu Sufyan, did not immediately brand him a hypocrite, because the Prophet’s companions were incapable of understanding the real but hidden intent of Abu Sufyan.²⁷ The Qur’an also commands that such people should be left free to do their own deeds.²⁸

When his companions prevailed upon him to reveal the names of the hypocrites, so that they may be killed, the Prophet (S) said: “*Don’t they claim to have accepted Islam? How can you kill them as long as they claim to be Muslims? Will not posterity blame us saying that they invited people towards Islam and when they accepted Islam, he got them killed!*” The Prophet (S) left Abu Sufyan to justify the truthfulness of his declaration of faith by his deeds. Abu Sufyan himself, by his conduct proved that though ostensibly a Muslim, he was indeed a hypocrite.

Some people may argue that the use of the word ‘*Tulaqa*’ was used by the Prophet (S) only after he entered Mecca and that Abu Sufyan had become a Muslim shortly before that time and therefore the word does not apply to him. This will be a fallacious argument because, firstly, all Meccans who were inimical to the Prophet (S), including Abu Sofia, were known as the *Tulaqa*; Secondly Imam Ali (S) wrote to Mu’awiya, who was in fact a second generation Muslim, being the son of Abu Sufyan: “*How can one who is a ‘Taleeq’ and the offspring of another ‘Taleeq’ claim superiority over a Muhajir?*”

The Immaculate Fatima (a.s.) used the same epithet ‘*Taleeq*’ in her arguments with Abu Bakr over Fadak. The Immaculate Fatima’s daughter Zainab (a.s.) addressed Yazid in the same words when Yazid was sitting on his throne in his palace at Damascus.²⁹ Neither Abu Sufyan and his progeny nor anyone

in the annals of history ever dared to challenge the assertion that Abu Sufyan was a *Taleeq*, Mu'awiya was the son of a *Taleeq*, and Yazid was the grandson of a *Taleeq*. Later historians favorable to the *Banu Umayya* never made any effort to contest or altogether remove the appendage 'Tulaqa' while referring to Abu Sufyan and his progeny. That no such effort was ever made proves the meaning and authenticity of Abu Sufyan and his children being the *Tulaqa*. When, on the death of Uthman, Mu'awiya sent Abu Huraira and Abu ad-Darda to convey the message that Imam Ali (a.s.) should withdraw from the *Caliphate*, they met Abdurrahman bin Ghanam on the way. On hearing about their mission, Abdurrahman bin Ghanam told Abu Huraira and Abu ad-Darda: "What does Mu'awiya have to do with giving advice in the matter [of Caliphate] ? Mu'awiya is one among the *Tulaqa* who have no right to become the caliph. Secondly, Mu'awiya and his father were the chiefs of the infidels who fought in the battle of Ahzab against the Prophet (S)."

We shall see, later, that when Abu Bakr became caliph, Abu Sufyan hypocritically suggested that Imam Ali (a.s.) should stake his claim to the *Caliphate*. Abu Sufyan disclosed his hidden desire when he told the third caliph: "Now, that the *Caliphate* has fallen into our [the *Umayyads*] hands, you should play around with it, toss it around like a ball and perpetuate it in the hands of the *Umayyads*." [30](#)

Regarding Mu'awiya, an authentic Sunni source, Musnad of Imam Ahmed bin Hanbal records the following incident related by Obeidillah Bin Buraida: "My father and myself went to Mu'awiya. We sat on a carpet. The table was laid. We shared a meal. Then intoxicants were brought in. Mu'awiya quaffed a cup and presented another to my father who refused saying, 'Ever since the time the Prophet (S) prohibited the use of liquor, I have never tasted it.' Upon this, Mu'awiya replied, 'Nothing pleases me more than wine, milk and boisterous company of revelers.'

Another reputed Sunni author, Jalaluddin as-Suyooti writes, "It was Mu'awiya who was the first to ride on his steed between *Safa* and *Marwa* [which is prohibited in Islam] ; who drank *Nabeez* [liquor] ; ate soil and made others eat it. When he sat on the Holy Prophet's pulpit and demanded fealty for his son Yazid, *Aa'isha* put out her head from her room and cried, 'Stop Mu'awiya! Stop. Did the first two Caliphs appoint their sons as successors?' 'No' replied Mu'awiya. *Aa'isha* asked, 'Then whom do you follow in this audacious step'."

Regarding Abu Sufyan, Mu'awiya, and his son Yazid, their oft-repeated couplet, recorded by both Sunni and Shia authentic sources, declares, "No Archangel ever appeared before Muhammad (S) nor was anything revealed. It is all a power-game played by the *Banu Hashim*."

Yazid used to play with and make fun of Qur'anic verses. Once he quoted the first part of the verse beginning with 'So, woe unto worshippers', without completing it by reciting the remaining part-'who are heedless of their prayer'. Then he added 'Look! Allah curses the worshippers and not the drunkards'. We have cited these examples to show the nature and faith of Abu Sufyan and his progeny who grabbed the reins of power to create a violently aggressive empire in place of Islam—the religion of universal peace.

- [1. Qur'an, 6:29, 8:31...](#)
- [2. Abul Fida's Qasasul Ambiya, p. 391.](#)
- [3. History of Islam, by S. Ali Naqi Naqvi, Printed by Imamia Mission, \[Hind\] Aligarh, Translator's Footnote No. 5 at p. 79.](#)
- [4. Banu or Bani means 'the family or the tribe of'.](#)
- [5. As-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqa, p. 144, quoted in History of Islam.](#)
- [6. Seeratun Nabi, Vol. I p. 158 quoted in History of Islam, p. 81.](#)
- [7. Al-Majlisi's Hayatul Quloob, 186.](#)
- [8. Qur'an, 2:218, 3:195, 4:97–100, 8:74, 9:20–22.](#)
- [9. Hayatul Quloob, Eng. Tr. By Rev. James L. Merrick; Ch. 11 P. 208.](#)
- [10. Abul Fida's Qasasul Ambiya, p. 393.](#)
- [11. Qur'an, 4:97–99.](#)
- [12. Qur'an, 4:100.](#)
- [13. Qur'an, 8:74.](#)
- [14. Qur'an, 9:20–22.](#)
- [15. Qur'an, 16:110.](#)
- [16. Tarikhul A'immah, P. 106.](#)
- [17. Qur'an, 8:30, Abdullah al-Khunayzi's 'Abu Talib, Mo'min Quraish', p. 170.](#)
- [18. Al-Majlisi's Hayatul Quloob, 225–226.](#)
- [19. Qur'an, 2:218, 3:195, 4:97–100, 8:74, 9:20–22.](#)
- [20. Tarikh at-Tabari, vol. 3, p. 22–23, Seeratun Nabi, vol. 1 p. 273, al-Istee'ab, vol. 2, p. 286.](#)
- [21. Qur'an, Yunus 10:90– 92.](#)
- [22. Qur'an, 9:95–96, Abul Fida's Qasasul Ambiya, p. 410, Majlisi's Hayatul Quloob, 289.](#)
- [23. Al-Majlisi's Hayatul Quloob, 290.](#)
- [24. Al-Majlisi's Hayatul Quloob, 291.](#)
- [25. Nahjul Balagha](#)
- [26. Qur'an, 2:208, 'Al Islam Huwa Taslim' Imam Ali in Nahjul Balagha.](#)
- [27. Qur'an, 2:204.](#)
- [28. Qur'an, 9:95–96.](#)
- [29. Seerat Fatimat az-Zehra, by Justice Sultan Mirza, p. 281.](#)
- [30. Nuqoshe Ismat.](#)

Chapter 4: Nomination of Ali to the Caliphate by the Prophet (S)

The chief and only cause for division among Muslims is the question whether or not the Prophet (S) has nominated anyone as his successor. All sects of Muslims universally agree that, of the four caliphs and in fact among all the companions of the Prophet (S), Ali (a.s.) was the most learned, just, valiant, noble and deserving. Yet, the majority sect, the Sunnis prefer to resign themselves to the historical fact that Ali (a.s.) became the fourth caliph, though they readily admit that Imam Ali (a.s.) was, in fact, the most deserving to immediately succeed the Prophet (S), as the first caliph.

The differences and debates begin the moment when the legitimacy of the first three caliphs is put to

test. The Sunni do not wish to discuss the impropriety of Ali (a.s.) being relegated to the fourth place. The Shia, on the other hand, believe that the caliphate was usurped through a well planned conspiracy in which, systematically, all the occasions and the sayings [traditions] of the Prophet (S) nominating Ali (a.s.) as his successor, were either erased completely or at least distorted and misinterpreted, in order to justify Ali's (a.s.) exclusion from immediate succession to the caliphate. Let us now examine the rival contentions based on books considered authentic by the various sects.

From the first day when he was commanded to proclaim Islam, to the last day when he was called to return to his Lord, the Prophet (S) had, at every opportunity, identified and nominated Imam Ali (a.s.) as his immediate successor. This was in keeping with Divine Tradition, where every Apostle either appointed or at least indicated his successor according to Divine commands. God chose and appointed His Apostles and their successors. From Adam (a.s.) to the Last Prophet (S), man had no say in their appointment. Wise men like the Magi were given signs by which they recognized and identified prophets and their successors.¹

The prophets themselves sometimes expressly appointed and at other times gave clear indications about their successors. The golden thread in all religions is that a Comforter or Mehdi [as Muslims call him] or a Kalki [as the Hindus call him] will come towards the end of the world to bring Divine Justice and universal peace. This personality, it is unanimously agreed, is one chosen by God. Prophets are endowed with Divine Wisdom. Therefore, as a part of their mission, they prophesy everything including identifying and nominating their successors as a part of their obligation.

In accordance with the traditions of earlier Apostles, throughout his life, on every important occasion, the Prophet (S) declared in unambiguous terms, often by physically pointing out, that Imam Ali (a.s.) was his deputy [*wali*], successor [*wasi*] and Administrator in Chief [*vizier*].

(1) The Feast of Youm ad-Dar

On the very first day when the Prophet (S) proclaimed Islam,² he arranged for a feast and invited the members of his clan. About forty members from the *Banu Abdul Muttalib* attended the feast. This event is called the Feast of *Youm ad-Dar* (the day of warning). All historians and the narrators of Hadith, both Sunnis and Shias as well as non-Muslim historians record this historical and momentous event unanimously and universally.³

The following is the gist of what transpired on that occasion: The Prophet (S) asked Ali (a.s.) to make bread from one measure of wheat, cook a leg of mutton and provide one pitcher of milk to feed the invitees. On seeing such meager food, the guests made fun of the Prophet (S) saying that the food was not enough even for a young child. However, after all, the guests had eaten to their satisfaction, like the miracle performed by Jesus, the food remained the same quantity as it was prepared.⁴ This prompted Abu Lahab, the Prophet's uncle, to declare that the Prophet (S) was indeed a sorcerer and that they should beware being bewitched by his magic. Abu Lahab's allegation of sorcery against the Prophet (S)

is similar to the allegations of Pharaoh, his vizier Haman, and Qarun against Moses.⁵

After the feast, the Prophet (S) conveyed the Divine Message and concluded his speech saying: “*Verily God has commanded me to invite you to Him. If you accept Him as the One Unique God, you will be benefited in this life as well as in the life to come. God has appointed me His Messenger. Acknowledge me as the Messenger of Allah and help me in my Mission. Now that I have passed on the Divine Message, I need some one to assist me in carrying forth the Divine Mission after me. Who among you will assist, share, and endure the burden in this mission of mine, for, he shall be my Deputy [Khalifa], my Trustee [Wasi], my Chief Administrator [vizier] both in this world and the life to come.*”

The entire congregation kept quiet, except Ali (a.s.), who rose and said: “*Though I am still in my teens and not strong enough as yet, I shall be your Deputy [Khalifa], Trustee [Wasi], and Chief Administrator [vizier].*” The congregation responded by deriding the Prophet (S), some claiming that he was bewitched while others preferred to ignore him.

The Prophet (S) invited the Banu Abdul Muttalib again the next day and on the third consecutive day for the miraculous feast as well as for repeating the Divine Message.

On all the three days, Imam Ali (a.s.) stood up in response to the Prophet’s call for a helper and said, “*I shall be your Deputy, Trustee, and vizier.*” The Prophet (S) hugged and blessed Ali (a.s.) and holding up Ali’s hand declared: “*Oh people, this Ali (a.s.) here is my successor, [wasi], my caliph, and my vizier both in this world and the next.*” The Prophet (S) then prayed: “*O Lord, love him who loves Ali, hold as your enemy whosoever shows enmity towards Ali, help those who help Ali, and abandon those who abandon Ali.*” On hearing this, people taunted Abu Talib saying, “*O Abu Talib, Muhammad has appointed your son as the lord over Muslims. From today, you have to obey your son.*” All historians and the narrators of Hadith and history record this historical and momentous event unanimously and universally.⁶

Here it is very important to note that on the Day of Warning, the Prophet (S) was alone, without any support of men, means, or material. Therefore, Imam Ali’s offer to support the Prophet (S) could not have been motivated by any materialistic desire. Similarly, the Prophet (S) also could not be accused of trying to confer any benefit or perpetuate family rule, for at that stage there was neither wealth nor estate. Instead of benefits, what was certain was only persecution in the shape of mental and physical harassment. It is a historical fact that as a direct consequence of proclamation of Islam in the feast of *Youm ad-Dar*, the Prophet (S) was banished for confinement in the *Shi'b (defile) of Abu Talib*. A social boycott was enforced and anyone found to sympathize with the Prophet (S) was subjected to mental and physical torture. Historians record that it was only the support of Abu Talib (a.s.) which deterred the Meccans from carrying out their cherished desire of killing the Prophet (S).

The seeking of a supporter and nomination of Imam Ali (a.s.) by the Prophet (S) in the feast of *Youm ad-Dar* is in accordance with traditions of earlier Prophets. About the Prophet Thul Kifl (a.s.), ibn Kathir writes,⁷ “Ibn Jarir and Ibn Hatam narrated on the authority of Dawud bin Abi Hind on the authority of

Mujahid that he said, ‘When Alyasa [Elisha] became an old man, he said: “*If I could find a man who will succeed me in managing the people’s affairs while I am alive, so I will be able to see how he is going to serve the people.*” Then Alyasa called the people, gathered them, and said, “*Who will fast in the day and pray in the night and will not be angry, he will be my successor.*” Then, an ordinary man stood up and said, “*I can do that.*” Alyasa said, “*Will you fast in the day and pray in the night and will not be angry?*” The man said, “*Yes*”, but Alyasa did not say anything. Then, on the second day happened the same thing, and the people did not answer, but the same man said, “*I can*”, therefore, Alyasa made him his successor, and this ordinary man was *Thul Kifl*. Regarding the question whether *Thul Kifl* was merely a righteous person or a prophet, Ibn Kathir states that *Thul Kifl*’s name being mentioned along with the name of other prophets [8](#) is a proof enough to show that *Thul Kifl* was in fact a prophet. Moses also sought a helper in facing the Pharaoh and God granted his wish and appointed Aaron as his helper and successor.[9](#)

(2) The Night of Emigration

On the night of his emigration (hijra) from Mecca to Medina, the Prophet (S) asked Imam Ali (a.s.) to sleep in his bed to defeat the conspiracy of the Meccans to kill him.[10](#) He entrusted and authorized Imam Ali (a.s.) to do all the things that were to be done by the Prophet (S) himself, including bringing to Medina all the family members of the Prophet’s household. Imam Ali (a.s.) remained in Mecca for three days and returned the deposits of money or goods entrusted to the Prophet (S) by the people of Mecca.[11](#)

(3) The Bond of Brotherhood

First at Mecca and again at Medina, the Prophet (S) created the bond of brotherhood and recited the declaration of fraternity among his companions. He chose Imam Ali (a.s.) and declared him to be his brother in this world and the afterworld. He compared his relationship with Imam Ali (a.s.) with the relationship between Moses and Aaron.[12](#)

(4) The Sura of at-Tawba

When the ninth Chapter of the Qur’an was revealed, the Prophet (S) asked Imam Ali (a.s.) to recite it to the Meccans, saying that God commanded that either he (the Prophet) himself or a man from him and no one else should carry out that task. The Prophet (S) added, “*Ali is from me and I am from Ali; he is my brother, my guardian, my successor, and my caliph over my Ummah after me. He will discharge my obligations and fulfill my promises and none other than Ali (a.s.) can do so.*”[13](#)

(5) Mubahala

On the occasion of the dispute with the Christians of Najran, the verse known as ‘*the Aya of Mubahala*’ was revealed commanding the Holy Prophet (S) to take with him his men, women, and children.¹⁴ The Prophet (S) chose none except his daughter Fatima (a.s.) to represent women, Imam Ali (a.s.) to represent men, and Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn (a.s.) to represent his children.¹⁵

(6) Madinatul Ilm (the city of knowledge)

The most important aspect of Prophethood, one that distinguishes a prophet from ordinary human beings, is the Divine Wisdom bestowed upon the prophet and revealed from time to time through *Wahi* (revelation).¹⁶ About the Divine Wisdom granted to the Prophet Muhammad (S), he said, “*I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate; those, who wish to enter the city of knowledge, should do so by passing through the gate.*”¹⁷

(7) Ghadir Khum

The final proclamation of Imam Ali’s succession was made by the Prophet (S) on his return from the last pilgrimage at Ghadir Khum. The fact that the Prophet (S) had declared that it would be his last pilgrimage was widely known and Muslims gathered in unprecedented numbers to participate in the Hajj along with the Prophet (S) for one last time. The Prophet (S) himself had invited ambassadors and delegates from various countries to witness the special occasion. These foreign delegates recorded every word, every movement, and every action of the Prophet (S).

The proclamation of the nomination of Imam Ali (a.s.) was thus witnessed by foreign ambassadors, recorded, and preserved by their chroniclers in their own countries and languages. Though, after the Prophet (S), an attempt was made to burn or dispose off as rubbish all books except the Qur'an in an attempt to obliterate any record of this event, the chronicles narrating the event, survived in foreign countries, such as Spain, Holland, France...etc. Thus, this event came to be recorded alike by historians and Sunni and Shia narrators of traditions and is universally accepted as genuine.

We give below a gist of the event, for brevity’s sake, incorporating the salient features of the event: When the Prophet (S) was informed that he was to join the Lord soon, he wished to perform his last Hajj and left Medina on the 23rd February, 632 A.D. On learning this, the Muslims considering that it was probably their last opportunity to perform the Hajj alongside the Prophet (S) especially gathered in great numbers.

While returning from the Hajj at a place called ‘Khum’, the Prophet (S) received the following verse: “*O Messenger, proclaim that which has been made manifest to you by your Lord. If you fail to do so, the Mission shall remain unfulfilled. Allah will protect you from [evil] men. Surely, Allah does not guide the*

non believers.”¹⁸

The message in the verse was imperative and it cast an immediate obligation on the Prophet (S) to disclose it to the Muslims, despite his fears and awareness of possible undermining opposition by the hypocrites who had by then surrounded him in good numbers. The verse was the penultimate verse revealed to the Prophet (S), for, after this verse, the verse regarding the completion of the Prophetic Mission and Divine Guidance, was revealed as the last verse of the Qur'an.¹⁹

The Prophet (S) immediately halted the caravan, had the area cleared of shrubs so as to accommodate the large gathering. He then ordered that those who had gone forward to retrace their steps and those who were lagging behind, to hurry up to join him. Wooden saddles of camels were collected and heaped one upon another to form a high pulpit or pedestal.²⁰

The Prophet (S) ascended the pulpit along with Ali (a.s.) and in full view of the gathering he tied a turban on his head in a gesture widely prevalent and understood in the East and by the Arabs to symbolize confirmation of succession to estate and office.²¹

The Prophet (S) then asked the gathering, “*Do you bear witness that I have discharged my Mission and guided you in the path of Allah?*” The crowd replied, “*Indeed we bear witness to that.*” The Prophet (S) said, “*Very shortly I will be recalled to my Creator. I am leaving behind me two precious things amidst you. One is the Qur'an – the Word of God; and the other is my progeny [Ahlul Bayt]. They are both intrinsically and inseparably linked with each other and will remain so linked until they reach me at the Hawdh [pond] on the Day of Resurrection. Firmly adhere to both of them. You will, then, not go astray or be misled into error.*”²²

The Prophet (S) then said, “*God is my Moula (guardian). Am I not the Moula of you all (the Muslim Ummah) ?.*” They replied, “*Certainly you are our Moula and the Moula of all Muslims.*”

The Prophet (S) then held aloft Ali (a.s.) in his arms so much so that the Prophet (S) himself was hidden behind Ali (a.s.). Holding Ali (a.s.) thus, the Prophet (S) declared, “*Whoever I am his guardian, this Ali is to be his guardian.*”

The Prophet (S) repeated this thrice and then prayed, “*O God, Be a friend to the friends of him; be an enemy to the enemies of him; help those who help him; abandon those who abandon him.*”²³

The Prophet (S) then commanded all those who were present to remember and record this message and pass it on to everyone in their respective cities, towns and villages and to propagate it to whoever was not present at that time and to repeat it whenever any two Muslims met, so as to preserve the message for posterity.

Then, the Prophet (S) got down from the pulpit along with Ali (a.s.). He set up a separate tent in which he seated Ali (a.s.) and directed all those present to congratulate and swear allegiance to him (Imam

Ali).

For three days, the proceedings went on. People like Abu Bakr, Umar ibn al-Khattab, and other companions were among the first to rush forth and congratulate Imam Ali (a.s.) on his appointment as the immediate successor to the Prophet (S). They paid their fealty and swore their allegiance to Imam Ali (a.s.).[24](#)

(8) Authenticity of the event of Ghadir Khum

The authenticity and genuineness of the above event of *Ghadir Khum* has been researched extensively by later historians and accepted as an undeniable historical fact. We extract below the opinion of a few such scholars:

Justice Amir Ali wrote, “*It is generally supposed that the Prophet (S) did not expressly designate anyone as his successor in the spiritual and temporal government of Islam; but this notion is founded on a mistaken apprehension of facts, for, there is abundant evidence that many a time the Prophet (S) indicated Imam Ali (a.s.) for the vicegerancy, notably on the occasion of the return journey from the performance of the ‘Farewell Pilgrimage’ during a halt at a place called ‘Khum’.* He convoked an assembly of the people accompanying him, and used words which could leave little doubt as to his intention regarding a successor. “Ali”, he said “*is to me as Aaron was to Moses. O Almighty God, be a friend to his friend and a foe to his foes; help those who help him, and frustrate the hopes of those who betray him.*”[25](#)

The renowned Sunni writer Shah Abdul Haq of Delhi, wrote regarding the tradition of *Ghadir Khum*: “*This tradition is undoubtedly correct and genuine; no less than sixteen and according to Ahmed ibn Hanbal, thirty companions of the Prophet (S) who had themselves heard it from the Prophet (S) testified to its correctness and genuineness when called upon by Ali (a.s.) to mention it on oath. Many eminent traditionists, for example, al Nassa'i, al Tirmithi, and Ahmed bin Hanbal have related it and testified to its genuineness; it has been related through many channels; most of its ‘Asaaneed’ [testimonials] are correct and unimpeachable. No attention should be paid to those who criticize it, nor to those who say that the sentence ‘O God !, be a friend to his friend and a foe to his foes’ is an interpolation, as that sentence is also reported through unimpeachable authorities, most of which have been scrutinized by ath-Thahabi and ibn Hajar and found correct.*”[26](#)

Another Sunni historian, Mirza Muhammad ibn Mo'tamid Khan writes, “*The tradition of Ghadir is genuine and very well known. No one doubts its genuineness and authority except a begotten [bastard] and no reliance can be placed on the word of a begotten person.*”[27](#)

Yet, another reputed Sunni narrator of Hadith, Qazi Sanaullah of Panipat, India, writes about the reports [hadith] of the events of *Ghadir Khum*: “*This hadith is no doubt genuine. It has reached the degree of Tawatur (i.e:continuous and uninterrupted chain of narrators of unimpeachable authority). Thirty of the*

companions of the Prophet (S), like Abu Ayyub, Zaid bin Arqam, al-Bara' ibn Aazib, Ammar ibn Murra, Abu Huraira, ibn Abbas, Imara ibn Buraid, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, ibn Umar, Anas, Jarir ibn Abdullah al-Bajali, Malik ibn Huwairith, Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri, Abu Tufail, Huthaifa ibn Usayd, and others have mentioned this hadith in their books, and have verified its genuineness.”²⁸

The well-known historian and narrator of *Hadith*, Ali Muttaqi, examines the sources and narrators of the event and quotes Zaid bin Arqam as saying, “I asked Zaid bin Arqam whether he himself has heard this from the Prophet (S). He replied that everyone who was there saw with his own eyes and heard with his own ears. Muhammad bin Jarir at-Tabari has related this very ‘Riwaya; tradition’ through Atiyya al-Awfi from Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri.”²⁹

Agha Muhammad Sultan Mirza, an eminent legal luminary and retired Judge, has written a very detailed book under the title ‘*The Caliphate; its Conception and Consequences*’, solely devoted to the matter of Imam Ali’s nomination to succeed the Prophet (S). Mirza was born in Delhi in 1885 and died on 17-12-1965 AD. The book runs into 362 pages of excellent research and analysis and was ready by 27 February 1949, but unfortunately, it could only be published posthumously, towards the end of 1988. On the subject of *Caliphate*, the book is an unimpeachable authority.³⁰

(9) The Last Will

Under Islam, it is incumbent, if not mandatory, upon every Muslim to make a will in order to prevent future disputes among his children. It is also incumbent on those who are present at the time of making a will, to strictly enforce the wishes of the dying person.³¹ For instance, Abu Bakr, during his last moments, sent for Uthman and dictated his will nominating Umar as his successor, saying that he could not leave such a grave affair as the *Caliphate* to future dissension in the absence of his will.

Jurists allocate a chapter exclusively on ‘Wills’ in every book on Islamic Jurisprudence. The last important historical event in the Prophet’s life is recorded universally by all historians and narrators of traditions as the time when the Prophet (S) called for parchment and pen so that he might write down his last will, and prevent all dissension. Al-Bukhari reports the event under seven headings in his *Sahih*. Muslim, like several others, reports the incident in several places.³²

This incident is popularly known as the ‘Event of the Parchment and Pen’ (*al-Qirtas wel-Qalam*).

Regarding this incident, learned scholar M.S. Mirza comments: “*This was the final attempt by the Prophet (S) to prevent his flock from going astray and having to wander in the wilderness in search of a true leader. Both explicitly and implicitly, by word and by deed, by proclamation, exhortation and announcements, in fact by every means available to him, he had tried to make his Umma see which quarter they should look to for true leadership. However, ambition and avarice blinded them, and they failed to heed his advice.*³³

Mirza then quotes from al-Bukhari and Muslim: “*Ibn Abbas mentioned Thursday and wept profusely, and said that it was on a Thursday that the Prophet (S) asked them to bring ink-pot and parchment, so that he might write the will which would save them till eternity from going astray. But, they said that the Prophet (S) was talking nonsense [yahjur]. Ibn Abbas said that during his last illness near his death, when many companions including Umar, were in the house around him, the Prophet (S) said, ‘Come, I will write to you a document which will protect you until eternity from going astray’.* But Umar said: ‘The Prophet is under the influence of the disease and we have the Qur'an. The Book of God is sufficient for us’. Those present became divided into two factions; one party was for supplying the writing material to the Prophet (S), and the other supported Umar. When the unseemly disorder and uproar increased, the Prophet (S) told the squabblers, ‘**Begone hence, this very moment**’.³⁴

According to Kanzul Ummal, Umar recounted, “*When the Holy Prophet fell ill, he asked for parchment and ink so that he might make a testament which would save us till eternity from going astray. His wives cried from behind the veil, ‘Don't you hear what the Prophet is saying?’ I said, ‘You are like the deceitful women of Joseph. When the Prophet is ill, you weep, and when he is healthy you sit upon his neck’.* The Prophet (S) said, ‘Go away. They are better than you’.”³⁵

Curiously, about such an important event, most of the narrators, for whatever expediency, do not narrate anything about what the Prophet (S) proposed to write in his will. Some narrators comment that the Prophet (S) intended to name his successor so that there may not be any dissension or dispute about it.³⁶

(10) The Oral Will

Having been frustrated in reducing his will into writing, the Prophet (S) made an oral Will. Al-Bukhari narrates that just before his death, the Prophet (S) made an oral Will about three matters, but the narrators remembered only two of the matters namely, [1] to expel the Jews from the Arabian Peninsula and [2] to accord the same treatment to foreign dignitaries, as the Prophet (S) himself had accorded. They said that they did not remember the third matter.³⁷ Of course, the third matter they forgot was obviously the express nomination of Imam Ali (a.s.) as the immediate successor of the Prophet (S).

Ibn Hajar al-Makki narrates explicitly, “On his deathbed, the Prophet (S) said, ‘O my people, shortly I will accompany the angel of death to heaven. I have already declared, and I declare again, that I am leaving among you the Book of God and my progeny [Ahlul Bayt]’. The Prophet (S) then caught hold of Ali (a.s.) by the arm and raised it up saying: ‘This Ali here is with the Qur'an and the Qur'an is with Ali. The two shall never separate until they meet me at the Hawdh (pond). Therefore, hold on to them both firmly so that you may never go astray’.”³⁸

The political climate made it difficult for the narrators to relate the truth. Therefore, they sought an easy way out from certain persecution, by pleading that they did not remember the third aspect willed by the Prophet (S). Regarding this forgetfulness, Mulla Mo'in comments that it was a political expediency that

made the narrator suffer amnesia in order to suppress the truth.[39](#)

Abu Bakr acted upon the two matters spoken to by the narrators as a part of the oral Will made by the Prophet (S). Obviously, there was no place in the scheme of the Caliph for third aspect so conveniently forgotten by the narrators regarding the appointment of Ali (a.s.) by the Prophet (S) as his immediate successor.

(11) Miscellaneous Traditions

The Prophet (S) declared on numerous occasions that the obligations and duties of Prophethood could only be discharged either by himself as the Prophet (S) or by Imam Ali (a.s.) as the Divinely appointed successor and none else.[40](#) The Prophet (S) proclaimed repeatedly that just as obedience and love for him was made obligatory, obedience and love for Imam Ali (a.s.) was also made obligatory on every Muslim.[41](#)

The Prophet (S) declared, “Whoever curses Ali (a.s.) in fact curses me.”[42](#) The Prophet (S) said that he who is inimical to Ali (a.s.) is in fact inimical to him [the Prophet] and he who is an enemy of him [the Prophet] is an infidel [Kafir], and such persons offend God.[43](#)

Conclusion

From the above, it is obvious that the Prophet (S), at every stage and until the very last moment of his life, made every possible effort to discharge his duty commanded by God to nominate Ali (a.s.) as his successor. When he tried to make a Will, he was prevented by some of the people surrounding him. He then made an oral will, the crucial part of which was conveniently claimed to have escaped the memory of those who witnessed the oral will.

But, the best evidence of Ali’s nomination by the Prophet (S) from his deathbed, is the statement Umar made during his conversation with Abdullah ibn Abbas recounted by Ibn Abil Hadid the mo’tazilite who records that Umar said: “*There is no doubt that the Prophet (S) said and did many things in this connection which do not support our view that he did not nominate Ali (a.s.) as his successor. The fact is that on many occasions the Prophet (S) did go to the extreme in favoring Ali (a.s.). It is a fact that during his last illness, the Prophet (S) wanted to write a will designating Ali (a.s.) expressly to the Caliphate, but I prevented him from doing so. By Allah, the Quraysh will never unanimously agree to Ali’s Caliphate, and if he is ever selected as Caliph, the Arabs will attack him from every direction.*”[44](#)

Some Sunni historians claim that the ‘election’ of Abu Bakr at *Saqifa* was an impulsive action taken on the spur of the moment to prevent the *Ansar* from usurping the *Caliphate*. Such a claim inherently means two things; firstly, that there was no sanction from the Prophet (S) to elect a leader for the Muslims, and secondly, that the hasty manner in which the affair was conducted implies that except for the few who were available on the spot at *Saqifa*, the general body of Muslims had no knowledge or say

in what took place at *Saqifa*. What is sought to be implied is that there was no prior planning and therefore no malice can be imputed or attached to the deed.

To the contrary is the view of the Shia, as could be seen from the *Book of Sulaym bin Qais al-Hilali*, an early companion of the Prophet (S) and of Imam Ali (a.s.). Sulaym narrates that while answering Talha ibn Ubaidullah, Ali (a.s.) took out a parchment and said: “*This is a written pledge taken by five people in the Ka’aba at the time of the Prophet’s last Hajj. Those five people had sworn that they would wrest the Caliphate from me and divide it [circulate it] among themselves, when the Prophet (S) is killed or he dies.*”⁴⁵

About Umar’s appointing of a committee that selected Uthman as the third caliph, Imam Ali (a.s.) asked the second caliph’s son Abdullah ibn Umar: “*How come I was included by your father in the shura*⁴⁶ *as one of the prospective candidates for the post of caliph, when he himself along with Abu Bakr had stated that the Prophet (S) had excluded me and the Ahlul Bayt from the caliphate?*”

Imam Ali (a.s.) then asked Abdullah ibn Umar to tell truthfully what his father, Umar, had told him just before he died. Abdullah replied, “*My father said that if these people [the ummah] paid allegiance to that man from Banu Hashim who has no hair in the middle of his head, he will lead them to the right and enlightened path and will make them act according to the Book of Allah and the Traditions of the Holy Prophet.*”

Imam Ali (a.s.) asked Abdullah as to what he then told his father Umar. Abdullah replied that he asked his father what then was holding him back from making Ali (a.s.) as the Caliph. Then Imam Ali (a.s.) questioned Abdullah ibn Umar as to what his father said in reply. Abdullah did not reply and preferred to keep silent.

Then, Imam Ali (a.s.) said, “*Though you may prefer to conceal it, the Holy Prophet (S) had told me the details of the conversation that took place between you and your father on that occasion.*”

Abdullah ibn Umar asked, “*When did the Prophet tell you?*” Imam Ali (a.s.) replied, “*The Prophet (S) told me personally at that time [during his last Hajj] and later in my dream when your father died.*”

Abdullah said, “*What did the Prophet tell you?*” Imam Ali (S) replied, “*O Abdullah ibn Umar, for the sake of God, will you confirm if what I say is true?*” Abdullah replied, “*I may not openly confirm it but would prefer to remain silent if what you say is the truth.*”

Then, Imam Ali (a.s.) said: “*Your father told you that what was holding him back from making me the caliph was the written pledge [sahifa] that was sworn to by five persons in the Kaaba at the time of the Prophet’s last Hajj.*” Sulaym bin Qais reports that at that time he found tears welling in the eyes of Abdullah ibn Umar and his throat was choking.⁴⁷

Sulaym continues that Salman then said, “*The five persons who had taken the pledge in the Ka’aba*

were the same persons who falsely attributed a hadith to the Prophet (S) saying that the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) had chosen the ‘aakhira’ [afterlife] in preference to the ‘duniya’ [worldly life], and that the Prophet (S) did not wish to combine the *Nubuwwa* [prophethood] and the caliphate to be in the same house. Those persons are Abu Bakr, Umar, Abu Ubaida bin al-Jarrah, Salim [slave of Huthaifa] and Mu’ath bin Jabal.⁴⁸

The above report of a prior conspiracy is supported by the following circumstances:

- (1) During the Prophet’s return from the last pilgrimage, the Archangel Gabriel informed him that in pursuance of a conspiracy some persons had planned to assassinate him in a valley called al-Aqabah. The Prophet (S) ordered that none should ascend the valley until he had passed through it. However, Huthaifa who was holding the reins and leading the Prophet’s camel, saw some persons with masked faces, standing ahead of them in the valley. Immediately an alarm was raised and Ammar pursued them, but the masked persons took to their heels. The Prophet (S) told Ammar the names of all the masked hypocrites, but he asked him to keep the secret because the hypocrites pretended to be close companions of the Prophet (S).⁴⁹ From that day, Ammar came to be called ‘the keeper of the Prophet’s secrets’, for he never divulged the names though several prominent companions would frequently approach and inquire if they were the ones who were named as ‘hypocrites’.
- (2) Despite repeated and strict orders of the Holy Prophet (S) asking all the *Muhajirin* and the *Ansar* including Abu Bakr and Umar to assemble under the command of Usama to proceed on an expedition, Abu Bakr and Umar disobeyed and remained in Medina.
- (3) Instead of participating in the solemn occasion of the burial rituals of the Prophet (S), Umar and Abu Bakr hurried to and remained at the *Saqifa*; Obviously, the only urgency in the matter of the caliphate was that if any time is given, the ummah including the *Ansar* would discuss the competence of each of the candidates in the light of the facts known to them as well as the various traditions of the Prophet (S) relating to the caliphate and would have certainly chosen Imam Ali (S) as the caliph, in keeping with the desire and directions of the Prophet (S), so often proclaimed in his life. The imagined urgency is belied by the fact that after Umar’s death, for three days there was no *Caliph*, for the committee appointed by him could not arrive at a conclusion till three days later.
- (4) Having met the *Ansar* at *Saqifa*, the three men of Quraysh could have convinced them to postpone the matter of succession at least until the completion of the burial rites of the Prophet (S).
- (5) All the persons who had taken the pledge in the Ka’aba were the only persons who presented and relied upon a fabricated tradition which misled the Muslims into believing that the *Ahlul Bayt*, the chief of whom was Ali (S), had renounced their share in worldly matters, more particularly the claim to the *Caliphate*, in preference to the life of the hereafter and that the Prophet (S) had declared that spiritual leadership and temporal leadership should not remain in the same house.

^{1.} The Journey of The Magi, by T.S. Eliot.

2. Qur'an, 26:214.
3. Musnad of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, vol. 1, p.331, Abul Fida, Part 1, p.116, at-Tabari , vol. 2 p. 217, ibn al-Athir, vol. 2, p.22; Mustadrak of al-Hakim, vol. 2 p. 133, Habib Al-Sayyar, vol. 2, Part 3, p.160, ibn Kathir's Tarikh, vol. 3, p. 40, Kanzul Ummal, vol. 6 p. 392, 397, 401 and 408, Rawdatus Safa, vol. 2 p. 278 and 279, Ibn Taymiya's Minhajus Sunna, vol. 4, p. 80, al-Mohib at-Tabari's Ar-Riyadul Nadira, Part 2 chap. 4 Section 6 p. 168, 202,203, Gibbon's 'Decline & Fall', vol.. 2, p. 422, Thomas Carlyle's Heroes & Hero Worship', Lecture 2, p. 78, M.S. Mirza's 'The Caliphate'121–132... etc.
4. Al-Majlisi's Hayatul Quloob, p.185, The Caliphate, p. 131–134.
5. Qur'an, 40:23–24, 42:29 – 51, ibn Kathir's Qasasul Ambiya 219.
6. Musnad of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, vol. 1, p.331, Abul Fida, Part 1, p.116; at-Tabari, vol. 2 p. 217, ibn al-Athir, vol. 2, p.22, Mustadrak of al-Hakim vol. 2 p. 133, Habib Al-Sayyar, vol. 2, Part 3, p.160; ibn Kathir's Tarikh vol. 3, p. 40, Kanzul Ummal, vol. 6 p. 392, 397, 401 and 408, Rawdatus Safa, vol. 2 p. 278 and 279, Ibn Taymiya's Minhajus Sunna, vol. 4, p. 80, Mohib at-Tabari's ar-Riyadul Nadira, Part 2 chap. 4 Section 6 p. 168, 202, 203, Gibbon's 'Decline & Fall' vol. 2, p. 422, Carlisle's 'Heroes & Hero Worship', Lecture 2, p. 78, M.S. Mirza's 'The Caliphate'131–134.
7. Qasasul Ambiya, p. 182.
8. Qur'an, 21:85–86, 38:45–48.
9. Qur'an, 28:33–35.
10. Ameer Ali's the Spirit of Islam, p. 47.
11. At-Tabari, vol. 2 p.244, ibn Khaldun, vol. 2 p.15, ibn Hisham, vol. 2 p. 94, Abul Fida, vol. 1 p.126, ibn Kathir, vol. 7 p.338, al Kamil of ibn al-Athir, vol. 2 p. 38, al-Mas'udi, vol. 2 p.174–175, Dayarbakhti vol. 1 p.367.
12. Sahih of Al-Bukhari, Bab Manaqib Ali, vol. 3, p.146, Sahih of Muslim, Bab Fadha'il Ali [s], vol. 7 p.120, Sunan of ibn Maja, vol. 1 p. 55, at-Tabari vol. 3, 144, Musnad of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, vol. 1, p. 170, 173, 175, 177, 179, 182, 184 and 185, vol. 3 p.32, 338, vol. 6 p. 369, 438, Tabaqat of ibn Sa'd, vol. 3 Part 1, p.14, Tarikh of ibn Kathir, vol. 7 p.224, 334, 338–341, The Caliphate, p. 168.
13. Al-Bukhari's Kitabus Salaat, p.238, at-Tbari vol. 3, p.154, ibn Khaldun, vol. 3 p.222–225, Habib al-Sayyar, vol. 1 Part 3, p.72, Tabaqat of ibn Sa'd, vol. 2 Pat 1, p.121, Abul Fida, vol. 1, p.150, Tarikh al-Khamis, vol. 2, p.156, Fat-h al-Bari, vol. 8, p.241, ibn al-Athir, vol. 2, p.111, Madarij an-Nubuwwa, vol. 2, p.492, ibn Kathir, vol. 7, p.337, 357.
14. Qur'an, 3:61.
15. Madarij an-Nubuwwa, Part 2, p.498–500, Sahih of Muslim, vol. 7, p.120–121, Habib as-Sayyar, vol. 1, Part 3, p.73–74, ibn Hajar al-Makki's as-Sawa'iq, Ch. 9, Section 1, p.93 and Section 2 p.72, Tarikh of ibn Kathir, vol. 7, p.3, as-Sayuti's ad-Durr al-Manthur vol. 2, p.39, al-Riyad of Mohibat-Tabari, Part 2, CH 2, Section 6, p.188, Fakhruddin ar-Razi's Tafseer al-Kabeer, vol. 2, p.700, al-Kashshaf of az-Zamakhshari, vol. 1 p.307.
16. Qur'an, 2:31, 2:247, 5:113, 18:65, 19:12, 21:79.
17. Ibn Hajar al-Makki's as-Sawaiq, chap 9, Section 2, p. 73, Mustadrak, vol. 3, p.126–127, Yanabee'ul Mawaddah, chap. 14, p. 65, 71–72, Mohib at-Tabari's ar-Riyad an-Nadira, Part 2, Ch. 4, Section 6, p.193 Kanzul Ummal, vol. 6, p. 152 and 401, ibn Kathir's Tarikh, vol. 7, p.358–359, ibn Abdul Barr's al-Isti'ab, Part 2, p.474–475.
18. Qur'an, 5:67.
19. Qur'an, 5:4, as-Suyuti's ad-Durrul Manthur, vol.. 2, p. 259.
20. Ad-Durrul Manthur of as-Suyuti, vol. 2, p.298.
21. Musnad of Taylasi, p. 23, Hadith No.154 Mohibuddin at-Tabari's ar-Riyad an-Nadira, Part 2, Ch. 4, Section 9, p. 217.
22. Sahih of Muslim, vol. 7 p. 122–123, Mustadrak, vol. 3 p.109, 110, 148, Musnad of Imam Ahmed bin Hanbal, vol. 3 p. 14, 17, 26 – vol. 4, p. 367, 371 – vol. 5 182, 189, ibn Asakir's Tarikh, vol. 5 p.436, Shibli's Siratun Nabi, vol. 1 Part 2, p.131–132. Kanzul Ummal, vol. 6 p.390, vol. 3, 61, The Caliphate p. 181
23. Musnad of Ahmad bin Hanbal, vol. 1, p.152, vol. 4, p. 282, 368 and 372, Mishkat, p.565, ibn Kathir's Tarikh, vol. 5 p. 208–214, Tathkiratul Huffadh by ath-Thahabi, vol. 3 p.231, ibn Hajar al-Makki's as-Sawa'iq, Ch. 9, Section 2, p. 7, Kanzul Ummal, vol. 6 p. 403, 407, Mohibuddin at-Tabari, Part 2, Ch 4, Section 6, p. 169,170, 204, Habib al-Sayyar's Tarikh, vol. 1 Part 3, p. 77, Madarijun Nubuwwah, Part 4, Ch 13, p. 220, Tathkira of Sibt ibnul Jawzi, Ch. 2, p.18, The Caliphate, p. 181–182.
24. Musnad of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, vol. 4, p. 281, Kanzul Ummal, vol. 8, p.60, Tarikh of Habibus Sayyar, vol. 1 Part 3,

p.77, ar-Riyadun Nadira, vol. 2, Ch.4, Section 13, p. 230, Madarijun Nubuwwa, Part 4, Ch.13, p.217.

[25.](#) The Spirit of Islam, Part 2, Ch. 8, p.292–293.

[26.](#) ‘Al-Ash’iatul Lami’ा, vol. 4 P.668 quoted in The Caliphate, p. 182.

[27.](#) Nuzulul Abrar, p.21.

[28.](#) As-Saif al-Maslul, quoted in The Caliphate, p. 183.

[29.](#) The Caliphate, p. 180 quoting Kanzul Ummal, vol. 6 p.390, vol. 3 p. 61.

[30.](#) The Caliphate, by Agha Muhammad Sultan Mirza.

[31.](#) Qur’an, 2:180, 5:109.

[32.](#) Sahih of Muslim, vol. 5 p.75, 76, Musnad of Ahmad bin Hanbal, vol. 1 p.336, 355, al-Milal wen-Nihal by ash-Shahristani, vol. 1 p. 23.

[33.](#) The Caliphate, p. 207.

[34.](#) The Caliphate, p.209.

[35.](#) Kanzul Ummal, vol. 3 p.138, vol. 4 p.52.

[36.](#) Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani’s Fat-hul Bari, vol. 1 p.186, vol. 8 p.101.

[37.](#) Al-Bukhari’s Kitabul Jihad, Kkitabul Khums, Bab Marzun Nabi.

[38.](#) As-Sawaiq of ibn Hajar, ch. 9, Part 2, p. 75.

[39.](#) Madarijun Nubuwwa, Part 4, Ch. 14, Section 3, p.229.

[40.](#) Al-Bukhari, Ch. 2, Manaqib Ali, Ibn Maja’s Sunan, Part 1, p.56, Mishkat, Bab Manaqib Ali, p.564, Sunan of At-Tirmithi, Bk. 46, Ch 19 and 20, Musnad of Ahmad bin Hanbal, vol. 3 p.483 vol. 4 p.164, 165 – vol. 5 p. 204, ibn Hajar al-Makki’s as-Sawa’iq Ch9, p.73, 75, ibn Kathir’s Tarikh vol. 7, p.224, 344, 356, Yanabi’ul Mawaddah ch.7, p 52, 56 al-Ashi’atul Lami’ah of Shah Abdul Haq, vol. 4 p 665, Muhibbuddin at-Tabari’s ar-Riyadun Nadira, Part 2, Ch.4, Section 6, p. 172, 174, Kanzul Ummal, vol.6, p.153.

[41.](#) Mohibuddin at-Tabari’s ar-Riyadun Nadira, Part 2, Ch. 4, Section 6, p.172, al-Qanduzi’s Yanabi’ul Mawaddah, vol. 1 Ch. 41, p.123, Arjah al-Matalib of Ubaidillah al-Aamertasturi Ch.4, p..595.

[42.](#) Mustadrak of al-Hakim, vol. 3 p. 121, Muhibbuddin at-Tabari’s ar-Riyadun Nadira, Part 2, Ch.4, Section 6, p.116, Ibn Hajar al-Makki’s as-Sawa’iq al-Muhrqa, Ch 9, Section 2, p.74, Ahmed bin Hanbal’s Musnad, vol. 6, p.323, Al-Qanduzi’s Yanabi’ul Mawaddah, Ch.6, p.48, ibn Kathir’s Tarikh, vol. 7 p. 354, Kanzul Ummal, vol. 6 p.152, 401.

[43.](#) Kanzul Ummal, vol. 6 p., 156.

[44.](#) Sharh Nahjul Balagha, vol. 3 p. 97 quoted in The Caliphate, p.46.

[45.](#) Kitab Sulaym bin Qais, Eng. Tr. Sayyid Ali Abid & Neelam Rizvi, Pub:S & N Rizvi, Heston, Houslow, TWS OJE, England [2001] p.108

[46.](#) The Islamic principle of (rule by) consultation; an Islamic consultative council.

[47.](#) Kitab Sulaym bin Qais, p.110–111.

[48.](#) Kitab Sulaym bin Qais, Hadith No.19, p. 171.

[49.](#) Madarijun Nubuwwa, Ch.12, p.201, Tafsir al-Kabir, vol. 4 p. 488, Tarikh Rawdhathul Ahbab, Al-Karrar, p.121, Hayatul Qulub, vol.2 p.823.

Chapter 5: The Intrigue

In the preceding chapter, we saw a formidable record of evidence, from historical as well as Islamic traditional sources, which show that from the very first day of proclaiming Islam to the last moments of his life, the Prophet (S) indicated and expressly nominated, on every occasion, Imam Ali (a.s.) as his immediate successor. The nomination of Imam Ali (a.s.) was not a personal whim of the Prophet (S).

The Qur'an declares that the Prophet (S) never spoke out of his personal wish, desire, or whim.¹ The Qur'an further declares that the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) do not wish anything which God does not wish.²

The nomination of a successor was never left to the Prophet (S), much less to his Umma. It was always according to the Divine commandment. However, every community suspected that there was no such thing as Divine command and that their Prophet (S) was acting by himself in appointing his successor. When Talut was appointed, the Israelites challenged saying: "How can he exercise authority over us when we are better fitted than he to exercise authority and he is not even gifted, with wealth in abundance." Their Prophet (S) replied: "Allah has chosen him above you, and has gifted him abundantly with knowledge and bodily prowess. Allah grants authority to whom He pleases."³

Imam Ali (a.s.) is universally acknowledged as the first person to accept Islam even when he was just in his teens.⁴ Coupled with this is the fact that unlike all other companions of the Holy Prophet (S), Ali had never worshiped any idol. Imam Ali (a.s.) is universally acknowledged as the most wise and knowledgeable.⁵ He is universally acknowledged as the only soldier who stood by and fought for the Prophet (S), often alone, to rescue the Prophet (S) from imminent dangers.⁶

Whenever the Prophet (S) spoke of Ali (a.s.) being his successor, the companions who were always in doubt about the Prophet's motives, questioned: "*Is this from you or from Allah?*"⁷ The companions always had a lingering suspicion as to the wisdom of the Prophet's words and deeds, for they measured the Prophet (S) with their own parameters. Coupled with this suspicion was their hope that if the Prophet's nomination of a particular individual was proved wrong, then they might stand a chance to succeed..

Before proceeding further, we may recall here a parallel. When Satan heard that God was going to appoint His Deputy [*Khalifa*] on the earth, all the devilish desires and false self-esteem came to the fore and kindled the hope that by ingratiating himself in the company of the Angels and making pretensions to piety, he [Satan] stood a fair chance of being appointed as God's deputy in the earth.

When God declared that Adam (a.s.) would be His deputy in the earth, all the envy and jealousy, which was in the devilish nature of Satan, took the shape of hatred and impotent frustration. Satan disputed and refused to obey God's command saying that being made of fire he was superior to Adam (a.s.) who was created from dust. The infallible Imams (a.s.) have explained that Satan was created in a combination of dust and fire and therefore he was an inferior jinnee and not an angel. His claim of superiority over Adam was therefore illusory.

Satan's dispute was with God, but he (Satan) vowed to punish Adam and his progeny. The nomination of Imam Ali (a.s.) was made by the Prophet (S) but the revenge was taken against Imam Ali (a.s.) and the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) ! All his pretensions to piety and being near to God in the company of Angels did not avail Satan who was banished on account of his real nature. Though the inveterate enemies of Islam pretended to become Muslims, their real status is shown in a tradition regarding Doomsday, related

through ibn Abbas in which the Prophet (S) said: “*Then, some of my companions will be taken to the right side and some to the left side. I will say: ‘(they are) My companions!’ It will be said, ‘They reneged after you had left them’.*”⁸

None of the companions could boast that they had never worshipped idols. As a matter of fact, Umar ibnul Khattab, who became the second caliph, was openly hostile towards the Prophet (S) and his Message. His hostility towards anything clashing with his idol worship and pagan beliefs were so severe that he persecuted his own first cousin Zaid.⁹ His hostility continued for over eight years after the proclamation of Islam and he is said to have embraced Islam only after forty or, according to some, fifty persons had already done so.¹⁰ The only reasons offered by Umar while refusing to become the first *Caliph* was that Abu Bakr had precedence over him in accepting Islam.

All the historians and reporters of traditions are unanimous that in defending Islam in the wars of *Badr*, *Uhud*, *Khandaq*, *Khaybar*, *Hunain*... etc., during the Prophet’s life, Imam Ali (a.s.) was the acknowledged champion of the battlefield. In the battle of Khaybar, for three days, Abu Bakr and Umar failed to capture the fort.¹¹ The Prophet (S), while bestowing the command upon Ali (a.s.), gave him the title of ‘*karrarun ghairo farrar*’; one who repeatedly attacks fearlessly and does not run away from the battlefield.

In the battle of Uhud, the greed of the companions for booty almost brought defeat to the Muslims. By the attacks of the infidels, the Prophet (S) was seriously injured and one of his teeth was broken. Assuming that the Prophet (S) was killed, most companions ran away from the battlefield. Only when Imam Ali (a.s.) shouted that the Prophet (S) was alive and he called out to them, did the companions return. In fact, some companions had fled so far away that they returned several days after the battle. Similarly, in the battle of *Hunain* when the infidels showered their arrows, the companions fled, leaving the Prophet (S) almost unattended. Imam Ali (a.s.) and the Prophet’s uncle Abbas were left to defend the Holy Prophet (S).¹²

The Prophet (S) had declared that Ali (a.s.) was the fountainhead of all knowledge and wisdom. The Prophet (S) had declared that Ali (a.s.) is the best jurist among them. The valor, wisdom, and eminence of Ali (a.s.) were not only well known but also frequently acknowledged even by his derogators.

Despite the abundance of evidence of Imam Ali’s nomination by the Prophet (S) as his immediate successor and the universally acknowledged merits of him, history shows that he did not succeed the Prophet (S) for about thirty years, till the fourth stage of the *Caliphate*, that too, when the *Caliphate* was literally thrust upon Imam Ali (a.s.) by popular choice and public accord.

Amir Ali writes, “*Thus, by one of the strangest freaks of fortune ever recorded in history, did the persecutors of Muhammad usurp the inheritance of his children, and the champions of idolatry became the supreme heads of his religion and empire.*”¹³

How this could ever happen is a matter for serious scrutiny. A keen and unbiased student of the history of Islam will notice that this was achieved in several well-planned phases. We should remember that the

ever-scheming Satan meticulously planned and lured the companions at every opportunity to join hands and conspire with the hypocrites and enemies of Islam.

The first phase of the conspiracy was set into motion in the very lifetime of the Prophet (S) when some companions started questioning the wisdom of the Prophet's words and deeds, as for instance at Hudaibiya.

The second phase began at and around the time of the Prophet's death when the Prophet (S) was disobeyed, imputed with delirium like any other ordinary mortal, and prevented from writing down his Will.

The third phase was put into effect during the period of the first three caliphs who strictly prohibited relating or recording of *Hadith*, on the ground that *Hadith* might create confusion or that the people will neglect the Qur'an in preference to *Hadith*. It is one of those quirks of fate that the today's world of *Sunnis* is largely dependent on *Hadith*. In fact, among the *Sunnis* there is a sect called '*ahlul (people of hadith*' who place absolute reliance only upon traditions.

In the fourth stage of the conspiracy, the three *Caliphs* misinterpreted *Jihad* to suit their convenience and dispatched the companions on wars with foreign countries for the sole reason that there was rising discontent among their companions about the capacity of the person occupying the seat of the *Caliph*.

The fifth phase was carried out by the Umayyads, the Abbasids, and the Fatimids, all usurpers to the throne, when they popularized cursing and abusing Ali (a.s.) and the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.), encouraged coining of false traditions derogating the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) and eulogizing their opponents or at least imputing them glory similar to Ali (a.s.) and the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.).

The last phase was when persons patronized by the Umayyad ruler of the day were allowed to collect and record traditions favorable to the ruler or his ancestors/predecessors, from every dubious source, while scrupulously excluding the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) in the matter of narration of traditions. Thus, the present day Muslim community is confronted with a plethora of conflicting and confusing traditions. The result was that the *Sunnis* became divided into several sects holding conflicting views, even on very fundamental matters

We shall examine in the following chapters the conspiracy, in detail, which corrupted Islam and the effect it left on Muslims. We have allotted a separate chapter for each stage of the conspiracy for the sake of the convenience of the reader.

1. Qur'an, 53:3.

2. Qur'an, 76:30, 81:29.

3. Qur'an, 2:246 – 251, Abul Fida's *Qasasul Ambiya*, p. 289.

4. Ahmed bin Hanbal's *Musnad*, vol. 1, p.99, 141, 209, 331, 373, vol. 4, p. 368, 370–371, vol. 5, p.26; *Kanzul Ummal*, vol. 6, p.400, at-Tabari's *Tarikh*, vol. 2, p.211–213, *Mustadrak of Al-Hakim*, vol.3, p.111, 112, 133, 136, ibn Hisham, vol. 1, p.247, 249, Abul Fida, vol. 1, p.116, *Tarikh al-Khamis*, vol. 1, p.323, *al-Kamil of Ibn al-Athir*, vol.2, p. 20–21, *Tarikh of ibn Kathir*,

vol. 3, p.24–25, vol. 7, p.222, 333–334, al-Mas’udi vol. 2, p. 172–173, As-Sawa’iq of ibn Hajar al-Makki, Ch.9, p. 72, Musnad of Abu Dawud, Part 1, p.26, Part 3, p.93, ibn Abdul Birr’s Isti’ab, Ch. Life of Ali [s], p.470,486, Muhibbuddin at-Tabari’s ar-Riyadun Nadira, Part 2, Ch.4,p.157–159, 203, Rawdatus Safa, Part 2, p. 276, Sunan of ibn Maja, Ch. 11, p.12, Mizan of ath-Thahabi, Part 3, p.212, ibn Abil Hadid, vol. 1, p. 376, vol.3, p. 257, Wasilatun Najat of Md. Mobin, p.70, as-Seera al-Alawiyya of Haider Ali Hanafi, vol. 1, p.31–42.

5. As-Sawa’iq of ibn Hajar al-Makki, Ch.9, Section 2, p.76, Tabaqat of ibn Sa’d, vol.2, Part 2, p. 101, Isti’ab of ibn Abdul Birr, Part 2, p.475–475, Mohibbuddin at-Tabari’s ar-Riyadun Nadira, Part 2, Ch. 4, Section 6, p.198, Section 9, p.221, al-Qunduzi’s Yanabi’ul Mawaddah, Ch.13, p.53, Ch.14, p. 60.

6. At-Tabari, vol. 3 p. 128, Dayarbakri’s Tarikh al-Khamis, vol. 1, p.427–429, Madarijun Nubuwwa, vol. 2, p. 167, Tarikh al-Khamis of Dayarbakri, vol.1 p.547–548, vol. 2, p.51, 113, vol. 3, p.125, Tarikh al-Kamil of ibnul Athir, vol.2, p.68, 83–84, 100, Habib as-Sayyar, vol. 1, Part 3, p.46–47, Shibli’s Siratun Nabi, vol. 1, Part 1, p.313, 367, at-Tabari, vol.2, p.83–84, Abul Fida, vol. 1, p.140, 146, ibn Hisham, vol.3, p.387, vol. 4, p.72, ibn abdul Birr’s Istia’b Part 2, ‘Life of Ali [s]’, p.474, Tabaqat of ibn Sa’d, vol. 2 Part 3, p.102, Mohibbuddin at-Tabari’s Ar-Riyadun Nadira, Part 2, Ch.4, Section 6, p.194, 197, Caliphate, p. 302.

7. As Sira al-Halabiyya, vol. 3 p. 308–309.

8. Abul Fida’s Qasasul Ambiya, P. 380, quoting the Sura of al-Ma’idah 117–118 and al-Bukhai’s chapter on Creation.

9. ibn Hisham, vol. 1, p.247, 249.

10. As-Suyuti’s al-Khasa’isul Kubra, p.134, Shibli’s al-Faruq, Part 1, p34.

11. Abul Fida’s Qasasul Ambiya, p. 402, 408.

12. Abul Fida’s Qasasul Ambiya, p.412 – 413.

13. A Short History of the Saracens, Ch.7, p.71.

Chapter 6: Attributing fallibility to the Prophet

Historical facts clearly show that there was a deep-rooted conspiracy, the spark of which was lit by Abu Sufyan, Marwan, Amr bin al-Aas...etc., long before they became reluctant Muslims. The spark was fanned into a fire when a written pledge was made by some persons comprised of *Banu Umayya* along with some companions of the Prophet (S) at the Kaaba, to hasten the early departure of the Prophet (S) by waylaying and killing him during his return from the last *Hajj*, and thus usurp the *Caliphate*.

The forging of an alliance between the *Banu Umayya* and some companions who were their childhood friends was absolutely necessary as the Muslim *Umma* would not have tolerated the *Banu Umayya*, one time enemies of Islam, to rule over them. When they could not succeed in killing him, they conspired to oppose every wish of the ailing Prophet (S). They refused to assemble under the banner of Usama violating the Prophet’s specific and repeated orders. Later, they frustrated the Prophet’s desire to write down his last will and came out openly saying that the Qur’an was sufficient and that there was no further need for guidance or directions from a delirious and dying Prophet (S).

It is not as if they wanted to create a doubt about the wisdom or infallibility of the Prophet (S). They held the view that the Prophet (S) was as much an ordinary man as they were; subject to greed, avarice, prejudice, and a desire to aggrandize the self and family. To their credit, it must be said that they

genuinely thought that the Prophet (S) was an ordinary human being. Therefore, they spied in his every speech and action a personal motive! At every stage, they asked, “*Is this from you or from Allah?*” They could never ever properly understand the Prophet (S).

Though every person who claimed to be a Muslim was commanded and obliged to unquestioningly submit to the command of the Prophet (S), in letter and in spirit, history is full of instances where the companions, who later became *Caliphs*, stood up to question the Prophet’s wisdom of word or deed.¹ They often asked, “*Is this from you or from Allah?*”² And every time the Prophet (S) had to reassure them that, as the Qur’an vouchsafes, he never did anything out of his own will, personal whim, or for pleasure.³ Later, whenever a tradition that was in favor of Ali (a.s.) or against their liking or interest was related, these very companions conveniently branded the tradition as the personal whim of Muhammad (S) the individual and not the act of Muhammad the Prophet (S). History is replete with instances where, for instance, Umar confessed about the peace treaty of *Hudaibiya* and said, “*It was a day when I doubted the wisdom of Muhammad (S) as never before, and I was nigh recanting from the faith.*”⁴

A perpetual, persistent, and commonly shared doubt in the Prophethood of Muhammad (S) and the anomaly of being counted upon as the companions of the very object of their suspicion, created inroads for a close nexus between the *Banu Umayya* and such of the tribe of *Quraysh* who held similar views. The ‘doubt’ was well conviction and they could not dispel it despite spending time in the company of the Prophet (S).

The history of the prophets is replete with instances where their flock accused them of being ordinary men like themselves. This arose on account of the fact that if the Prophet (S) claimed to be super human, the flock will rightly claim that the commandments could be followed by him—a super human—and not by ordinary mortals. Therefore, the Prophets had to appear human, subject to thirst, hunger, pain, joy and to walk about in the market place to buy and sell. At the same time, the prophets also performed miracles which set them apart from ordinary human beings. A right thinking man considered the prophets to be similar but superior to himself, whereas ignorant and misguided men considered the prophets (S) to be just like any ordinary man.⁵

Ultimately, a solution to the contradiction that arose between a perpetually lingering doubt while constantly being viewed as the Prophet’s companions took the shape of the old proposition that was all too convenient for their secret plans. Thus, even during the lifetime of the Prophet (S) itself, they started a subtle but sustained campaign that Muhammad (S) was, after all, as much an ordinary human being as any other, subject to greed, lust and all other human frailties and excesses; and that it was only on those occasions when he received Divine Messages that he acted as the Messenger of God. Thus, a cleavage was made in the personality of Prophet Muhammad (S) and a rift was created between religious and temporal leadership, for the conspirators were fully aware that while they could not go anywhere near religious leadership [imamate], they, as expert politicians, could stake their right to temporal leadership [caliphate]. They knew that if you held the calf, the cow would follow.

We may note here that whenever Divine Messengership combined with temporal authority as in the case of Adam, David, Solomon, and the Prophet Muhammad (S), no injustice was caused to anyone under such ‘Just’ rulers. On the other hand, when temporal authority was separated from Divine Messengership, people suffered under unjust and oppressive rulers.

In order to prevent any dissension or doubt, the Prophet (S) called for pen and parchment so that he might write down his will declaring his successor. Umar refused and prevented others from procuring pen and parchment, knowing that the Prophet (S) would make a will in favour of Ali (a.s.). Umar then declared that the Prophet (S) was hallucinating in a state of *delirium*, and was, therefore, incapable of understanding his own words and deeds. Umar put the last nail in the proverbial coffin. He proclaimed: “*We have the Qur'an amongst us, which is sufficient to guide us.*”⁶ Thus, Umar dispensed with the necessity of any guidance from the Prophet (S) ! Hearing this, the Prophet (S) became angry and told Umar: ‘get out of my presence’.⁷ This incident is recorded by Al-Bukhari under the same heading, i.e. ‘*Qumu Anni; get away from me*’. The incident reveals that right in the presence the ailing Prophet (S) they dared to suggest that the Prophet (S) was only an ordinary human being and that he suffered from infirmity of the mind. Thus, it was insinuated, firstly that the Prophet’s words were of no consequence since they were merely the blabbering of a weak and wandering mind, and secondly, that no guidance from the Prophet (S) was needed any longer since they already had the Qur'an with them.

Disobeying the Prophet

The Prophet (S) sent several ambassadors and delegations to the neighboring kingdoms. Al-Munthir accepted Islam. The Egyptians sent rich presents while the Hercules and Negus replied in courteous manner. Khosrow, the king of Persia, behaved arrogantly and swore that he would punish the Prophet (S). But Khosrow was murdered by his own son. The Roman king had insulted and killed Usama’s father Zaid, who was sent as an ambassador by the Prophet (S). The Roman king failed to apologize and he threatened to wipe out the Muslims. This gave cause for the Muslims to send an army, demand an apology from the Roman king, and to wage war if he would refuse to apologize.⁸

The Prophet (S), therefore, directed Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas, Abu Ubaida bin al-Jarrah and all the Muhajirin and the Ansar, except Imam Ali (a.s.), to go to the place called Mu'ta on an expedition under the command of Usama bin Zaid.⁹ Objections were raised saying that the senior companions were opposed to being placed under the command of Usama who was a young man. Many argued that on earlier occasions, the Prophet (S) had placed the very same companions under the charge of Ali (a.s.) who was the youngest among them. However, a foundation was laid for a demur and claim that the leader should only be an older member and not any youngster.

Unable to collect men around him, Usama twice met the Prophet (S) who became angry at his orders being disobeyed and he insisted that Usama should immediately collect all the men and proceed on the expedition without further delay. Books of history are full of reports as to how Usama tried to collect the

men for the expedition and how they refused to assemble under his leadership and how the companions of the Prophet (S) disobeyed the ailing Prophet (S).

History also records the palace intrigues of Aa'isha and Hafsa, wives of the Prophet (S) and daughters of Abu Bakr and Umar respectively. The animosity of these two women towards Imam Ali (a.s.) is very well recorded in history. Each of these two women insisted that her father should not proceed on any expedition and should be present in Medina, since the Prophet (S) was about to die. Therefore, instead of going to Usama as directed by the Prophet (S), Abu Bakr went to Suq to his newly wedded wife, and Umar shuttled between his friends among the *Banu Umayya* and the *Muhajirin*. Whenever the Prophet (S) called for Ali (a.s.), each of these two women would suggest that her father might be called instead of Ali (a.s.), but the Prophet (S) insisted on Ali (a.s.), with whom he conferred for a long time.¹⁰ The Prophet (S) said, “*God's curse upon those who demurred in joining the army of Usama*”¹¹

The Myth of Leading the Prayers

During his last days, the Prophet (S) was able to lead the prayers only once a day. When his sickness became severe, he was unable to go out and lead the prayers. During his sickness, he asked Imam Ali (a.s.) to lead the prayers. But somehow, this fact had to be obliterated or at least rendered dubious in historical records. Therefore, years later under the two caliphs, gullible historians introduced Abu Bakr and Umar as persons who led the prayer in the place of the Prophet (S) during his illness. That history, which was manipulated, is obvious from the following contradictory versions:

According to the earliest version of Muhammad ibn Isshaq, it is reported by Abdullah ibn Zam ibn al-Aswad that he was present near the ailing Prophet (S), when Bilal called out the *Azan* and inquired as to who should lead the prayers. The Prophet (S) told ibn Zam to ask anyone he may find at hand to lead the prayers. Ibn Zam said that on hearing this he came out, found that Abu Bakr was not present but Umar was. Ibn Zam asked Umar to lead the prayers. When Umar stood up and said the *Takbir*, the Prophet (S) heard Umar's booming voice, and said, “*Where is Abu Bakr? God and the Muslims refuse that Umar should lead the prayers.*” Abu Bakr was sent for, but before he came, Umar had completed the Prayer. Feeling hurt at the incident, Umar asked ibn Zam, “*Why did you do this to me? When I led the prayers, I thought that I was complying with the Prophet's wish.*” Ibn Zam replied, “*The order was not from the Prophet. When I could not find Abu Bakr, I thought that you are the next best person to lead the prayers and therefore it was I who had asked you to lead the prayer.*”¹²

The above version is improved and amended by Husayn Dayar Bakhti by substituting the words that the Prophet (S) told ibn Zam that he might ask anyone he would find to lead the prayers, and in its place interpolating that the Prophet (S) asked Abdullah ibn Zam to ask Abu Bakr to lead the prayers but not finding Abu Bakr, he asked Umar to lead the prayers.¹³

But the great Sunni traditionist Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal gives a different version and narrates from Abdullah ibn Abbas who said: “*During his sickness, the Prophet (S) sent for Ali (a.s.) to be brought in*

immediately. Hearing this, Aa'isha said, 'Why not my father Abu Bakr?' The Prophet (S) said, 'Very well'. Then Hafsa challenged, 'Why only Abu Bakr, and not my father Umar?' The Prophet (S) said, 'Very Well'. Then, Ummul Fadhl said, 'Why not my husband Abbas?' The Prophet (S) said, 'Very Well'. When all the three, Abu Bakr, Umar, and Abbas arrived, the Prophet (S) lifted his head and not finding Ali (a.s.) among them, kept quiet. Umar understood that the Prophet (S) was not in favour of any of them and he said, 'Let us move out'. Then Bilal, who had called out for prayer [called out the Azan] came in. Aa'isha said, 'Abu Bakr is emotional and mild natured. Let Umar lead the prayer'. However, Abu Bakr went out to lead the prayer. Then the Prophet (S) finding himself slightly better, had himself lifted, his feet dragging on the ground, went into the mosque with the help of two persons... The Prophet (S) led the prayer and Abu Bakr was following him." [14](#) Al-Bukhari and Muslim also report on lines similar to Ahmed bin Hanbal, with the addition that when Aa'isha and Hafsa were disputing as to whose father should lead the prayers, the Prophet (S) said, "You are [deceitful and cunning] like the women of Joseph." [15](#)

At-Tabari has a different version according to which the Prophet (S) asked Abu Bakr to lead the Prayer. Aa'isha said, "Abu Bakr is a soft man." The Prophet (S) said, "Then ask Umar to lead the prayers." Umar replied, "I am not going to lead the prayer when Abu Bakr is present." Therefore, Abu Bakr led the prayers. [16](#)

The incident was later manipulated in such a way as to suggest that, during the three days preceding the Prophet's death, Abu Bakr led the prayers according to an indication (*Ishara*) given by the Prophet (S). This manipulation is later used to suggest that Abu Bakr was indicated to be the successor of the Prophet (S). [17](#)

Thus, historical facts were distorted and the precedence of Abu Bakr and Umar was sought to be established during the last days of the Prophet (S), as a prelude and a step in aide to challenge the wisdom of the Prophet's words and deeds. [18](#)

After finishing the prayer, the Prophet (S) returned to his chamber and demanded that pen and parchment to be procured to write down his will and testament, so that the Muslim community might be rightly guided and not to fall into gross eternal error. [19](#) We have recounted this incident in detail in the preceding pages.

Anguish of the Ansar before the Saqifa

Umar apprehended that if the news of the death of the Prophet (S) reached the Ansar, they would rush and swear allegiance to Imam Ali (S) where they knew well that he had been nominated by the Prophet (S). He was also aware that the Ansar were in favour of Ali (a.s.) to succeed the Prophet (S). He realized that once Ali (a.s.) completed the funeral rites, the entire Muslim community would swear their allegiance and make Ali (a.s.) the caliph as wanted by the Prophet (S). He had to somehow gain time and defer the question of succession till he could present a fait accompli. It is for this reason that we find Umar standing near the Prophet's body with his sword unsheathed, imputing a sort of immortality to the

Prophet (S), and threatening that anyone who said that the Prophet (S) had died, would be immediately beheaded.²⁰ Having created the desired confusion, Umar left the dead body of the Prophet (S) to be buried by Ali (a.s.) and he hastened to the Saqifa. Abu Bakr, who came after some time on his return from Suk, joined Umar at Saqifa, where he was immediately declared as the Caliph.²¹ On their return from Saqifa, Abu Bakr recited verses from the Qur'an to show that after all Umar was wrong and the Prophet (S), like any ordinary human being, had died.²² The confusion created by Umar's assertion gave enough breathing time to put into effect their plan of usurping the Caliphate.

The initial assertion of immortality and later contradicting it by Qur'anic verses was cleverly used to prove that the Prophet (S) was as much a mortal as any other. The crux of the matter was to remove any possible doubt as to the Prophet (S) to be anything other than a mere mortal, and thus attempting to establish that, if on occasions, the Prophet's actions appeared to be favorable to Ali (a.s.), all such actions should be discounted and dismissed as the fancies of the wandering mind of an ordinary man, who was naturally interested in seeing his son-in-law and cousin becoming the leader of the Muslims.

Thus, all those innumerable occasions when the Prophet (S) declared Imam Ali (a.s.) as his successor, they argued, should be presumed to be the impulsive acts of Muhammad (S), the mortal man, who was impelled by the desire to perpetuate a family rule. All such sayings of the Prophet (S) regarding Ali (a.s.), they argued, should therefore be discarded as the whims and fancies of an ordinary human mind. What was so long whispered as a theory was now to be put into practical use.

The Ansar were witnesses to the nomination of Imam Ali (a.s.) by the Prophet (S) on several occasions. They acknowledged Ali's superiority in all respects over the entire Muslim community. They all knew that as a matter of fact Ali (a.s.) would have to become the successor of the Prophet (S) and hence they were eager and ready to accept him as the *Caliph*.²³ They had none among them who could even remotely compete against Ali (a.s.).

But, the open opposition shown to the ailing Prophet (S), in his last days, was noted by the Ansar. Now, the Ansar realized that already plans were afoot to forestall Ali's succession and that some other unknown person was likely to pre-empt Ali (a.s.) as well as the Ansar in order to usurp the *Caliphate*. The Ansar argued that if it was going to be any person other than Ali (a.s.), they had an equal, if not a better claim to the *Caliphate*, as the people who gave a place and protection first to the Muslims and later to the Prophet (S) himself. They hurried to the *Saqifa of the Bani Sa'ida* which was their old hideout where all urgent and important matters were discussed and decided. Sa'd bin Ubada was a well-known, powerful, and ambitious man among the Ansar. The Ansar decided that if any person other than Ali (a.s.) attempted to become the *Caliph*, Sa'd Bin Ibada should stake the claim for the *Caliphate*.²⁴

The Ansar themselves were a divided lot on account of long-standing enmity between the two major tribes of al-Aws and al-Khazraj.²⁵ Both of the tribes had traitors who passed on the information to the *Muhajirin*. Umar had, as his close friends and informers, Uwaim, Mu'in ibn Adiy, and his brother Aasim from among the Ansar. These men were jealous of and opposed to Sa'd bin Ibada and his tribe. When

they saw that Sa'd bin Ibada was likely to be put up as a candidate of the Ansar to the *Caliphate*, Aasim hurried in search of Umar. He found him at the Prophet's house and from behind a wall, called out to him. Aasim and Mu'in bin Adiy informed Umar that the Ansar had gathered at *Saqifa* and were about to choose Sa'd bin Ibada as the *Caliph*.²⁶ Aasim urged Umar to hurry to *Saqifa*. Umar could not locate Abu Bakr, who was then a short distance away at *Suk* with his newly wedded wife. Instead, he found Abu Ubaida ibn al-Jarrah and offered the caliphate to him. Abu Ubaida refused, saying that he dared not do so as long as seniors like Abu Bakr and Umar were present. On the way, Abu Bakr met them and all three of them hurried towards *Saqifa*, leaving behind the body of the Prophet (S) to be buried by his family members and close companions.²⁷

Even during the lifetime of the Prophet (S), Abu Bakr and Umar kept their link with Abu Sufyan, Marwan, Mu'awiya, and other Umayyads. In the heat of the Battle of Uhud, assuming that the Prophet (S) was killed, Umar, Talha, and a few Muhajirin and Ansar fled to the mountains.²⁸ When Anas ibn an-Nadhr, came upon them and inquired as to why they deserted the Prophet (S) at such a crucial moment, Umar lamented that since he was told that the Prophet (S) was killed, he wished that someone could go to the hypocrite Abdullah ibn Ubay and request him to intercede and get an amnesty from Abu Sufyan who was the commander of the infidel army.²⁹ Umar and Abu Bakr, when they assumed the *Caliphate*, doubly renewed their friendship with the *Banu Umayya*, the clan to which Uthman belonged.

At the *Saqifa*, after much disputation, initially a sort of compromise formula was proposed that in recognition of the undeniable protection and services rendered by the Ansar to Muslims, one man from the Ansar and one man from the Muhajirin should become *Caliphs*. Umar vehemently objected saying that two swords could not be sheathed in one scabbard. It is to be noted that at the *Saqifa*, there were only three persons; Abu Bakr, Umar, and Abu Ubaida and nobody else from the Muhajirin.³⁰ S.M. Suhufi gives a total number of fourteen persons who had gathered at *Saqifa*.³¹

At the *Saqifa*, there was no any discussion between the Muhajirin and the Ansar regarding the merits of their respective candidates. The only contention of Abu Bakr and Umar was that they belonged to the tribe of Quraysh, who accepted Islam long before the Ansar and that they were relatives of the Prophet (S). On this ground, the people of Quraysh contended that they had a better and superior right over the Ansar. The details of what transpired at the *Saqifa* does not concern us here. The entire incident and the manner in which Abu Bakr became the first Caliphate is recorded in detail by all the historians as well as reporters of traditions. The arguments between the two contestants are set out in detail supported by authoritative references by Agha M.S. Mirza in his book 'The *Caliphate*'.³² Suffice it to say that there were wordy duels followed by exchange of blows and bloodshed. At-Tabari records that it was "truly a scene from the period of *Jahiliya* (the pre-Islamic era).³³

A vast number of the Hashemites, Muhajirin, such as Salman, al-Miqdad, Ammar, Huthaifa, Abu Dharr, and the Ansar such as Abu Ayyub al Ansari, Jabir ibn Abdullah...etc., refused to acknowledge Abu Bakr as their *Caliph*. The *Banu Umayya* headed by Abu Sufyan also initially refused to acknowledge Abu

Bakr's *Caliphate*.³⁴

As to how, by offering wealth, property, and lucrative posts, and where these did not work, by threats of annihilation and actual use of force, the dissidents, except the *Banu Hashim*, were subdued by the *Caliph*, is recorded in detail by Ahmed ibn Hanbal in his *Musnad*, Ibn Sa'd in his *Tabaqat*, Ibn Qutaiba in his *Kitabul Imamah wes-Siyasah*, al-Hakim in his *Mustadrak*, Abu Dawud in his *Musnad*, Shah Abdul Haq in his *al-Ashi'atul Lami'a*, al-Balatheri in his *Futuhul Buldan*, in addition to the books of Abul Fida, at-Tabari, al-Mas'udi, ibn Abil Hadid al-Mo'tazili...etc.³⁵

Abu Sufyan ostensibly became a Muslim, but remained a pagan at heart, for he was highly pleased when Umar and other Muslims deserted the Prophet (S) and ran away in the battle of Hunain.³⁶ He gloated: "*This day we have seen the last of the witchcraft of Muhammad. This headlong flight of the Muslims will be stopped only by the sea.*"³⁷

Introduction of Fatalism

The *Umma* was greatly agitated by the fact that Ali (a.s.) was cunningly sidestepped. There were unending discussions about the acumen of the first caliph. The conspirators were aware that if an element of Divine will was introduced, it would silence the common man. For this, the next step was to introduce a sense of fatalism of the maxim 'Man proposes, God disposes'. Thus, it is that Umar introduced 'Divine Providence' when he told Abdullah ibn Abbas: "*It is true that the Prophet (S) intended and wished that Ali should attain the Caliphate. But the wish of the Prophet can carry no weight, as God did not will it so. The Prophet wished that Ali should attain the Caliphate, but God wished it otherwise. The will of God prevailed, thus the Prophet's desire could not be fulfilled. ... The Prophet wished to write a will giving the Caliphate to Ali, but I prevented him from doing so in the interest of Islam. The Prophet also came to know what was in my heart, and refrained from writing the will. The will of God prevailed.*"³⁸

The uncanny introduction of fatalism brought out a mix that was easily consumable for the *Umma* that was ever ready to resign to its 'fate'. To this day, Muslims are under the impression that what had happened at *Saqifa* in the matter of *Caliphate* might have been due to the Decree of God and we the *Umma*, including the Prophet and his progeny are powerless on-lookers. In this view, are concealed and condoned all the contrivances employed by the *Banu Umayya* and some greedy men of Quraysh, to usurp the *Caliphate* and keep it successfully beyond the reach of the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.).

In one swipe all those traditions regarding Imam Ali's nomination to the *Caliphate*, were done away with. But there remained those traditions that spoke of the excellence and supremacy of Imam Ali (a.s.) over all other Muslims in matters of faith, and his indispensability to Islam. However, not much could be done as long as the Prophet (S) lived, for he would have reiterated whenever they made any attempt to falsify a tradition, thereby enhancing the number of narrators of traditions. Yet, during the Prophet's lifetime itself false sayings were attributed to him so much so the Prophet (S) said, "*Whoever attributes false*

*traditions in my name shall surely be cast into hell.”*³⁹ The appropriate time for action, therefore, was immediately after the death of the Prophet (S). However, political expediency demanded that the foundation be laid when the Prophet (S) was in the last moments of his life. Consummate politician that he was, Umar superbly carried out this part of the conspiracy.

1. Al-Bukhari, Chapter on Jihad, vol.2, p. 14, ibnul Athir’s Tarikh al-Kamil, vol.2, p.84, Tarikh al-Khamis, vol. 2, p.22, 32, Madarijun Nubuwwa, vol.2 p.286–287, al-Waqidi’s Kitabul Maghazi, vol. 2 p.607, Ali Naqi’s History of Islam, Pp.357–362.
2. As-Seera al-Halabiyya, vol. 3, p.308–309.
3. Qur'an, 53:3–4.
4. Ibnul Athir’s Tarikh al-Kamil, vol.2, p.84, Tarikh al-Khamis, vol. 2, p.22, 32, Madarijun Nubuwwa, vol.2, p.286–287, al-Waqidi’s Kitabul Maghazi, vol. 2, p.607, Ali Naqi’s History of Islam, p.357–362.
5. Qur'an, Hud 11:31, al-Mu'minoon 23:33 – 35, 123 – 126, ash-Shura 26:153 – 154, 176–191, Yasin 36:13 – 29, al-Baqara 2:246 – 251.
6. Al-Bukhari, Kitabul Ilm, Kitabul Jihad, Kitabul Khums, Bab Maradh an-Nabi, Qumu Anni, Bab Karahiyat..., Sahih of Muslim, vol.5, p.75–76, Ahmed bin Hanbal’s Musnad, vol. 1, p.355– 356, ash-Shahristani’s Kitab al-Milal wen-Nihal, ibn Hazm’s Kitab al-Fasl, vol. 1 p.23, Kanzul Ummal, vol. 3 p.138, vol. 4 p.23, The Caliphate, p. 208–209.
7. Al-Bukhari, Bab ‘Qumu anni’.
8. Abul Fida’s Qasasul Ambiya, p. 408 – 409.
9. At-Tabari, vol.3, p.188–189, Habibus Sayyar, vol. 1, Part 3, p.77, Madarijun Nubuwwa, vol. 2, p.530, Tarikh al-Khamis, vol. 2 p.171, Ibnul Athir, vol. 2,p.120, ibn Abil Hadid, vol. 1 p.53, vol.2 p.20.
10. At-Tabari, vol.3, p.188–189, Habibus Sayyar, vol. 1, Part 3, p.77, Madarijun Nubuwwa, vol. 2, p.530, Tarikh al-Khamis, vol. 2, p.171, Ibnul Athir, vol. 2 p.120, ibn Abil Hadid, vol.1, p.53, vol.2, p.20.
11. Stories From the Qur'an by S.M. Suhufi, p. 316, Arabic Text No. 119 at p. 351. [La’ana Allahu man takhallafa an jaishi Usama].
12. Seeratun Nabi, Vol. 4, p.330.
13. Tarikh al-Khamis, vol. 2 p.181.
14. Ahmed bin Hanbal’s Musnad, vol. 1, p.356.
15. Al-Bukhari, Kitabul Azan and Kitabul I’tisaam, Sahih of Muslim, vol. 1, part 3, p.79.
16. Tabari, vol. 3, p.195
17. Habib al-Sayyar, vol. 4, p. 356. Khilafah in Theory & Practice, p.48–49.
18. The Caliphate, p. 196–207.
19. The Caliphate, p. 212 and footnote 264.
20. Ibn Khaldun, vol.2, p.63, Shibli’s al Faruq, Part 1, p.65, The Caliphate, p.230, 232.
21. Al-Bukhari, Bab Fada’il As~haab an-Nabi, vol.2, p.193, ibn Khaldun, vol.2, Supp. P. 63, Tabaqat of ibn Sa’d, Vol. 2, Part 2, p. 55.
22. The Caliphate by M.S. Mirza, p.220–221, ibn Hisham, vol. 4, p.334–335, Musnad of Ahmed bin Hanbal, vol. 1, p.334, Al-Bukhari, Bab Fada’il As~haab an Nabi, vol.2, p.193, ibn Khaldun, vol.2, Supp. P. 63, Tabaqat of ibn Sa’d, Vol. 2, Part 2, p. 55; ibn Hajar al-Makki’s As~Sawa’iq, p.5.
23. At-Tabari, vol.3, p. 198, al-Kamil of ibnul Athir, vol. 2,p.124, Ibn Abil Hadid al-Mo’tazili , vol. 2, p. 7–8, 411.
24. Ibn Abil Hadid, Vol. 2, p. 10.
25. Ibn Qutaiba, Kitabul Imamah, p.9; The Caliphate, p.227, Khilafa, p.48.
26. Ibn Abil Hadid, vol. 2,p. 3.
27. Al-Bukhari, Bab Fada’il As~hab an-Nabi, vol.2, p.193, at-Tabari, vol. 3, p.208, Muhibbuddin at-Tabari’s ar-Riydun Nadira, Part 1, Ch.2, Section 13, p. 15, 165.
28. As-Suyuti’s ad-Durrul Manthur, vol.2, supp. P. 88.
29. At-Tabari’s Tarikh, vol.3, p.19–20; Kitabul Maghazi, vol. 3, p. 45.
30. Al-Bukhari, Bab Fada’il As~hab an Nabi, vol. 2, p.193, at-Tabari, Vol. 3, p.208.
31. Stories From the Qur'an by Suhufi, Eng. Tr. By Muhammad Fazal Haq, P. 312 Islamic Seminary Publications [2003].

- [32. The Caliphate, Its Conception and Consequences, p. 222 – 242.](#)
- [33. At-Tabari, vol. 3, p. 208–210, ibn Khaldun, vol. 2, supp. P. 63.](#)
- [34. Habib al-Sayyar, vol. 1, Part 4, p. 2, Abul Fida, vol. 1, p. 156, at-Tabari, vol. 3, p. 202, al-Mas'udi, vol. 2, p. 194, ibn Abil Hadid, vol. 1, p. 134.](#)
- [35. Ibn Sa'd's at-Tabaqatul Kubra, Part 1, Vol. 3, p. 129, ibn Qutaiba's Kitabul Imama wes-Siyasah, vol. 1, p. 15, ibn Abil Hadid, vol. 1, p. 133, vol. 2, p. 3.](#)
- [36. Al-Bukhari, Kitabul Maghazi, vol. 3, p. 45.](#)
- [37. At-Tabari, vol. 3, p. 128, Ibnul Athir, vol. 2, p. 100, Abul Fida, vol. 1, 146, ibn Kathir's Tarikh, vol. 4, p. 327, Margoliouth's 'Muhammad', p. 394–402.](#)
- [38. The Caliphate, p. 46–47, 329–330, quoting Ibn Abil Hadeed's Sharh Nahjul Balaghah, vol. 3, p. 114.](#)
- [39. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 209.](#)

Chapter 7: Hadith

By hastening to *Saqifa* and leaving behind the body of the Prophet (S), they succeeded in usurping the *Caliphate* from Imam Ali (a.s.). As the very first act, the *Caliph* invited the *Banu Umayya*, the inveterate enemies of Islam and more particularly of the *Banu Hashim*, to participate in the administration. They recalled the exiled Marwan and Amr bin al-'Aas and entertained them as close confidants, secretly in the beginning and openly during the period of the third *Caliph*. The *Caliphs* also appointed Abu Sufyan's sons as governors of Syria, Iraq, and Egypt.

The conspiracy extended beyond these overt acts. The conspirators resolved to follow a system by which:

- [a] the traditions [sayings] and the Sunna [deeds] of the Prophet (S) were prohibited from being cited, repeated, or recorded.
- [b] Altogether new traditions were invented to justify the exclusion of Ali (a.s.) from the first three stages of the *Caliphate*.
- [c] Traditions were so interpreted as to justify the assumption of the *Caliphate* by persons other than Ali (a.s.).
- [d] Traditions were distorted in favour of the legitimacy of the first three *Caliphs* and the ruling *Caliph*.
- [e] New traditions were invented as parallels to those traditions which were known to be in favour of Ali (a.s.).
- [f] Traditions were coined to show that the Prophet (S) and his progeny (a.s.) were not different from other people and therefore, they were fallible.

[g] Just criticism was shut down by inventing the need for expeditions and wars under the name of Jihad, and people were sent to foreign countries, or at least their attention was diverted from local problems by innovating *Tarawih* prayers..

[h] The meaning of Zakat and Khums was so misinterpreted that it excluded the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) from their rightful share.

A consummate politician that he was, Umar achieved his objectives, first as an advisor to Abu Bakr and later himself as the second *Caliph*. The appointment of the third *Caliph* was made contingent upon his agreeing to follow the aforesaid precedents of the first two *Caliphs*. Imam Ali (a.s.) rejected the condition and refused to follow the footsteps of the first two *Caliphs*, saying that he would not be bound by anything except the Qur'an and the *Sunna*. On the other hand, Uthman, who agreed to abide by this stipulation, became the *Caliph* and followed the footsteps of the first two *Caliphs*.

Prohibition of Narrating the Hadith

The Prophet (S) had laid the foundation of Islam. Polytheism was abolished. Women, for the first time in the history of the world, were given personal rights and inheritance. The Arabs were weaned away from their pagan beliefs. The Qur'an became the constitution. The rules for a peaceful and pious society were laid down and put into practice. All that was required had been fully explained in the sayings and actions of the Prophet (S) that are known as *Hadith*.

Agha S.N. Mirza writes: "*The sources of information on all questions in Islam are three; the Qur'an, the Hadith or the Sunna, and History. There is no dispute about the provisions of the Holy Qur'an; the dispute arises only in respect of its interpretation, and it is the interpretation of the Qur'an alone that all the numerous sects, said to be seventy-three in number, appeal as the basis of their cult. All traditions are, of course, traced to the Prophet (S), and the interpretation put on the different verses of the Qur'an by the Prophet (S) are known only through the Hadith. Thus, so far as disputed questions in Islam are concerned, the source of their solution or information are two; Hadith and History.*"¹

Having gained the throne, the second phase of the conspiracy was set in motion. The first *Caliph*, instead of collecting, collating, and propagating the *Hadith*, reiterated the words of Umar and declared that the Qur'an alone was sufficient guidance for Muslims.

As the first measure, he strictly prohibited the narration, recording, or relying upon the Prophet's words and deeds- collectively called the *Sunna* or *Hadith*. Ath-Thahabi records that Abu Bakr said, "*Do not relate among yourselves the traditions of the Prophet (S). Traditions are likely to cause differences of opinion. The differences will be more serious after us. I warn you against narrating any sayings of the Prophet (S). If anyone inquires about what the Prophet (S) said in regard to any matter, tell him that the Book of God is sufficient for all purposes.*"² Abu Bakr is also reported to have burnt a book containing a collection of the sayings of the Prophet (S) declaring that the traditions are irrelevant, redundant, and

unnecessary as Muslims had the Qur'an for their guidance.³

Umar, during his *Caliphate* stringently enforced the edict by adding that if traditions were narrated, people would abandon the Qur'an.⁴ So fierce was Umar in enforcing the prohibition that for narrating Hadith, he sent to prison ibn Mas'ud, Abu ad-Darda, and Abu Mas'ud al-Ansari who were all noted companions of the Prophet (S).⁵

Umar proclaimed that anybody found narrating any tradition should be beheaded forthwith. A shallow reason touted for the stringent prohibition was that different people narrated different traditions which was likely to cause confusion. However, no explanation is given as to why the method followed by the three caliphs in collecting the Qur'an was not adopted for collecting the Hadith.

Quraidha ibn Ka'b says that Umar accompanied the army proceeding towards Iraq for some distance and said, "*The chief reason for my accompanying you is that since you are going to foreign lands where they recite the Qur'an in a buzzing voice like bees, I want to tell you not to mention the Prophet's Hadith to them, lest their recital of the Qur'an might be interrupted. Stop at the Qur'an; abstain from relating the Hadith of the Prophet (S). I am with you in this matter.*" Due to this injunction, when people inquired about the sayings of the Prophet (S), Quraidha used to say that Umar had prohibited everyone from relating any tradition.⁶

All the three caliphs, Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman prohibited the narration, recording, and reference to any tradition. Anybody contravening these orders was subjected to heavy penalties and severe punishment such as whipping, imprisonment, and even banishment.

Thus, all the sayings of the Prophet (S) in any manner relating or referring to Imam Ali (a.s.), were effectively stifled and consigned only to the memory of a few close companions of the Prophet (S) or in rare books secretly written and well hidden.

Despite this, Imam Ali's exegesis, sermons, sayings, letters, and directions issued to his governors, forming the back-bone of the earliest Islamic literature, were zealously preserved by his Shia and are available even today. No such literature can be traced to the first three Caliphs or the Umayyad or Abbasid rulers.

Coining and Propagating False traditions

Immediately after the Prophet's death, Abu Bakr, as the first *Caliph*, appointed Abu Sufyan's son Yazid as the Governor of Syria. On the death of Yazid bin Abu Sufyan, his brother Mu'awiya was made the Governor of Syria.

Marwan, who was banished by the Prophet (S) for sedition, was recalled and retained as a special and trusted advisor to the *Caliph*. He was later made the Governor of Egypt. Abu Sufyan, Marwan, and their respective offspring were inveterate enemies of Imam Ali (a.s.). They formed the seed of the *Umayyad*

Dynasty that ruled over Muslims for about a century. They indulged in spreading systematic calumny against the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) in general and Ali (a.s.) in particular.

The amount of success they achieved can be measured from the fact that most people in Syria, Iraq, and Egypt did not know who Ali (a.s.) was. Some claimed that he was a bandit who fought against Islam. How this was achieved, constitutes an important and integral part of the conspiracy. Again, this was done in two parts, firstly by degrading the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) from on the pulpits, and secondly by coining false traditions in favour of the opponents of Ali (a.s.) and the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.).

As the first step, a false propaganda was launched that the Prophet (S) did not nominate anyone as his successor. Secondly, a false story was circulated that the Ansar had planned to usurp the *Caliphate*. The fact, as we saw earlier, was that the Ansar assumed and were willing to accept the *Caliphate* of Imam Ali (a.s.) since they had no candidate equal to him among them. It was only when the Ansar witnessed the rebellious attitude of Umar at the Prophet's deathbed, that they realized that Ali (a.s.) was being sidestepped and someone else was going to usurp the *Caliphate*. Thirdly, another false story was circulated that Abu Bakr was elected by the majority, whereas the fact was that the Banu Hashim, Quraysh, and other Muhajirin, Ansar, and companions of the Prophet (S) as well as the Muslim public were all assembled, at that very moment, at the house of the dying Prophet (S). Those who were present at *Saqifa* were [1] Abu Bakr [2] Umar [3] Abu Ubaida ibn al-Jarrah [4] Sa'd bin Ubadah [5] Qays bin Sa'd [6] Khuzaymah bin Thabit [7] Usayd bin Hudhair [8] Uthman bin Affan [9] Abu Haytham bin at-Tayyihan [10] Hassaan bin Thabit [11] Abdurrahman bin Awf [12] Thabit bin Qays bin Shammas [13] Hubab bin Munthir [14] Mu'ath bin Adiy [15] Bashir bin Sa'd al-A'war and [16] Harith bin Hisham and a handful of other Muslims.

The next step was [i] to twist and modify well-known traditions so as to completely change their import and context or [ii] to fabricate, introduce, and propagate altogether new traditions glorifying the *Banu Umayya* and the first three *Caliphs* and [iii] for every existing tradition in favour of Imam Ali (S) and the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.), invent a corresponding new tradition in favour of their opponents. These steps were zealously and fully executed.

The foundation was laid on the very first day of Abu Bakr's *Caliphate*. Imam Ali (S) recalled before the congregation all those occasions and traditions wherein the Prophet (S) had nominated him (Ali) as his successor. In one voice, the assembly vouched for the veracity of every one of those occasions and traditions. Abu Bakr feared that the people might rise in support of Ali (S). Therefore, Abu Bakr invented a false tradition and said, “*All that you have recounted is absolutely true, for I myself had seen and heard and I do still remember all those words of the Prophet (S) as a witness to all those occasions. But, I have also heard the Prophet (S) declaring: 'We the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) were especially chosen by Allah not for leadership in this world but for the leadership in the eternal life hereafter'* Abu Bakr then added: ‘*Allah has not decreed that the Prophethood and Caliphate should remain in one house*’.”⁷

In saying so, Abu Bakr bifurcated religious leadership from temporal leadership. This is an invention that

contradicts the Qur'an and History which show that every Prophet (S) appointed his own brother, son, or near relative as his *Caliph* or successor.⁸ Out of the large congregation, only Umar, Abu Ubaida ibn al-Jarrah, Salim, and Mu'ath bin Jabal supported Abu Bakr by saying that they were present on that occasion.⁹

Agha M.S. Mirza gives a list of over a dozen prophets who nominated their children, brothers, or other close relatives as their successors.¹⁰ In fact, every Prophet (S) had unfailingly described, identified, or named his successor. The office of the successor to a prophet, like the office of Prophethood itself, lay within the domain of the Divine Choice and Will. Never was the choice of succession to Prophethood left to men.¹¹ That they were Divinely appointed is proved when the prophets performed miracles as for instance when Jesus (a.s.) spoke from the cradle. Where no successor is appointed, as in the case of Jesus, the Prophet (S) is kept alive, even among the Shia where nomination ended with the eleventh imam and the twelfth imam did not nominate another as his successor imam, the twelfth imam is kept alive but in occultation.

Abu Bakr's claim is an obvious fabrication, for whenever the Prophet (S) spoke about Ali (S), from the first day of Youm ad-Dar to the last day of his life, he consistently referred to his relationship with Ali (S) as a subsisting one '*in this world and the next*'. On numerous occasions, the Prophet (S) said, "*O Ali, you are to me like Aaron was to Moses. You are my brother in this world and the next.*"¹² He said, "*O Ali, you are my Vizier, Guardian, Caliph, Vicegerent, and Deputy in this world and the next.*" This fact is uniformly recorded in the books of the Shia and the Sunni alike.

As against the preponderance of such traditions, Abu Bakr set up a single tradition without quoting its context, the reason, or occasion for the Prophet (S), excluding the temporal leadership from the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.). The tradition is also falsified by the fact that contrary to his own words, the Prophet (S) himself acted as the temporal as well as religious leader of the Muslims throughout his life. Abu Bakr was aware of this glaring contradiction, and therefore he added that '*God did not wish to keep the Prophethood and Caliphate in one house*'.¹³

Yazid bin Abu Sufyan and later on his brother Mu'awiya, during their tenure, lavishly distributed money and property to those leaders of congregation who made false accusations, abused, and cursed Imam Ali (a.s.) from on the pulpit after every prayer, till it became a routine affair. Abu Huraira and Amr bin al-Aas gained notoriety for gaining immense wealth by fabricating false traditions. The notoriety caused great uproar among the public and compelled Umar to confiscate their illegal wealth. History books are full of instances of *Banu Umayya*'s persecution of those who refused to impute false allegation, abuse, and curse Imam Ali (a.s.). They were treated as renegades and were mercilessly penalized, punished, banished, or even killed.

For the first time, the Umayyad rulers employed their henchmen ostensibly to collect and compile traditions, but in fact to invent and popularize false traditions against the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.). The compilers were persons obliged to the caliph for the material comforts showered on them. They were aware about

the direction in which they could find their safety, welfare, progress, and material comforts. There was yet another category of persons who hated Imam Ali (a.s.), simply because at some battle or skirmish, their forefathers or other near relatives had challenged the Prophet (S), and in defense of Islam, Imam Ali (a.s.) had killed them. All these kind of people combined against Imam Ali (a.s.) to invent false stories defaming him and glorifying his enemies. Another class of narrators were those who bore an innate hatred toward Imam Ali (a.s.).¹⁴ They compiled only those traditions that did not conflict with the *Banu Umayya*'s position as *caliphs*. They scrupulously avoided any tradition in favour of the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.), particularly the traditions that spoke of the virtues, supremacy, or nomination of Imam Ali (a.s.).

A well-known Sunni writer Shibli has devoted a chapter under the heading '*Collection and Compilation of learning Commenced at the Instance of the Rulers*'.¹⁵ He writes, "Though *Hadith* and *Fiqh* were promulgated to a considerable extent during the period of the *Caliphs* and many centers of learning had been established, yet all of it was by word of mouth only. But, the Umayyad kings ordered the *Ulema* to reduce it to writing... First of all, Mu'awiya sent for Ubaid ibn Sharriyya from Yemen to prepare the history of the ancients. After him, Abdul Malik ibn Marwan commanded Sa'd bin Jubair to write books on every art."

Regarding Imam az-Zuhri who was the role model and mentor for Imam Al-Bukhari, Shibli writes, "In collecting *Hadith*, he took great pains. He would go to the house of every one of the *Ansar* and would interrogate their young and old, men and women... He was attached to the durbar of Abdul Malik son of Marwan, who honored him greatly. It must be particularly said that the said Imam was connected with the durbar of kings and was among their closest friends; the education of Marwan's children was specially entrusted to him."¹⁶

In his biography of Abu Hanifa named '*Seeratun No'man*', Shibli wrote: "First of all, Imam az-Zuhri prepared a collection of *Hadith* under the orders of the Umayyad rulers of the time. Copies of this collection were sent by the rulers to all the Islamic countries. From that time on, this collection of *Hadith* became common."¹⁷

Every Muslim knew the famous tradition of the Prophet (S) that 'Hasan and Husayn were the two masters of the youth in Paradise'. The *Banu Umayya* fabricated a tradition that Abu Bakr and Umar are the masters of the old men in Paradise.¹⁸ This is, *ex facie* an absurdity, for in Paradise, there should then be a master of infants, a master of middle aged persons, and a master for all other imaginable categories of people...etc., *ad nauseam*.

Another instance is where they distorted the tradition of *al-Najm*, wherein the Prophet (S) allegedly said that all his companions were like the stars shedding the light of wisdom and that the *ummah* was at liberty to follow any one of them as all the companions were of the same status. The fact is that many of the companions were addicted to the prohibited vices. At any rate, most of them, like Umar himself, were ignorant of the true meaning of the Qur'anic verses. After a careful analysis, many learned Sunni *Ulema* have held that the tradition of *al-Najm* is a fabrication.¹⁹ The distortion was made by substituting the

names of the Imams (a.s.) with the words ‘companions’.

The original tradition of *al-Najm* is as follows: “*Allah chose twelve successors from my progeny as the rightful guides for my Ummah. Among them, one succeeding another, there are eleven Imams after my brother Ali. When one of them passes away, the next one takes his place. Their example is that of the stars in the sky; when one disappears, another manifests itself, because they are themselves rightly guided and they shall rightly guide the Muslim Ummah. All of them are Authorities appointed by Allah on the earth. They are the Witnesses over His Creation. Whoever obeys them, in fact, obeys Allah, and whoever disobeys them disobeys Allah. They are all with the Qur'an and the Qur'an is with them. They will not separate from the Qur'an and the Qur'an will not separate from them till they meet me at the Fountain in Paradise.*”²⁰

Agha S.N. Mirza analyses the reasons for so much animosity against Imam Ali (S), which made them go to the extent of fabricating false *traditions*. He wrote, “*Their firm conviction that Imam Ali (a.s.) was the rightful claimant to the Caliphate, which they had deprived him of by intrigue and clever moves, naturally made them see in him a most formidable rival who must be carefully watched and strictly kept down if they were to breathe easily in their usurped power. The Caliphate owed its life to the opposition to the Prophet's scheme in which Ali (S) was to be the first Caliph. The position which the Prophet (S) had created for Imam Ali (a.s.), coupled with the deeds of heroism which Imam Ali (a.s.) had performed to save Islam, and the sacrifices he had made at the risk of his life to establish the Islamic state, made him a formidable rival in the eyes of the rulers who never forgot that what they had obtained by a coup d'état, was not theirs by right. They, therefore, regarded Imam Ali (a.s.) with that dread mingled with hatred and enmity which is generally the hallmark of a precarious position obtained by fraud and held up by force, and they used those devices and stratagems which are generally resorted to by persons similarly holding office without legitimacy, employing all the available means in their power... They tried to keep Imam Ali (a.s.) down and erected enormous barriers between him and the Caliphate. One of these, which in the end proved insurmountable, was the push to prominence given by the first two Caliphs to the Banu Umayya, the hereditary rivals and inveterate foes of the Banu Hashim, with the result that when Imam Ali's precarious rule began, he found himself surrounded by hostile elements with an independent and antagonistic kingdom in Syria confronting him... The Banu Umayya inherited the policy as well as the government of the first three Caliphs and the circumstances under which they wrested power from the Banu Hashim added even more venom to the already poisoned sting.*”²¹

Abu Huraira, who spent hardly a few years with the Prophet (S), was credit with the maximum narration of traditions and is considered a reliable narrator by the Sunnis. He was generously rewarded by Mu'awiya, the governor of Syria, for coining false traditions against Ali (a.s.) and in favour of the *Banu Umayya* and the first three *Caliphs*. It is said that by spinning out false traditions, Abu Huraira amassed so much unaccounted wealth and became notorious that Umar, in a show of propriety, had to confiscate his property along with that of Amr bin al-Aas.²²

The Effect of Prohibiting the Narration of Hadith

Conjecture recognized as a means to interpret the Qur'an

Several occasions arose when the three *Caliphs* found themselves at a loss to solve many legal and social issues relating to *fiqh (jurisprudence)*, *fa'ar'idh (obligations)*, *jizya*,²³ *kharaj*,²⁴ *dhimmis*,²⁵ converts...etc., merely by relying on the Qur'an. In all such matters, where the three *Caliphs* could not find a solution or precedent in the Qur'an, they had no option but to convene an assembly of the companions of the Prophet (S) to inquire and ascertain if any of them knew any tradition applicable to the matter in question. In this manner, Umar learnt many traditions relating to simple matters such as 'Takbir'²⁶ at funerals, ablutions after coitus, *jizya* to be collected from the *Magi*... etc.²⁷

The fact that Umar learnt, only much later in his life, about simple and fundamental, day to day, matters such as 'Takbir' at funerals, ablutions after coitus...etc., shows that not everybody knew or remembered what was taught by the Holy Prophet (S). If this was the state of knowledge of the *Caliph*, we can well imagine the state of ordinary Muslims living in remote places. To some of them, the Qur'an was unintelligible; and when they attempted to interpret it with their conjecture, the Qur'an appeared to be full of contradictions. Thus, the three *Caliphs* found that an omnibus prohibition against narrating traditions was impractical and that they had no other option but to refer to traditions, in order to explain not only verses from the Qur'an, but also matters relating to Islamic practices, whenever the occasion arose.

Thus compelled to rely upon traditions, the *Caliphs* resorted to a unique method of collecting them. Only those traditions narrated by the *Banu Umayya* or the *Ansar* were taken into consideration. Specifically ignored and excluded from the exercise of collecting traditions were the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) and the *Banu Abdul Mutallib*, who, being members of the house, were the best source for narrating traditions. The *Caliph* sought traditions for the particular occasion and matter on hand. No attempt was made to collect, collate, or compile traditions. Meanwhile, many of the companions who had memorized traditions or witnessed the Prophet (S) speaking about the virtues and supremacy of Ali (a.s.) over all Muslims, and his nomination as the successor, had either died or were killed. The surviving sincere narrators of traditions such as Salman, Ammar, Kumail, Hudhaifa, Miqdad, Harith...etc., were banished to the desert by the *Caliphs* on flimsy trumped up charges.

Though the sole motive in prohibiting the narration of traditions was to suppress the Prophet's nomination of Imam Ali (a.s.) to the caliphate, the move left a profound ill effect on Islam itself. As a direct consequence, inept and ignorant persons took control of the nascent Islamic State. About Abu Bakr, the Prophet (S) is reported to have said, "*Heathenism is still imperceptibly working within you like the underground movement of ants.*"²⁸

The matter became more confounded when newly initiated Muslim Bedouin Arabs, who were yet to understand the depth of the Islamic philosophy and thought, were ordered to march against ancient

civilizations such as Persia, Mesopotamia, Syria, Rome, Greece, India, and China. The three caliphs by prohibiting the narration of traditions, had in effect, prevented a proper understanding of the Qur'an and the philosophy of Islam.

The prohibition against narrating traditions left a bankrupt legacy to Islam bereft of any philosophy of thought or action. This bankruptcy of thought was the undoing of the zealous young and old soldiers, who were confronted by the wisdom and philosophies of the ancient civilization of Assyria, Babylon, Greece, Persia, India, China...etc.

Agha M.S. Mirza wrote, “*The discomfiture on the part of the Muslims was due to the fact that the early and premature conquests had brought them to the world stage before they had thoroughly imbibed the principles of Islam for it to be infused into their very existence. They had only outwardly left paganism, and old habits of thought that had been ingrained in their nature by centuries of continuous conduct and practice were still lurking in their minds, and like old companions of childhood, held more attraction to them than the new tenets of Islam that were so different to what they had hitherto known and experienced.*”²⁹

The poverty of Islamic thought was such that the Muslim conquerors were not aware of any suitable arguments to debate with the ancient wisdom of Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and India. The conquerors became dumfounded students absorbing the philosophies from their subjects. Their ego did not allow them to abandon the banner of Islam under which they had marched in conquest, but they remained Muslims only in name. Faced with such inconvenient situations, the early three Caliphs issued an edict saying that where no solution could be found readily in the Qur'an, one should use his own conjecture to arrive at a conclusion and deduce a plausible argument. This corrupted the real philosophy of Islam, and instead of searching for a solution in the Qur'an and the *Sunna*, each one who had any following, invented his own sect of Islam.

1. The Caliphate, p. 75.

2. Tathkiratul Huffadh, vol. 1 p. 3, The Caliphate, p. 58.

3. Shibli's Al-Faruq, Part 2, p. 225, ath-Thahabi's Tathkiratul Huffadh, vol. 1, p. 5.

4. Tathkiratul Huffadh, vol. 1, p. 7, Shibli's Al-Faruq, Part 2, p. 223.

5. Tathkira of ath-Thahabi, vol. 1, p. 7, Abdul Salam an-Nadawi's Tarikh al-Fiqh al-Islami, p.161–162, The Caliphate, p. 58–64.

6. Shibli's Al-Faruq, Part 2, p.223, The Caliphate, p. 59.

7. Kitab Sulaym bin Qais, tradition No.5, p.57, 61, 91, 108 [Eng.Tr. by Sayyid Ali Abid Rizvi & Nilam Rizvi, Pub. by S & N Rizvi, 2001, Honslow, England.

8. The Bible, Genesis, V, at-Tabari, vol. 1, p.76–87, Tarikh al-Kamil of ibnul Athir, vol.1, p 20–26.

9. Kitab Sulaym bin Qais, p. 108.

10. The Caliphate, p. 120.

11. Qur'an, Al Baqara 2 :246 – 251.

12. Muhibbuddin at-Tabari's Ar-Riyadun Nadira, Part 2, Ch.4, Sec. 6, p.163, Mawaddatul Qurba, Mawaddat 6.

13. Kitab Sulaym bin Qais, p. 57, 61.

14. Ibn Abil Hadid, vol. 1, p. 370.

15. Shibli's Seeratun Nabi, p. 39–49.

- [16.](#) Shibli's Seeratun Nabi, p. 15–17.
- [17.](#) The Caliphate, p.78.
- [18.](#) Kitab Sulaym bin Qais, tradition No.10, p.93.
- [19.](#) Agha S.N. Mirza's al-Balaghul Mubin, Part 2, p.1326–1361 quoting ibn Taymiyya's Minhajus Sunna, ibn Hajar al-Asqalani's Takhrijul Ahadith, al Kashshaf.
- [20.](#) Kitab Sulaym bin Qais, tradition No.10, p. 140.
- [21.](#) The Caliphate, p.56–57.
- [22.](#) A study of Islamic History, p.144.
- [23.](#) A tax levied on non–Muslims living in Muslim countries.
- [24.](#) Land taxation.
- [25.](#) Non–Muslims of other Divine religions who live under the Muslim rule.
- [26.](#) The reciting of 'Allahu Akbar'.
- [27.](#) Al Fru, Part 2, p.217, the Caliphate, p.60–64, ibn Sa'd's Tabaqat, vol. 2, Part 2, p. 109, Abdul Salam an–Nadwi's Tarikh al Fiqh al–Islami, p.161–162 .
- [28.](#) As–Suyuti's ad–Durrul Manthur, vol.4, p.54.
- [29.](#) The Caliphate, p. 338.

Chapter 8: Mutilation of the Concept of Jihad

In Islam, there is no concept of aggressive or preemptive war. This was amply demonstrated by the Prophet (S) throughout his life.¹ Whenever possible, the Prophet (S) negotiated for and entered into peace treatise with those who declared war against him. He sent delegations to neighboring countries inviting them to Islam; a religion and life of peace here and hereafter. The first Caliph, and more particularly Umar who acted as the chief advisor to the first caliph and later he himself as the second caliph, were fully aware of this concept of Jihad in Islam.

For the Prophet (S), there was never any need for a standing army. He was preaching the concept of One Unique God deserving worship, a harmonious coexistence and peaceful way of life full of piety and above all self-restraint and love for others. The code of conduct prescribed for the Muslims was intended to create a peaceful model society. Muslims were taught that there should be no compulsion in religion.²

Whenever individual Muslims were threatened by any aggression, they were first advised to endure it in patience and supplication. There was no scope for aggressive propagation of Islam. It was the conduct and astute way of a Muslim's life that was to provide the incentive for non–Muslims to be attracted towards Islam. This was amply proved during the first emigration of Muslims to Abyssinia where their conduct won several converts to Islam. Any difference in ideology was to be sorted out through wise and convincing exhortation and dialogue.³

All missionary zeal had to be confined to inviting men towards good, enjoin what is right and forbid what is evil.⁴ If, in spite of exhortations and dialogue, someone could not be convinced about Islam, the Holy

Qur'an enjoins that he should be left alone, saying "You to your ways; and I to mine."⁵

Islam was a religion that meant to rule the heart of men and not their person, purse or territory. The method adopted by the Prophet (S) was to send delegations and letters to neighboring kingdoms explaining Islamic tenets and not to send armies or arsenals. In Islam, there was never any scope to maintain a standing army, nor did the Prophet (S), throughout his life, ever raise a standing army. Whenever an occasion demanded the defense of Muslims or the enforcement of a mutually agreed covenant, volunteers were called for. There was never any compulsion that all Muslims should join the army. At any rate, there was not a semblance of an army during the Prophet's time.

The propensity of an Arab's mind, in those days, to readily incline towards all sorts of expeditions and warfare for the sake of *Ghanima* (spoils of war in the form of slave boys and girls in addition to the usual booty) was only too well-known to the *Caliphs*.⁶ The *Caliphs* cleverly gave a religious colour to the adventure for the sake of infusing in their soldiers that zeal and disregard for life which is so essential for winning a war.

When Abu Bakr became the first *Caliph*, he was confronted with complicated issues of religion as well as governance. In all such cases, he referred people to Umar for finding a solution. So frequent was this done that people started asking Abu Bakr: "Are you the *Caliph* or Umar is the *Caliph*?" Umar was also seen to reverse several decisions made by Abu Bakr. However, invariably both Abu Bakr and Umar considered Ali (a.s.) as the final authority. They repeated the tradition in which the Prophet (S) had declared: "Among you the best Judge is Ali." Umar often confessed: "But for Ali, Umar would have perished." Many such instances are compiled in a book under the title "*Qadhaya (judgments of) Ameerul Mo'minin*."

Whenever Muslims met privately or in congregation after prayers, there was open and fierce discussions about the ignorance so often exhibited publicly by the *Caliph* and his inability to find solutions to even the simplest questions that arose. They compared the *Caliph*'s incompetence to the ease with which Imam Ali (a.s.) solved the most difficult issues. People in every congregation, recounted the various traditions of the Prophet (S) extolling Imam Ali's supremacy over all the other Muslims in knowledge, virtue, valor and nobility. They also recounted the various occasions when the Prophet (S) nominated Imam Ali (a.s.) as his successor, and how, unfortunately, inept and ignorant persons deprived him of his rightful and deserving place. The discussions became more serious in the month of *Ramadan* when large gatherings assembled in mosques after breaking the mandatory fast. Umar found large groups openly expressing their dissatisfaction with the capabilities of the *Caliph*. In order to prevent such critical discussions, Umar ordered that instead of indulging in discussions, people should spend their time in prayers. People asked him as to what prayers and how much prayers are to be performed, as they did not practice any such prayers during the Prophet's time. Thus, arose the practice of *Tarawih* prayers during the month of Ramadan. The lofty matter of prayers was utilized to conceal the real intent of putting down any discussion about the *Caliph*. Till this day, there is raging controversy among the *Sunnis* as to the number

of *Raka's* to be recited in *Tarawih* and whether the *Tarawih* is not in fact the *Tahajjud* (Midnight) Prayers.

The *Caliph* was fully aware of the fact that the foundation of his *Caliphate* was raised on wobbly and suspect grounds and that a popular revolt was likely to erupt any moment, seeking to restore the *Caliphate* to Imam Ali (a.s.). Therefore, the need for wars and expeditions had, perforce, to be invented and declared, so that men might be sent away to far-off places on expeditions and wars. Thus, public criticism about the competency and legitimacy of the person occupying the seat of the *Caliph* was avoided and the possibility of immediate revolt averted. Gilman wrote: "*Despots have always found it necessary to employ their subjects in foreign wars from time to time, in order to keep them away from feeling the galling chains by which they are bound, or to hear their clanking; and it came to pass that when the Caliph had all the tribes of Arabia under control, he saw no better way to retrain them from new revolts than by tempting them to make inroads upon their neighbors. Nothing could have been better planned by a ruler acquainted with the volatile nature of his subjects.*"⁷ On similar lines is the opinion of the great scientist, philosopher Aristotle, whom the Prophet (S) identified as one among the Apostles of God.⁸

The sending of foreign expeditions by the first two *Caliphs* was never a religious movement, but the political expediency that the situation demanded to safeguard their precarious perch on the *Caliphate*. What was then sought to be disseminated by the sword was the political sovereignty of the Arabs and not Islam the religion. Coupled with this, was the greed to subjugate the rich resources of opulent neighboring countries.

The principal reason for the wars was to divert the attention of Muslims from the inefficiency of the persons heading the State, by taking advantage of the Arab's greed for loot. The historian K. Ali observes that the *Caliphs* realized that the opulent lands of Persia, Egypt, Rome and Syria had to be conquered to free the Arabs from their dependence on the mercy of others and to relieve them from perennial financial embarrassment.⁹ The expeditions brought immense wealth. But along with opulence, came several evils.

Nicholson observes about the ills brought by financial affluence: "*The conquests made by the successors of the Prophet (S) brought enormous wealth into Mecca and Medina, and when the Umayyad aristocracy gained the upper hand in Uthman's Caliphate, these towns developed a voluptuous and dissolute life which broke through every restriction that Islam had imposed.*"¹⁰ Many people joined the army in anticipation of getting large booty, others out of misguided religious fervor. In one stroke, the narration of Hadith was prevented, while simultaneously those who were criticizing the mode in which the *Caliph* came to power, were dispatched to far-off lands, either to lavish in their ill-gotten loot or to be branded a martyr and buried in alien lands. At any rate, the result was that potential opposition was effectively and ingeniously removed.

The cause for the war with Syria is said to be the *Caliph's* desire to carry out the last wish of the Prophet (S) who had ordered Usama to proceed towards Syria.¹¹ The reason given is misleading. The Prophet

(S) had ordered Usama bin Zaid to proceed immediately to Mu'ta to avenge the disrespect and murder of his father Zaid who was sent as the Prophet's envoy. The Prophet (S) had ordered all the Ansar and the Muhajirin, except Ali (a.s.), to assemble under the command of Usama. Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and, of course, even during the Prophet's life, the Banu Umayya disobeyed his order and remained in Medina. Later, after the Prophet's death, the *Caliph* now pretended to fulfill the last wish of the Prophet. We have seen earlier how the last wish of the Prophet (S) to leave a written Will was defeated by this same group of people. In fact, the incident at *Mu'ta*, during the lifetime of the Prophet (S) did not involve the Syrians at all but involved the Romans whose chieftain Shurahbil of the Banu Ghassaan murdered the Prophet's envoy.¹² Instead of Rome, Abu Bakr declared war against Syria. The War against the Romans was declared only in 634 A.D, two years after the death of the Prophet (S).

Greed and Territorial Expansion: Motive for the Early Wars

Though the wars were given a religious colour by misinterpreting the word '*Jihad*', the real reason was purely mercenary, coupled with the desire to annex neighboring countries.

About the war with Syria, K. Ali writes, "*There were other causes that widened the gulf of relationship. Arabia is a land of desert and hence its inhabitants had to seek their fortunes outside Arabia. On the other hand, the Byzantine Empire was famous for its richness and better living and so the Muslims, in order to solve their economic problems, turned their eyes towards the Byzantine Empire. Besides, the strategic position of the Byzantine Empire was such that it was necessary for the safety and defense of Islam.*"¹³ Abu Bakr made Yazid ibn Abu Sufyan, the Governor of Syria. On Yazid's death, his brother Mu'awiya succeeded as Governor, perpetuating a family rule that lasted for almost a century.

About the war with Persia, K. Ali writes, "*From the geographical point of view, Iraq, a province of the then Persian Empire, formed the natural part of Arabia. Hence, it was essential to the Arabs... The economic factor was not less important in deciding the fate of Persia. Iraq is a land of immense wealth due to the flow of the Euphrates and the Tigris over the surface of the province. Being a barren land, Arabia depended on the province of Iraq for trade. But, the Persians did not allow the Islamized Arabia to carry on the trade with them. So, the economic necessity drove the Muslims to come into conflict with the Persians.*"¹⁴

That the wars were nothing but empire building and moneymaking is admitted by the Sunni Historians K. Ali: "*When Abu Bakr was on his deathbed, Muslims had defeated the Roman and Syrian frontiers. After that, Khalid bin al-Waleed annexed Damascus, Ardan, and Hims one after another to the empire of Islam.*"¹⁵

That empire building and economic considerations were the sole motive for the wars against Palestine and Egypt is admitted by K. Ali in these words: "*The causes for the conquest of Egypt are not far to seek. The strategic position of Egypt, the richness of its grain producing soil and the enmity of the Roman Emperor led the caliph to turn his attention to the conquest of Egypt. The Byzantines had been living in*

*Egypt since their expulsion from Syria and Palestine. It was not safe for the Muslims to allow them to live so near to Syria and Palestine. Besides that Egypt was lying so dangerously near to Hijaz that it might be great danger to the Muslims... The Arabs were not free from financial embarrassment. They had to depend on the mercy of others for the solution of their economic problem. Egypt was a rich country due to the flow of the Nile on its surface... So, the Muslims, in order to improve their lot and weaken the economic position of the Byzantines, felt it necessary to conquer it.”*¹⁶ Amr bin al-Aas was made the Governor of Egypt. Later Marwan and Khalid bin al-Walid became governors under the rule of the Banu Umayya.

Thus, the wars waged during the period of the first two Caliphs were based on political and economic expediency. There is absolutely no element of religion or holiness in the wars, except that the successful warmongers went by the name of ‘Muslims’. To call these ‘wars’ as ‘Holy Wars’ or ‘Islamic Wars’ will be the greatest abuse and injustice to the noble word ‘Jihad’ the greatest of which is the *Jihad an-Nafs*; the strife against the carnal desires of the self. All the wars were either imperialistic preemptive aggression or for aggrandizement. Such wars satiated the corporeal desires, in the process building an Empire in the name of Islam. Such wars had absolutely nothing to do with Islam the religion of Peace and Brotherhood, so strenuously propagated by the Prophet (S). Nicholson observes: “*The Empire founded by the Caliph Umar and administered by the Umayyads was essentially, as the reader will have gathered, a military organisation for the benefit of the paramount race.*”¹⁷ The well-known Sunni writer Shibli reports from Abu Dawud that the Arabs repeatedly asked the Prophet (S) whether a man would get any reward for Jihad if he also had any worldly gain in view, and every time the Prophet (S) replied that persons who had worldly gain in view, would not get any reward in the next world for his Jihad.¹⁸

The institutions of the army and the treasury were created for the first time in Islam by Abu Bakr who molded them on the Roman Model. These two institutions, as we have seen above, had no place in Islam nor did they have the sanction of the Prophet (S). They were innovations introduced into Islam that were catastrophic, changing Islam the religion of peace into a band of sword wielding, unlettered and uncivilized men who called themselves Muslims.

The Muslims in the army, young and old, coming from far and near, towns and desert, had no opportunity to understand anything about Islam. They were forbidden to hear traditions that were the only other source, apart from the Qur'an, to impart knowledge of Islam. The Qur'an itself required knowledge of its special literary quality, the idioms, parables, history, science, fables, the esoteric meaning, exegeses, annotations with reference to the cause and circumstances of revelations in order to understand the meaning of its verses. Most of the Muslims remained ignorant of the real Islam, but externally appearing to be Muslims.

The army, for its commanders, had such inveterate enemies to the Prophet (S) and his Message, as Mu'awiya bin Abu Sufyan, Khalid bin al-Walid, and Amr bin al-Aas. They had the least knowledge of or care for Islam. For them, Islam was an empire and all that was involved was politics and economics.

They flouted all the laws of Islam. Drinking was the most common habit for them. Mu'awiya used to recite a couplet saying, “*The Banu Hashim has played with the rule; no archangel ever descended nor was anything revealed (to Muhammad).*” Amr bin al-Aas fixed the Qur'an on the door and pierced it with arrows. Khalid bin al-Walid was an incorrigible debauch. One can imagine the faith of the ordinary soldier under such commanders. The pity of the matter is that the commanders went unpunished though the *Caliph* fully knew their crimes. Later historians glorified them as ‘able’ commanders, concealing the atrocities they committed.

About the Muslims assembled by the Caliphs into an army to invade the advanced civilizations of Syria, Mesopotamia, Egypt and Rome, the best description is given by Nicholson: “*Against such (Islamic) doctrines, the conservative and materialistic instincts of the desert people rose in revolt; and although they became Muslims en masse, the majority of them neither believed in Islam nor knew what it meant.*”¹⁹

These half-baked Muslims were dumbstruck when they came face to face with the material pomp and glory and a great wealth of philosophy of the civilizations they conquered. They had no answer to the philosophies and debates prevalent among those whom they conquered. The only answer they could find was to consider themselves mere pawns in the hands of an unseen ‘destiny’. They became numb fatalists, resigned to their fate. The reason is analyzed ably by Osborne who observed, “*Fatalism is thus the central theme of Islam... The great bulk of the people are passive; wars and revolutions rage around them; they accept them as the decrees of a fate which it is useless to strive against.*”²⁰ But in fact, such fatalism is completely alien to Islam.

As we noted above that the very object of the wars was to gain economic advantage and acquire territory, there was much pillage and looting. The rulers led a grandiose and pompous life indulging in the very luxuries that Islam had prohibited.

The expeditions brought, in addition to immense wealth, a plethora of cultures, alien to Islam and unknown to the Arabs. While wealth brought back the pagan spirit of unrestrained, indulgent life, the cultures brought in philosophies which puzzled the conquering Arabs. The ancient civilizations of Rome, Babylon and the Indus valley had their own philosophies. The Arabs, intoxicated with wine and wealth, could hardly care to understand the alien philosophies or to distinguish Islam from such philosophies.

Those Muslims, who had no any interest in the preservation of Islamic philosophy, found that they, personally, were not aware of any answer to such philosophies as reincarnation, transmigration, karma, nirvana...etc. They could never know the Islamic philosophy regarding Divine Decrees and Human Volition. They simply resigned themselves to fate, which they assumed had made them rulers of a vast empire out of the nomads of the Arabian Desert. All this was on account of their abandoning Ali (a.s.) and the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) who were the fountainhead of the Islamic jurisprudence and philosophy.

S.M. Mirza wrote, “*It can well be imagined in what shape Islam emerged from the medley of ideas, in*

which the doctrines of genuine Islam had the weakest position. It was itself an immature, imperfect and defective Islam, which the armies carried to foreign lands and gave to the converts, who in turn, mixed it with their old ideas and habits of thought. It was almost inevitable that their Islam should have more of a paganistic than an Islamic tincture.²¹

In such a situation, the *Caliph*, as much puzzled as the common soldier in an alien land, passed an edict that if one did not find a ready answer in the Qur'an or the Sunna, he should use his conjecture to arrive at a solution. This played havoc with Islam which became distorted, assuming any shape that a man could imagine, completely distorting the basic and most vital Islamic concept about God. Thus, they assumed God to have a human-like body that would become visible on the Doomsday. The license to find your own solution gave rise to any number of cults, quite foreign and opposed to Islam. Thus, people imagined that they could realise God within themselves, with the help of wine and opiates.

Agha S.M. Mirza wrote: "*The state of things, coupled with the fact that the Muslims, during the early Caliphate, had been given the sanction to use their own judgement in religious matters if they thought there was nothing in the Qur'an or Hadith applicable to the case under consideration,*²² *led to Islam being rent asunder into different sects, most of them taking their inspiration not from the Qur'an but from the atheistic philosophies of Greece and India.*"²³ That was because the conquering young Muslims, uninitiated in the Philosophy or study of Islam, thought that they had nothing suitable to give in return for the Greek philosophy or the Hindu Vedanta.

The sects they invented were a curious mix of paganism, pantheism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Greek philosophy and Vedanta. They had nothing to do with the simple philosophy of Islam taught by the Prophet (S). Thus, the Sufis emerged, absorbing into Islam such paganistic beliefs as Incarnation, Nirvana, Karma...etc., by giving them Arabic terminology of *Hulul, Haqiqah, Fana'*...etc. The effect was that Muslims became either fatalists or persons like Junayd and Mansur al-Hallaj, who claimed that they were personifications of God [Haq]. Their search for God invariably started in the hallucinations created by opiates or a drug of Hashish.

The proponent of each sect took care to meet the political exigencies which required that Islam be so molded, the Qur'an so interpreted and explained, as to support the usurpers of power on the death of the Holy Prophet (S), for they were required to justify and explain to the public that all that was done, indeed had Divine sanction. Agha M.S. Mirza has written a detailed book in Urdu setting out all the amendments, modifications, abrogations and distortions made in the Islamic Theology, by the first three Caliphs, the Umayyad and Abbasid rulers.²⁴

It is Abu Bakr and Umar who had gifted Syria to the notorious sons of Abu Sufyan and gifted Egypt to the equally notorious Marwan. It is their offspring, the Umayyads, steeped in paganism who, submerged in lust and wine, came to rule the Islamic State for over a century. Muslim historians note that the greatest possible harm was done to Islam under the Umayyads in the first instance and later on by the Abbasids, and that in the midst of worldly grandeur and power, Islam stood deserted and forlorn.²⁵

The first Caliph came to power through an election of sorts by a handful of persons at Saqifa at a time when the Prophet's body lay unburied. At the time of his death, the first Caliph, instead of letting Muslims elect their leader, left a will nominating the second Caliph as his successor. It is curious that when questioned whether the Prophet (S) did not nominate any one to succeed him, the first Caliph had quoted the tradition that 'prophets do not leave behind any inheritance'. But when his turn came, the first Caliph made a will of the Caliphate as if it were a heritable property belonging to him.

It is thus that the mode in which the second Caliph came to power was not through any election of sorts or through election by a committee but by nomination by the first Caliph. The third Caliph, on the other hand, was chosen by a select committee nominated by the second Caliph, with one member of the committee having the casting vote. Thus, the ascension of the first three Caliphs to power was retrograde, going from democratic process of sorts to autocratic nominations by individuals or by a one-sided committee selected by an individual.

During the period of the first *Caliph* as well as during his own tenure, the second Caliph is credited with planning and executing the territorial expansion of the Muslim Empire. He is also reported to have burnt or destroyed libraries and works of arts and sciences, which he considered not in consonance with his understanding of the Qur'an. If the books were in agreement with the Qur'an, he still decreed that they should be destroyed as being redundant. It is due to this that it became notorious that Muslims propagated Islam with sword in one hand and the Qur'an in the other. He also entertained Abu Sufiyan, Marwan, and Mu'awiya into his close, but private circle of influential political advisors.

1. Abu Dawud, vol. 1, p.348, the Caliphate, p. 323.

2. Qur'an, 2:256.

3. Qur'an, 16: 125.

4. Qur'an, 3: 104.

5. Qur'an, 109:6.

6. Shibli's Seeratun Nabi, vol. 1,part 1, p.444-447.

7. The Saracens, Ch.25, p.226.

8. Shirazi's Asaar-e-Tarikh Ajam, p 37.

9. A study of Islamic History, p.101.

10. Literary History of the Arabs, p.241.

11. K. Ali's 'A Study of Islamic History', p.82-83.

12. K. Ali's 'A Study of Islamic History, p.89, 97.

13. Ibid., p.97-98.

14. Ibid., p.94.

15. K. Ali's 'A Study of Islamic History', p.98.

16. Ibid., p.101

17. A Literary History of the Arabs, p. 254.

18. Seeratun Nabi, quoting Abu Dawud, Vol.1, p.348.

19. R.A. Nicholson's 'Literary History of the Arabs', p.178.

20. Islam under the Arabs, p.26.

21. The Caliphate, 340.

22. Shibli's Al-Faruq, Part 2, p.64, 240.

[23.](#) The Caliphate, p. 335–336.

[24.](#) Kitabul Tafriq Wal Tahrif Fil Islam.

[25.](#) Abul Hasan an-Nadawi's Seerat Ahmed Shahid, p.21.

Chapter 9: Mutilation of the Concept of Zakat and Khums

Having deprived the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) of their rightful position, it was essential that they should be subjected to poverty and want. The next step of the conspiracy was to deprive them of the very source of their sustenance. At the same time, funds were needed to enrich the opponents of the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.). Under the Divine Law, provision was made to the poor in the form of a Poor Tax [*Zakat*] of 2.5 percent on some products (if they reach a certain specified amount) of every Muslim. The *Sayyids* {progeny of the Prophet(S) } were specifically prohibited from receiving *Zakat* from non *Sayyids*. Islam highly recommended alms giving [*Sadaqa or Khairat*] every day. No limit was prescribed for *Sadaqa or Khairat*. The *Sayyids* were specifically prohibited from receiving *Sadaqa*.

Thus, *Sayyids* were left with *Khums*, which is one fifth of the total accumulated profit in the form of cash or goods that remains as balance in the account of a Muslim at the end of the financial year. Both *Zakat* and *Khums* are in accordance with Qur'anic Injunctions.[1](#)

In Islam, there was no need to create a treasury or a central fund, for whatever was recovered as *ghanimah* [spoils of war] was immediately distributed. K. Ali writes, “*So no regular system for the collecting of revenue grew up. The small sources of revenue that would come to the State treasury were distributed among the people then and there.*”[2](#) When there was no treasury, there was no question of collection of funds nor was there any organization to collect such funds. Hence, there was no possibility of misappropriation by those in possession of such funds.

The responsibility of payment of *Khums* and *Zakat* rested solely on the individual.[3](#) Such of the Muslims who could afford, were commanded to **voluntarily** set apart *Zakat* and *Khums* from their income and property at the end of every financial year and pay the same to those indicated in the Qur'an. It was made obligatory that every person should **himself distribute** *Zakat* and *Khums* to the deserving and the needy; firstly among the relatives within the family, and then to the orphans, the wayfarer, and lastly to deserving others. Muslims were also commanded to give generously in charity to the poor, whether Muslims or non-Muslims. The burden was laid on the individual because people should be made aware of their obligations to and the rights of others over them. The act of complying with injunctions relating to economy had to be performed by the Muslims voluntarily and conscientiously with the fear of Punishment for breach or a hope for reward for adherence to the Divine Law, in the afterlife. In this

structure of economy, there is no provision for an agency for enforcement of collection of funds or a treasury for its safekeeping or distribution. Until today, the command regarding *Zakat*⁴ and *Khums*⁵ remains unaltered. Contrarily, *Khums* and *Zakat* were made state revenue. The Government was never aware of the plight of the poor in distant territories. *Khums* and *Zakat* was doled out to the cronies who hovered around the persons in power. Instead of the self-conscious duty of a Muslim, *Khums* and *Zakat* became cumbersome levies payment of which every Muslim avoids!

K. Ali writes, “*In the Holy Qur'an, Zakat has been mentioned just after prayer. It is said, 'Perform the prayers and pay the tax*⁶’ [Sura 2:80]. *Zakat indeed is the tax for the poor. It was imposed on the men of means, and all the money realized as Zakat was distributed among the poor and needy. Through this system of Zakat, the social consciousness has been reflected. There was an idea behind this consciousness.*”⁷ Earlier on the same page, he writes: “*With the expansion of the Islamic empire under Umar, the amount of regular collection of revenue increased and it necessitated a well regulated revenue system.*” Umar also innovated and imposed a new type of *Zakat* unheard of during the times of the Prophet (S) and even during the period of Abu Bakr. Umar imposed *Zakat* on foreign non-Muslim merchants and horses.”⁸

Regarding *Khums*, the fifth-share reserved in the Qur'an as the amount payable by every Muslim to the progeny of the Prophet (S) (the *Sayyids*), K. Ali writes: “*This [Khums] was an important source of income of the state under the first two caliphs. It was divided into three portions according to the Holy Qur'an. But the share of the Prophet (S) and that of his relatives were spent on the weapons and equipments of the army.*”⁹ This statement brings out two things: firstly, that only during the period of the first two *Caliphs*, *Khums* was made an important source of income for the state. Secondly, the amount meant to be paid to the Prophet's relatives was stopped and diverted for purchase of arms, contrary to the Qur'anic injunctions. However, Umar increased the share of Aa'isha several fold, for which bounty she ever remained thankful to Umar.

Islam had prescribed an astute life bereft of pomp and revelry. What the Prophet (S) taught was a simple way of life and a simple belief in an Unseen, Omnipotent God. It prohibited wine and a pompous way of life. The Umayyads, who by nature were boisterous revelers, could not suffer the prohibitions, as much as they could not comprehend an Unseen God. Nicholson wrote that the Umayyads who had come to power as ‘kings by right, *Caliphs* by courtesy’, adds, “*As descendants and representatives of pagan aristocracy, which strove with all its might to defeat Muhammad, they were usurpers in the eyes of the Moslem community which they claimed to lead as his successors.*”¹⁰

In the pre-Islamic times, the Arabs never believed in a life after death, nor did they believe in resurrection, the Day of Judgement, or the Final Reckoning. They had no concept of accountability, reward, or punishment for their deeds. They lived their life to enjoy it uninhibited to the full, for the moment. They suddenly realized that Islam sought to put strange shackles, which they were only too eager to remove and abandon on the slightest pretext. The death of the Prophet (S) provided the

opportunity. In a show of asserting their independence they theorized that no Divine sanction is necessary in the matter of the Prophet's successor to govern the temporal affairs of the Islamic State. Thus assuming power, the *Caliph* demanded that *Zakat* and *Khums* should be directly paid to the agents of the *Caliph* instead of paying it to the deserving, as the Qur'an directed.

Dispute about the Caliph's Authority to Collect Zakat

At the days of the Prophet (S), *Zakat* was never collected by any authority. Payment of *Zakat* was an individual's responsibility under Qur'anic injunctions. For the first time, Abu Bakr ordered that *Zakat* to be paid to tax collectors appointed by the government. This innovation was strongly resented by several Muslims, who rightly believed that *Zakat* was not a part of the state fund or treasury.¹¹ It, therefore, became necessary for the first two *Caliphs* to change the very meaning and interpretation of the word 'Zakat' treating it not as an individual's obligation but as the right of the state. In this view of the matter, the *Caliph*, for the first time in Islam, created a standing force to extract *Zakat* from all Muslims and remit it to the treasury. Later, the very same force was converted into an army for invasion against foreign countries.

The first *Caliph* ordered the formation of an army to subjugate the Muslims who refused to pay *Zakat* and *Khums*. The expedition brought great disrepute as its leader Khalid bin al-Walid not only killed Malik bin Nuwaira (the Prophet's companion) unjustly, but also he got married (by force) to the beautiful wife of Malik immediately after killing him, without waiting for the mandatory period of *Iddah*¹² to elapse. This caused great resentment among Muslims. However, the *Caliph* refused to take any action against Khalid, the transgressor. On the other hand, Khalid's action was sought to be justified under a concocted tradition that if a scholar does the correct thing he will be rewarded for it, but if the scholar commits a mistake and then regrets, he will be doubly rewarded, once for repentance and the second for future abstinence!

The manner in which Imam Ali (a.s.) administered the institution of *Zakat* and *Khums* stands out in stark contrast to the coercive methods adopted by the earlier three *Caliphs*. He gave standing instructions as Model Code of Conduct¹³ to the Tax Collectors. He directed them to be gentle and considerate towards the subjects and to accept what they voluntarily disclose as their tax liability. Where tax was paid in kind, Imam Ali (a.s.) directed that the owner would have the first choice of retaining what he wished. He reminded the tax collectors that *Zakat* was in fact a person's due to Allah and should be distributed among the poor and the destitute with equanimity. He made it clear that the greatest crime is the crime against the community, that is the usurpation of public funds.

The difference between the administration of the State by Imam Ali (a.s.) and the other three *Caliphs* is the difference between a just government and a corrupt government. In the matter of appointments to government posts, Imam Ali (a.s.) was never influenced by relationship. The only criteria for him was honesty and adherence to the Islamic principles.

Under the first three *Caliphs*, Marwan, Amr bin al-Aas, Abu Huraira and Abu Sufyan's sons Yazid and Mu'awiya were patronized and they amassed unlawful wealth. Persons banished by the Prophet (S) for sedition and creating wars and conflicts were reintroduced as high profile officers in the administration of the Muslim nation. People were asked to use their own surmise and conjectures in the matter of interpreting Islam.

Imam Ali (a.s.) on the other hand, never played politics and was therefore intolerant of any sort of corruption. He did not entertain anyone on the basis of kinship or any clannish considerations. He followed the Islamic tenets strictly and interpreted the Qur'an on the basis of what the Prophet (S) had taught him. He abhorred interpolations, innovations and other human interference in religious matters.

[1.](#) Zakat – Qur'an, 2:3, 43, 80, 83, 177, 277; 4:77; 162; 5:12, 55; 7:156; 9:5, 11, 18, 71; 18:81; 19:13, 31, 55; 21:73; 22:41; 78; 23:4; 24:37, 56; 27:3, 30, 39; 31:4; 41:7; 58:13; 73:20; 98:5. Khums – Qur'an, 8:1, 41; 17:26; 30:28; 33:27; 59:6–9.

[2.](#) A Study of Islamic History by K. Ali, p. 140–141.

[3.](#) Qur'an, 2:2–4.

[4.](#) Qur'an, 2:3, 43, 80, 83, 177, 277; 4:77, 162; 5:12, 55; 7:156; 9:5, 11, 18, 71; 18:81; 19:13, 31, 55; 21:73; 22:41, 78; 23:4; 24:37, 56; 27:3, 30, 39; 31:4; 41:7; 58:13; 73:20; 98:5.

[5.](#) Qur'an, 8:1, 41; 17:26; 30:28; 33:27; 59:6–9.

[6.](#) It is curious that Mr. K. Ali translates the verse in this manner as to justify the collection of tax by the Caliph. The Verse is translated to read :“ Perform the prayer and pay the poor tax”.

[7.](#) Qur'an, 8:41, A Study of Islamic History by K. Ali, p. 141.

[8.](#) K. Ali's 'A study of Islamic History', p. 106.

[9.](#) Ibid., p. 142.

[10.](#) A Literary History of the Arabs, p. 193.

[11.](#) K. Ali's 'A Study of Islamic History', p.870.

[12.](#) A specified period of time that must elapse before a Muslim widow or divorcee may legitimately remarry.

[13.](#) Nahjul Balagha, Instructions 25 and 26.

Chapter 10: The Caliphate

The Prophet (S) was the religious as well as the temporal leader of the *Ummah*. The Qur'an quotes with approval instances of such combination of religious and temporal authority in a single individual, namely the Divinely appointed Prophets.[1](#) Since the office of Prophethood ended with Muhammad (S), both the temporal as well as religious authority ought to have remained with his successor, because the administration of the affairs of the *Ummah* depended upon the interpretation of the Qur'anic Injunctions in the light of the Prophet's traditions. The Prophet's successor should have to be, per force, a person who not only is an able administrator but also a person well versed in the interpretation of the Qur'an in order to administer the Divine Laws as interpreted by the Prophet (S). In the Qur'an, such persons are called the '*Imams*'.

The Qur'an reveals that the '*Imams*' are the sole authority under whom, on the Day of Resurrection,

each group will be collected and called forth.² Guidance of humankind in accordance with the Divine Commands is the responsibility of the infallible Imam (a.s.). The Qur'an reveals, "*We have appointed them Imams in order that they might guide in accordance with Our Commands.*"³ At another place, the Qur'an reveals that the reason why they were chosen as *Imams* is their unshakable faith and Divinely endowed Wisdom to enable them to guide mankind: "*We have chosen from among them Imams who at Our Command shall guide men to the right path, for they are patient and steadfast and have certain [definite] knowledge of Our signs.*"⁴ Since the Imams are successors to the Prophets, their station is achieved only after the individual has already attained all the high ranks. Thus, Abraham, already a Prophet holding the special status of a 'friend' [Khaleel] was conferred the ultimate honorific title of 'Imam'. The sixth Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) said, "*Before appointing Ibrahim as the Prophet, God the Almighty appointed him as his devout servant. Before ennobling him with His friendship, He bestowed on him the rank of Messengerhood. Before granting him the rank of Imamate, He made him His sincere and devoted friend [Khaleel]. It was, therefore, after Ibrahim had attained a whole series of high ranks that he was bestowed the honor of 'Imamate'.*"⁵

Abraham was so pleased with the honor, which he held high in his esteem, that he wanted the blessing to be continued and the *Imamate* continued among his offspring. The answer Abraham got was that *Imamate* would never be granted to a wrongdoer.⁶ In other words, the *Imamate* would be conferred only upon an Infallible and Immaculate person and that no tyrant can ever be an *Imam*.

Infallibility and Immaculacy is an inseparable ingredient of Prophethood and *Imamate* because in the matter of interpreting and implementing Divine Commands and Ordinances, the *Imam* should not be swayed or influenced by his personal desire, wish, fancy or fear. Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) said, "*The Imam is designated by God and the Messenger to be God's proof before people. Through the blessed existence of the Imam (a.s.), a link is established between God's servants and the supra-sensible realm, and God's Grace flows down upon them. God will not accept the deeds of his servants unless they are loyal to the Imam. God does not abandon His servants to their own devices after creating them; instead, by means of the Imam, He lays out a path of piety before them and thus establishes His proof.*"⁷

The special favors granted to the Prophets and the Imams brought with them an element of jealousy among people. The Qur'an reveals: "*Are they envious of what We in our generosity bestowed on the progeny of Ibrahim? We gave the Book and Wisdom to the family of Ibrahim, and also gave them kingship and rule.*"⁸ People were ready to concede that the prophets were given Books and Wisdom, but they became jealous and inimical when the kingdom remained with the prophets.

The word *Caliph* literally means 'deputy' and it was understood, in Islamic connotations, to be synonymous with the word *Imam*, in the matter of succession to the Prophet (S). However, the word *Caliph* was later segregated to denote political rule by ordinary men instead of guidance in all matters pertaining to Muslims by the Divinely appointed *Imam*. The *Caliph* was no longer required to be Infallible and Immaculate. Any person who claimed he had the majority and could hold out threats to his

detractors, was considered a fit person to be the *Caliph* to rule the Muslim *Ummah*.

This extraordinary feat of fallacious reasoning was achieved by a simple distortion of another Qur'anic phrase '*Ullil Amr*'⁹ so that it came to denote any person in authority. In doing so, it was purposefully overlooked that the word '*ulil Amr*' is conjointly used while speaking about obedience to the Authority of God and His Prophet (S) both in religious and temporal matters. The Qur'an reveals: "*O Ye believers, obey the commands of God, the Messenger and the Holders of Authority [Ullil Amr]. When you fall into disagreement concerning your affairs, refer to the commands of the Lord and his Messenger, if you believe in God and the Day of Judgement. This will be better for you than anything else you might imagine, and conducive to a far better outcome.*"¹⁰ Thus, the Qur'an makes implicit obedience to the Divinely appointed Holders of Authority [*ulil amr*] to be far superior and beneficial than any contrivance adopted by man, to govern every aspect of an individual's life, both in this world and in the hereafter.

This is explained by Imam Ali (a.s.) as, "*The only obedience incumbent upon people is to the laws of God and the commandments of the Prophet of God. As for obedience to the Holders of Authority, this has been made incumbent because they are immune from sin, and in the very nature of things they can not issue any order that violates or runs counter to God's Commands.*"¹¹

The Qur'an brings out the other side of the coin. It reveals: "*Do not follow those who have abandoned Me and pursue their own fancies.*"¹² Thus, the use of any conjecture in matters pertaining to Islam is strictly ruled out.

Who the Holders of Authority are, is talked about by Imam al-Baqir (a.s.): "*The Holders of Authority [Ullil Amr] are the leaders of the Ummah, from the progeny of Ali (a.s.) and Fatima (a.s.) who shall remain in existence till the Day of Resurrection.*"¹³

Jabir ibn Abdullah al-Ansari asked the Prophet (S) about the Holders of Authority whose obedience was made obligatory on the *Ummah*, and the Prophet (S) replied, "*O Jabir, the first of them is Ali ibn Abi Talib, followed by his two sons Hasan and Husayn, and then by Ali ibnul Husayn, followed by Muhammad al-Baqir whom you, O Jabir, will live to see. When you meet him, convey my salutations to him. He will be followed by Ja'far as-Sadiq, Musa al-Kadhim, Ali ar-Ridha, Muhammad al-Jawad, Ali al-Hadi, al-Hasan al-Askari, and finally the Hidden One; the Promised Mehdi. These will be the leaders after me.*"¹⁴

To the above effect, there are numerous traditions recorded by both the Sunnis and the Shias with reference to the twelve *Imams* (a.s.) mentioned in *Traditions* and exegesis as successors to the Prophet (S), which are collected in Gulpaigani's voluminous book 'The Hidden Imam'.¹⁵

Az-Zuhri relates that the Prophet (S) went to the tribe of Bani Aamir to invite them to accept Islam. A man from the tribe, Bayhara by name, asked, "*If we accept all your commands and you conquer your enemies with our help, do you promise that after your death the leadership will pass on to us?*" The Prophet (S) replied, "*The matter of governance belongs to God; He will appoint whomsoever He wills.*"

*The man replied, “Are we to endanger ourselves in helping you against your enemies, only to see the rulership pass on to some one other than us?”*¹⁶ This incident shows what exactly was in the minds as the ultimate aim of a few, if not some well-known companions of the Prophet (S), when they came forward to accept Islam.

At any rate, the question of rulership came to the fore immediately on the death of the Prophet (S). The matter was considered so urgent and important that Abu Bakr, Umar, and ibn al-Jarrah considered it proper to leave the uninterred body of the Prophet (S) and go to *Saqifa*.¹⁷

At *Saqifa*, it was the tribal spirit of the period of *Jahiliyya* that asserted itself in the tribe *Quraysh* seeking to monopolize power in their clan by condemning the *Ansar*, their opponents, as less deserving.¹⁸

At *Saqifa*, neither Divine Wisdom nor Divine appointment was under consideration. The only compelling factor was to wrest power and present a *fait accompli* before the Muslim *Umma*, which could realize that Ali (a.s.) was being deprived of the *Caliphate*. This could be achieved only after severe wrangling which lasted till the second day after the Prophet’s death. Thereafter, the gathering from *Saqifa* headed by Abu Bakr and Umar went to the Prophet’s house. According to the author of *Kanzul ummal*, neither Abu Bakr nor Umar participated in the burial of the Prophet (S).¹⁹

Umar himself later regretted the haste in which the affair was conducted and the *Caliph* chosen at *Saqifa*. He warned: “*It was a hasty accident that Abu Bakr became the leader. No consultation or exchanges of views took place. If anyone in future invites you to do the same again, instantly kill him.*”²⁰

According to some *Sunni* thinkers, all that is required of a *Caliph* is his capacity to govern by implementing the penalties prescribed in Islam and guarding the *Ummah* against foreign intrusion. This means that the *Caliph* has to provide the necessary police and military protection to the *Ummah*. In this view of the matter, they argue that the *Caliph* **needs not be** an infallible or immaculate person. It will make little difference if the *Caliph* had a long history of opposition to Islam because of its prohibiting idol worship. It also did not matter if the *Caliph*, after having professed Islam, had frequently strayed into the sinful alleys prohibited in Islam. All that was required was his capacity to establish and enforce his dominance over Muslims, although it might be through oppression and tyranny by trampling upon the rights of Muslims and shedding their blood in the process. The *Caliph*, according to this view, may flout all norms of Justice and Equity, but he will be considered the leader of the Muslims so long as he is able to hold control over the *Ummah*.

The natural corollary of such a hypothesis leads a well-known *Sunni* scholar to write, “The *Caliph* can not be removed from office on account of contravening God’s laws and commands, transgressing against the property of individuals or killing them, or suspending the laws God has decreed. In such a case, it is the duty of the Islamic community to set his *misdeeds and to draw him on to the path of true guidance.*”²¹ This theory is against the Qur’anic injunction that lays down: “*None has the freedom in the matter of the commands of God and His Messenger. Whoever disobeys the commands of God and His*

Messenger falls a prey to obvious error.”²²

The hypothesis is invented only to justify the conduct of the *Caliphs* with the exception of Imam Ali (a.s.), as we shall presently see. Before that, we may note the observations of another Sunni Scholar Dr. Abdul Aziz ad-Durri who wrote, “*At the time the sovereignty of the Caliphate was being established, the political theory of the Sunnis with respect to this institution was not based simply on the Qur'an and Hadith. Rather, it rested on the principle that the Qur'an and Hadith must be understood and explicated in accordance with whatever events subsequently occurred.*” Ad-Durri then proceeds to quote and edict from Judge Abul Hasan al-Mawardi’s book *al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyya* the following passage: “*It is permissible for an unfit individual to be the leader even if a fit individual can also be found. Once, someone has been chosen; he can not be removed simply because there is some one better and more fitted available.*” Ad-Durri concludes: “*He [the Judge] admits and vindicates his principle in order to justify the rule by numerous unfit Caliphs. It is possible, too, that he wished to refute the Shia's views on the subject. The theological and credal view he puts forth serves no other purpose for the Sunnis, but to justify the political development of the day. The only aim was to justify whatever might be grouped under the heading of *Ijma'* [consensus].*”²³

Mujtaba Musavi Lari writes, “*Imamate and Caliphate are inseparable in just the same way that the governmental functions of the Messenger of God (S) can not be separated from his prophetic office. Spiritual Islam and Political Islam are two parts of a single whole. However, in the course of Islamic history, political power did become separate from the spiritual Imamate and the political dimension of religion was separated from its religious dimension.*”²⁴

Imamate, which is the succession to the Prophet (S), was always considered by the Shias to be within the exclusive domain of the Divine Will, as much as prophethood was. Man therefore had no choice in the matter of succession to the Prophet (S). According to the Shias, the Prophet (S) followed the same pattern of succession observed by the earlier Prophets who appointed their successors only according to the Divine Will. The Prophet (S) had also declared, nominated and identified, by every means and on every occasion, his succeeding *Imams* to come, until Doomsday. As we have seen earlier, by whatever name he is called; *Imam, Ulil Amr, Khalifa, Ahlul Thiikr, Rasikhoon fil 'Ilm*, the successor to the Prophet (S) is to possess Divine Wisdom, Infallibility and Immaculacy. Such persons will neither err nor transgress the divine ordinances. Such persons will be most suited to establish a just Divine rule over their subjects. All others will be prone to err, do injustice and to contravene the Divine commandments, thus disqualifying themselves from the right to enforce the very commandment that they themselves flout.

Sheik Sulayman Khanduzi an Indian Sunni scholar of great repute eliminates the possibility of the *Caliphs*, with the exception of Imam Ali (a.s.), from being counted among the *Imams* mentioned by the Prophet (S) as being his successors. He wrote, “*According to scholars, the traditions that specify the successors to the Prophet (S) to be twelve in number are well-known and they have been narrated by*

different chains of transmission. It became clear with the passage of time that what the Messenger of God was referring to in this tradition were the twelve Imams from his progeny. It is impossible to refer it to the first Caliphs, for, they were four in number; nor could it be applied to the Umayyads who were more than twelve in number; apart from which with the exception of Umar ibn Abdul Aziz, they were all tyrants and oppressors and they did not belong to the Bani Hashim, whereas the Holy Prophet (S) had specified that his twelve successors would be from the Bani Hashim. Jabir bin Samrah mentions that the Prophet (S) spoke this last part of the tradition softly, because not everyone was happy that the Caliphate should go the Bani Hashim. Similarly, the tradition could not have referred to the Abbasids, because their number too is more than twelve; they did not act in accordance with the verse enjoining love for the Ahlul Bayt [Qur'an 42:23] and they ignored the tradition of the Cloak [Kisa]. The tradition must then refer exclusively to the Twelve Imams from the progeny of the Prophet (S), for they were superior to all others with respect to knowledge, moral virtues, piety and lineage. They were a line who inherited their knowledge from the Messenger of God (S), their great ancestor. This is confirmed by the tradition concerning the two weighty trusts and numerous other traditions that have reached us from the Prophet (S).²⁵

About the wisdom and knowledge of the *Imams*, the sixth Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) said, "The one who has the knowledge of the Book is Imam Ali (a.s.), for he himself said, 'Be aware that the knowledge that came to the earth with Adam (a.s.) and all the knowledge with which the prophets were ennobled down to the last Prophet (S), exists in his progeny'."²⁶

Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) also said, "The sacred Divine Essence has two forms of knowledge: one peculiar to God Himself, inaccessible to his creatures, and the other knowledge which is bestowed on angels and prophets. This second category of knowledge is accessible to us, the Imams, too."²⁷

The fifth Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) said, "The knowledge that came down with Adam (a.s.), the father of mankind, did not vanish, for it was handed down from one generation to the next. Ali (a.s.) had complete knowledge of religion and shariah, and none of us, the Imams, dies without designating our successor who will inherit his knowledge and what God pleases to impart to him."²⁸

The knowledge of the *Imams* encompasses the corporeal and incorporeal, the spiritual and material, the seen and the unseen, the past, present and future, the lives and philosophies of prophets and guides of bygone times and those who were to come; in fact all that should be known to man. It is thus, the seventh Imam Musa al-Kadhim (a.s.), who was yet a child, debated with Burayd, a Christian scholar, basing his arguments on the Torah and the Gospels. Regarding this knowledge when Burayd asked, the Imam (a.s.) replied, "This is our inherited knowledge. We recite and pronounce each of those scriptures just as their followers and believers do. God would not place on the earth His proof (authority) who would have to say 'I do not know', in answer to any question."²⁹

The eighth Imam Ali bin Musa ar-Ridha (a.s.) told his disciple an-Nawfali, "Al-Ma'mun will regret convening this meeting in which I shall argue with the followers of the Torah by citing the Torah, against

*the followers of the Gospel by citing the Gospels, against the followers of the Psalms by citing the Psalms, against the Sabians in their own Hebraic language, against the Zoroastrians priests in Persian language, against the Greeks in the Greek language, and against the Arabs in Arabic language. Al-Ma'mun will then realize that the seat, which he occupies, and the authority, on which he rests, are not rightfully his.*³⁰

Imam Ali (a.s.) said, “Ask me (whatever you want) before you miss me, for I know about the ways of the empyrean more than I know about the ways of the earth.”

Umar told ibn Abbas: “I swear by Allah that if your friend (Ali) assumes the Caliphate, he will cause the people to act in accordance with the Book of God and the Sunna of the Messenger of God and will lead them to the straight and clear path of Islam, the religion.”³¹

As against this background of the Imam’s knowledge, let us see how the *Caliphs* fare, in their own estimate as well as in the eyes of others. Abu Bakr, on becoming the *Caliph*, made his opening speech from on the pulpit, “*O People, I may fall into grievous error or I may not make any mistake. If you see me deviating from the right path, prevail upon me to return to it. The Prophet was infallible, but I am not. I have a Satan ever drawing me towards error.*”³² Abu Bakr declared that he was not the Divinely appointed *Caliph*. Instead, he claimed to be the *Caliph* of the Prophet (S).³³ On the same analogy, Umar was the *Caliph* of Abu Bakr, Uthman was the *Caliph* of Umar, and so on and so forth *ad nauseam*. However, the institution of the *Caliphate* itself was abolished in 1924 by Mustafa Kamal Pasha of Turkey. It is therefore clear that Abu Bakr was not the successor of Adam the first Divinely appointed *Caliph*.

On several occasions when Umar was rescued by Imam Ali (a.s.) from committing gross error, he declared that ‘but for Ali, Umar would have been doomed’.³⁴ Umar, the second *Caliph*, said, “*There were three things that were permissible in the time of the Prophet which I have forbidden on threat of severe punishment. The three things are Mut’ah (temporary) marriage, the Mut’ah during the hajj, and reciting in the Azan ‘hasten to the best of all deeds’ [Hayya ‘ala Khairil ‘ama].*”³⁵ He substituted these words with ‘*Prayer is better than sleep*’ [*as-slaatu khairum minan-naum*] in the dawn prayers.³⁶

Umar’s son Abdullah was told about the prohibition imposed by his father on the *Mut’ah* of the hajj and the *Mut’ah* marriage. He replied, “*I am afraid you will incur the wrath of God and a stone will fall on you. Are we to follow the Sunna of the Prophet or the sunna of Umar bin al-Khattab?*”³⁷

During the time of the Prophet (S) and during the time of Abu Bakr’s *Caliphate* and the first three years of Umar’s *Caliphate*, a triple pronouncement of *Talaq* (divorce) on a single occasion was considered a single repudiation and not as final repudiation. Umar changed and declared, “*I will count a triple pronunciation of Talaq on a single occasion as final repudiation of marriage.*”³⁸ Thus, Umar altered the Divine commandments and the Prophet’s *Sunna*.

Mu’awiya did the ultimate when he declared, “*Everything on the earth belongs to God and I am God’s deputy (Khalifa). I will deal as I please.*” Nobody had the courage to challenge Mu’awiya’s temerity

except Sa'sa'ah bin Sowhan.³⁹

Regarding persons like Mu'awiya, the Prophet (S) said, “*When some of my companions are brought before me at the Pond, they will feel ashamed. I will then say, ‘Oh God, they are my companions?’ I will be told: ‘You do not know what they did after your death.’*”⁴⁰

The Qur'an poses this question: “*Is the one who guides to God more fitting to be followed or the one who himself needs guidance? How would you judge this matter?*”⁴¹

On this note, we will leave the question of *Caliphate* for our readers to decide. However, we will have to revert to the historical incident of *Saqifa*, which laid the foundation for the substitution of the Infallible ones by ordinary erring mortals.

The Saqifa

Some companions realized that the place shortly to be left by the Prophet (S), for succession, had to be grabbed at all cost. They were aware that all earlier Prophets like Abraham, Joseph, Moses...etc., had appointed their kith and kin under Divine Commands. Muslims had witnessed the Prophet (S), on numerous occasions, nominating Imam Ali (a.s.) as his successor. The last pilgrimage of the Prophet (S), his sermons and advices, particularly his last sermon, addressed to over a million Muslims and several foreign dignitaries assembled at Ghadir Khum nominating Imam Ali (S) as his immediate successor, were fresh in everyone's mind.

A few persons, from the Muhajirin and the Ansar, abandoned the dying Prophet (S) and assembled at a place called Saqifa of Bani Sa'idah, which was some distance from Medina, and was used by the Ansar as a place for holding secret discussion.

A violent dispute arose between the two groups, the Muhajirin⁴² and the Ansar,⁴³ each side claiming supremacy over the other. At that time, Umar shouted asking Abu Bakr to extend his hand. Umar struck the extended palm of Abu Bakr and immediately swore his allegiance to him and shouted in his famous loud voice that Abu Bakr, being the eldest among those present, has been chosen as the Caliph. This sudden move surprised the squabblers. Their own internal dissension contributed to their failure to take up the challenge in an orderly manner.

Even as the squabbles at Saqifa were in full swing, Imam Ali (S) was busy with the burial of the Prophet (S). When he was informed of the activities at Saqifa, he did not deem it proper, like others, to leave the body of the Prophet (S) without performing the burial rites and to rush to stake his claim.

For the whole day, the people from Saqifa went around Medina announcing that Abu Bakr had been chosen as the *Caliph*. When they reached the Prophet's house, they found that Imam Ali (a.s.) had performed the rites and buried the Prophet (S). One of the people returning from *Saqifa* wanted that the Prophet's body should be immediately exhumed. Hearing this, Imam Ali (a.s.) said, “*Are you not*

ashamed that you deserted the Prophet in several battles and now you abandoned his body to grab the Caliphate? When he is buried, you want to commit the sacrilegious act of exhuming him! Not even Jews and Christians will think of such a horrendous deed. Shamelessly you call yourself Muslims!" Imam Ali (a.s.) drew his sword and stood greatly enraged. Never had they seen Imam Ali (a.s.) in such temper and they were mortally afraid of his physical prowess. They recollected the saying of the Prophet (S) to beware the day when after the Prophet's death Imam Ali (a.s.) would unsheathe his sword. Thus was prevented the sacrilegious act of exhuming the Prophet's body. But for Imam Ali's intervention, the so called companions of the Prophet (S) would have gladly carried out their ignoble deed of exhuming the Prophet's sacred body.

Observing these incidents, the opportunist Abu Sufyan approached Abbas, the holy Prophet's uncle, and said, *"These people have snatched away the Caliphate from the Banu Hashim. You are the uncle of the Prophet (S) and the eldest among Quraish. The people of Quraish will listen to you and accede to your proposal. Let us swear allegiance to Ali (a.s.). If anybody opposes us, we shall kill him."* Abu Sufyan and Abbas then approached Ali (a.s.). Abu Sufyan said, *"O Ali, if you agree, I will fill Medina with large contingents of infantry and cavalry. Do accept our proposal and put out your hand so that we may swear our oath of allegiance of Caliphate to you."* To this, Ali (a.s.) replied, *"O Abu Sufyan, I swear by the Almighty Allah that you, through this proposal, want to create serious dissension and discord among Muslims. You have always tried to harm the Prophet (S), and now you plan to harm Islam. I do not need your sympathy or help."*⁴⁴

If really Imam Ali (a.s.) and the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) had any desire for power, this certainly was the best opportunity, and Medina was the right place since that its inhabitants were witnesses to the Prophet's declaring, on innumerable occasions, the supremacy of knowledge and the moral and ethical character of the Ahlul Bayt (S) and the nomination of Imam Ali (a.s.) as his vicegerent, deputy, and successor.

The fact that the Ahlul Bayt (S) spurned pomp and glory of wealth and power is recorded throughout the history of Islam and in the sermons, sayings and writings of Imam Ali (a.s.) and other members of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.).

When the first Caliph's father came to know that his son, Abu Bakr was chosen as the Caliph in preference to Imam Ali (a.s.), he inquired from his grandson Muhammad Bin Abu Bakr as to how Abu Bakr could claim preference over Imam Ali (a.s.) and why Imam Ali (a.s.) was not chosen as the Caliph. He was informed that the choice fell on Abu Bakr because he was the eldest among the contenders to the *Caliphate* while Imam Ali (a.s.) was still a young man. To this, he promptly replied, *"If age is the criteria, then, as Abu Bakr's father, I would better claim to be the Caliph!"* He thus demonstrated the hollowness of the claim that age was the decisive factor in the matter of the *Caliphate*.

Abul Fida Isma'il ibn Kathir writes regarding the Verses 41-48 of the Chapter 'Mary': *"Allah the Almighty mentioned what happened between Abraham (a.s.) and his father Azar, and how Abraham (a.s.) explained to his father the falsehood of idolatry because Allah gave Abraham (a.s.) useful knowledge*

although he (a.s.) was younger than his father; therefore it was his duty and privilege to guide and point to the right way.”⁴⁵ Then, Ibn Kathir quotes the verse 114 of the Chapter “Tawba”: “And Abraham prayed for his father’s forgiveness only because of a promise he had made to him. But, when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of Allah, he dissociated himself from him, for Abraham was most tender hearted and forbearing.”

Though Azar was the father⁴⁶ of Abraham, in matters of faith neither relationship nor age would confer superiority or status on a person. An elderly and experienced person is also required to obey a younger person who is invested with authority by Divine Pleasure. This is evident from the following tradition narrated through Abu Huraira by Al-Bukhari in his *Kitab at-Tafsir*: “On the Day of Resurrection Ibrahim (a.s.) will meet his father Azar whose face will be dark and covered with dust. Ibrahim (a.s.) will say to him, ‘Did I not tell you to obey me?’ His father will reply, ‘Today I will not disobey you’. Ibrahim will say, ‘O my Lord! You promised me not to disgrace me on the Day of Resurrection; and what will be more disgraceful to me than cursing and dishonoring my father?’ Then, Allah the Almighty will say to him: ‘I have forbidden the Paradise for the disbelievers’. Then, he will be addressed, ‘O Ibrahim! See what is underneath your feet.’ He will look and there he will see a blood-stained animal, which will be caught by its legs and thrown in the Hell-Fire.”⁴⁷

Imam Ali (a.s.) questioned the election/selection of Abu Bakr as the *Caliph*, but restrained his followers and companions from revolting against the regime for the reason that the Islamic State was yet in its nascent stage and any dispute would have rendered it vulnerable to attacks, both from its internal and external enemies. Therefore, Imam Ali (a.s.) frequently repeated the reply of Aaron (a.s.) when Moses (a.s.) asked, “What kept you back from following me, when you saw them taking the wrong steps? Did you disobey my instructions?” Aaron replied, “O son of my mother! Seize me not by my beard or the hair of my head. I was afraid that you may say that I caused a division among the children of Israel.”⁴⁸

The earliest recorded version of the incidents found in the Book of Sulaym ibn Qais al-Hilali⁴⁹ and the recorded sermons of Imam Ali (a.s.) in Nahujul Balaghah⁵⁰ and Nahujul Asrar clearly show Imam Ali’s predicament and disapproval of the events that took place at *Saqifa* in the matter of succession after the death of the Prophet (S).

History is full of instances where Imam Ali (a.s.) was sought, unsuccessfully, to be compelled to give his allegiance to the *Caliph*. Imam Ali (a.s.) chose to remain aloof, saying that he was busy annotating the Qur'an, which he had already compiled in book form on the personal dictates of the Prophet (S). However, history also records that quite often, Imam Ali (a.s.) could not be ignored and the *Caliphs* were obliged to seek his advice, guidance and judicial acumen, to resolve difficult situations that appeared to shake the very fundamentals and foundation of Islam. His cooperation in this regard, with the sole object of protecting Islam in times of its need as the Imam, would be often mistakenly touted as his approval of the validity of the regime. However, the fact remains that Imam Ali (a.s.) never participated in the political affairs or the military expeditions of the state but he confined himself to advice purely on religious

matters or to religious legitimacy of any issue faced by the *Caliphs*.

There was open criticism about the competence of the Caliph in deciding important matters. Often the Caliph had to resort to Imam Ali's help in solving complicated issues. This reminded the Umma of the various traditions extolling the supremacy and the virtue of Imam Ali (a.s.) over all others. People also recollected the various occasions when the Prophet (S) nominated Imam Ali (a.s.) as his successor. This discussion, initially in whispers became an ominous rumble that could no longer be ignored if the Caliph were to hold on to his seat.

As noted earlier, to avert the consequences of dissent, two measures were adopted. Firstly, the *Caliph* banned the narration of traditions on the grounds that they might create confusion and even make people neglect the Qur'an in favour of traditions. Secondly, wars were declared on neighboring countries.

Having failed to incite Imam Ali (a.s.) to take military action against the first *Caliph*, Abu Sufyan managed and successfully persuaded the first three Caliphs to appoint his son Yazid as the Governor of Syria. On the death of Yazid bin Abu Sufyan, his brother Mu'awiya bin Abu Sufyan was appointed by the *Caliph* as Governor of Syria. Mu'awiya persuaded the third *Caliph* to re-induct the infamous Marwan who in turn removed just and honest officers and brought in avaricious and corrupt Umayyads in all key posts.

During the reign of the first three Caliphs, more particularly the third Caliph, Mu'awiya and his ilk gained free access to the corridors of power and they extracted monetary favors and positions of considerable power and influence. Soon, all the governors appointed by the first two Caliphs were recalled and in their place, Umayyads or their henchmen were appointed as governors by the third Caliph. Marwan was recalled from the exile and he gained a very special status of a trusted advisor of the third Caliph. They systematically harassed, tortured and even banished several noble and trusted companions of the Prophet (S).

Any person who was even suspected to be a friend, well-wisher or even a mere sympathizer of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.), was secretly annihilated in order to eliminate dissension and simultaneously consolidate the Umayyads' hold on power. Having gained access to power, they started a lavish and sinful way of life at the cost of the public treasury.

The dreams of Abu Sufyan were realized and the Islamic State was converted into a military empire of pomp and pretensions. The sons of Abu Sofia, Yazid and his brother Mu'awiya, who became successive governors of Syria, misused their position of power to accumulate great wealth for themselves and they built huge palaces full of pompous adornments at the cost of the public money.

The governors were inaccessible to anyone but their own henchmen. This greatly enraged the Muslims who were taught to lead a simple life of austerity. The mounting sufferings and cries of the public against injustice and starvation went unheeded.

Regarding the situation, Justice Sayyid Ameer Ali wrote, “*The choice of electorate fell upon Uthman, a member of the Umayyad family. His election proved, in the end, the ruin of Islam. He fell at once under the influence of his clan. He was guided entirely by his secretary and son-in-law Marwan, who had once been expelled by the Holy Prophet (S) for breach of trust. Uthman displaced most of the lieutenants employed by Umar and in their place, he appointed incompetent and worthless members of his own family. The weakness of the center and the wickedness of the favorites were creating a great ferment among the people. Loud complaints of extraction and oppression by the Governors began pouring into the capital. Ali (a.s.) pleaded and expostulated several times with the Caliph about the manner in which he allowed the government to fall into the hands of the unworthy favorites, but Uthman, under the influence of his evil genius Marwan, paid no heed to these counsels.*” [51](#)

The discontent became so rampant that delegations from Syria, Iraq and Egypt arrived to complain to the Caliph about the anarchy and despotism of the governors appointed by him. They held the third Caliph personally responsible for the induction of persons, who were known criminals and open enemies of Islam, into position of power with full access to the public treasury. Historians record that the delegations met the third Caliph and pleaded with him to remove the tyrannical governors of Syria and Egypt. *Caliph* Uthman refused to remove Mu’awiya from the governorship of Syria. After great persuasion, he agreed to appoint Muhammad Bin Abu Bakr [the first Caliph’s son] as the Governor of Egypt in place of Abdullah Bin Sa’d. A letter was issued to Abdullah Bin Sa’d, the governor of Egypt, asking him to hand over the charge of the Egyptian government to Muhammad Bin Abu Bakr.

When the Egyptian delegation carrying the letter, was returning home, they found a man overtaking them on a fast camel. They interrupted him and upon search, they found another letter addressed to Abdullah Bin Sa’d, the Governor of Egypt, directing him to behead Muhammad Bin Abu Bakr and the delegation accompanying him. The second letter was also written by the same scribe [Marwan] who wrote the order appointing Muhammad Bin Abu Bakr as the Governor of Egypt. Both the letters contained the seal of the Caliph. The scribe of both the letters had taken advantage of the dots that are affixed either above or below an Arabic letter. Thus, In the first letter it was written ‘*Iqbāl*’ which means ‘accept’, by putting a dot under the third alphabet to read it as ‘b’; whereas in the second letter two dots were put over the third alphabet which then became ‘t’ instead of ‘b’, to be read as ‘*Uqtūl*’ meaning ‘behead’. The cunningness and duplicity enraged the members of the delegations who immediately returned to Medina to question the Caliph. It was found on inquiry that Marwan had scribed both the letters and affixed the seal of the Caliphate. The Caliph admitted the seal to be his and the writing in both the letters to be that of Marwan. However, he pleaded ignorance in the matter. The delegation demanded that Marwan should be handed over to them or, alternatively, the Caliph himself should resign. The Caliph rejected both the alternatives, whereupon the excited mob surrounded and attacked his house. The third Caliph was confined within his house for three days. He sent for assistance from Mu’awiya, who cunningly kept himself away, deserting his benefactor and relative. Despite knowing that the delegation was bent on causing harm to the third Caliph. Mu’awiya purposefully did not come to his rescue, for he realized that if anything happened to the Caliph, it would only furnish rich material to

foment dissension on clannish lines, which could be used to advantage against any contender to the *Caliphate*, particularly Imam Ali (a.s.). Umar himself, when deliberating about his successor, said this about Uthman: “*If he becomes the Caliph, he will impose Bani Abi Ma’it over the people and then the Arabs will rise against and kill him.*”⁵²

The third Caliph, then, sought Imam Ali’s help, but by the time help could reach, the enraged mutineers had slain the third Caliph. The cunning Marwan took the bloodstained clothes of the Caliph and on it, he sewed the severed fingers of the Caliph’s wife Na’ila. He, cunningly, propagated false rumors shifting the blame of the murder of the third Caliph to Imam Ali (a.s.). The body of the Caliph was left on the public square and was grossly dishonored and insulted by his enemies. His body was then buried in a Jewish cemetery by the enraged public who prevented his burial in *al-Baqee’*, the Muslim graveyard. However, in later times *al-Baqee’* was expanded several times and Jewish and Christian cemeteries came to be included in the present day within its boundaries. Yet the whereabouts of the third *Caliph’s* grave remains a mystery, just as the grave of Aa’isha remains a mystery.

The net result of the administration of the three *Caliphs* was that Islam lost its religious identity and was converted into a worldly power. The result is aptly summarized by a scholar in the literature and history of Muslims, Akhilesh Mitthal who wrote: “*Their [Muslims] history, also written by bards and sycophants, makes out that the religion, Islam, forged the hereto warring tribes into a monolithic corunna or column which shattered and overcame all those who came in its path. In the year 681 AD, an Arab general Uqba bin Nafi’ plunged his horse into the waves of the Atlantic until the steed was shouldered deep in the waters. Uqba then unsheathed his sword and announced, ‘Allaho Akbar. If the ocean had not intervened my victorious westward march, my sword would have killed all who refused to accept Him’*”⁵³

Conclusion

Islam is the last link in the chain of Divine religions. Similarly, the Qur’an is the last of the Revealed Scriptures. By the time Islam and the Prophet (S) appeared, humanity was ripe and ready to exercise its cognitive powers to seek answers to the unknown and unseen, particularly in the field of religion. Civilizations had developed largely and scientific inquiry replaced blind dogma. The sciences of logical deduction, philosophy and probes into the hitherto unknown fields became almost a passion and a pastime in everyday life.

Islam came to provide answers to unanswered question and to convince that for his actions in this life, man was accountable to his Creator, in an eternal life to come. The Qur’an provided a constitution for a peaceful and harmonious life in this world and the means by which one could hope to achieve salvation and eternal bliss in the life to come.

The Qur’an provided the basic constitution for Muslims. Like all constitutions, the Qur’an also requires expositions and explanations, which could be provided only by the Prophet (S) himself or by his Divinely appointed deputies and successors. That is why the Prophet (S) exhorted men to firmly hold on to the

Qur'an and the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) so that men may not go astray and fall into gross error.

Yet, in a systematically planned move, Imam Ali (a.s.) who was nominated by the Prophet (S) was sidestepped and Abu Bakr was made the first *Caliph*.

It is unfortunate that Muslims were ruled for almost half a century, from 632 to 680 A.D, particularly in Syria and Iraq by Mu'awiya, the son of Abu Sufyan the inveterate enemy who forever plotted to kill the Prophet (S) and destroy his Mission. Abu Bakr ruled for about three years from 632 to 634 A.D, Umar ruled for about ten years from 634 – 644 A.D, Uthman for about twelve years from 644 to 656 A.D, and the last of *Caliphs*, Imam Ali (a.s.) was harassed by Mu'awiya and made to engage in wars and skirmishes throughout the period of about five years from 656–661. The total period of governance under the *Rashidun Caliphs* was only 30 years; whereas, Mu'awiya's rule over Syria and Iraq extended to another 18 years after the *four caliphs*. Thus, in a part of the Islamic world from the very early days, what was taught for about half a century was Mu'awiya's brand of Islam.

That Mu'awiya did not create any confusion during the rule of the first three *Caliphs* shows how the threat perception was viewed by both sides, and how mutual concession were given and taken by both sides in order to retain the seat that both sides knew it was not theirs by right but only by mutual courtesy. Both sides also realised that any dispute between them at that stage would have only strengthened Ali's position, since the companions, who had witnessed the Prophet (S) speaking in favour of Ali, were alive and in a good number.

The fact that Imam Ali (a.s.) could re-establish true Islamic norms within a short span of about five years, that too while he was engaged by Mu'awiya in constant wars, shows that the righteous always win, though their victory may come much later. It is this rule of Imam Ali (a.s.) that we shall examine in the next chapter.

1. Qur'an, 2:247, 4:52, 5:48, 12:22, 38:25, 62:2.

2. Qur'an, 17:71.

3. Qur'an, 2:123.

4. Qur'an, 32:24.

5. Al-Kaafi, vol. 1, p. 180.

6. Qur'an, 2; 123.

7. Al-Hurr al-Aamili's *Ithbatul Hudat*, vol. 1, p. 247, quoted in *Imamate and Leadership* by Mujtaba Musavi Lari, p. 161.

8. Qur'an, 4:52.

9. Men of authority.

10. Qur'an, 4:58.

11. Biharul Anwar, Vol. 25, p. 200.

12. Qur'an, 18:27.

13. Al-Hurr al-Aamili's *Ithbatul Hudat*, vol. 3, p. 131.

14. Ibid., p. 123.

15. Translated by Dr. Shabeb Rizvi, Abaqat Publications, 2003.

16. At-Tabari's *Tarikh*, vol. 2, p. 84.

17. *Musnad* of Ahmed bin Hanbal, vol.4, p.104, *Tarikh* of at-Tabari, vol. 2, p. 451, *Al-Iqd al-Farid* of ibn Abd Rabbih, vol. 3,

p.61, al-Bidaya of ibn Kathir, vol. 5, p. 260, Tarikh of al-Ya'qubi, vol. 2, p.94.

[18.](#) Tarikh of at-Tabari, vol. 5, p.31, al-Kamil of ibn al-Athir, vol. 3, p.3.

[19.](#) Kanzul Ummal, vol. 3, p. 140.

[20.](#) Seera of ibn Hisham, vol. 4, p.308.

[21.](#) At-Tamhid of al-Baqillani, p. 186, quoted in Mujtaba Musavi Lari's Imamate and Leadership, p. 13.

[22.](#) Qur'an, 33:36.

[23.](#) Ad-Duri's al-Nudhum al-Islamiyya, vol. 1, p.72–84, quoted in Mujtaba Musavi Lari's Imamate and Leadership, p. 14.

[24.](#) Mujtaba Musavi Lari's Imamate and Leadership, p. 16

[25.](#) Sheik Sulayman Al-Qanduzi's Yanabi'ul Mawaddah, p. 446.

[26.](#) Al-Majlisi's Biharul Anwar, vol. 26, p. 160.

[27.](#) Al-Kulayni's al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 255.

[28.](#) Ibid., p. 222.

[29.](#) Al-Kulaini's al Kaafi, vol. 1, p. 225.

[30.](#) Al-Hurr al-Aamili's Ithbatul Hudat, vol. 6, p. 45, Sheikh as-Saduq's Kitabut Tawhid p. 427.

[31.](#) Ibn Abil Hadid's Sharh Nahjol Balagha vol. 3, p. 107.

[32.](#) At-Tabaris's Tarikh vol.2, p.460, Ibn Hisham's al-Seera, vol. 4 P. 34, ibn Kathir's al-Bidaya. vol. 6 p. 303, ibnul Athir's al-Kamil, vol. 2, p. 129.

[33.](#) Musnad of Ahmad bin Hanbal, vol. 1, p.10, Muqaddima of ibn Khaldun, Tr. Rosenthal, Vol. 1, p.388–89.

[34.](#) Ibn Sa'd's Tabaqat, vol. 2, p...

[35.](#) Al-Ghadir vol. 6, p. 23.

[36.](#) Sahih of Muslim vol. 3, p. 183, Musnad of Ahmad bin Hanbal, vol. 3, p. 408, al-Halabi's Seera vol. 4, p.37; ibn Katjhir's Tarikh, vol. 3, p. 23.

[37.](#) At-Tirmithi's al-Jami'ul Sahih, vol. 4, p. 38, al-Bidaya of ibn Kathir, vol. 5, p. 141.

[38.](#) Sihih of Muslim, vol. 4, p. 183.

[39.](#) Al-Mas'udi's Muruj ath-Thahab.

[40.](#) Sahih of Al-Bukhari, Kitabul Fitan, Sahih of Muslim, vol. 5, p. 64.

[41.](#) Qur'an, 10:35.

[42.](#) Muhajirin were the first Muslims who migrated from Mecca to Medina. The literal meaning is 'emigrants'.

[43.](#) Ansars were the residents of Medina who helped and assisted the Prophet [s] and his companions, the Muhajirin, in defending them against their enemies. The literal meaning of the word is 'helpers or assistants'.

[44.](#) Tarikh al-Khulafa, Vol. 3, p. 202–203, Quoting Kanzul Ummal Vol. 3, p. 140. Nahjul Balagha:Sermon No. 9.

[45.](#) Qasasul Anbiya, Rightway Publication – [2005] – p. 89.

[46.](#) In fact, he was his uncle, but because he regarded him too much that he brought him up, he called him as 'father'.

[47.](#) Qasasul Anbiya, Rightway Publication – [2005] – p. 90.

[48.](#) Ibn Kathir's Qasasul Anbiya, p. 247

[49.](#) Kitab Sulaym Ibn Qays al-Hilli, English Translation by Maulana Sayyid Ali Abid Rizvi & Fazela Nilam Rizvi, published by S & N Rizvi, Heston, Hounslow, England [2001].

[50.](#) Nahjul Balagha – Sermon No. 7; ash-Shaqshaqiyya, Nahjul Asrar, p. 262.

[51.](#) A short History of the Saracens, p. 47.

[52.](#) Shibli's al-Faruq, p. 123–124 quoted in MAA Sattar's Caliph's Caliphate.

[53.](#) The Deccan Chronicle published from Hyderabad, India, dated 20 February 2005.

Chapter 11: Imam Ali, The only Caliph by Public Choice

If, at all, any real democratic choice of its ruler is to be found in the entire history of Islam, it is to be found only in the case of Imam Ali (a.s.), when the entire population of Muslims, after the murder of Uthman, unitedly and repeatedly requested Imam Ali (a.s.) to assume the religio-political governance of the Islamic world. Though he refused in the beginning, he yielded when he was told that his refusal would be tantamount to abdication of his duties as the *Imam*. Imam Ali (a.s.) accepted the political leadership of the *Ummah* in addition to the religious leadership that always remained with him. Imam Ali (a.s.) in his famous sermon called ‘*Shaqshaqiyah*’ elaborates the dilemma facing him: “*At that time nothing surprised me more than the vast crowd of people rushing to me* [demanding that I accept the *Caliphate*]. *It [the crowd] advanced towards me from every side like the mane of the hyena so much so that Hasan and Husayn were neigh being trampled and crushed and both ends of my garment [tunic] were torn* [due to being pulled by the crowd to draw my attention] ... *Behold, by Him Who splits the seed and creates life, had there not gathered such multitude of supporters, and had they not exhausted all the arguments, and had there not been a covenant between God and the learned scholars [Imams] that [the Imams] shall not sit quietly watching the gluttony of the oppressor and the burning hunger of the oppressed poor, I would have cast the rope of Caliphate on its own shoulders* [declined to accept the *Caliphate*] *and I would have continued to give the last of them the same treatment as the first one. You would then have realized that in my view [for me] worldly life is not better than the sneeze of a goat.*”¹

Thus, when by popular demand, Imam Ali (a.s.) accepted the *Caliphate*, after a lapse of over thirty years after the Prophet (S), for the first time once again, the temporal authority [*Caliphate*] and the religious authority [*Imamate*] came to be vested in one person (Imam Ali (a.s.)). His leadership stands in stark contrast to the period of the three earlier *Caliphs*.

Firstly, Imam Ali (a.s.) never planned territorial expansion. Secondly, he subdued the internal threat from the hypocrites [*Munafiqin*] like Mu’awiya and those who were solely interested in acquiring power or expanding territory like Talha and az-Zubair. Thirdly, he removed corrupt officers, eliminated all lavish state expenditure, and directed that the state funds should be utilized only for public welfare and to help the needy and downtrodden. He directed that every person, irrespective of his religion or belief, should be dealt justly and equitably without fear or favour. His written instructions to his Governors, Judges and Commanders of the army are eloquent testimony to his Just Governance.

In the early days of Islam, Abu Sufyan incited people and waged war against the Prophet (S). After he died, his son Mu’awiya continued the family tradition and waged war against the Prophet’s beloved cousin and successor Imam Ali (a.s.). In addition to physical warfare, Mu’awiya made false propaganda that Imam Ali (a.s.) was instrumental in the murder of Uthman.

During one of the savage battles against the enemies of Islam, Malik al-Ashtar a great warrior was surprised to see that Imam Ali (a.s.) was nowhere to be seen fighting. He found Imam Ali (a.s.) conversing with some one. He asked Imam Ali (a.s.) what he was doing at that crucial stage of the battle, and he said, “*What are we fighting for, Malik?*” Malik replied, “*We are fighting for God.*” Imam Ali (a.s.) replied, “*This man has just asked me to explain the concept of God in Islam. If I am able to convince him through dialogue, there is absolutely no need for any war or blood-shed.*”² This clearly shows that Imam Ali (a.s.) was more interested in propagating Islam through discussion and dialogue rather than for its territorial expansion through war.

Every battle that Imam Ali (a.s.) fought during his *Caliphate* was against those who were enemies in the garb of Muslims. Imam Ali (a.s.) treated the Jews and the Christians in a just manner, permitting them to practice their faith openly and fearlessly. For his personal needs, Imam Ali (a.s.) worked in his spare time. He never used the state funds for himself or his family. Though Imam Ali (a.s.) was the religious and temporal head of the Islamic State, his simple house in Kufa is a witness of his simple way of life. During that time, Mu’awiya had occupied his grand Syrian palace, well-known for its revelry, pomp and Grandeur. History records the fact that Imam Ali (a.s.) ate simple food, wore ordinary clothes that often contained patches sewn together. History also records that Imam Ali (a.s.) chose to mend his own shoes.

In the battlefield, if the opponent lost his sword or was disarmed, Imam Ali (a.s.) let him go. Imam Ali (a.s.) never chased an enemy who lost his steed or weapon and was unable to defend himself. Talha son of Abi Talha was the bitterest enemy of the Prophet (S) and Imam Ali (a.s.). In the battle of Uhud, he challenged Imam Ali (a.s.) to face him in single combat. Imam Ali (a.s.) invited him to strike first and warded off Talha’s blow. In return, Imam Ali (a.s.) gave such a blow that Talha fell down and found it difficult to get up. When, instead of killing the fallen Talha, Imam Ali (a.s.) left him and walked away, the warriors shouted that it was the best opportunity to finish off the bitter enemy. Imam Ali (a.s.) replied that he would not kill even an enemy, if such enemy was not in a position to defend himself.

In the battle of *an-Nahrawan*, an enemy soldier lost his sword in the combat with Imam Ali (a.s.), and was trembling with mortal fear. Imam Ali (a.s.) raised his sword to strike him but stopped when he saw that the enemy had lost his sword. Imam Ali (a.s.) said, “*Run away my friend, for you are now unable to defend yourself.*” The soldier said, “*Why don’t you kill me and thus get rid of one more enemy?*” Imam Ali (a.s.) replied, “*We the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) do not kill any person who is unable to defend himself.*” The soldier said, “*If what I hear about your generosity is true, let me see if you would give me your sword.*” Imam Ali (a.s.) immediately gave his sword. The enemy soldier now said, “*Who will defend you now against my attack?*” Imam Ali (a.s.) calmly replied, “*O ignorant man! If He so Wills, He will defend me. Neither you nor any one else can cause even the slightest harm to me. If death, which is sure to come, is destined for me now, by God, none can save me.*” This reply impressed the soldier so much that he threw the sword, glorified God and accepted Islam at the hands of Imam Ali (a.s.). There are numerous such incidents where Imam Ali (a.s.) won converts to Islam without waging war, merely on the strength

of his character.

Mu'awiya, during 39–40 AH, organized the systematic looting, plunder, arson, rape and other harassment of the villages bordering Syria where mostly Jews and Christians lived. Kumail, who was appointed as governor, wrote asking for permission to carry out similar attacks on other villages in retaliation. Imam Ali (a.s.) condemned the proposal and wrote, *"It is your duty to protect your subjects from the enemy's attack more diligently and vigorously, instead of imitating his mean and vile acts. Though they live under the control of your enemy, they are civilians and human beings like us, though they may follow other beliefs. Beware of following the deeds of the evil doers."*

When his brother Aqeel fell in dire need, he approached Imam Ali (a.s.) and requested that his share might be paid before its due date with something more than what he actually deserved from the state treasury. Imam Ali (a.s.), who was then the *caliph*, refused to give anything in excess of Aqeel's share or before the due date from the state treasury. Instead, Imam Ali (a.s.) helped Aqeel from his personal funds. A similar incident is also recorded about Abdullah ibn Jafar the son-in-law of Imam Ali (a.s.).

Imam Ali (a.s.) never tolerated corruption in high office. He removed all the corrupt governors who were misusing public funds. When one of the governors appointed by him attended a sumptuous dinner hosted by some rich people, Imam Ali (a.s.) scolded him by writing, *"It is unfortunate that you attended a dinner where only rich people were invited and poor people were scornfully excluded."*

Osborne wrote, *"Ali (a.s.) had been advised by several of his counselors to defer dismissal of corrupt governors previously appointed until he himself was secure against all enemies... the hero without fear and without reproach refused to be guilty of any duplicity or compromise with injustice. This uncompromisingly noble attitude cost him his state and his life; but such was Ali (a.s.) who never valued anything above justice and truth."*³

Imam Ali's strict control of state funds and his exhortations to lead an astute and simple life in the way of God, enraged persons like Mu'awiya, who were enamoured of worldly wealth and a pompous and sinful life. In one of the battles, Mu'awiya's army had gained control of the only water source available and they deprived Imam Ali's troops of water for three days. On the fourth day Imam Ali's troops gained control of the water source. Mu'awiya was afraid that Imam Ali (a.s.) would take revenge by denying access to water. Mu'awiya consulted Amr bin al-Aas who said that it was not the cunning Mu'awiya but the noble Ali (a.s.) who controls the river. Imam Ali (a.s.) allowed access to the river saying that water was a basic necessity provided by God to all living things and therefore should not be denied to anyone, even if he was your bitter enemy.

Imam Ali (a.s.) is the most read about and researched personality in the history of Islam. Nahjul Balagha, a book having collections of Imam Ali's sermons, letters and sayings is well-known in the East and the West. Many books have been written and several writers in the East and the West have expressed their opinion praising Imam Ali (a.s.). Another popular book is Nahjul Asrar, published from

Hyderabad, India. In addition to this, there are several books of Imam Ali's traditions, sermons, sayings, supplications and writings, such as *as-Sahifa al-Alawiyya*.

It may be recalled here that Imam Ali (S) presented the complete bound volume of the Qur'an written down by him to the dictates of the Prophet (S), to the first *Caliph*. When it was refused to be accepted, Imam Ali (a.s.) took it back saying that it could be again seen only in the hands of the twelfth Imam (a.s.) at the time of his reappearance.

Imam Ali (a.s.) told Talha, "*The Prophet (S) made me write each verse of the Qur'an as and when it was revealed. I have the entire Qur'an here in this book, written down in my own handwriting together with its meaning, every prohibition [haram] and permission [halal], every limit and every command, the details of the amount of compensation [diya] payable for the tiniest scratch and all that the Ummah will need, right from the first day until the Doomsday.*"

Imam Ali's character is unique in that he possessed a rare combination of opposite qualities. He was an undefeated warrior yet very kind, sympathetic and most gentle towards the poor and downtrodden people and those enemies whom he subdued. He was a great orator, moralist and philosopher. He was God-fearing, and an erudite teacher of religious tenets. He was a just and noble ruler, who led a simple life, bereft of all ostentation and grandeur that goes with the crown. He bore a noble countenance, wore simple clothes, and ate the most common food that was the staple food of the poor people of his time. He was always available to his subjects and he moved among them freely. He was bereft of all pomp and pretensions, so much so that when he moved about in the street, he was identified as one among the citizens. He neither feared any harm from his subjects, nor did the citizens have any fear or hesitation in meeting and conversing with him so easily.

Gibbon wrote,⁴ "*He [Imam Ali (a.s.)] united the qualifications of a poet, a soldier, and a saint. His wisdom still breathes in a collection of moral and religious sayings; and every antagonist in the combat of tongue or of sword was subdued by his eloquence and valor. From the first hour of the mission to the last rites of his funeral, the apostle was never forsaken by this generous friend, whom he delighted to name as his brother, his vicegerent and the faithful Aaron of second Moses.*"

Abdullah ibn Abbas, the governor, used to treat his non-Muslim subjects with contempt. When they complained, Imam Ali (a.s.) wrote, "*They may be heathens and polytheists; nonetheless, they are our subjects and human beings like us. They deserve better treatment than what you appear to have shown them. Make yourself available to them, hear their complaints and give proper consideration, and justly redress their grievances.*" The directions⁵ given by Imam Ali (S) in his letter to Malik al-Ashtar form a self-contained code of conduct for Governance.

George Jordaq, an Egyptian Christian scholar in Arabic, Persian, English, German and French languages, has compiled a book of the excellent judgments rendered by Imam Ali (a.s.). The book has been translated into Urdu.

Apart from being the *Caliph*, Imam Ali (a.s.) was and is always known as the *Imam* and *Ameerul Mo'minin* [Commander of the Faithful]. After his martyrdom, the title of *Caliph* was lost in history and the title 'Ameerul Mo'minin' was usurped by Mu'awiya and later rulers for some time to denote the temporal authority– the person who was at the helm of the affairs of Muslims. Now, even the word *Ameerul Mo'minin* is not used by rulers of any Islamic state. However, it is noteworthy that neither Mu'awiya nor the subsequent rulers of the Islamic world ever claimed that they were *Imams*. Until today, the number of the infallible *Imams* remains restricted to the twelve *Imams* named by the Prophet (S) in numerous traditions.

Ibn Muljim and a few other *Kharjites* supported by Mu'awiya conspired to eliminate Imam Ali (a.s.). They chose a day in the month of *Ramadan* and they planned to assassinate Imam Ali (a.s.) at Kufa early during the Morning Prayer. Mu'awiya created a legend that the conspirators had also planned to eliminate Mu'awiya but that on the appointed day, he fell ill and could not go to the mosque to lead the prayers. A story was thus spun and popularized that Mu'awiya escaped assassination and, instead, the person, who was deputed by Mu'awiya to lead the prayers, was injured by the conspirator. However, when Imam Ali (a.s.) was leading the Morning Prayer in the great mosque of Kufa, the wicked Ibn Muljim struck him on the head with his poisoned sword and seriously wounded him. The gathering of worshippers chased ibn Muljim, and Huthaifa al-Yamani caught him and tied his hands and feet. The crowd attempted to assault the accused Ibn Muljim. Imam Ali (a.s.) saw this and noticed that the ropes tying ibn Muljim were so tight that they were cutting into his flesh. Imam Ali (a.s.) abjured the gathering saying, "*He has not yet been tried according our Shariah. Until he is tried and found guilty, you have no right to hurt any under trial prisoner in any manner, whatever be his crime.*"

What we have discussed above is with reference to the human side of Imam Ali's personality. There is also the spiritual aspect of the Fourteen Immaculate and infallible persons, which elevates them above man but below God. This aspect is discussed separately.

Abu Sufyan sowed the seed of hatred, Mu'awiya nurtured the tree and Yazid reaped the harvest by slaying the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) openly and defiantly in the Battle of Karbala. Abu Sufyan and his progeny invented absolute falsehood, and they propagated and popularized such falsehood, through their gullible henchmen. The coffers of the public treasuries flowed in the hands of the corrupt Umayyads to propagate that Imam Ali (a.s.) never offered prayers. The result was that when news of Imam Ali's martyrdom reached Syria, people exclaimed: 'Ali in the mosque!?' By the time Yazid assumed power, people only remembered the grandeur of the Umayyad rulers, and forgot the simple Islamic way of life, and they knew little about Imam Husayn (a.s.) the pious and noble grandson of the Prophet (S).

1. Nahjul Balagha, Sermon No.3. The authenticity of this sermon is testified by twenty-seven learned scholars mentioned in the note appended to this sermon...

2. Nahjul Asrar, p. 262.

3. Osborne, Islam Under the Arabs.

4. The History of the Decline and the Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. 5.

5. Nahjul Balagha, translated by Sayyid Ali Reza, published by Abbas Book Agency, Lucknow, U.P.

Chapter 12: Imamate

Imam Hasan (a.s.) followed the footsteps of his grandfather, the Prophet (S). Like the Prophet (S), who had entered into Peace treaties including the one with the infidels of Mecca, Imam Hasan (a.s.) preferred to enter into a peace treaty with Mu'awiya in order to avoid unnecessary bloodshed. The main terms stipulated in the treaty were [i] that Mu'awiya should not nominate his successor; [ii] he should not interfere in religious matters; [iii] he would stop forthwith the calumny and falsehood propagated against Imam Ali (a.s.) and the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) from on the pulpits. Mu'awiya, the hypocrite that he was, signed the treaty to gain instant reprieve, but he flouted every word of the treaty even before the ink on his signature could dry.

Thus, for a second and last time, the ostensible temporal leadership was separated from the religious leadership, not to be united again in one person, until the reappearance of the Awaited Twelfth Imam (S). Before we proceed to discuss Imamate, it will be proper to know the connotation of the word '*Imam*'. In every language, words have different meanings with reference to different contexts. Every language also attributes a special meaning to a word. Though in Arabic the term '*Imam*' means 'leader', in the Islamic sense and perspective, the term has acquired a special and significant connotation exclusively referable only to the religious head. For instance, the word 'Messenger' may apply to anyone, but when a Muslim uses the word, it refers only to the Prophet (S) and none else.

Even in this perspective, there has arisen a marked difference between the Shiite and the Sunni interpretation. In the early centuries, both the Shia and the Sunni, universally, acknowledged that the term '*Imam*' refers exclusively to the twelve Imams designated by the Prophet (S). The *six Sihah*¹ which are the authentic books of traditions relied on by the Sunnis, as also all other books of traditions, whether Shia or Sunni, contain numerous references to the Prophet (S) designating and identifying by name the twelve Imams (a.s.). Other offices of the state were designated separately; for instance an ambassador was called a 'Safeer'; the Governor was called the 'Wali'.

However, centuries later, Abu Hanifa, ash-Shafi'iyy, Malik, and Ahmed ibn Hanbal were given the prefix of '*Imam*' by their followers as a tribute to their knowledge and work. Of these four, Abu Hanifa was exclusively given the special title of '*al-Imam al-A'dham*'² since his treatise and interpretation of Islamic tenets came to be followed by the largest majority of Muslims, known as the Hanafites. It should be noted here that these four (Abu Hanifa [b. 80– d. 150 AH.], Malik [b. 95– d. 169 AH], ash-Shafi'iyy [b. 150– d. 204 AH] and ibn Hanbal [b. 164– d. 241 AH]) were all born several decades after the time of the Prophet (S) and they were not designated or named as Imams by the Prophet (S), nor did they themselves ever claim to be Imams. It was only a popular prefix added to their names as a tribute, by their followers after their death out of love, affection, and regard.

In much later times, the Sunni sect further diluted the significance of the word '*Imam*', and when any

person possessing some knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence, he was referred to as an *Imam*. The Twelver Shia, on the other hand, consider only the twelve *Imams* (a.s.) designated and named by the Prophet (S), as their temporal and spiritual leaders, and Divine Guides. For the Shia, *Imamate* is as much a Divine conferment as Prophethood. The verses of the Qur'an reveal that God conferred *Imamate* on Abraham. Therefore, an Imam cannot be chosen or elected by men.

There are several basic differences between the Twelver Shia and the Sunnis as to who is an Imam. The Twelver Shia consider that the Imams are chosen and designated by God. The Sunnis believe that it is sufficient if the majority of Muslims designate a person as the Imam. Among the Sunnis, the reputed knowledge of Islamic Jurisprudence is the only criteria for such designation. The Twelver Shia, on the other hand, hold that the Imams are chosen and designated by God; that the Imams are endowed with knowledge of the past, present and the future; of the known and unknown and all the scriptures revealed to the various Prophets, since the Imams are the very embodiment of the Divine Wisdom.

For the Twelver Shia, the supreme commander [*U'il Amr*], in temporal as well as religious matters, is the *Imam* of the time. The Sunnis interpret '*U'il Amr*' as the head of the state, separating religion from worldly affairs. Though, for the Twelver Shia, the terms *Imam* and *U'il Amr* refer only to the twelve designated *Imams* (a.s.), recently the term was also being erroneously and unfortunately used, in its Sunni sense of the word, by a small section of the Twelver Shia to denote the head of a state. Similarly, the term '*ahlul thikr*' exclusively denotes the immaculate and infallible Ones (a.s.). However, in recent times, the term '*ahlul thikr*' is also being misused by some Twelver Shia to denote a pious and learned person.

Another term that is grossly maligned, misinterpreted and misunderstood is '*Jihad*'. There is a sharp difference in the Shiite and Sunni interpretation. Basically, the term is used to denote struggle or effort. Thus, the first requirement of a Muslim is *Jihad an-Nafs* (the strife against one's base desires or excesses). On a larger perspective, it is a struggle, fight and strife against oppression and tyranny. In the later sense, it means war. For the Twelver Shia, no person or body of persons has the right to declare or commence a war. The Divinely designated and Divinely inspired *Imam* (a.s.) of the time alone has the authority to order or commence *Jihad*. Even in such cases, the *Imam* (a.s.) never declares a war of aggression, or in modern terms, 'war of preemption', but to act only in defense against oppression and tyranny by standing up to the tyrant, after all the avenues of avoiding the conflict have failed. This is exactly what Imam Husayn (a.s.) did in Karbala, as the *Imam* of the time, to protect the faith and to expose the injustice and oppression of Yazid, the tyrant ruler.

Imamate, the real and ostensible religious authority, always remained with Ali (a.s.) and his eleven designated progeny who were then were, as even today are, called *Imams* of the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.), while the *Caliphate* came to represent temporal authority. The three *Caliphs* never ever, at any time, claimed *Imamate* or called themselves or were ever known as '*Imams*'. They always remained merely the *Caliphs*. The real temporal as well as religious authority (*Caliphate* and *Imamate*) always remained

vested in the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). The importance of the difference between *Imamate* and *Caliphate* has to be understood in the light of the Qur'an and the Sunna. The Qur'an reveals that after Abraham's sacrifice had been accepted, God declared that Abraham, already a Prophet (S) and Khaleel, was made the 'Imam'. When Abraham wanted to know if his progeny also would be designated as Imams, the reply was 'not those who are transgressors and oppressors'.³

Authentic traditions abound, in both Sunni and Shia books, about the Prophet's designating, by name, of the twelve *Imams* of the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.). Thus, *Imamate* and therefore leadership, both religious and temporal, always remained, in reality, with Imam Ali (a.s.) and his eleven designated progeny called the *Imams* of the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.). The choice of ostensible temporal heads, in all sorts of manners, never made any difference to the Divinely appointed *Imam* (a.s.).

The various dictates and judgements rendered by the *Imams* (a.s.) in temporal matters, which the rulers of the time found incapable of solution, is an ample proof that the *Caliphate* (the temporal authority) also remained, in reality, with the *Imams* (a.s.). What the ruler of the time took away from the Imam (a.s.) was the treasury and the hordes of hypocrites and timeservers. The *Imams* (a.s.) detested glamorous ostentation and had no use for riches or sycophants. They relished frugal and simple food, even as they gave generously to the poor, orphans and the disabled. They preferred coarse clothes for themselves but distributed good clothes to the poor. None of the *Imams* (a.s.) hoarded wealth nor did they leave behind any property or money. They always worked and earned their living and, therefore, had no need to depend upon the ruler or to please him. They also detested hypocrites and timeservers. Therefore, the loss of the treasury and the loss of hypocritical supporters were of no importance to them. It is for this reason that the *Imams* (a.s.) never made any attempt to fight and gain the seat or the vain gloss of worldly power. It is, therefore, trite to say that Imam Husayn's dispute with Yazid was a struggle for power.

Some people argue that, after the Prophet (S), both temporal and religious leadership passed on to the *Caliphs*. It is further argued that the *Caliphs*, particularly the second *Caliph*, brought in several innovations in religious matters such as adding to the morning call for prayer [Azan], the words '*the prayer is better than sleep*' [*as-salatu khayrum minan nawm*] ; appropriated *Khums* and used it for military exploits instead of paying it to the progeny of the Holy Prophet (S) ; banned the practice of *Mut'a* (temporary marriage) ...etc. These acts are touted as proof of the *Caliph's* control and authority over religious matters. The Prophet (S) himself was made to say that he could not, in any manner, alter, amend, or introduce changes in the Divinely revealed Laws.⁴ Therefore, the *Caliph* had no power to bring in any amendment, alteration, or innovation in the Divine Laws. It is common knowledge that transgression of any law does not amount to its amendment by the individual. The Qur'an declared that Islam was revealed to the Prophet (S) as a complete and immutable code of conduct governing the Muslims in all walks of their life, whether temporal or religious. The *Caliph's* innovative actions cannot be termed to be in exercise of the religious power assumed by or conferred upon him, but should be treated only as unauthorized and illegitimate interference. No power can be assumed to vest in anyone that

would subvert the very principles for the preservation of which the *Caliph* takes the office.

Further, if it was true that the three *Caliphs* exercised religious authority as well as administration of temporal affairs, there would be no need for the numerous occasions when the three preceding *Caliphs* had to seek Imam Ali's dicta whenever complicated matters of Islamic jurisprudence had to be solved, and for the second Caliph to declare, ever so frequently, that had Imam Ali (a.s.) not been there, Umar would certainly have perished.

If really Yazid had both the temporal and religious authority, there was no need for him to seek a Fatwa to legitimize his assault on Imam Husayn (a.s.). Even today, where the so-called Islamic countries are faced with a hypothetical or real religious issue, their governments seek the Fatwa of the Mufti to legitimize their stand. If the government had the temporal as well as religious authority, why should the ruler of an Islamic country seek a Fatwa from any person other than the temporal head of the state?

Both the Twelver Shia and the Sunni believe that while the government has the power to regulate or carry on administration, religious issues lie within the compass and exclusive jurisdiction of the religious head. For the Twelver Shia, the matter is taken one-step further- while temporal administration of a state may lie in the hands of those in power, religious matters are always in the hands of the *Imam* (a.s.) of the time. The *Imams* (a.s.) might not have pressed for temporal authority in the interest of the survival of Islam, but neither did the *Imams* (a.s.) surrender nor did the rulers claim to take away the *Imam*'s religious authority at any time. Those who sought to ascend the seat of power considered themselves only as administrators of temporal matters, even as they were keenly aware that in religious matters they were not competent to assume authority. It is thus that the *Caliphs*, when confronted with matters of faith or jurisprudence, have readily admitted their ignorance while asserting that Imam Ali (a.s.) had superior knowledge and authority, in all matters, as the Holy Prophet (a.s.) declared repository of wisdom.

The Ulema as Jurists have the obligation to search for and find a solution from precedents by virtue of their learning and knowledge of the Qur'an and the Sunna. They have no authority or power to innovate or do the guessing game and come out with a probable solution according to their personal view of the problem. On several occasions, the sixth Imam (a.s.) has demonstrably deprecated the use of conjecture in matters of religion. In this regard, it is worthwhile to translate the writing of the late Allama Sayyid Zeeshan Haider Jawadi from his book '*Nuqooshe Ismat*':

"In the fundamental principles of Islam, every Imam is the guardian and protector of the Shariah [religion]. The need for Imamate alongside the Risalah [prophethood] is due to the fact that Divine Revelations cease the moment the prophetic mission is completed, and it then becomes necessary that there should be some *one who protects and preserves the religion revealed through the prophet, so that the Divine Laws are retained in their original form and applied in their original substance. For all outward appearance, it seems possible that the Shariah may be preserved even by the scholars of the Muslim community. But, Imamate is indispensable for the preservation of the Divine Commandments, because scholars are ignorant of the Divine Laws as they have no access to the al-Louh al-Mahfoodh [the*

Preserved Sacred Tablet] and they acquire knowledge by studying the Holy Book [Qur'an] and Traditions [Sunna] and they interpret the Divine Laws, according to their individual human capabilities. This is the reason why there is a conflict between the Fatwa [Edict] of one scholar and another, and their method of reasoning are conflicting, different and not uniform. On the other hand, the Imam is endowed with complete knowledge of the Divine Commandments through his access to the al-Louh al-Mahfoodh, even from the time of his birth. Therefore, there is absolutely no question of contradiction or conflict in the interpretation and implementation of the Divine Laws by one Imam in different situations or between one Imam and another at different times. All the Imams were the guardians and protectors of the Divine Commandments and they performed their obligations. Preservation and interpretation of the Divine Commandments, is of two kinds; one where the Imam interprets a commandment whenever the occasion arose and there was a likelihood or threat of the Commandment being misinterpreted or put to abuse, and the second kind is where the validity of a Commandment is challenged, or the Commandment is sought to be derogated, altered, or abolished. In the later event, it becomes obligatory on the Imam, even at the cost of his life, to stand up to such attempts to abrogate, alter, abolish, or challenge the validity of the Divine Commandments.”⁵

It is appropriate to mention here that most of the writings on *Imamate* relate to the apparently human qualities of the fourteen Infallible ones (a.s.). In fact, they are perfect in everything and represent the unique model of morals and manners. The Prophets and the Imams form the link between God and man, and therefore, necessarily, one facet of their personality reflects Divinity while the other reflects human quality.

The concept of the Ideal or Perfect Man (*Insan Kamil*) among the Sufis and some sects of Muslims, and the concept of Avatara Purusha among the Hindus, are the nearest but not the perfect examples for the Shiite concept.

In Shiite Islam, people have no right to choose the successor of the Holy Prophet (S) as it is the prerogative reserved to God by Himself. The simple reason is that man's knowledge is limited to availability, approach, and reach. Due to the innate human tendency to err, man's knowledge is subject to frequent revision. Human knowledge is constantly evolving, aided by observations and assisted by the implements progressively invented by man.

Shiite tenets contradict the assumption raised by the other Islamic sects that the Prophet (S) was, after all, an ordinary human being just like any of us, and that he had two sides to his personality; occasions when he acted as the Messenger of God and received Qur'anic Revelations from God, and at all other times, when he was just a man, susceptible to commit mistakes or be affected by natural human frailties. Refuting this concept, the Shia hold that Prophets are invested with the office of Prophethood from their inception in the Spiritual sphere. In that sphere, God made covenants with them.⁶ They continue to be Prophets from the moment of their birth in this world and remain so throughout every moment of their life. The example of Jesus speaking from the cradle⁷ is a case in this point. Therefore, there is no

possibility of the Prophet's committing any error at any time. Nor can any successor of the Prophet (S) be fallible.

The Sunni sects, on the other hand, hold that after the Prophet (S), any person can become his successor by election, nomination, or appointment by a select committee. The Shia argue that assuming that all the buffalos of the world joined together and selected or elected the one who had the longest horns among them and declared him to be a 'man', he would nonetheless not cease to be a buffalo, nor will he become a 'man'. It is God Who created him a buffalo and he will remain so. No progress, no evolution, no experience will elevate him to the position of man. So also only, those that are Divinely appointed shall be the Prophets or the Successors. Man has no say in the matter.

The Shia consider the Holy Prophet (S), as the Perfect Man, and being God's chosen representative, as the Perfect Mirror that reflects the summation and totality of the Being of God, without the need for integration, incarnation or transmigration. For, it is impossible to speak of integration, incarnation or transmigration without presupposing two existents, whereas here there is only One Existence [without a second] ; all things being extant within that One Being, but not existent by themselves. The Existence that is One without a second manifests Himself through His Creation and conceals Himself in His Names. Between the states of manifestation and concealment there is an intermediary stage (Barzakh) that distinguishes the manifest from the hidden. This Barzakh is the Perfect Man who is the Mirror that reflects summarily or in detail, the Manifest and the Hidden or an intermingling of both.⁸ The Imams (a.s.) being the inheritors of the Prophet (S) are the successors to the Perfect Man.

The Perfect Man is God's representative on the earth at all times. All Apostles, Messengers, Prophets, and Vicegerents are Perfect Men of their times. The earth cannot be without the Perfect Man to guide humankind from the first to the last day.

In short, the mirror (more aptly a photograph) shows the image, but by itself, it is something other than what it reflects. Yet, we identify the person it reflects. The concept of Immaculacy and Infallibility of the Imams (a.s.) is based on the fact that despite being the Mirror that reflects Divine qualities, which often led men to assume and erroneously declare that the Perfect Man (*Ma'soom*:infallible) is 'God', the infallible ones (a.s.) themselves always rejected such false attributes and elevation to godhead and declared that they posses human qualities since they were once born (and therefore had a beginning) and one day they would be destined to leave this world,⁹ whereas the Almighty Creator alone is Beginningless and Eternal.

The Shia assert that both the spiritual and temporal leadership was with the Prophet (S). After him, it was vested upon the designated successors; the *Imams* of the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.). On the other hand, other sects of Muslims consider the caliph, not necessarily appointed by God, as the Temporal Authority, distinct from the Spiritual Authority (the Imam). Therefore, according to the Sunnis, the successors of the Prophets can be chosen by men, from among men. The Shias consider that the Successor of a Prophet should be beyond human frailties so that there is not the slightest possibility of his committing any error

or be influenced by worldly considerations while transmitting the Word of God and the Divine mission. This is the basic Shiite tenet of the Infallibility of the Imams (a.s.), the successors of the Holy Prophet (S).

The Shias and a vast majority of Sunnis hold that the Holy Prophet (S), his daughter the Immaculate Fatima (a.s.), Imam Ali (a.s.) and eleven Imams (a.s.) from their progeny, designated by God, are the Immaculate and Infallible persons (a.s.).¹⁰ God declared them chaste and He protected them from even the slightest shadow of error.¹¹ Hence, the traditions related from the Infallible ones (a.s.) alone are considered authentic by the Shias.

Thus, in Shiite thought, like the Prophet (S), the Imams (a.s.) hold a unique position as the Intermediary between God and Man. It is therefore that Imam Ali (a.s.) proclaimed, "*I am the Dawn of the First day of Creation.*"¹² The symbolism here is very eloquent. The dawn is the intervening period that separates the night from the day, but by itself it is neither 'day' nor 'night'. One end is merged with the night and the other end is merged in the day. So is the position of the Imam (a.s.), who, being the intermediary between God and Man, is the reflection of both, while by himself he is different from both. On the one hand, in the capacity of the servant, the Imam (a.s.) is subservient to the Omniscient and Omnipotent God, and on the other hand, the Imam (a.s.), as the all-knowing Guide to humankind, is far superior to and different from man.

^{1.} 'Sihah' is the plural for of 'Sahih' that is a book of Hadith.

^{2.} The greatest imam.

^{3.} Qur'an, 10:15, 33:62, 35:43.

^{4.} Qur'an, 10:15, 33:62, 35:43.

^{5.} Nuqoosh-e-Ismat, by Allama Zeeshan Haider Jawadi.

^{6.} Qur'an, 3:81.

^{7.} Qur'an, 17:30.

^{8.} Mir'aatul Aarifeen fee Multamise Zainul Aabideen, p. 24 and 25, English Translation of Text, Translation, Introduction and Notes by Sayyid Hasan Askari, Publishers: Zahra Trust U.K [1983], Burlington Press [Cambridge] Ltd., Foxton, Cambridge CB 2 6SW.

^{9.} Qur'an, 3:185, 21:35.

^{10.} A Shiite Creed, Publisher WOFIS, P. 83, Waheed Akhtar, Early Imamiyya Shiite Thinkers, P xxxii.

^{11.} Qur'an, 33:33.

^{12.} Nahjul Asrar.

Chapter 13: The Muslim Empire

Mu'awiya's extremely cunning nature was augmented by the advice and support of Marwan and Amr bin al-Aas. Besides his cruel nature, Mu'awiya was extremely cunning. When his attempts to search for defects in Imam Ali (a.s.) failed, he commenced the practice of praising the Banu Umayya the inveterate

enemies of Imam Ali (a.s.), by inventing and propagating false traditions attributed to the Prophet (S). Mu'awiya bribed his henchmen and arranged for the propagation of daily calumnies and falsehoods against Imam Ali (a.s.) from on the pulpits after every prayer in every mosque of Syria, Egypt, and Iraq. Any leader of the congregational prayers, who was not amenable to his bribes or threats, was ruthlessly removed or killed, and in the vacancy, Mu'awiya's cronies were appointed. The propaganda was so fierce and systematic that soon people started comparing Mu'awiya with Imam Ali (a.s.).¹ The propaganda was so vicious that when the news of Imam Ali's martyrdom during offering the prayer in the mosque of Kufa reached the people of Syria, they wondered how Ali could have been killed in the mosque when he never attended any prayer.

Mu'awiya retained the control of Syria, Egypt, and Iraq, which he got in the early days of the Caliphate and appointed his kin and sycophants as his trusted advisors and representatives in various provinces. Except for an opportunistic and hypocritical conversion, neither Mu'awiya nor his father Abu Sufyan or his son Yazid had any regard or affinity for Islam. Abu Sufyan was from the Kuffar (disbelievers) of Mecca and he remained so. The Qur'an reveals that the Kuffar of Mecca asserted that there would be no other life than the one in this world; that there would be no life hereafter, and none would be resurrected or held accountable for his deeds.² This philosophy was imbibed in the Banu Umayya in general and Abu Sufyan, Mu'awiya, and Yazid in particular, and was the cause of their cruel nature. They always held the view that there would be no life hereafter and no accounting for one's deeds. They proclaimed that the Prophet (S) had invented these as myths in order to gain worldly power. It is their greed that converted Islam into a Muslim Empire by expanding territories and accumulating huge amount of illicit wealth, and in the process abandoning the spirit of Islam. Islam that emerged, during their rule, bore only a minuscule outward resemblance to the Islam propagated by the Prophet (S). In the hands of the Banu Umayya, Islam was devoid of its true spirit, philosophy, and the concept of God and the moral and ethical life and standards taught by the Prophet (S). Abu Sufyan, his son Mu'awiya and grandson Yazid abhorred the Divine commandments that demanded Muslims to lead a virtuous, pious, and peaceful life of coexistence with people holding different beliefs.

Mu'awiya's denial of the afterlife and accountability naturally led him to addiction to all sorts of vices and the temerity to commit great atrocities against the poor. He harassed, persecuted, tortured or killed the companions of the Prophet (S) who resented his way of interpreting the way of life prescribed under Islam. He annihilated those who were even suspected to be sympathetic to Imam Ali (a.s.) or the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). Cunning as he was, Mu'awiya carried out in public, the pretension of being a Muslim, lest the power he gained as the head of the Islamic state be wrenched away by the public. Slowly, but systematically, he eroded minor injunctions of Islam, by letting go the transgressors and later rewarding those who could fallaciously justify their irreligious acts. He used the public funds not only to aggrandize himself but also to eliminate or silence any opposition and to purchase support.

His appointees to higher posts had no knowledge of Islam or any other sciences, but were well-versed in every evil trade and act. One of the governors, while drunken, offered four rak'as in the Morning

Prayer instead of the obligatory two, and mockingly he told the congregation that, if they were not tired, he could perform several more. His son, Yazid used to make fun of Islam in the open court. Yazid's conduct eroded the credibility and quality of Islam, causing great anxiety to the Imams (S) as well as the surviving companions of the Prophet (S) who were the true Muslims of the time. Simon Oakley wrote: "Among my authorities, I find one who, when treating of Hasan's death, asserted that, in the treaties between him and Mu'awiya, it has been stipulated that Mu'awiya should never appoint a successor so long as Hasan lived, but should leave, as Umar had before, the election in the hands of a certain number of persons to be nominated by Hasan. Mu'awiya, therefore, being desirous of leaving the Caliphate to his son Yazid and thinking that he could not bring about his design so long as Hasan was alive, determined to get rid of him."³

Mu'awiya hatched a plan to eliminate Imam Hasan (a.s.). Imam Hasan (a.s.) was poisoned by one of his wives at the instance of Mu'awiya who promised that he would get her married to his son Yazid. In his last moments, Imam Hasan (a.s.) expressed his wish to be buried beside his grandfather the Holy Prophet (S) and in the event of any opposition, to bury him at the common burial ground of al-Baqee', so that any conflict and consequent division among Muslims might be averted. When Imam Husayn (a.s.) took the bier in order to bury Imam Hasan (a.s.) beside the Prophet's tomb, Mu'awiya incited Aa'isha to have arrows showered on the coffin of Imam Hasan (a.s.). Thus, Imam Husayn (a.s.) was prevented from fulfilling the last wish of his brother. Imam Hasan (a.s.) was then buried in the graveyard of al-Baqee' in Medina.

The martyrdom of Imam Hasan (a.s.), further emboldened Mu'awiya in his evil designs. He issued orders that any one praising Imam Ali (S) or found relating traditions in praise of him or the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) should at once be beheaded, hanged, and cut into pieces. He also instructed the leaders of congregations in every mosque to curse, blaspheme, and spread falsehood about Imam Ali (a.s.) and the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) and amply rewarded those who complied with this order. The greed of people encouraged them to invent ever-new traditions falsely attributed to the Prophet (S), praising the open enemies of Islam such as Marwan, Abu Sufyan, Mu'awiya... etc.

On the other hand, those, who refused to praise the Banu Umayya and other enemies of Islam, were punished severely. Maytham at-Tammar, who refused to curse Imam Ali (a.s.), was tortured, his limbs were torn apart, and his tongue was pulled out. His body was hung at the city center as a warning to those who did not obey Mu'awiya's orders. Hija bin Adiy al-Kindi (the great companion) was slaughtered for the same reason. Muhammad, son of the first *Caliph* Abu Bakr, who had special love and regard for Imam Ali (a.s.), was killed and his body was stuffed in the skin of a donkey and was burnt. In the city of Basra alone, eight thousand persons, who declared their love and obedience for Imam Ali (a.s.) as a part of their faith, were meticulously traced and brutally killed. The pensions of those, who were weak, disabled, old or orphans, was stopped if they were even suspected of entertaining any affection towards the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.).⁴

After Imam Hasan (a.s.) had been poisoned, Imam Husayn (a.s.) lived peacefully in Medina, imparting religious teachings and had a great number of companions and followers. Mu'awiya, who had expanded his control over various provinces, started to disclose his desire to appoint his son Yazid as his successor. He was able to secure the assent of the Syrians and some people in Iraq and Egypt. Mu'awiya's representative in Medina wrote to him stating that the people of Medina were not in favour of Yazid to succeed Mu'awiya. Aa'isha, Imam Husayn (a.s.), Abdullah Bin Umar, Abdurrahman bin Abu Bakr, Abdullah bin az-Zubair and others were mentioned as the opponents. Mu'awiya came to Medina and from on the pulpit of the Holy Prophet (S) he started to praise Yazid and suggested his name as the successor after him. Aa'isha interrupted him, shouted from her room, and asked which precedent Mu'awiya was following in nominating his son, when the earlier Caliphs did not appoint their sons.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) then got up and said that Yazid, being a flouter of basic Islamic principles, a known debauch, gambler and drunkard was not fit to be the ruler of the Islamic world. Imam Husayn (a.s.) suggested that it was essential to discuss the character of Yazid in a public meeting and discussion.⁵

Mu'awiya instructed Yazid to proceed to Medina via Mecca on the pretext of performing the Hajj and to give lavish gifts to the people of Medina and Mecca, in order to create an impression of his piety and generosity. To some extent, the ruse worked and people were deceived by the ostentatious gifts from Yazid.

Mu'awiya, under the advice of Marwan and Amr bin al-Aas then, proposed that he would later call a public meeting to know people's preference regarding the matter of his succession. He assured Imam Husayn (a.s.), Abdullah bin Abbas, Abdullah Bin Umar, Abdullah Bin az-Zubair and all others who opposed Yazid that they would have their say in the public meeting. Cunning that he was, he dispatched his cronies to spread the false rumor that Imam Husayn (a.s.), Abdullah bin Abbas, Abdullah Bin Umar, Abdullah Bin az-Zubair and all others who had once opposed, had consented to Yazid being nominated as the successor of Mu'awiya.

Mu'awiya made elaborate arrangement for the public gathering. He instructed his cronies to disperse to strategic points in the crowd so that they might carry out his directions at a given signal. When the meeting commenced, Mu'awiya started praising Yazid as a pious and generous person. He told the people of Medina that they had themselves witnessed Yazid's piety and generosity. When Imam Husayn (a.s.) tried to protest, Mu'awiya politely asked him to be patient and hear him fully. Mu'awiya assured, after he had finished his speech, Imam Husayn (a.s.) that he would have opportunity when his turn came to say whatever he pleased. Then, Mu'awiya proclaimed that all the nobles of Medina, including those present on the rostrum, have agreed to his nominating of Yazid as his successor. He then gave the signal to his cronies mingled in the crowd, who created a huge commotion by shouting slogans in favour of Yazid. In the confusion, nothing could be heard and a stampede was created and the gathering was forced to disperse. Imam Husayn (a.s.) and others opposed to Yazid were, thus, effectively prevented from voicing their objections, while the gathering noted their presence alongside Mu'awiya to be the sign

of their approval of Yazid's succession.[6](#)

Ronald P. Sokol wrote with reference to present-day world leaders,[7](#) “*A leader not subject to law may indulge in the propensity to assign a name, be it Jew, gypsy, terrorist, enemy combatant, or insurgent, and then to demonize that name until sight is lost of the other person's humanity. When that point is reached, humiliation, torture, and death are inflicted without compunction. That propensity lies deeply embedded in the psyche. It stains democracies as well as dictatorships, presidents as well as tyrants... Law is our only tool for tempering that dark propensity.*”

This analysis applies, very aptly, to Mu'awiya and his son Yazid who resorted to inventing falsehood, who threatened, bribed and set up thousands of persons to curse, defame and disparage Imam Ali (a.s.) and the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) from on the pulpits five times daily after every prayer. Mu'awiya humiliated, tortured and even killed several of the companions whom the Prophet (S) had highly praised for their integrity, sincerity, religious acumen and fearlessness in the face of adversity.

Imam Ali (a.s.) was targeted to be unjustly abused, because he represented the pure, simple and unaltered Islam, as propagated by the Prophet (S). There was no room in Imam Ali's Islam for any materialist way of life or a gilded monarchy of pomp and power that was the cherished desire and practice of Mu'awiya, his ancestors and progeny. The result of Mu'awiya's action was that, except for a few right thinking persons, Imam Ali (a.s.) and all the good that he stood for, came to be clouded and the real Islam propagated by the Prophet (S) was mutilated by misinterpretations, conjectures, heresy and innovations.

Yazid followed his father Mu'awiya's footsteps with added arrogance and viciousness. He subverted the spirit of peaceful coexistence and brotherhood that Islam taught. Yazid substituted it with a constant strife for acquisition of power and territory, thereby creating chaos and mutilating beyond recognition the very sense of the word 'Islam' which means peace.

About Mu'awiya, Justice Amir Ali quotes Osborne,[8](#) “*The astute, unscrupulous and pitiless first Caliph of the Umayyads shrank from no crime necessary to secure his position. Murder was his accustomed mode of removing a formidable opponent. The grandson of the Holy Prophet (S) was poisoned. Malik al-Ashtar, the heroic lieutenant of Imam Ali (a.s.), was destroyed in a like way. To secure the succession of Yazid, Mu'awiya hesitated not to break the word he pledged to Imam Hasan (a.s.), the surviving son of Ali (a.s.) ... The explanation for this anomaly is to be found in two circumstances, which I have more than once adverted. The first one is that truly devout and earnest Muslims conceived that he manifested his religion most effectively by withdrawing himself from the affairs of the world. The other is the tribal spirit of the Arabs, the conquerors of Asia, of North Africa, and of Spain. The Arabs never rose to the level of their position. Greatness had been thrust upon them. However, in the midst of their grandeur, they retained in all their previous force of intensity, the passions, the rivalries, the petty jealousies of the desert. They merely fought again on a wider field, the battles of the Arabs before Islam.*”

The result of Mu'awiya's usurpation of the leadership of the Islamic world, led to terrorist methods for acquiring territory and silencing the opposition. Unfortunately, to Mu'awiya goes the credit of being the first terrorist clothed in Islamic garb as also the credit for stamping that sobriquet 'Islamic Terrorists' which is now sought to be attached to any and every Muslim.

- [1. Nahjul Balaghah.](#)
- [2. Qur'an, 6:29, 11:7, 16:38, 17:49, 17:98, 19:66, 27:67, 32:10, 44:34, 45:24.](#)
- [3. Life of Husayn The Saviour, p. 71 – 72.](#)
- [4. Kitabul Imamah wes-Siyasah & Kitabul Ahdath, quoted in Life of Husayn The Saviour 73.](#)
- [5. Balaghatal Husayn, P. 35, Sermons, Sayings & letters of Imam Husayn \(a.s.\). Compiled by Mustafa Mohsin Musavi, Urdu Translation by Moulvi Sayyid Muhammad Baqir.](#)
- [6. Life of Husayn, p. 95–96.](#)
- [7. Ronald P. Sokol, the International Herald Tribune, the Deccan Chronicle, Hyderabad, 20 February 2005.](#)
- [8. The Spirit of Islam, by Amir Ali.](#)

Chapter 14: Yazid bin Mu'awiya bin Abu Sufyan

In his last days, Mu'awiya warned Yazid that he should be careful about how he would handle four persons; Imam Husayn (a.s.), Abdullah bin Umar, Abdullah ibn az-Zubair and Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr, who opposed his succession. When Mu'awiya died in Syria, his son Yazid usurped the governorship of Syria and staked his claim as successor of the head of the Islamic State. Yazid appointed his kin and his henchmen as Governors of various provinces. He appointed his cousin al-Waleed bin Utbah bin Abu Sufyan as the Governor of Medina. Al-Waleed's predecessor Marwan, who was banished by the Holy Prophet (S) and the first and the second *Caliphs*, was recalled to act as al-Waleed's advisor.

Yazid's fear of Imam Husayn (a.s.) was so great that he sent a special emissary with a letter to al-Waleed commanding him to get the oath of allegiance from Imam Husayn (a.s.), Abdullah Bin Umar, Abdullah bin Az-Zubair, with a special stress on Imam Husayn (a.s.), and to kill them if they refused.

Al-Waleed sent for the persons named in the letter. His messengers found Imam Husayn (a.s.) and Abdullah Ibn az-Zubair in the mosque. They both replied that they would meet al-Waleed later. Abdullah ibn az-Zubair realized that for al-Waleed to send for them at that hour of night, the reason might be that Mu'awiya who was known to be seriously sick, must have died and that Yazid would have called for their allegiance. Ibn az-Zubair also realized that the occasion provided the chance for him to grab power that he so long cherished.

Instead of going to al-Waleed, ibn az-Zubair collected the members of his clan and his followers and sat with them in the safety of his house. When al-Waleed sent his henchmen who abused ibn az-Zubair and demanded that he should come out and meet al-Waleed immediately or else be killed. The terrified ibn az-Zubair sent his brother Ja'far to plead with al-Waleed to withdraw his men, with a promise that

ibn az-Zubair would meet al-Waleed in the morning. Al-Waleed recalled his men believing that ibn az-Zubair would keep his promise. Immediately after al-Waleed's men had left, ibn az-Zubair and his brother Ja'far rushed to Mecca through secret routes under the cover of the night. Next morning, al-Waleed sent for ibn az-Zubair only to find that he had already left Medina under the cover of the night. Al-Waleed sent eighty horsemen to trace az-Zubair and his brother. They searched all the known routes to Mecca but could not find the desert route followed by ibn az-Zubair.¹ Ibn az-Zubair reached Mecca and sought asylum in the sanctuary of the Kaaba, where he sought to win over followers by pretensions to piety.

From the four persons summoned by al-Waleed, only Imam Husayn (a.s.) met him. Al-Waleed himself showed respect to Imam Husayn (S) and shirked the thought of causing any harm to the Prophet's grandson. At the meeting, al-Waleed read out the first part of the letter demanding Imam Husayn's allegiance, and then he gave the letter to Imam Husayn (a.s.) to read the later part. On seeing that the letter contained the command to kill him, Imam Husayn suggested that al-Waleed should gather the people of Medina in a public meeting and ascertain their opinion whether Imam Husayn (a.s.) should take the oath of allegiance acknowledging Yazid's sovereignty. Al-Waleed agreed to do so, but the cunning Marwan intervened and told al-Waleed either to obtain the oath of allegiance there and then, or to kill Imam Husayn (a.s.) immediately. Imam Husayn (a.s.) became angry at the audacity of Marwan and raised his voice in protest, and the Hashimites, who were waiting outside, immediately rushed in.² On realizing that the situation has become volatile, Marwan slunk away through a back door and al-Waleed pacified Imam Husayn (a.s.). Later, Marwan told al-Waleed, "*You missed the best opportunity to kill Husayn and protect Yazid's Caliphate.*" The next day, there was a chance encounter between Marwan and Imam Husayn (a.s.). Marwan accosted the Imam and said, "*I advise you to swear allegiance to Yazid and reap the benefits.*" The Imam (a.s.) replied, "*It is because of us [the infallible ones] God opened up creation. It is due to us that creatures get their sustenance, and it is due to us that life continues. The likes of me do not pay allegiance to the likes of him (Yazid).*³ *You want me to swear allegiance to Yazid who is an infidel and immoral person. No wonder it is you who is supporting Yazid, for it is you, Marwan, whom the Prophet (S) had banished for sedition and mischief.*" Like his noble father Ali (a.s.), Imam Husayn neither surrendered to the threats nor was he trapped by flattery.

From the beginning until his end, Imam Husayn (a.s.) staunchly opposed the debauch and tyrant Yazid. He preferred to sacrifice himself and his near and dear fellows rather than to surrender before Yazid.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) was informed that under Amr ibn Sa'd ibn al-Aas, Yazid had dispatched a division of mercenaries with specific instructions to kill him wherever he might be found.⁴ Under pressure from Yazid, his governor al-Waleed sent his men to Imam Husayn's house in the night when the Imam had gone to visit the Prophet's tomb. On the following night also, al-Waleed's men could not find Imam Husayn (a.s.) in his house, as the Imam (a.s.) had gone to visit the tombs of his mother and brother. Al-Waleed expressed his glee that he was spared the blood of Imam Husayn (a.s.) whom he presumed had already left Medina.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) was faced with two options; he had either to capitulate to the demands of Yazid or to leave Medina to prevent bloodshed. He left Medina in the morning, two days before the new moon of the month of *Sha'ban* in the year sixty of Hijra. Imam Husayn (a.s.) followed the highway from Medina to Mecca, unlike ibn az-Zubair who took flight in the night and reached Mecca through desert routes. The contrast brings out the fact that ibn az-Zubair ran for fear of life, whereas Imam Husayn (S) had no such fear. Secondly, the clandestine departure through secret routes shows that ibn az-Zubair had political aspirations, whereas Imam Husayn (a.s.) had no such intention. When Yazid learnt that al-Waleed did not carry out his orders and let Imam Husayn (a.s.) leave Medina, he replaced him with the notorious Marwan as the Governor of Medina and Mecca.

On the way to Mecca, Imam Husayn met Abdullah ibn Mutee' who inquired as to where the Imam (a.s.) was going. The Imam (a.s.) replied that for the present he was heading to Mecca. On hearing this, ibn Mutee' said, "*I was afraid that you may be heading towards Kufa [on account of the thousands of letters addressed by the Kufians]. Kufa is the place where your father Imam Ali (a.s.) was martyred. The Kufians are the most treacherous and untrustworthy. They deserted your brother Imam Hasan (S) when he was attacked by Mu'awiya's men. Do not go to Kufa but stay in Mecca, for once you are killed we will be annihilated.*"⁵

The animosity of Yazid towards Imam Husayn was because of his inherent character and his denial of Islam, a religion ostensibly professed for political gain and just to stay in power. Yazid openly derided the Holy Prophet (S) and Islam. He was a debauch and a drunkard of vile nature. Yazid, by descent or by himself, never possessed any noble qualities. His grandfather was Abu Sufyan who plotted and carried out several plots to kill the Prophet (S). His grandmother was Hind who chewed the martyr Hamza's liver. His mother was Maysoon, a Christian planted by the Christians to avenge the defeat conceded by them when they were confronted by the Prophet (S) at the event of Mubahala. He had no pity or mercy for anyone. He killed people in thousands even before the battle of Karbala. Like his grandfather Abu Sufyan, Yazid also believed that there would be no life other than this and that there would be no heaven or hell and no accountability for one's evil and sinful acts. Nicholson wrote, "*The slaughter of Husayn does not complete the tale of Yazid's enormities. Medina, the Prophet's city, having expelled its Umayyad governor, was sacked by the Syrian army, while Mecca itself, where Abdullah bin az-Zubayr had set up as rival Caliph was besieged, and the Kaaba laid in ruins*".⁶

Allama Sayyid Zeeshan Haider Jawadi writes, "The evil personality and character of Yazid was never in dispute among Muslims, but his faith and the nature of Islam was always in dispute. Above all is the dispute whether Yazid deserves to be cursed or not. However, it is well established and acknowledged by every unprejudiced scholar that Yazid's Islam was never the real Islam and that his character was such that he deserved to be cursed."⁷

The following renowned Sunni scholars of merit approve of cursing Yazid:⁸

[a] Allama al-Barazanji in his book 'Al-Isha'ah' and Ibn Hajar in as-Sawa'iq record that when Ahmed ibn

Hanbal's⁹ son asked his father about cursing Yazid, he replied, "*How can Yazid not be cursed when God himself has cursed him.*" He then quoted the Qur'anic verse in which those who create chaos and bloodshed are cursed.

[b] Ibn Khaldun says that Judge Abu Bakr bin al-Arabi al-Maliki wrote in his book 'Al-Awasim wal-Qawasim' that it would be absolutely wrong to say that Imam Husayn (a.s.) was slain by the sword of his grandfather. Yazid was never an Islamic ruler. The fundamental requisite of Islamic rule is justice and equity and there was never a person more just than Imam Husayn (a.s.).

[c] At page 254 of *Preface to History* (Muqaddimat at-Tareekh) is mentioned, 'the fact that the Islamic scholars are united in admitting the irreligiousness of Yazid and they hold that such a person can not be an Islamic ruler and that any action taken against him can not be construed as impermissible.'

[d] The silent endurance by the companions of the Prophet (S) and the next generation (Tabi'een),¹⁰ was not on account of their approval of Yazid's evil character, but because they did not like bloodshed and therefore they did not consider it proper to assist him.

[e] Ibn Muflah al-Hanbali says that in the eyes of ibn Aqeel and ibnul Jowzi, it is permissible to oppose an unjust ruler, just as Imam Husayn (a.s.) stood up to oppose Yazid's tyranny. Assuming for a moment, if Yazid's rule in its initial stage, is considered as that of a lawful ruler, his rule automatically forfeits its legality and validity after he had killed Imam Husayn (a.s.), desecrated the Kaaba, and disgraced Medina.

[f] Allama at-Taftazani, the author of 'Sharh al-Aqaaid an-Nasafiyya' writes that Yazid's willingness before and his joyous celebrations after the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (a.s.) are established beyond doubt. Such a person cannot be attributed to have any faith. On the other hand, he deserves to be cursed and God's curse is upon his accomplices and assistants.

[g] Ibn Hazm wrote in his book 'Al-Muhalla' that Yazid believed only in a worldly, materialistic life. There is no justification for his deeds. He was an absolute despot and tyrant. The attempts of some scholars to justify his deeds are nothing but unjust excesses.

[h] Hafiz writes at page 298 of his book 'Rasayil' that the worst and inhuman crime of slaying Imam Husayn (a.s.), capturing his womenfolk, desecrating of Imam Husayn's severed head, looting Medina, and desecrating the Kaaba are sufficient proof of Yazid's stone heartedness, enmity towards the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.), hatred, cunningness, hypocrisy, and lack of faith. Every degenerate tyrant is a cursed one. In fact, those who do not curse the accursed ones deserve, in turn, to be cursed.

[i] Burhan al-Halabi writes that both Sheikh Muhammad Bakri and his father used to curse Yazid and prayed, "*May God throw Yazid in the deepest part of Hell.*"

[j] Ath-Thahabi writes in 'Siyer A'laamun Nubala' that Yazid bin Mu'awiya was an inveterate enemy of

Imam Ali and the *Ahlul Bayt*, self-conceited, ill mannered, characterless, drunkard, and debauch. He started his rule with the murder of Imam Husayn (a.s.) and his household, and completed it with the incident of al-Harrah in the year 63 AH.

[k] Ath-Thahabi writes in page 496 of the 8th volume of the book ‘Mir’atuz Zamaan’ that when asked about cursing Yazid, Sibt bin al-Jowzi replied that Imam Ahmed (bin Hanbal) considered it appropriate to curse Yazid and we [his followers] also do not approve of him because his deeds were most despicable. If people are content to stop with their dislike, it is all right, but we too would have cursed him.

The above reference establish that scholars and historians of all times, who were just and did not carry any prejudice, declared Yazid to be an unjust ruler, infidel and hypocrite who deserved to be cursed. None of them approved of Yazid’s character.

In recent times, some writers attempt to support Yazid on the ground that Yazid was not personally involved in the slaying of Imam Husayn (a.s.) or responsible for the subsequent events that took place. They hold that Ibn Ziyad and Ibn Sa’d were solely responsible for the horrible deeds... he certainly deserves to be cursed.” [11](#)

It is only a few ignorant and irreligious writers who seek to justify the legitimacy of Yazid’s rule and consider that his fight against Imam Husayn (a.s.) in the battle of Karbala was nothing but a struggle for power. Such writers are, in reality, the progeny of Yazid, and therefore, until recently, used to consider Yazid as the Commander of the Faithful [*Ameerul Mo’minin*]. They have conspired to legitimize Yazid’s oppressive and tyrannous rule to downplay Imam Husayn’s sacrifice and martyrdom by declaring Imam Husayn (a.s.) to be a militant against the established rule. [12](#)

Imam Husayn (a.s.), as his father Imam Ali (a.s.), never aspired for political leadership, but he expressed his reservations against the sinful and debauch Yazid’s taking control of the affairs of the Islamic world. Imam Husayn (a.s.) continued to propagate Islamic sciences as the acknowledged *Imam*. He never collected any army nor did he plan to overthrow Yazid. Yet Yazid was mortally afraid that a day would come when people would be attracted to the Islamic teachings of Imam Husayn (a.s.), and Yazid’s own misdeeds would lead to a revolt. He sought Imam Husayn’s seal of approval and he demanded that Imam Husayn (a.s.) should openly acknowledge Yazid as the legitimate ruler of the Islamic world. Like his father Imam Ali (a.s.), Imam Husayn (a.s.) refused to do so and he preferred to remain in Medina discharging his duties as the acknowledged *Imam* of the time.

[1.](#) Nafasul Mahmoom, Urdu Translation by Allama Sayyid Safdar Husayn Najafi, Abbas Book Agency Lucknow, p 95.

[2.](#) Nafasul Mahmoom, p 94, Life of Imam Husayn [s] [The Saviour] p. 100.

[3.](#) Nuzhatul Masa’ib, vol. I p.195 quoting ibn Nama.

[4.](#) Maqtal al-Husayn by al-Muqarram, 165, quoted in Imam Husayn (a.s.) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 51.

[5.](#) Nafasul Mahmoom, p 109, al-Kamil of Ibnul Athir, 19–4 quoted in Imam Husayn (a.s.) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p 53.

[6.](#) A Literary History of Arabs, Adam Publishers [2003] p. 198.

[7.](#) Nuqooshe Ismat, p. 279.

[8.](#) Ibid., p. 279 – 281.

[9.](#) Note: Ahmed bin Hanbal is the founder of the Hanbalite sect of Sunni Muslims.

[10.](#) Tabi'een: the next generation, which did not personally meet or hear the Prophet [s] but narrated traditions they heard from the companions of the Prophet (S).

[11.](#) Nuqooshe Ismat, p. 280–281.

[12.](#) Note: Those who defend Yazid conveniently forget and forsake the well-known doctrines of conspiracy, accountability and vicarious liability. When the commander of an army entitled to take credit for victory gained through his men, he is also responsible for the atrocities committed by his deputies.

Chapter 15: Imam Husayn migrates to Mecca

Imam Husayn (a.s.) had a great following among the people of Medina who had seen the Prophet (S) showering his love and affection on him. Imam Husayn's eminence in teaching the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (S) and his knowledge of the Islamic Jurisprudence and other sciences and his noble character had endeared him to the people of Medina. In addition to this, he had his near relatives (the Hashimites) and several esteemed companions of the Prophet (S) who revered Imam Husayn (a.s.) so highly. Imam Husayn (a.s.) enjoyed the respect and admiration of the people of Medina and Mecca.

Had Imam Husayn (a.s.) desired to wage war against the tyrannical establishment with a view to succeed to power, Medina was the most suitable place to commence the struggle.

However, Imam Husayn (a.s.) chose to avoid any conflict. Therefore, he chose to leave Medina when he was threatened and pressurized to accept Yazid as the *Caliph*.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) was fully aware of the Qur'anic injunction to migrate when faced with oppression.[1](#) He was also aware that his grandfather, the Prophet (S), acted according to those injunctions. Imam Husayn (a.s.) was facing severe persecution and extreme pressure to accept Yazid as the *Caliph*. Had Imam Husayn (a.s.) sworn allegiance to Yazid it would have amounted to approve all the anti-Islamic deeds of Yazid. If Imam Husayn (a.s.) had remained in Medina, it would certainly have led to his massacre along with the Banu Hashim and all the true believers. Imam Husayn (a.s.) consulted Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyya and others who unanimously thought that it would be better for Imam Husayn (a.s.) to leave Medina and seek sanctuary in Mecca, instead of capitulating to the wretched Yazid.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) preferred to migrate and move away from Medina. The best place he could choose was Mecca. The sanctuary of the Holy *Kaaba*, where even the killing of a mosquito is prohibited right from the pre-Islamic days, should have provided safety to Imam Husayn (a.s.) and his family. However, this was not to be.

In preferring to migrate rather than to stay at Medina and create a possible confrontation with the forces of Yazid, Imam Husayn (a.s.) followed the footsteps of his grandfather the Prophet (S). The Prophet (S)

had set an example in his migration from Mecca to Medina in similar circumstances on the command of God. Imam Husayn (a.s.) could not, at any cost, accept an enemy of Islam as a ruler over Muslims. Moulvi al-Haj Ghulam Abbas Ali gives the reason for Imam Husayn (a.s.) in leaving Medina: *“In fact, the Umayyads fostered an inborn animosity to the Prophet (S) and his family. Their main object was to destroy even the last surviving soul among the Ahlul Bayt and their adherents. Husayn (a.s.) had noted that his brother’s retirement to private life could not improve the Islamic world and set it thinking to distinguish the right from the wrong. Even his murder in secret was coolly heard by the Arabs and could not bring on a revolution. Husayn (a.s.) was sure that he would have to share the same fate as that of his elder brother and that the Umayyad’s animosity would pursue and kill him wherever he would go. However, he desired that his valuable blood should not be so easily shed and the whole matter hushed up without a proper consequence. He was prepared to suffer martyrdom publicly and reap its fruit for religion. He wanted to show the public how brutal and irreligious the Umayyads were and how the shedding of human blood, even that of the children of the Prophet (S), was a crime calculated as nothing... Above all, he wanted to set a lesson for upholding the right under the most adverse circumstances, in order to please God and thus tread the most difficult path of love and annihilate his separate existence in the All Pervading Existence, unmindful of the severe persecution at the hands of the devilish folk. His means to this end was not aggression, but passive resistance in order that he might not be blamed for any oppressive act on his part.”*²

Islam deprecates suicide. The protection of one’s life and the prevention from exposing one’s self to imminent danger is an obligatory part of a Muslim’s faith. Mirza Ghulam Abbas Ali further notes, *“For fear of being criticized by the public that when he was sure of his murder at Medina, he ought to have taken shelter at Mecca and to be free before God from the blame that he had brought the trouble and ruin on himself, Husayn (S) thought it wise to settle within the precincts of the Kaaba.”*³

On the night preceding his departure, Imam Husayn (a.s.) visited the tombs of his grandfather the Prophet (S), his mother Fatima (S) and brother Imam Hasan (a.s.). At the Prophet’s tomb after performing his prayers, Imam Husayn (a.s.) dozed off and in his vision, the Prophet (S) said, *“I see you being butchered by the very people who expect my intercession. Wretched that they are, I shall not intercede for them. Soon, you will join me, your parents, and your brother. God has reserved for you the place in the Paradise that could only be attained through martyrdom.”* Returning home, Imam Husayn (a.s.) narrated his dream to his relatives and friends.⁴

Imam Husayn (a.s.) met Umm Salama, his step-grandmother and the surviving wife of the Prophet (S). Umm Salama had heard from the Prophet (S) that Imam Husayn (a.s.) would be martyred at Karbala. She repeated what she had heard from the Prophet (S) and showed a vial of mud given to her by the Prophet (S). Imam Husayn (a.s.) retold his dream, gave a vial containing mud of Karbala, and asked Umm Salama to keep both vials together. He then told Umm Salama that on the day of his martyrdom the mud in both the vials would turn into blood.⁵ A similar incident is reported through the Prophet’s wife Aa’isha.

Imam Husayn's elder daughter Fatima as-Sughra (the youngest) was ill at the time when Imam Husayn (a.s.) left Medina. He entrusted Fatima as-Sughra to the care of Umm Salama. Imam Husayn (a.s.) met Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyya and discussed the situation. Muhammad suggested that the Imam (a.s.) should leave Medina immediately and proceed to Mecca, which was a safe sanctuary for every one. He then suggested that in case there was any threat of bloodshed and desecration of the Kaaba, the Imam should proceed to Yemen. If even in Yemen there would be a threat to his life, the Imam should move on to the desert and mountains and keep moving until things settled down. Hearing these words, the Imam (a.s.) blessed Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyya for his advice.⁶

Later, in a testament written to Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyya, Imam Husayn (a.s.) himself set out the reason for his leaving Medina in the following words: "*I am leaving (Medina) not to create sedition, corruption, or in jest. I am leaving with the sole object of guiding the Umma of my grandfather, the Prophet (S). I shall enjoin the good (al-Amr bil Ma'ruf) and forbid the wrong (an-Nahi anil Munkar). I follow the footsteps of my grandfather and my father Ali ibn Abi Talib. If anyone wants to respond to my righteous call, it is better in the eyes of God. On the other hand, if anyone has any objection, I shall be patient and seek God's Arbitration between me and the people, for God is the best Judge.*"⁷

Unless we understand the terms "Amr bil Ma'ruf" and "Nahi anil Munkar", it is difficult to understand the stress laid on those two terms said by Imam Husayn (a.s.). Simply put, the two terms "Amr bil Ma'ruf" and "Nahi 'anil Munkar" mean the "do's" and "don'ts" of Islam. In other words, the terms denote what is permissible and what is prohibited in Islam. Imam Husayn (a.s.) said that above all things, God made 'Amr bil Ma'ruf' and 'Nahi anil Munkar' obligatory on man. In fact, "Amr bil Ma'ruf" and "Nahi 'anil Munkar" is, firstly, to invite people towards Islam and the defending against oppression by fighting the tyrant. Secondly, 'Nahi anil Munkar' means abstinence from doing what is prohibited. In the spiritual sense, the terms mean acknowledging and obeying the Creator and shunning Satanic evil. In the temporal sense, it means an equitable and just distribution of wealth by the wealthy and equitable distribution among the poor. In both these senses, *Amr bil Ma'ruf* and *Nahi Anil Munkar* is made obligatory on every human being.

Regarding the situation prevailing at that time, Imam Husayn (a.s.) said, "*You did not entrust your affairs to the learned and pious people, but you surrendered yourselves before those who acted according to their whims and were slaves of their worldly desires, which made them fearlessly do mean things. As a result of this, the weaker section of the society is terrorized, trampled and driven away from their land. Today, you find in every town and city, their puppets that are steeped in ignorance, but pretentiously give edicts based on mere conjecture and surmise. They create mischief and spread discord. Might is prevailing over right and common man has been enslaved into submission. They are torturing and killing the learned and the pious. They have forgotten that there is a Creator who will raise them from their graves and call them to account for their deeds. O God, You are our witness that we never had any greed for power or position; nor did wealth or any worldly pleasure attract us. Whatever we did was only to establish the faith, to guide men on to the right path and to protect the poor from exploitation*

and misery.”⁸

What troubled the Banu Umayya was the later aspect, namely, the *Ahlul Bayt*’s concern for the poor and the pious. Yazid perceived a threat that if Imam Husayn (a.s.) took up the cause of the poor, the Banu Umayya would lose the control of the treasury and power.

While leaving Medina, Imam Husayn (a.s.) did not take any armed contingent of his friends and followers. He took only his family members, but no specific number is mentioned in the books.⁹ However, it is not in dispute that the following persons accompanied Imam Husayn (a.s.) in his migration from Medina:

1. Zainul Aabidin; his (Imam Husayn) son aged 20 years, who succeeded Imam Husayn (S) as the fourth Imam
2. Ali al-Akber; his son aged 17 years
3. Muhammad al-Baqir; son of Zainul Aabidin aged five years, the fifth Imam
4. Abul Fadhl al-Abbas; his (Imam Husayn) stepbrother
5. Al-Qasim bin al-Hasan (S)
6. Abdullah bin al-Hasan (S)
7. Abu Bakr bin al-Hasan (S)
8. Ahmed bin al-Hasan (S)
9. Ja’far bin Aqeel
10. Abdurrahman bin Aqeel
11. Own bin Aqeel
12. Ali bin Aqeel
13. Abdullah bin Aqeel
14. Muslim bin Aqeel; Imam Husayn’s cousin
15. Abdullah bin Muslim
16. Muhammad bin Muslim
17. Muhammad bin Abi Sa’eed bin Aqeel

18. Ja'far bin Muhammad bin Aqeel
19. Ahmed bin Muhammad bin Aqeel
20. John; Abu Dharr's servant, an African
21. Umm Kulthoom; widowed sister
22. Zainab (a.s.) ; sister of Imam Husayn (a.s.) and wife of Abdullah bin Ja'far
23. Layla; wife of Imam Husayn (a.s.) and mother of Ali al-Akbar (a.s.)
24. Shahr Banu; wife of Imam Husayn (a.s.)
25. Sukaina; daughter of Imam Husayn (a.s.), aged 4 years
26. Ali al-Asghar (a.s.) ; infant, son of Imam Husayn (a.s.)
27. The wife of Imam Hasan (a.s.)
28. Fidhdha; Imam Husayn's governess and the bondmaid of his mother Fatima (S). Fidhdha was an Abyssinian princess.

Had Imam Husayn (a.s.) planned to create any revolt or attempt to gain power, neither would he have left Medina where he had plenty of supporters, nor would he have chosen to take his family members consisting mostly of women and children. This shows that Imam Husayn (a.s.) left Medina primarily in response to the urgent and insistent call of the Iraqis for religious guidance and also to avoid capitulating to Yazid's demand leading to serious conflict and avoidable blood shed. Never can any worldly aspirations or desire for power or wealth be attributed to Imam Husayn (a.s.).

- [1.](#) For details see Chapter 2 above.
- [2.](#) Life of Imam Husayn the Saviour, p. 131 – 132.
- [3.](#) Life of Imam Husayn the Saviour, p. 134.
- [4.](#) Amali of Sheikh as-Saduq, Awaliyahul Ulum, quoted in Imam Husayn (a.s.) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 45.
- [5.](#) Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 107.
- [6.](#) Nafasul Mahmoom, p 97, 102.
- [7.](#) Biharul Anwar, Vol. 44 p. 329.
- [8.](#) Balaghatal Husayn, P. 61–71, Sermons, Sayings & letters of Imam Husayn[s], compiled by Mustafa Mohsin Musavi, Urdu Translation by Moulvi Sayyid Muhammad Baqir.
- [9.](#) Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 96.

Chapter 16: Muslim bin Aqeel: Imam Husayn's Ambassador to Kufa

Imam Husayn (a.s.) called his cousin Muslim bin Aqeel and asked him to proceed to Kufa to ascertain the veracity of the thousands of letters written by the people of Kufa. Muslim took with him two guides for the journey. The guides lost the way in the desert. They died of severe thirst. Muslim was fortunate to find a well. He reached Kufa with some difficulty. He stayed in the house of the great warrior al-Mukhtar, son of Abu Ubayda ath-Thaqafi. Muslim was warmly welcomed by the people of Kufa who gathered in great numbers. Within a few days, over eighty thousand of them took the oath of allegiance. By taking the hand of Muslim in paying allegiance, they accepted Imam Husayn (a.s.) as their *Imam*. Muslim presided over the daily five-time prayers at the huge mosque of Kufa which was filled to capacity.

Muslim wrote to Imam Husayn (a.s.) about the warm welcome and the oaths of allegiance he received from most of the residents of Kufa. Muslim wrote confirming the need for Imam Husayn (a.s.) to come to Kufa, for religious guidance of the Ummah. He sent the letters through Aabis bin Shabeeb ash-Shakiri, Qais bin Mushir as-Saidawi, and others.

At this point of time, if Muslim had any political inclination, he could have easily overthrown the governor of Kufa with the help of his host, the great warrior al-Mukhtar, son of Abu Ubayda ath-Thaqafi and the public support he enjoyed. However, he neither wished nor was he authorized by Imam Husayn (a.s.) to do anything that would amount to interference in the affairs of the government.

The governor of Kufa, an-No'man bin Basheer, was informed about the growing popularity of Muslim (may Allah have mercy on him) and the perceived threat of a possible interference with the government. However, the governor found that Muslim's mission was purely religious and it did not constitute a threat to the government. From on the pulpit, an-No'man proclaimed that he would neither harm anyone who did not interfere with the government, nor would he let anyone go unpunished if he found any such interference. The failure on the Governor's part to take any action against Muslim created panic among the Umayyads of Kufa. Imarah Bin Uqbah, Umar bin Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas and Abdullah bin Muslim wrote separate letters to Yazid detailing Muslim's popularity in Kufa, and the consequent exposure of the ruler's atrocities and the probable unification of the pious and the poor against the tyranny of the state. They complained that the governor was inept in handling the situation and was guilty of inaction, and therefore he should be forthwith replaced by a more stringent ruler.

Yazid was always apprehensive of a possible public revolt by his harassed subjects and of loosing the throne that he knew was illegally usurped by him. On receipt of the complaints from the Umayyads, Yazid immediately issued orders dismissing an-No'man Bin Basheer. Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad, who was then Governor of Basra, was given the additional charge as the Governor of Kufa with specific

instructions to kill Muslim and any one who gave shelter to him or sympathized with Imam Ali (a.s.). Ibn Ziyad had already earned notoriety as the vile, cunning and cruel governor of Basra.

Ibn Ziyad dressed himself in the manner of Imam Husayn (a.s.), and he, throwing a veil over his face to conceal the impersonation, entered Kufa with his soldiers. People, in thousands, had already gathered and performed their prayers behind Muslim in the great mosque of Kufa. Muslim told them that he had already written asking Imam Husayn (a.s.) to come to Kufa. At that time when Ibn Ziyad, dressed like Imam Husayn (S), entered the mosque, people thought that Imam Husayn (a.s.) himself had actually arrived with his followers. They rushed to meet him, kiss his hands and swear fealty to him. When Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad removed the veil, people were aghast to see that instead of Imam Husayn (a.s.), it was the cruel Governor of Basra, Ibn Ziyad, who had impersonated and deceived them. Immediately, Ibn Ziyad issued an order proclaiming that anyone assisting or even found associating or speaking to Muslim would be beheaded forthwith. This created a great scare in the minds of the people.

When Ibn Ziyad knocked on the palace gate, an-No'man bin Basheer, the Governor, also thought that Imam Husayn (a.s.) had come. He peered from the balcony of his palace and said, "*Go away! I do not wish to have anything with you.*" Ibn Ziyad's men shouted that it was not Imam Husayn (a.s.) but Ibn Ziyad who had come to relieve him from the post of Governor on orders from Yazid. Hearing this, an-No'man opened the palace gates.

In the night, Ibn Ziyad proclaimed that everyone should attend the Morning Prayer and none should stay at home. In the Morning Prayer, Ibn Ziyad proclaimed rewards to those who would bring Muslim bin Aqeel dead or alive and threatened with confiscation of property and death for anyone who sheltered Muslim.

Shareek bin al-A'war was a sincere follower of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). He lived in Basra. He was aware that Imam Husayn (a.s.) had sent Muslim ibn Aqeel to Kufa and that the Imam (a.s.) himself was expected to reach Kufa shortly. On hearing that, Yazid had appointed Ibn Ziyad as the Governor of Kufa. Shareek unsuccessfully tried to delay the reaching of Ibn Ziyad to Kufa before Imam Husayn (a.s.). Soon, Shareek also reached Kufa and stayed with his friend Hani ibn Urwa. When Muslim learnt of the arrival of Ibn Ziyad and the strict orders issued by him, he left al-Mukhtar's house and took shelter with Hani ibn Urwa.

Ibn Ziyad had great respect for Shareek. When ibn Ziyad learnt that Shareek was ill, he sent word that he would visit Shareek in Hani's house in the night. Ibn Ziyad was also a friend of Hani. Shareek detested Ibn Ziyad for his cruelty and hatred to the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.). Shareek told Muslim ibn Aqeel that since ibn Ziyad was a cruel hypocrite, he deserved to be killed. This proposed visit was the best opportunity to get rid of this wretch. Shareek gave a sword to Muslim and suggested that he (Muslim) should hide himself behind the curtains and at a given signal attack and kill Ibn Ziyad while he was engaged in conversation. Hani was reluctant to have ibn Ziyad killed in his house where he would be his guest. Shareek, however, gave the prearranged signal, but Muslim remained in his room. Shareek

started asking for water and recited a couplet. As Muslim ibn Aqeel failed to carry out the plan, Shareek repeated the couplet thrice. Hani pacified ibn Ziyad saying that due to his illness Shareek was hallucinating since morning. Ibn Ziyad's servant Mehran realized that there might be a conspiracy to kill ibn Ziyad. Therefore, Mehran pulled ibn Ziyad and took him away. However, some narrators record that it was not Shareek but Hani ibn Urwa himself who pretended illness and planned to kill ibn Ziyad.¹ However, the reports about Shareek are more authentic.

Later Shareek questioned Muslim as to why he lost an opportunity to eliminate an inveterate enemy of the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.). Muslim ibn Aqeel replied that the Prophet (S) and his progeny had never been aggressors. They never took anyone by surprise or stabbed him from the back. They never would kill a Muslim, even if he were only in name, except in retaliation of his attacking first. Lastly, Muslim said that he did not want to kill ibn Ziyad in the house of his host, Hani ibn Urwa.² These words uttered by Muslim are eloquent testimony to the fact that Imam Husayn (a.s.), Muslim, or anyone of the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) never ever made any attempt to gain power by slyly eliminating the enemy through underhand methods. Shareek was so much grieved by the loss of an opportunity to eliminate ibn Ziyad that he died three days after the incident.

Ibn Ziyad was clueless about the whereabouts of Muslim. He consulted his slave Mekhal who was very cunning and adept at mean tricks. Mekhal asked Ibn Ziyad to give him three thousand silver coins. With this, he went about pretending to be a friend of Imam Husayn (S) who was seeking to hand over the bag of money to Muslim. In the Mosque, Mekhal met Muslim ibn Awsaja al-Asadi who was a sincere friend and follower of the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.). Mekhal told Muslim ibn Awsaja that he was a friend and follower of the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) and that having heard that Muslim ibn Aqeel was in Kufa as the Ambassador of Imam Husayn (a.s.), he was desirous of meeting and paying his allegiance to Imam Husayn (a.s.) at the hands of Muslim ibn Aqeel. Mekhal told Muslim ibn Awsaja that he was carrying three thousand Dirhams to be given to Imam Husayn (a.s.) through Muslim ibn Aqeel. The ruse worked and Muslim ibn Awsaja, after extracting promises of secrecy, took Mekhal to Hani's house. Mekhal met Muslim ibn Aqeel and handed over the bag of coins to his (Muslim) treasurer Abu Thumama. Mekhal then returned to the palace to inform Ibn Ziyad that Muslim was staying with Hani.

When Ibn Ziyad knew this, he sent for Usama ibn Khadija and Amr bin al-Hajjaj az-Zubaidi to inquire about Hani. They replied that Hani was ill and bedridden. Ibn Ziyad said that he had information that Hani was only pretending to be sick. Ibn Ziyad asked Usama and Amr to fetch Hani. When Hani was brought, Ibn Ziyad asked whether he was sheltering Muslim ibn Aqeel. When Hani evaded giving a direct reply, Ibn Ziyad called for Mekhal, the spy, and asked Hani if he knew Mekhal. Hani realized that he was trapped. Ibn Ziyad asked Hani to deliver Muslim ibn Aqeel, and when Hani refused to hand over Muslim, Ibn Ziyad hit Hani on the face with his stick and broke his nose. Hani was then locked up in a room.

When Hani's tribesmen found that Hani had not returned from ibn Ziyad, they surrounded the palace and threatened to assault ibn Ziyad. Hani's tribesmen were valiant warriors. Fearing an uprising, Ibn Ziyad

called for Shuraih (the judge) and asked him to see for himself that Hani was very much alive, and to report the matter to Hani's tribesmen and to ask them to go home. Shuraih found that Hani, though alive, was severely beaten and he was bleeding. Hani asked Shuraih to inform his condition to his tribesmen. Shuraih wanted to report what he found, but ibn Ziyad threatened to kill him if he reported anything except that Hani was alive. On being assured by Shuraih that Hani was alive, his tribesmen left the palace. Immediately, Ibn Ziyad asked his men to kill Hani, sever his head, and throw his body in a well.

The public support, which Muslim had, was genuine. But, as always, the poor carry the memories and scars of oppression and are easily scared and subdued by guile and by threats. Over twenty thousand people surrounded Ubaidullah Ibn Ziyad who took refuge behind the closed door of the palace along with twenty of his elite. Cunning and cruel that he was, Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad sent, as spies into the crowd through a back door, his cronies Kathir ibn Shihab al-Harithi, al-Qa'qa' ibn Shour ath-Thuhali, Shabath ibn Rib'iy at-Tamimi, Hajjar ibn Abjar, Shimr ibn thil-Jowshan al-Aamiri. They mingled with the crowd and pretended to sympathize with the public. They first looked for, targeted their relatives and friends, and told them that though their cause was just, it was futile to confront a cruel despot like ibn Ziyad. They also spread rumors that at Ubaidillah's request, Yazid had dispatched a large army to quell the rebellion. They spread the rumor that when the army would arrive, even the innocent bystanders would not be spared the severest punishment, and whatever they possessed would surely be confiscated, leaving them to become beggars. Simultaneously, Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad sent Muhammad ibn al-Ash'ath, al-Qa'qa' ath-Thuhali and a few others with white flags in gesture of truce to proclaim that whoever came over to them and stood under the white flag would be spared punishment and whoever failed to do so would be severely punished by Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad and the approaching army of Yazid. Those, who came under the flag, were quickly whisked away to their homes. The rumors and the trick had an electrifying effect and soon the mob disappeared. The bewildered Muslim ibn Aqeel was left watching the sudden turn of events.³

Kathir ibn Shihab al-Harithi was entrusted with the task of finding out all those who were companions of Imam Ali (a.s.) and those who sympathized with or supported the cause of Imam Husayn (a.s.). Soon, Shihab arrested and imprisoned Sulayman ibn Surad al-Khuza'iy, Ibrahim bin Malik al-Ashtar, Ibn Safwan, Yahaya ibn Ouf, Sa'sa'a bin Souhan al-Abdi and other pious and learned men of Kufa. Later Hussein bin Numayr arrested and imprisoned al-Muktar ath-Thaqafi who was living in a village called Qatawan. He also arrested Abdullah bin Nufail at the Mosque of Kufa. In fact, the last mentioned two nobles were kept in confinement until after the death of Yazid bin Mu'awiya and were released by the public in a subsequent uprising.

Muslim realized the seriousness of the situation when Hani was summoned and arrested by Ibn Ziyad. He was very much worried at the sudden and adverse turn of events. He was apprehensive that in response to his letter, Imam Husayn (S) might soon reach Kufa and thus would walk into the trap that was being laid for him. Even at that time, the mosque in Kufa was full with devotees who offered prayers behind Muslim Ibn Aqeel. As the news spread that Yazid's army was fast approaching, the congregation

melted. Muslim left the mosque accompanied by only about thirty people. Further down the streets only ten people remained. At the end of the street Muslim found himself alone. He lamented at the sudden desertion by the people of Kufa. He met Sa'eed ibn al-Ahnaf who told him that the doors of Kufa had been closed and spies sent all over the place to trace him. Sa'eed then took Muslim to the house of Muhammad ibn Kathir who welcomed him heartily. Soon, news about Muslim reached ibn Ziyad who sent a contingent to search Ibn Kathir's house. Ibn Kathir had so cleverly hidden Muslim that ibn Ziyad's soldier could not find him. Ibn Ziyad ordered ibn Kathir and his son to be arrested. When they were brought before him, ibn Ziyad questioned them as to where they had secreted Muslim. The valiant ibn Kathir and his son refused to betray Muslim bin Aqeel. They tried to put up a fight, but they were martyred. When Muslim learnt of the murder of ibn Kathir and his son, he mourned for them and left ibn Kathir's house.⁴

Thirsty and worried, Muslim aimlessly wandered the streets of Kufa. Muslim saw an old woman named Tou'ah. He asked her for water, as he was extremely thirsty. The old woman questioned Muslim, found who he was, and gave him asylum as she loved and venerated Imam Ali (S) and his family. Unfortunately, the old woman's wretched son, Bilal bin al-Hadhrani was a soldier in Ibn Ziyad's army. He was a greedy man and he betrayed Muslim for monetary gain.

Ibn Ziyad's contingent of three hundred men surrounded the house of Tou'ah that was in a narrow lane. Muslim came out of the house and faced the soldiers who were forced to come two at a time because of the narrowness of the lane. Muslim killed a major portion of the contingent. The commandant, Muhammad ibn al-Ash'ath, had to send for reinforcement several times. At this, Ibn Ziyad became angry and asked the commandant if he would need the entire army to catch a single person. The commandant, Muhammad bin al-Ash'ath, silenced ibn Ziyad with this reply: "*We are not after a petty shop keeper. We are encountering a lion of the family of Hashim. If you are so brave, you may yourself come and conduct the operation.*"⁵ Ibn Ziyad then ordered that either by offering safety or by any sly means Muslim should be captured.

Finding it impossible to pry out Muslim from his advantageous position, Muhammad ibn al-Ash'ath employed an old Umayyad trick. He sent his soldiers to the rooftops of adjoining houses and asked them to throw burning torches soaked in oil. The entire lane was filled with choking smoke and burning torches. The commandant asked his soldiers to dig a trench at the entrance of the street and cover it up with sticks and grass. Unable to bear the heat and smoke, Muslim came out fighting. He fell into the covered and concealed trench and was captured.⁶ According to al-Mas'udi, Muhammad ibn al-Ash'ath offered a truce of safety without any duplicity. Muslim agreed to this and surrendered himself.⁷ However, the earlier version reported in al-Malhoof and Manaqib of Shahr Ashoob⁸ that Muslim was trapped in a ditch and captured, and the later version of al-Mas'udi that ibn al-Ash'ath promised asylum are incidents that followed one another and therefore both versions are reliable.

Muslim told al-Ash'ath, "*I am afraid you will not be able to keep up your promise or provide me any*

safety. Therefore, as a last wish, I ask you to convey the message to Imam al-Husayn that the people of Kufa have betrayed us and that al-Husayn should avoid Kufa and go to some other place.” Muhammad ibn al-Ash’ath took Muslim to Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad’s palace and said that he had promised protection to him. Ibn Ziyad became angry and asked, “Who has authorized you to give any guarantee of protection? Your duty was to bring Muslim here and you have nothing else to do now.”

Muslim bin Amr al-Bahli took charge of Muslim bin Aqeel. Muslim asked for water to quench his burning thirst, but the request was refused. Then, Imara bin Uqba according to some historians and according to some others Amr bin Hureith sent his servant to bring a mug of water. When Muslim tried to drink the water, blood fell from his mouth filling the cup. Muslim attempted thrice, but on all three attempts, his blood filled the cup. On the last attempt, his teeth fell in the cup due to a serious injury in his mouth, inflicted by Bukeir bin Hamran al-Ahmeri.⁹ Muslim threw the cup saying that it appeared that he would be killed while being thirsty.

Muslim told Umar Bin Sa’d who was sitting with ibn Ziyad: “*You are related to me, though distantly. I would like to make a last will to you personally before I am killed.*” When Umar bin Sa’d declined, Ubeidullah ibn Ziyad said, “*Go aside and listen to his last will. After all, he is your relative.*” Muslim and Umar bin Sa’d went to a corner on the terrace. Muslim said, “*I owe seven hundred dirhams, which I used for my food... etc. I want that you may take the responsibility of discharging it from my own funds lying in Medina. Secondly, my dead body should be given a decent burial according to Islamic rites. Lastly, but the most important is that you should arrange to send a message to Imam Husayn asking him not to come to Kufa at any cost.*” Amr ibn al-Aas informed ibn Ziyad about the last wishes of Muslim. Ibn Ziyad said, “*A trustee never betrays his trust. But sometimes mistakenly thieves are made trustees.*” Then Ibn Ziyad said to Muslim, “*You may deal with your money as you please. As for Husayn, we will do what we intend to do. And as for your dead body, why you bother about what is done to it.*”¹⁰

Ibn Ziyad then started blaspheming and cursing Muslim bin Aqeel and Imam Husayn (S) with false allegations. Muslim refuted the false allegations and reiterated that neither he nor Imam Husayn (S) had ever intended to divide the Ummah. Muslim said that ibn Ziyad and his master Yazid bin Mu’awiya were the ones who were breaking the Islamic tenets and were making un-Islamic innovations. Ibn Ziyad became angry and said, “*I see that you shall be killed in a manner in which none was ever killed before in the history of Islam.*” To this, Muslim replied, “*You are a hard hearted tyrant and a heathen capable of all such innovations.*” Ibn Ziyad then ordered, and Bukeir bin Hamran beheaded Muslim ibn Aqeel and threw down the headless body from the turret into the cobblers’ market. Hani was beheaded by Rashid (a Turkish slave of Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad) in the market of meat vendors.¹¹ The headless bodies of Muslim ibn Aqeel and Hani ibn Urwa were dragged through the markets. When the clan of Bani Muthhaj, to which Hani belonged, learnt about this, the entire clan rose up in revolt, rescued the headless bodies and buried them according to the Islamic rites.

Later Muslim’s severed head was mounted on a lance and taken along with the severed head of Hani

ibn Urwa to Damascus. On seeing the heads, Yazid gloated over them and directed that the heads should be hung in the arch of the main entrance of Damascus. Yazid issued orders that people should be imprisoned on the slightest suspicion or even false allegation to be punished severely.[12](#)

Hani was a companion of Imam Ali (S) and he fought with him in the Battle of the Camel (al-Jamal) during his Caliphate. Hani commanded great respect among people and was a known supporter of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). The killing of Muslim ibn Aqeel and Hani ibn Urwa took place on the day of Arafa, Tuesday the ninth of Thul Hijjah, in the year 60 AH. Some writers claim that it was Wednesday, the 10th of Thul Hijjah. The earlier account of al-Mas'udi in Murooj ath-Thahab and of other writers is considered more authentic. On the very day when Muslim ibn Aqeel was martyred in Kufa, Imam Husayn (a.s.) left Mecca towards Kufa.

While accompanying Imam Husayn (a.s.), Muslim had left his wife and four sons and a daughter in Medina. When Imam Husayn (a.s.) asked him to proceed to Kufa, he took permission to go to Medina and bring his wife and children. He left his wife, two sons Muhammad and Qasim and a daughter Ruqayyah with Imam Husayn (S) and took with him his two younger sons to Kufa.[13](#) Ali Nazari Munfared wrote, "... *The number of Moslem's children is five, of whom two – Abdullah and Muhammad – were martyred in the Karabala event and two other sons were martyred in Kufa.*"[14](#) However, the manner of attaining martyrdom of all the four children is almost identical. Sheikh Abbas al-Qummi relates that the two sons of Muslim left with Imam Husayn (a.s.) were captured and imprisoned after the event of Ashura. However, an old guard, who sympathized with the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.), let them out of prison. The two children wandered and found shelter with an old woman who, from the fragrance of their body, recognized them to belong to the Prophet's family. She had a son-in-law who was employed in Yazid's army. He came into the house. In the night he heard the snoring of the children, apprehended them, and despite the pleas of the old woman, the man asked his slave named Faleeh to behead them on the banks of the Euphrates. When the slave learnt about the identity of the two sons of Muslim, he threw away the sword, plunged into the river and crossed to the opposite shore, to the surprise of his master. The man then asked his son to behead the children. As they were proceeding along the bank of the Euphrates, the young man came to know that the children were the grandchildren of the Prophet (S). Like the slave, he also threw the sword, plunged into the river and crossed over to the opposite shore. The enraged man then declared that he himself beheaded the children, threw their bodies in the river and took the severed heads to ibn Ziyad with the hope of getting the promised reward. Ibn Ziyad after enquiring in detail as to what transpired between him and the children, asked a Syrian slave to behead the man for his cruelty as his reward.[15](#)

An almost similar, if not identical, account has been given about the two sons whom Muslim took with him to Kufa. S.V. Mir Ahmed Ali writes, "*At last, somehow Muslim managed to send his two young children out of Kufa with his message to the Holy Imam, a counter to his previous communication to him, requesting Imam Husayn never to think of Kufa any more.*"[16](#) Ahmed Ali continues, "*The two young souls in their concealed march from Kufa, traveling during nights, lost their way in the desert. They were*

once arrested and imprisoned but the pitiful guard of the prison allowed them to escape, and at last they were found by the good-hearted lady, the wife of Haris, who was already in search of the innocents to win the rich reward.” S.V. Mir Ahmed Ali then narrates that in the middle of the night the children saw their father in their dream and started lamenting. The noise betrayed their presence and Haris took them out to the banks of the Euphrates. When he attempted to behead them, his wife intervened and lost her hands. Haris severed the heads of the children and threw their bodies in the river.[17](#)

- [1.](#) Nafasul Mahmoor, p. 172.
- [2.](#) Ibid., p. 138, Life of Imam Husayn the Saviour, P. 115.
- [3.](#) Imam Husayn (a.s.) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, 85.
- [4.](#) Imam Husayn (a.s.) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p.87.
- [5.](#) Nafasul Mahmoor, p 155.
- [6.](#) Nafasul Mahmoor, p 156.
- [7.](#) Nafasul Mahmoor, p. 153.
- [8.](#) Ibid., p. 157.
- [9.](#) Ibid., p. 162, 157.
- [10.](#) Nafasul Mahmoor, p. 162 quoting al-Kamil of ibnul Atheer.
- [11.](#) Ibid., p. 163–166.
- [12.](#) Nafasul Mahmoor, p. 166.
- [13.](#) Life of Husayn the Saviour, by Mirza Ghulam Abbas Ali, Ch. 9, p. 95.
- [14.](#) Imam Husayn (A) and the Saga of Karabala, Eng. Tr. Ali Ebrahimi, p. 104.
- [15.](#) Nafasul Mahmoor, p. 201–207.
- [16.](#) Husayn the Saviour of Islam, by S.V. Mir Ahmed Ali, Ansariyan Publications, [2005], p. 155.
- [17.](#) Ibid., p. 158–159.

Chapter 17: Imam Husayn’s Migration from Mecca

The History of Islam is replete with instances where, in a man-to-man combat, Imam Ali (a.s.) always gave the right of the ‘first strike’ to his opponent and he attacked only in retaliation. There is no concept of a ‘preemptive strike’ in Islam. The concept of ‘preemptive strike’ was nurtured by the heathens who always struck from behind or without provocation. We saw in the earlier chapter that Muslim ibn Aqeel refrained from killing ibn Ziyad in Hani ibn Urwa’s house, though he could have done so very easily. There is no instance in the entire history of Islam where Imam Ali (a.s.) or anyone of the Ahlul Bayt attacked first or attacked an unsuspecting person from a hiding place. Imam Ali (S) never attacked an enemy who was disarmed or was unable to defend himself. He gave strict instructions to his men to follow the Qur’anic injunctions, never to attack women, children, the disabled, the sick or one who run away from the battlefield. It is this principle that saved the lives of Abu Sufyan and Mu’awiya when they only turned their backs and run away from the battlefield during their fighting against the Prophet (a.s.).

Imam Husayn (a.s.) was steeped in the moral, ethical and spiritual standards set up by his grandfather the Prophet (S) and his father Imam Ali (a.s.). The entire course of events that led to the battle of Karbala shows that at each and every step Imam Husayn (a.s.) tried his best to avoid direct conflict and consequent bloodshed. All his actions were open and transparent. He never resorted to deceit or secret plans.

At the time of Imam Husayn's departure from Medina to Mecca, several of his friends offered to accompany and support him. Instead of increasing his armed forces by encouraging more people to join him, Imam Husayn (a.s.) dissuaded them saying that Yazid was only after his (Imam Husayn) blood, and that knowing the cruel nature of Yazid he did not wish to expose them to any harm and that it was not obligatory for them to join him.

The Meccans received Imam Husayn (a.s.) with great love and reverence as they had seen the Prophet (S) openly showing his love and care for him before. They also remembered the Holy Prophet's oft-repeated words that Hasan and Husayn are the two masters of the youth in the Paradise. They gathered around him in great numbers, seeking guidance in Islamic philosophy and other religious matters. They were enamored of Imam Husayn's way of discourse, ethics and manners. Every day the gathering swelled to greater proportions.

The fast approaching *Hajj* brought more and more people from far-off places and countries. When the pilgrims learnt that the Holy Prophet's grandson was in Mecca, they swarmed around him to have a look at him and to clarify their doubts in matters of religion, science, commerce, rights, obligations, morals, ethics...etc. This irked ibn az-Zubair who was planning to enlarge his own following. He therefore used to meet Imam Husayn (a.s.) more out of curiosity to know what was happening in Imam Husayn's camp, than out of real respect.

Al-Haj Moulvi Ghulam Abbas Ali Sahib wrote, "*Husayn never attempted to gain any land or disturb the government by any rebellious movement, in spite of the love and power he was commanding at Mecca. He only lectured to his disciples on various rites and ceremonies of Islam inculcated by the Qur'an and the Prophet, on allowable and objectionable articles of food, and on ethical principles. His chief aim was to train people to be godly and pious and strict observers of the Islamic Principles. The more he heard of the irreligion of Yazid, the greater was his zeal in ordering his disciples to follow the Qur'anic injunctions. He feared that the Arabs, who had long been accustomed to idolatry and irreligion headed by atheistic monarch, would easily be misled and thus the success achieved by his grandfather in training them to be pious servants of God would be lost forever.*"¹

In Medina, Imam Husayn (a.s.) had received hundreds of letters and personal representations complaining against the tyranny and un-Islamic character and conduct of Mu'awiya and his men. After Mu'awiya's death, Imam Husayn (a.s.) received at Mecca over twelve thousand letters from the people of Kufa, complaining against the oppressive, vicious and merciless killing of innocent persons by Ibn Ziyad, Yazid's governor of Basra, for criticizing his irreligious ways of life and distortion of the Qur'an and

the Sunna.² They pleaded with Imam Husayn (a.s.) to save Islam from being distorted and misinterpreted by the unethical usurpers of power.

The people of Kufa were disgusted with the oppressive nature of the Umayyad rule and the ignorance of the governors in religious matters. The complaints to Mu'awiya and later to Yazid about the incompetence in administration, the excessive partiality, the discrimination and the incompetence of his governors even to perform the daily prayers properly fell on deaf ears.

The dissatisfied people of Kufa assembled at the house of Sulayman ibn Surad al-Khuza'iy, a companion of the Prophet (S), and resolved to petition Imam Husayn (a.s.) to come to their rescue. Leading personalities like Sulayman, al-Musayyab, Rifa'ah, and Habib ibn Mudhahir signed a letter requesting Imam Husayn (a.s.) to relieve them from the anarchy and oppression of the governor of Kufa. The letter was delivered to Imam Husayn (a.s.) on the tenth of Ramadan, the year 60 A.H. Thereafter, as many as 12000 such letters written by individuals as well as collectively by groups of persons were received by Imam Husayn (a.s.) within two months.³ Letters signed by Shibath bin Rib'iy, Hajjar bin Abjur, Yazid bin al-Harith, Urwa bin Qeis, Umar bin Hajjaj, Muhammad bin Amr, and several others laid particular stress on the fact that as the Imam of the time, it was incumbent upon Imam Husayn (a.s.) to come to the rescue of the oppressed and to render justice, and if he failed to do so, he would be responsible before God. All the letters emphasized that the people of Kufa were left without an Imam to guide them in matters of religion.

Though several letters had promised military assistance to remove the governor of Kufa, Imam Husayn (a.s.) was not impressed by the prospect of his taking up such venture as it was against his principles. Therefore, Imam Husayn (a.s.) totally ignored such letters. It is the special aspect of the last mentioned letter written by the people of Kufa calling upon Imam Husayn (a.s.), as the Imam of the time, to come to the aid of Islam that led him to make up his mind and abandon the safety of the Kaaba and to proceed to Iraq, despite knowing the dangers involved.

One of the obligations cast on the Imam (a.s.) was to stand up against corruption in faith when the oppression, tyranny, and aggression of the rulers became excessive and when collectively people called upon the Imam to rise in defense of the faith. It is this part of Imamate that the people of Kufa stressed upon in their letters which made it obligatory on Imam Husayn (a.s.) to leave the safety of Kaaba and proceed towards Iraq. Therefore, it is not that Imam Husayn (a.s.) wanted to achieve power, but his departure to Iraq was in response to the call of the people to redeem the faith from being corrupted and to protect the common man from oppression, tyranny and cruelty of the state perpetrated on the poor and the innocent. The importance of this aspect of the Imam's obligation stressed in the letters written by the people of Kufa and Imam Husayn's response to the demand can be appreciated only with a proper understanding of Imamate, which we have dealt with in an earlier chapter.

Imam Husayn (S) replied to the last letter that is extracted by al-Haj Moulvi Ghulam Abbas Ali, "*In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful and Compassionate. This letter is written by Husayn son of Ali to the*

believers and Moslems of Kufa. Hani and Sa'eed brought to me your last letter. From this and your previous letters, I understood your unanimous declaration that you have no Imam for your guidance. I considered all my relatives and friends, but found none more learned and pious than my cousin Muslim son of Aqeel. I am sending him to you and have commanded him to intimate your real affairs. If he writes to me that most of you are desirous of following the right path and supporting the truth, and if the wise and virtuous among you unanimously agree with you as you have represented in your letter, I shall be soon among you, God willing. I should enlighten your minds with the fact that an Imam or true guide is one who acts according to the Divine percepts, keeps himself steady on the path of justice and righteousness, and who binds himself with the laws laid down by God and His Prophet.”⁴

Imam Husayn's reply brings out three salient points; **firstly**, that the people of Kufa had unanimously declared that they had no Imam to guide them, in which event it became obligatory for the Imam to fill the void, **secondly** that Imam Husayn (S) did not plan to go to Kufa as a conquering *Caliph*, but as an Imam not exercising unbridled power but as one who fetters his powers with the chains of Divine Laws to act justly and righteously. In such case, all his actions would necessarily be within the framework of the Divine Laws and there would be no possibility of any injustice being meted out to friend or foe, and **thirdly**, he was not an opportunist to empower himself with the support of the disgruntled and impatient masses. Therefore, Imam Husayn (S) proposed to send a worthy representative to act as his ambassador. This shows that there was neither caprice nor haste in the Imam's action, but a desire to act justly on the basis of the true state of affairs.

At *Mina*, Imam Husayn (a.s.) gave a sermon to the huge congregation of Hajjis who had assembled around him. Then the Imam (a.s.) said,

“You are fully aware of the tyranny and oppression of Mu’awiya and his son Yazid. I wish to tell you something and request you to affirm if what I say is right and to correct me if I am wrong. By God and by the close relationship between me and the messenger of Allah, I ask you to bear witness about what I shall say, standing here before you, and to write it down, remember and propagate this my speech and message to everyone in every tribe, village, town and city. I am doing this because I apprehend that the truth will be buried and falsehood will be made to prevail over the truth. But, God has promised to protect His light, though the infidels may dislike it.”

After glorifying Allah and reciting the numerous Qur'anic verses, which were revealed about the *Ahlu Bayt* (a.s.), Imam Husayn (a.s.) narrated the various traditions of the Holy Prophet (S) eulogizing Imam Ali (S) and his progeny. We give below a part of the lengthy sermon:

“Listen to me carefully and confirm if what I say is true. If you do not know then ask those companions of the messenger of Allah who are aware of what I am about to say, for they will confirm the veracity of my statements. Is not Muhammad the messenger of Allah?”

In one voice, the congregation replied, “Certainly.”

The Imam (a.s.) said, “*Is not Fatima the only child of the Prophet and that she is the Chief of the women in Paradise?*” They replied, “Indeed it is as you say.”

The Imam (a.s.) said, “*Is not Ali the cousin and deputy of the Prophet? Have you not heard the Prophet (S) say, when he created a bond of brotherhood between his followers that Ali was a brother to him, like Aaron was to Moses?*”

People replied, “We bear witness that what you say is true.”

The Imam (a.s.) asked, “*Am I not the son of Ali and Fatima?*” They replied, “Indeed you are so.”

The Imam (a.s.) asked, “*Have you not heard the Prophet (S) say that I and my brother Hasan are the masters of the youth in Paradise?*”

People replied, “We are witnesses to what you have said.”

The Imam (a.s.) said, “*Is it not true that when the Prophet (S) constructed the mosque, he had all the doors closed except the one leading to the house of Ali and Fatima, and when Umar wanted to open a chink in the wall of his house so that he could peep into the mosque, the Prophet (S) sternly forbid it?*” They replied, “It was so.”

The Imam (a.s.) asked, “*Is it not true that on the day of Mubahaila with the Christians, the Prophet (S) took my mother Fatima to represent women, my father Ali to represent men and I and my brother Hasan to represent children of the Prophet? This the Prophet (S) did in accordance with what was revealed to him by God.*”

They said, “Indeed, it is true.”

The Imam (a.s.) said, “*Have you not heard the Prophet (S) say that ‘Fatima, Ali, Hasan, and Husayn are from me and I am from them’ and that ‘they are my Ahlul Bayt’? Have you not heard the Prophet (S) say that ‘one who loves my Ahlul Bayt loves me and one who loves me loves Allah, and he who opposes my Ahlul Bayt opposes me and he who opposes me opposes Allah’?*”

The people said, “We affirm the truthfulness of what you said.”

The Imam (a.s.) said, “*I make it obligatory on all of you gathered here to repeat what all you heard from me now, to your kith and kin, friends and acquaintances, in villages, towns and cities and wherever you find two believers gathered in one place.*”

The Imam (a.s.) has set out the reason why he took so much pain to repeat what was already common knowledge, by saying, “*I apprehend that the truth shall be buried and falsehood shall be made to prevail over the truth. But, God has promised to protect His light, though the infidels may dislike it.*”

This foresight of the Imam (a.s.) is what has perpetuated his remembrance and erased Mu’awiya and

Yazid from the good books of history.

On the 20th of Thul Qa'dah, the year 59 AH, Imam Husayn (a.s.) received a letter from Muslim ibn Aqeel, stating that over a lakh of the people of Kufa had sworn fealty to him, accepting Imam Husayn (a.s.) as their guide and Imam and seeking his presence in Kufa. Muslim urged Imam Husayn (a.s.) to proceed to Kufa at the earliest. The entire course of Imam Husayn's actions is strictly within the parameters set out in his reply. His sermons to the people of Kufa and Syria and his dialogues with Yazid's army assembled in the battlefield at Karbala bring out succinctly the principles on which Imam Husayn (a.s.) maintained his actions.

Meanwhile, Yazid learnt of the popularity and public support Muslim received from the people of Kufa. Yazid assumed that Imam Husayn (a.s.) was planning to undermine his political grip and power. He ordered that in addition to Muslim ibn Aqeel, Hani ibn Urwa, and Shareek, all supporters of the Ahlul Bayt should be either eliminated or at least imprisoned. Thus, Maytham bin Yahya at-Tammar, Rashid al-Hijri, Hujr bin Adiy, Amr bin al-Hamq, Kumail bin Ziyad ath-Thaqafi, Sulaym bin Qays and several others who were known as supporters of the Ahlul Bayt were first confined to prison and later tortured and killed.

Yazid had sent a contingent headed by Amr bin Sa'eed bin al-Aas, with strict instruction to kill Imam Husayn (a.s.) in the very precincts of the Holy Kaaba. When Imam Husayn (a.s.) learnt of this, he decided to leave Mecca by performing the Umra (minor hajj) instead of the Hajj.

Umm Salama (the Prophet's wife), Abdullah ibn Abbas, Abdullah ibn Ja'far with two of his sons and Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyya the cousins of Imam Husayn (a.s.) had also come to Mecca to perform the Hajj. Imam Husayn (a.s.) met Umm Salama and handed over his books and other belongings for safe custody to be given to his successor.

When Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyya learnt that the Imam planned to leave Mecca, he met and dissuaded the Imam from proceeding towards Kufa. He suggested that the Imam (a.s.) should either go to Yemen or keep to the desert until the disgruntled people of Kufa would get rid of their cruel governor. To similar effect, Abdullah ibn Abbas also suggested. To both of them, Imam Husayn (a.s.) replied that as the Imam he was obliged to respond to the call of people made through thousands of letters, to lead and guide them in religious matters. He had also received Muslim ibn Aqeel's letter to come to Kufa. Lastly, the Imam (a.s.) said that he was aware that Yazid had already dispatched a contingent with strict instructions to kill him in the precinct of the Holy Kaaba. The Imam (a.s.) made it clear that he would not be instrumental in defiling the sanctity of the Kaaba.⁵ The Imam (a.s.) also told them that he dreamt of the Prophet (S) urging him to proceed towards Iraq.

On his return when Abdullah ibn Abbas saw Abdullah ibn az-Zubair, he sarcastically recited an ode, the meaning of which was that then that Imam Husayn (a.s.) was leaving Mecca, the field was clear for ibn az-Zubair to achieve his dream of grabbing the leadership of Muslims. This came true as Abdullah ibn

az-Zubair cherished a secret desire for the Caliphate and strenuously put forth his claim later.

On the eve of his departure from Mecca, Imam Husayn (a.s.) gave the following sermon after praising Allah and seeking His blessings on the Prophet (S), *“I long to join my forefathers just like Jacob longed to join his son Joseph. The place to bury my body has already been fixed and it is imperative that I reach there as soon as possible. I visualize the Banu Umayya, like wolves tearing my body into pieces. We the Ahlul Bayt choose only that which Allah has chosen for us. To be patient in adversity is incumbent upon us, for God rewards those who are patient. Whoever is desirous of joining me in my journey should be ready to sacrifice his life for the cause, for tomorrow, God willing, I shall leave Mecca.”*⁶

Imam Husayn (a.s.) left Mecca for Kufa on the eighth of Thul Hijja, the year 60 AH, the day on which Muslim ibn Aqeel and Hani ibn Urwa were martyred in Kufa. According to some authors,⁷ Imam Husayn's caravan consisted of eighty-two males, including his family members and relatives.

[1.](#) Life of Imam Husayn the Saviour, p. 108.

[2.](#) Imam Husayn (a.s.) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, 61.

[3.](#) Imam Husayn (a.s.) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p 61, Life of Imam Husayn the Saviour, p. 110.

[4.](#) Life of Husayn the Saviour, p. 111.

[5.](#) Nafasul Mahmoor, p. 229–242.

[6.](#) Nafasul Mahmoor, p. 230.

[7.](#) Matalibul Sa'oo, al-Mahzoon, al-Malhoof quoted in Imam Husayn (a.s.) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 105–106.

Chapter 18: Imam Husayn's journey to Karbala

Those, who strive for a cause, do not care for the odds or the consequences. Imam Husayn (a.s.) left Medina for the cause of Islam; to save Islam from the corruption, innovation and distortions introduced by the Banu Umayya. Islam was no longer the simple way of life, in which bereft of pomp and pretensions, the ruler was hardly distinguishable from the ruled. When Imam Ali (a.s.) went into the bazaar of Kufa, he could not be differentiated from the ordinary citizens. As the *Caliph*, Imam Ali (a.s.) made it clear that he was not to be feared and shunned. He was one among them, though he held the ultimate authority. Even people, who did not profess Islam, felt safe under his rule.

The Banu Umayya always considered Islam the religion to be an empire and nothing more. They could hardly understand, nor did they care to understand the philosophy of Islam. For them, Islam was a monarchy heritable by those who had the money, means and power to suppress the masses. Instead of being the creed providing to the poor, help in this world and hope of salvation in the life to come, Islam was made into the creed of the oppressive ruler wielding his sword in the name of Islam while they were, in fact, cutting the faith into shreds. This terrifying image of the Banu Umayya is now being imposed upon Muslims allover the world by the opportunistic detractors of Islam. This terrorist image is the only

everlasting contribution of the Banu Umayya to Islam.

It was then high time for someone to take up the cause of the real Islam, to bring out and expose the corruption, innovation and distortions introduced by the Banu Umayya in Islam. It was time for somebody to take up the cause of the poor and the oppressed, and to retrieve for them the Islam that had changed their very way of life and made them intellectuals instead of the robbers, dacoits and murderers that they were before the advent of Islam. When Imam Husayn (a.s.) took up this cause, he had no fear of numbers or the immediate result. He knew that he was grossly outnumbered. He knew that he and his followers would certainly lose their lives in the strife. He also knew that ultimately posterity would realise that the truth would prevail over falsehood. He established that even in the face of huge numbers and heavy odds, the truth never bows down to falsehood. It is for these reasons that we find Imam Husayn (a.s.) ignoring what appears, at first look, to be sound advice from Abdullah ibn Abbas, Muhammad ibn al-Hanafyya, Abdullah ibn Ja'far, Jabir ibn Abdullah al-Ansari, Ibn az-Zubair, Umar ibn Abdurrahman, Musawwar ibn Makhramah, Abdullah ibn Umar and a great number of relatives and friends.¹

His relatives and friends were more concerned with the worldly outlook of extreme odds and immediate fatal result. Therefore, they tried to persuade him from going to Kufa, for they were fully aware from the days of Imam Ali's *Caliphate* that the people of Kufa were weak-hearted, irresolute and most untrustworthy. They were also aware that Yazid and his men were capable of terrorizing and committing the greatest atrocities, even on women and children, in order to retain their power. However, Imam Husayn (a.s.) himself gave his reason for not listening to their apparently advice, "*I shall not be blamed by Allah for shrinking from the religious duty of training and guiding people to be pious and simple. If the people of Kufa prove disloyal and if I am killed in the discharge of my duty, my position will be much nearer to God and they will be responsible for their disloyalty and evil deeds.*"²

According to the historian ibnul Atheer,³ Abdullah ibn Ja'far himself, and according to other historians,⁴ the Governor of Mecca Amr bin Sa'eed either by himself or at the instance of Abdullah ibn Ja'far, wrote a letter to Imam Husayn (a.s.). The letter was taken by Abdullah ibn Ja'far and Yahya bin Sa'eed, the brother of the Governor of Mecca. At-Tabari⁵ sets out the contents of the letter as follows: "*I am told that you are proceeding towards Iraq. May God protect you from any evil that may befall you. I am afraid you may be killed. I am sending this letter through Abdullah bin Ja'far and my brother Yahya bin Sa'eed so that you may come back with them to me. I assure you that in me you will find asylum, protection, kindness and good company, and for what I have written I hold God as my witness.*" Imam Husayn (a.s.) wrote back, "*You have offered me asylum and protection. In Allah is the best asylum and refuge. He does not give refuge in the hereafter to those who do not fear Him in this world. We pray that we may fear and abide by Him in this world so that we may hope for and find His refuge on the Doomsday. May Allah reward you for your offer to be kind and good to me.*"⁶

Realizing that Imam Husayn (a.s.) was ready to sacrifice himself for his cause, Abdullah ibn Ja'far left

his two teenaged sons Oun and Muhammad as his representatives to fight against evil.⁷ Then, Abdullah ibn Ja'far and Yahya bin Sa'eed returned to Medina.

Muhammad bin Abu Talib Musavi writes that when al-Waleed bin Utba, the governor of Medina learnt that Imam Husayn (S) was proceeding towards Iraq, he (al-Waleed) who knew the cruel nature of Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad, the recently appointed Governor of Basra and Kufa, wrote to ibn Ziyad as follows: "*Al-Husayn is coming towards Iraq. He is the son of Fatima who is the only child of the messenger of Allah. See that no harm comes to him nor should his family members be harassed in any manner. If any irreversible damage is caused by you, the world will never forgive or forget you.*" Ibn Ziyad read the letter but he did not heed the advice.⁸

Imam Husayn's caravan stopped at a place called al-Abtah where Yazid ibn Thabit al-Basri met Imam Husayn (a.s.) and learnt about the reasons of the Imam's migration.⁹ The caravan halted for a short while at some place where Imam Husayn (a.s.) purchased food and other stock from a caravan that brought goods from Yemen.

At a junction of roads called Thatul Araq, Imam Husayn (a.s.) met Bishr bin Ghalib who was coming from Iraq. When Imam Husayn (a.s.) enquired, Bishr said, "*Their (the people of Kufa) hearts are with you, but their swords are against you.*"¹⁰ According to ath-Thahabi, at Thatul Araq, Imam Husayn (a.s.) met the famous poet al-Farazdaq who was going with his mother to Mecca to perform the Hajj. According to some authors, their meeting took place at Mecca near the Kaaba. Yet, others report that their meeting took place at a place called al-Sifah.¹¹ Al-Farazdaq tried unsuccessfully to dissuade Imam Husayn (a.s.) from going to Kufa. When Imam Husayn (a.s.) resumed the journey towards Kufa, he found that all crossroads were manned by ibn Ziyad's military and check-posts were set up barring all roads except the one leading to Kufa. Hussayn bin Numeir was in charge of these operations. By doing so, ibn Ziyad ensured that Imam Husayn (a.s.) had no other option but to take only the road to Kufa. Imam Husayn (a.s.) and his caravan reached a place called Tha'labiyyah where he met Abu Hurrah to whom Imam Husayn (a.s.) explained why he had to leave Mecca.

As there was no fresh news from Muslim, Imam Husayn (a.s.) sent, according to some historians, Qais bin Musahhir as-Saidawi, and according to some others, Abdullah bin Yaqtur, to go speedily in advance and get news about Muslim ibn Aqeel. It is quite probable that Imam Husayn (a.s.) sent both Qais bin Musahhir and Abdullah bin Yaqtur, one after another within a short span of time.

At a place known as Qadisiyya, Qais bin Mushir was intercepted by Hussayn bin Numeir. Before he could be searched, Qais destroyed the letter written by Imam Husayn (a.s.) to the people of Kufa. Hussayn bin Numeir arrested and sent Qais bin Musahhir to Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad in Kufa. Ubaidullah asked Qais to curse Imam Husayn (a.s.) from the on pulpit. Qais ascended the pulpit and praised the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) and cursed Mu'awiya, Yazid and Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad, who ordered Qais to be thrown from above the roof of the palace and later beheaded.

At a place called Wadi al-Aqiq, Abdullah ibn Ja'far's two sons Oun and Muhammad brought and delivered a letter from their father addressed to Imam Husayn (a.s.). They told the Imam that Abdullah himself had gone to meet Amr bin Sa'eed, the Governor of Mecca, to persuade him to provide all comforts to Imam Husayn (a.s.) when he would arrive in Mecca. Later, Abdullah ibn Ja'far himself met Imam Husayn (a.s.) and left his two sons to serve him as his representatives.

The next day, Imam Husayn's caravan reached Waqisa, which was turned into a garrison of Yazid's Syrian soldiers. A short distance from Imam Husayn's caravan, another caravan was following and pitching its tents. Imam Husayn (a.s.) sent his men to inquire who the members of the other caravan were and what their intention in following his caravan was. They found that the caravan belonged to Zohair bin al-Qain al-Bajali¹² of the Nukheilah tribe and that they were following Imam Husayn's caravan from Mecca, and out of the fear of the Umayyad soldiers, they were pitching their tents at a distance. When they heard the invitation of Imam Husayn (a.s.), they hung their heads and dared not visit him for fear of persecution by the Umayyad army that was posted all along the route taken by the caravans. When their women folk saw this, they blamed them for their meekness. Zohair ibn al-Qain then went to Imam Husayn (a.s.) and after a short conversation, he returned and asked his men to pitch their tents near Imam Husayn's caravan. Thus, Zohair's men joined the small band of Imam Husayn's followers and their women joined the company of Lady Zainab (a.s.).¹³

On the next day, Imam Husayn (a.s.) halted at a place called al-Khuzaimah.¹⁴ He found a man hurrying past his tents. He sent Abdullah bin Sulaiman and Munthir bin Isma'il to find out who the rider was. The rider informed Sulaiman and Munthir that he was Bakr from the Bani Asad tribe and that he was coming from Kufa where he had witnessed the torture and beheading of Hani ibn Urwa and Muslim bin Aqeel. They narrated the details of the incidents leading to the martyrdom of Muslim ibn Aqeel and Hani ibn Urwa. When questioned about Abdullah bin Yaqtur, he said, "Abdullah was captured by Hussayn bin Numair who searched his bags and found letters addressed by Imam Husayn (a.s.) to some nobles of Kufa. Abdullah bin Yaqtur snatched and tore the letters into small bits and scattered them into the wind. Being Enraged, Hussayn sent bin Yaqtur to Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad, who in turn, tortured and threatened to kill him if he failed to either disclose the names of persons to whom Imam Husayn (S) had addressed letters or alternatively to curse Imam Husayn (a.s.) from on the pulpit of the mosque of Kufa. Bin Yaqtur chose the second alternative. When being brought before the congregation in the mosque, bin Yaqtur ascended the pulpit and instead of cursing Imam Husayn (a.s.), he praised his noble qualities and he cursed Mu'awiya, Yazid, Ibn Ziyad and the Banu Umayya, and exposed their cunning, lawlessness, cruelty and evil intentions to retain the power illegally grabbed by them. The enraged ibn Ziyad killed bin Yaqtur by throwing him down from the highest building."¹⁵

On hearing this, both Abdullah bin Sulaiman and Munthir bin Isma'il were so much grieved that they did not disclose the sorrowful incidents to Imam Husayn (a.s.) except after two days. When the caravan halted at Zobala, they narrated the incidents related to them by Bakr at al-Khuzaimah. Meanwhile, Hilal bin Nafi' and Uthman bin Khalid brought the news confirming Bakr's narration gathered through others.

When being told about Muslim's martyrdom, Imam Husayn (S) called Muslim's teenaged daughter Ruqayyah and placed his hand on her head. The young girl realized that her uncle was treating her as if she was an orphan. Imam Husayn (a.s.) said, "*My daughter, from today I am your guardian in place of your father.*"

The next morning, a resident of Kufa called Abu Harrah came to Imam Husayn (a.s.) and said, "*In these awful times, what made you leave the safe precincts of your grandfather and the Holy Kaaba?*" The Imam (a.s.) replied, "*O Abu Harrah, I showed restraint when the Banu Umayya usurped my properties. I showed restraint when they spread falsehood and they cursed me and the Ahlul Bayt openly. Now they have sworn to kill me. I have no other option but to migrate since it is obligatory on me to avoid bloodshed as far as possible.*"¹⁶

Wherever Imam Husayn (a.s.) made a halt, people joined his caravan, hoping that he was going to Kufa to remove the tyrant governor and that there would be a war resulting in acquiring territory and treasury. They had no other desire but to take a share in the spoils of a possible war. By the time, Imam Husayn's caravan reached a place called Zobala, the number of persons accompanying had swelled into several thousands.

According to some historians, it was at Zobala that the Imam (a.s.) received the details of the martyrdom of Muslim ibn Aqeel, Hani ibn Urwa and Abdullah ibn Yaqtur, through the messengers sent by Muhammad bin al-Ash'ath and Umar ibn Sa'd, as the last wish of Muslim ibn Aqeel.¹⁷ Some other historians say that this happened at Tha'labiyya.¹⁸ Some historians record that it was at Tha'labiyya that a Christian man met Imam Husayn (a.s.), became a Muslim and joined the caravan and was martyred at Karbala.¹⁹

Realizing the materialistic objective of several persons who joined his company, Imam Husayn (a.s.) called together all of them and said,

*"You are aware of the grievous murder of Hani, Muslim, bin Yaqtur and other supporters of the Ahlul Bayt. We are betrayed by the very people who wrote letters welcoming us to Kufa. Yazid is only demanding me to give my allegiance to him and recognize him as the leader of all Muslims. He seeks only to punish me if I did not comply. If you choose to continue to follow me, you will be exposed to severe torture before losing your life. Whoever wants to leave may do so now. It will not be a sin to leave me now nor shall I have any complaint against those who wish to leave now."*²⁰

A majority of the people who accompanied Imam Husayn (a.s.) in the hope of acquiring the spoils of war, departed, leaving only a small contingent of a few hundred people.

Throughout his journey, Imam Husayn (a.s.) frequently gave such sermons and advised the people to leave him. As a result, at every stage the number of followers dwindled, so much so that only those accompanying him from Medina or a few more of persons who joined him remained with him, in the ranks of those who were later martyred at Karbala.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) left Zobala after a few days. When the caravan passed a place called Batnul Aqabah, an old man called Amr bin Louthan from the tribe of Bani Ikrima told Imam Husayn (a.s.), “I see nothing but the tips of lances and the glint of swords as far as the eye could see in Kufa. The very people, who had written letters requesting you to come, have now turned against you. They will not stop short in killing you. Please turn back and to any place except Kufa.”

Imam Husayn (a.s.) replied, “I am aware of the situation, but I can not act against the Will of God. By God, these people will surely slay me.”²¹

A short distance from Batnul Aqabah, the caravan came across an oasis in a place called Shiraf with many wells and ponds. Here, Imam Husayn (a.s.) halted the caravan and asked his men to fill all leather bags and every utensil they had with water. This move perplexed his companions as so much water added to the weight and slowed down the journey.

Hussayn bin Numair (whose father's name is mentioned as Tameem instead of Numair by a few authors) was given charge of sealing all the roads except the one leading to Kufa. Al-Hurr ibn Yazid ar-Riyahi was sent by Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad with a thousand horsemen as an advance force to intercept, surround and prevent Imam Husayn (a.s.) from going anywhere else except Kufa, where Yazid's forces had already assembled in great numbers and strength.

After a short journey in the midst of barren and arid desert, a cavalry of al-Hurr's one thousand tired and thirsty horsemen approached Imam Husayn's caravan. Several of them fainted due to dehydration and their horses were stumbling due to the severe thirst under the scorching sun of the desert. The contingent was headed by al-Hurr bin Yazid ar-Riyahi, who said that before he could utter anything he and his men and horses needed water to quench the thirst that was nigh killing them. Imam Husayn (a.s.) ordered his men to supply water to all of them including their horses.

Ali Bin at-Ta”aan al-Muharibi says, “On that day, I was present as one of the soldiers in al-Hurr's cavalry. I was so thirsty and weak that I could hardly drink the water offered by al-Husayn's men. Al-Husayn helped me in drinking the water. When all the men and horses of al-Hurr were satiated and it was time for the noon prayer, al-Husayn asked al-Hajjaj bin Masruq to call out the Azan for prayers. When men from al-Husayn's camp and the cavalry of al-Hurr had assembled for prayers, al-Husayn addressed them as follows: 'I have not come to you of my own accord, but only in response to your written requests and personal pleadings in which you stated that you are without an Imam [guide in religious matters]. You expressed the desire that I should guide you in religious matters and you had covenanted and bound yourself to abide by my religious guidance. Tell me clearly if you are firm, even now, in your covenant to take and abide by my guidance in religion, so that I may be assured once again about the genuineness of your need and your promise. On the other hand, if you do not intend to keep your covenant made to me or if you do not want my presence, I shall return to where I have come from'.

When nobody gave any reply, al-Husayn asked al-Hajjaj Bin Masruq to call out the Eqamah. Then al-

*Husayn asked al-Hurr if he wished to separately offer the prayer along with his men or wished to pray under al-Husayn's Imamate. Al-Hurr replied that he and his men would offer the prayer under the leadership (imamate) of al-Husayn, and then we rested until evening.*²²

Ali Bin at-Ta"aan al-Muharibi continues, "When the time for the Evening Prayer came, al-Husayn asked the Azan be called out. Once again, when all the men from both camps assembled, they requested al-Husayn to lead the prayers... After offering the prayer, al-Husayn addressed the men as follows: *"Fear God and do justice by giving the rightful person his due. We the Ahlul Bayt have the rightful and superior claim, and we deserve to be the successors of the messenger of Allah instead of those who have now usurped the seat of Caliphate. The usurpers are oppressing you and are indulging in excesses. But in spite of your numerous letters and representations, if you now choose to deny my rights and if you do not wish to welcome me amidst you, I will return back to whence I have come'.*

Al-Hurr replied, 'I know nothing about the letters of which you speak'.

Thereupon, Imam Husayn (a.s.) called Uqba bin Sam'an who brought the bag containing the letters. On seeing thousands of letters written by the people of Kufa, al-Hurr said, 'We did not write these letters. We are bound by the orders to surround and bring you to Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad in Kufa'. Then al-Hurr read out a letter sent by Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad under orders of Yazid, with specific instructions directing the cavalry headed by al-Hurr to surround Imam Husayn's caravan and lead it straight to Kufa. Imam Husayn (a.s.) said, 'Your death will overtake you before you could accomplish that task'. Imam Husayn (a.s.) asked his men to prepare for the journey back to Medina. When they were about to proceed, al-Hurr's forces obstructed the way. Imam Husayn (a.s.) rebuked al-Hurr for obstructing the passage. Al-Hurr told Imam Husayn (a.s.) that he had no personal ill will against Imam Husayn (a.s.) and that he was constrained to obey Ibn Ziyad's order; otherwise, Ibn Ziyad would carry out the threat to confiscate all his properties and kill him and all his children and family members for disobedience. Al-Hurr said that since Imam Husayn (a.s.) did intend to go to Kufa, he would also not be allowed to go to Medina. Al-Hurr suggested that Imam Husayn (a.s.) might take any road except the road to Medina or Kufa. On hearing this, Imam Husayn's caravan turned right and proceeded towards al-Uthayb and al-Qadisiyya.²³

On the way, the caravan halted at al-Badiyah. Al-Hurr and his one-thousand-man army were closely following Imam Husayn (a.s.), and were praying behind him. At-Tabari reports from Abu Makhnaf that Uqba bin Abul Khirad has narrated a lengthy sermon of Imam Husayn (a.s.) addressed to his followers and to al-Hurr and his men at al-Badiyah. The sermon is as follows:

"God will punish those who do not oppose, by word and deed, a tyrant who legitimizes what is forbidden, transgresses the limits prescribed by God, breaks his covenant and flouts the traditions of the messenger of Allah (S) and terrorizes and tyrannizes his subjects and leads a sinful life. The Banu Umayya have become the disciples of Satan and forsaken God. They have forbidden what is lawful and made lawful what is forbidden by God. They have appropriated the public treasuries as if they are their personal properties. I am the first one to oppose and protest against their evil deeds. You wrote letters to

me and your representatives came to me. I am told that you have made a covenant that you will not betray me to my enemies nor will you desert me in times of need. It is but just that you should abide by your covenant. I am Husayn son of Ali and Fatima the only child and daughter of the Messenger of God (S). I am with you and my family is with your family. We are not those who misappropriate public funds. We are those who do not touch or use public funds. We lead our lives as any common man, so that you may emulate us by leading a simple life bereft of wasteful pomp. On the contrary, if you choose to ignore and break your pledge and wish to absolve yourself from the promised obligations, it will not surprise me, for you have broken your covenants made with my father Ali, my brother Hasan and my cousin Muslim ibn Aqeel. Only a conceited and inexperienced person will be misled by your vain promises. Whoever makes a pledge and then breaks it is in deed at a great loss.”²⁴

Imam Husayn’s caravan halted at a place that was the pasture of an-No’man bin al-Munthir’s horses. It was near the border between the Arabia, Iraq and Persia. Here, Thur-Rimma bin Adi, Nafi’ bin Hilal, Majm’a bin Abdullah and Umar bin Khalid met Imam Husayn (a.s.). Thur-Rimma was an expert guide of the desert roads. Thur-Rimma recited a poem eulogizing Imam Husayn (S) and his noble cause and cursing the Banu Umayya and their evil deeds.²⁵ All the four men pledged their support to Imam Husayn (a.s.). Al-Hurr said that since they were from Kufa, they should be sent back to Kufa or in the alternative, they should remain in al-Hurr’s army. Imam Husayn (a.s.) told al-Hurr that they were his sincere followers and they should remain with him and be considered among those who had accompanied him from Medina.²⁶

Thur-Rimma informed Imam Husayn (a.s.) that many of the people of Kufa, under mortal fear of being killed by ibn Ziyad, and several others having succumbed to his bribery were ready to take up arms against Imam Husayn (a.s.). When asked about Qais bin Mussahir, the messenger sent by Imam Husayn (a.s.) to Kufa, they replied that he too, like Abdullah Bin Yaqtur, was killed when he refused to curse the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) and to praise Yazid from on the pulpit in the mosque of Kufa. Thur-Rimma told Imam Husayn (a.s.) that ibn Ziyad has filled up the open lands of Kufa with a great number of soldiers from Syria and other places, with orders to intercept and immediately kill Imam Husayn (a.s.).

Thur-Rimma then came near Imam Husayn (a.s.) and whispered, “I have seen a great army in Kufa gathered by Yazid and Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad in order to surround and kill you. I like that you avoid Kufa at all cost. You have such a small group of men that even al-Hurr’s thousand horsemen can overpower and kill you all. If you want, I can show a safe place in the mountains of Aja’. It is a safe valley surrounded by mountains where my tribe lives in a fortification that is safe from marauders and neighboring kings. From there, you can write to the tribe of Tay who inhabit the mountains and within ten days, their warriors will come to guard you. I promise you that as long as we, the tribe of Tay, live no harm will come to you.”

Imam Husayn (a.s.) thanked and blessed Thur-Rimma for his offer and said that he was under a binding promise that he would not betray al-Hurr by leaving with Thur-Rimma.

Thur-Rimma said that though he wished to join Imam Husayn's caravan and sacrifice his life along with him, he had to bring essential goods to his people on whose behalf he was acting as a trustee and also that the yearly sustenance of his large family was with him to be delivered to them. Thur-Rimma promised that as soon as he had discharged his trust, he intended to rush back to Imam Husayn (a.s.) to sacrifice his life for him. Imam Husayn (a.s.) bade farewell to Thur-Rimma.

According to Jamil bin Marsad, Thur-Rimma narrated that after discharging his trust, he (Thur-Rimma) made his last will and bade farewell to his family, saying that Imam Husayn (a.s.) was in need of assistance and that he had to hurry to sacrifice his life for the Imam (a.s.). When Thur-Rimma was on his way, he met Samat bin Badr near the place called Uthayb al-Hijanat. Samat bin Badr informed Thur-Rimma that Imam Husayn (a.s.) was already martyred. Thur-Rimma returned to his people to narrate the above incidents.²⁷ Another weak report relates that Thur-Rimma was present with Imam Husayn (a.s.) in the battle of Karbala and suffered several wounds due to which he fainted and was later rescued by some people.²⁸

When the caravan pitched the tents at some place on its way, Imam Husayn (a.s.) gathered his small group of companions and spoke to them saying,

“You see what matter has happened. The world has changed its colours; virtue has almost vanished. This is the age of Wrong and the followers of Right have passed away. A time has come when a true believer has to separate himself from the mischievous mutineers and turn towards his Creator. Do you not see that the Divine Commands are neglected and what is forbidden is practiced with relish? Life under tyrants is hard to live and I consider death a great honor.”²⁹

Imam Husayn (a.s.) then tried to dissuade his companions from accompanying him, as he wanted to face the situation alone. He did not want to expose his companions to any harm. Hearing this, Bilal bin Nafi', Burair bin Khudhair and other companions of Imam Husayn (a.s.) protested saying that if they would be slain, then revived to be slain again a hundred times, they would not leave him, for he was fighting against an evil tyrant, and therefore would attain martyrdom and they too have chosen to fight against evil and attain martyrdom. Thus, the companions, despite Imam Husayn's entreaties, refused to leave him. Zuhair ibnul Qayn got up and said, “*Even if life in this world becomes everlasting, we would prefer to leave [give up our lives] this world behind to follow and serve you.*”³⁰

This situation is unique and exceptional in the history of humankind. It is natural for anybody facing imminent threat to his life to assemble as many of his supporters as possible to defend himself. Here, we find Imam Husayn (a.s.) dissuading his companions from accompanying him. This is not the conduct of one who desires to wage war. Imam Husayn's companions were also unique in that they knew that they were few in number and would be annihilated by the huge army that had gathered, and yet they willingly chose to stand against tyranny along with Imam Husayn (a.s.).

In stark contrast is the case of Ubaidullah ibn al-Hurr al-Ju'fi who was a sympathizer of the third *Caliph*

Uthman. He had fought in the war of *Siffin* as a supporter of Mu'awiya against Imam Ali (a.s.). When Imam Husayn's caravan made a short halt at Qasr Bani Muqatil, they found Ubaidullah ibn al-Hurr Ju'fi in a tent. When Imam Husayn (a.s.) met him, he said that he had left Kufa as it was filled and fortified with the military of Yazid with instructions to kill Imam Husayn (a.s.) and his family members even if it were to be in the premises of the *Kaaba*. Imam Husayn (a.s.) said, "All of you have led a sinful life. Here is an opportunity to be absolved of your sins. If you support me, my grandfather the messenger of Allah (S) will intercede for you."

Ubaidullah replied, "*I know that what you say is true, but I have seen Yazid's forces in such great numbers that it is impossible for me to fight them, and I do not want to lose my life. Anyway, I offer you my horse. He is a fast steed and he has always brought me safe from my pursuing enemy.*"

Imam Husayn (a.s.) replied, "*I am in no need of your horse. I advice you to go so far away that when I call out, my voice would not reach you, for then if you hear me and do not come to my aid, you will be a transgressor who will surely be thrown into hell.*"³¹

Al-Hurr and his cavalry was following Imam Husayn's caravan at some distance and some times, he purposefully halted for long time so that there was great distance between the two caravans. When Imam Husayn (a.s.) and his small caravan reached a place called Nineveh, a rider came from Kufa and gave a letter in which Ibn Ziyad directed al-Hurr to surround Imam Husayn's caravan and take it to a parched, arid open land away from any source of water. On hearing this, a follower of Imam Husayn (a.s.) called Yazid bin Ziyad bin Muhajir Abu Sha'tha al-Kindi and an-Nahdi asked the messenger: "*Are you not Malik bin Nusair al-Beddi?*" The man replied affirmatively. Then, Yazid bin Ziyad bin Muhajir said, "*You are indeed an evil messenger.*" Malik said, "*I have been sincere to my leader and I did what he bade me.*"

Yazid said, "*Indeed, you have chosen an evil leader; for the Qur'an reveals that such leaders will be deemed to be the ones who invite people to the fire of Hell and they shall not receive any help [on the Day of Judgement].*"³²

It has been the shameful conduct of the infidels and the hypocrites to deny water. In the same way, Mu'awiya had denied water to Imam Ali (a.s.) and his men before. Ibn Ziyad denied water to be given to Muslim ibn Aqeel too.

Thus surrounded, Imam Husayn's caravan reached a place that was about forty miles from Kufa and three miles from the bank of the Euphrates. Here, Imam Husayn's horse stopped and all efforts to goad him to go forward having failed. Imam Husayn (a.s.) took the unprecedented step of using his whip, which the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) never did as they loved their animals and always treated them kindly. Imam Husayn (a.s.) then changed several horses but to no avail. Then, camels were brought in and they too did not move from their place. At last, Imam Husayn (a.s.) asked some villagers about the name of the place, and some said it was al-Jazeerah, some others said Nineveh, and others said the Land of Taff.

Yet, another said it was known as as-Saqiya, but Imam Husayn (a.s.) kept on inquiring. An old man, who had seen over a hundred summers said, “This place, I heard from my elders, was called Karbala in ancient times and that every Prophet (S) who passed by this place was afflicted with severe grief.” Imam Husayn (a.s.) said, “Verily, Karbala is composed of two words Karb (sorrow) and Bala (affliction).”

In the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 1:19 says that the Prophet Moses (a.s.) lost his way and wandered for forty years around a place called ‘the Terrible Wilderness’ near Kadesh Barnea which later came to be known as Qadisiya. It was also the place foretold for sacrifice near the river Euphrates [Jeremiah 46, 9]. According to the Prophetic traditions, Noah’s ark was caught in a whirlpool and Jesus Christ suffered and cried at Karbala. Imam Husayn (a.s.) then ordered the tents to be pitched. It is unanimously agreed by all historians that it was Thursday, the second day of Muharram of the year 61 A.H. Imam Husayn (a.s.) sent his men to call the residents of the village inhabited by the Banu Asad, who owned the lands where he had pitched his tents. He offered to pay 60,000 dirhams and purchase the land. The tribesmen remonstrated saying that the accursed land was fallow and never did anything grow in it, and therefore no useful purpose would be served in buying it. Imam Husayn (a.s.) replied, *“This land will become fertile with my blood and the blood of my kin and companions, and people will soon inhabit it and my Shia (followers) will visit it as a place of pilgrimage.”*

Imam Husayn (a.s.) purchased the land for 60,000 dirhams and a purchase was made in the name of Ali al-Akbar bin al-Husayn ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.). Imam Husayn (a.s.) asked Ali al-Akbar to immediately entrust the land back to the owners by declaring, *“I donate this land back to you and make you its custodians so that you may keep the visitors of our graves as guests for three days.”*

Then, Imam Husayn (a.s.) called all the men, women and children of the tribe of Banu Asad. He addressed their men saying, *“My grandfather the messenger of Allah (S) has told me that after my martyrdom, Yazid’s army would sever the heads of the martyrs and leave the bodies on the open plains of Karbala. It is my desire that you should arrange to bury our bodies.”* Imam Husayn (a.s.) turned to the women and told them, *“If, out of fear of reprisal by Yazid’s men, your men fail to bury our bodies, please try to do so under the cover of night.”* Imam Husayn (a.s.) then addressed the children of Banu Asad, *“Oh children, if your men and women fail to bury our bodies, I entrust the responsibility to you to playfully come and throw a little soil to cover our headless bodies.”*

The entire night of the second day of Muharram was spent by Imam Husayn (a.s.), his family and companions in offering prayers and glorifying God.

- [1.](#) Imam Husayn (a.s.) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 108–115.
- [2.](#) Life of Husayn the Saviour, P. 124.
- [3.](#) Al-Kamil of ibnul Atheer.
- [4.](#) Al-Iqd al-Fareed.
- [5.](#) Tarikh at-Tabari.
- [6.](#) Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 245–248.
- [7.](#) Ibid., p. 247 quoting Tarikh at-Tabari.

- [8. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 44 p. 368, Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 249, Imam Husayn \(a.s.\) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 116.](#)
- [9. Imam Husayn \(a.s.\) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 118.](#)
- [10. Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 249.](#)
- [11. Imam Husayn \(a.s.\) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 119, Footnote 3.](#)
- [12. Some authors say that the name is Zohair ibn Qais instead of Zohair ibn al-Qain.](#)
- [13. Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 254–256, Life of Husayn, p. 127, Imam Husayn \(a.s.\) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 127.](#)
- [14. A'tham al-Kufi says that the poet al-Farazdaq met Imam Husayn \[s\] at al-Khuzaimah.](#)
- [15. Life of Husayn the Saviour, p. 128, Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 258–260 quoting al-Malhuf.](#)
- [16. Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 260.](#)
- [17. Al-Malhuf, al-Saduq's al-Irshad, Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 262.](#)
- [18. Imam Husayn & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 128, Imam al-Husayn wa Asshabuh, p. 166.](#)
- [19. Ibid., p. 132, Ibid., p. 172.](#)
- [20. Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 261.](#)
- [21. Nafasul Mahmoom, p.263.](#)
- [22. Nafasul Mahmoom, p.266, Imam Husayn \(a.s.\) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 132 quoting Tarikh at-Tabari, vol. 5 p. 403.](#)
- [23. Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 267.](#)
- [24. Nafasul Mahmoom, p.269, Imam Husayn \(a.s.\) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 142, Maqta al-Husayn of al-Muqarram, p. 184.](#)
- [25. Tarikh at-Tabari, ibnul Athir's al-Kamil.](#)
- [26. Tarikh at-Tabari, ibnul Athir's Kamil. quoted in Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 274.](#)
- [27. Nafasul Mahmoom, p.277 quoting Tarikh at-Tabari.](#)
- [28. Maqta of Abu Makhnaf.](#)
- [29. Life of Imam Husayn the Saviour, p. 136, Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 270.](#)
- [30. Al-Malhuf.](#)
- [31. Imam Husayn \(a.s.\) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 148, Maqta al-Husayn, p. 189, Nafasul Mahmoom, p 278–289.](#)
- [32. Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 291.](#)

Chapter 19: Yazid's forces gather at Karbala

Ibn Ziyad had given strict orders to surround and compel Imam Husayn (a.s.) to proceed to Kufa where a large army was assembled. However, Imam Husayn never allowed them to succeed in their plan. He proceeded to take a different route and arrived at Karbala. On the second of Muharram, the year 61 AH when Imam Husayn pitched his camp at Karbala, al-Hurr also pitched his camp a little distance from Imam Husayn's camp. Al-Hurr wrote to Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad stating that Imam Husayn (a.s.) had finally pitched his camp and settled at Karbala and appeared to have no plan to proceed to Kufa. Had Imam Husayn (a.s.) proceeded to Kufa, it would have been construed as his seeking to fight the forces of Ibn Ziyad who had already gathered there. By pitching his camp at Karbala, Imam Husayn (a.s.), forever, removed even the remotest chance of an allegation that he was the aggressor since he sought the stationary army of ibn Ziyad. By making ibn Ziyad to change his plans and send his army to Karbala, Imam Husayn (a.s.) showed who was the aggressor and who was after whom. Secondly, by avoiding going to Kufa, Imam Husayn (a.s.) forestalled the possible allegation that since he knew that a huge

army had gathered and was for him at Kufa, it was suicidal to proceed to Kufa. Lastly sitting at a neutral place, Imam Husayn (a.s.) kept the door for negotiations open, as could be seen in the following pages.

If at all it can be called a ‘battle’, the battle of Karbala was extremely unequal and one sided. On the one side, when Imam Husayn (a.s.) pitched his camp in Karbala on the second of Muharram the year 61 AH, there were only few hundreds of persons, including ladies, children, teenagers, old men and only a few able (to fight) persons. According to some historians, there were five hundred cavalry and about a hundred infantry in the camp of the Imam Husayn.¹ Some companions of the Imam (a.s.) suggested that it was possible to defeat al-Hurr’s army of the thousand men before any additional forces arrived. The Imam (a.s.) refused, saying that the Ahlul Bayt never commenced any hostility. Instead, Imam Husayn (a.s.) wrote and sent letters to Sulayman bin Surad, al-Musayyab bin Najaba, Refa’ah bin Shaddad, Abdullah ibn Wal and other known adherents of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.).

The letters were identical and were as follows:

“Those who do not stand up to a tyrant and transgressor of the faith will suffer in this life and the life to come. You are aware that the Banu Umayya are impelled by their satanic desire, have perpetuated corruption, usurped the treasury for themselves, transgressed religious injunctions and permitted what is prohibited and prohibited what is lawful in Islam. You will recall that you wrote to me complaining that you are left without a guide in religion and had invited me to Kufa. Now, I am besieged by Yazid’s army. If you still hold fast to the pledge you made and the affection you promised to show me, know that at your instance I have come. I will not be surprised if you retract from your pledge, for, you had betrayed my father Ali and my brother Hasan.”²

Imam Husayn (a.s.) gathered his small group of companions and said to them,

“The course which affairs have taken is manifest to you. The world has changed its colours; virtue has almost vanished. This is the age of Wrong and the followers of Right have passed away. A time has come when the true believer has to separate himself from the mischievous mutineers and turn towards his Creator. Do you not see that the Divine Commands are neglected and what is forbidden is practiced with relish? Life under tyrants is hard to live and I consider death a great honor.”³

Hilal bin Nafi’ got up and said, “I would prefer to sacrifice my life than to live after you.” Zohair ibn al-Qain said, “If I were to be killed in defending you and then raised to life again a thousand times, I would still defend and not desert you.”

The battlefield chronicler Abu Makhnaf records that on the other side, in the course of two days, between the third and the fourth of Muharram, the plains of Karbala were filled with over a hundred and forty thousand warriors from Syria, Iraq, Iran and other countries to oppose Imam Husayn (a.s.). Umar bin Sa’d bin Abi Waqqas brought an army of six thousand soldiers, four thousand men were headed by Shibli bin Rib’iy, various contingents of between ten and twenty thousand men each headed by Urwa bin Qays, Sinan bin Anas an-Nakh’iy, Hussayn Bin Numair, Shimr bin Thil Joushan, Mudha’ir bin

Raheena al-Mazini, Yazid bin Rikab al-Kelbi, Nadhr bin Harasha, Muhammad bin al-Ash'ath, Abdullah bin Hussayn, Khouli al-Asbahi, Bakr bin Ka'b bin Talha, Hajjar ibn Abhur⁴ besides the warriors under the command of Umar bin Hajjaj.

On the fourth of Muharram, Umar bin Sa'd wanted Urwa bin Qais a prominent figure from Kufa to go to Imam Husayn (a.s.) and inquire why he had come. Urwa was one of those who had repeatedly written to Imam Husayn (a.s.) inviting him to come to Kufa. He made a lame excuse from the task of meeting Imam Husayn, as he felt ashamed to face the Imam (a.s.). Ibn Sa'd tried to persuade other prominent personalities of Kufa to go on the errand, but they refused out of shame as it was they who had written letters inviting Imam Husayn (S) to come to Kufa.⁵ Then, Katheer bin Abdullah agreed to go to Imam Husayn's tent. He was stopped by Zohair ibn al-Qain or by Abu Thumama according to some sources, and asked to remove his weapons that he did not agree and went back.⁶ Umar ibn Sa'd then sent Qurra bin Qeis al-Handhali. Imam Husayn (a.s.) asked if anyone knew Qurra. Zohair ibn al-Qain said that Qurra was his sister's son and belonged to the clan of Tameem. Qurra agreed and deposited his weapons with Zohair and was allowed to meet Imam Husayn (a.s.). To Qurra's question, Imam Husayn (a.s.) replied that the people of Kufa wrote letters inviting him to come to Kufa and guide them in religious matters as they were without an Imam. Imam Husayn (a.s.) further said that in those circumstances, as an Imam, it was his divinely entrusted mission to come and guide the people of Kufa even at the cost of his life. Imam Husayn (S) then said that if the people of Kufa had changed their mind and they did not want him to come to Kufa, he was ready and willing to go back. Zohair told Qurra that it was unfortunate that Qurra was with the opponents of the grandson of the Prophet (S).⁷ On hearing this, Qurra replied that before taking any decision he would first prefer to convey the reply of Imam Husayn (a.s.) to ibn Sa'd and watch his reaction.

On the nights of the fourth and the fifth of Muharram, Umar bin Sa'd wanted to meet Imam Husayn (a.s.). Arrangements were made in an open space between Imam Husayn's camp and Umar's army when a long conversation ensued during which Imam Husayn (a.s.) showed hundreds of letters written by the people of Kufa. The next night a similar meeting took place in which Imam Husayn (a.s.) explained that he had come only in response to the invitation of the people of Kufa; that it was his Divinely entrusted mission, as an Imam, to guide Muslims and that he had no other aspirations.⁸

Umar bin Sa'd wrote to Ibn Ziyad, *"By God's grace, an inevitable conflict and unnecessary bloodshed has been avoided in my dialogue with al-Husayn. He showed me over twelve thousand letters written by the people of Kufa inviting him to guide and lead them in religious matters. Al-Husayn has not come with any ulterior motive of grabbing power, but only to perform his religious obligation as an Imam. If, however, the people of Kufa say that they do not need him, he intends to go back to Medina or to any far-off place or even to any foreign country. As a last alternative, al-Husayn suggested that there should be a meeting between him and Yazid and the matter of leadership of the Muslims should be decided by public choice. Let me know what you propose to do in the matter keeping in mind all the alternatives, so that the matter may be resolved peacefully, without hurting the Prophet's grandson."*⁹

Khouli, who was inimical to the Ahlul Bayt, wrote to Ibn Ziyad that Umar ibn Sa'd appears to have been impressed with Imam Husayn's reasoning and mellowed and hence might not carry out the purpose for which he was given the command of the army. On hearing this, Ibn Ziyad said sarcastically, "*Look, here is an advisor and well wisher of Muslims.*" Ibn Ziyad was enraged by the attitude of Ibn Sa'd and he called for Shimr bin Thil Joushan to whom he gave a letter to be delivered to Umar ibn Sa'd. Shimr gleefully took the letter to Karbala and gave it to Umar bin Sa'd on the night of the sixth of Muharram.

The contents of the letter were recorded by Abu Makhnaf as well as A'sam al-Kufi, and translated into English by Mirza Ghulam Abbas Ali as follows:

"O son of Sa'd! I have known that you spend whole nights out of your camp along with Husayn near the bank of the Euphrates. You hold friendly discourses with him on various topics and show him mildness. Now as soon as this reaches you and you read it, see that no drop of water is carried to Husayn's camp, if you mind your own welfare. Post your men between the Euphrates and Husayn's soldiers. Attack and destroy them. I allow the use of water of the Euphrates by Christians and Jews, but refuse it to Husayn, his relatives and friends. Guard the banks, so that they may not be able to take any water in return for what they have done to Uthman who was so badly treated. I know that harming dead bodies does no good or evil, but I command you to trample their dead bodies under the hoofs of horses after you will have killed them. If you are reluctant to carry out my orders, hand over the charge of my forces to the bearer Shimr bin Thil Joushan and come to me to wait for my future orders. As soon as you receive this letter, seal the banks of the river and see that not a drop of water reaches Husayn's camp." [10](#)

Umar bin Sa'd realized that Shimr had always carried a grudge against him for being preferred and given command of the army and that he was overlooked; therefore, he incited Ibn Ziyad against him. The possibility of losing his command of the army as well as the riches promised by ibn Ziyad, was enough to, once again, blind Umar ibn Sa'd from the reality placed before him by Imam Husayn (a.s.) during the preceding nights. He forthwith ordered the closure of the banks of the Euphrates by posting several battalions under the command of Amr bin al-Hajjaj, and Hussayn ibn Numair with strict instructions not to allow anyone from Imam Husayn's camp to come near the river and take any water. [11](#)

[1.](#) Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 295 quoting Murooj ath-Thahab.

[2.](#) Imam Husayn (a.s.) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 155-156.

[3.](#) Life of Imam Husayn the Saviour, p. 136, Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 270, Imam Husayn (a.s.) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 156.

[4.](#) Life of Imam Husayn the Saviour, p. 143, 144.

[5.](#) Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 303

[6.](#) Life of Husayn the Saviour, p. 145.

[7.](#) Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 304-305.

[8.](#) Life of Imam Husayn [s] [The Saviour], p. 146, Imam Husayn (a.s.) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 170-171.

[9.](#) Imam Husayn (a.s.) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 161, 171, Nafasul Mahmoom p. 305.

[10.](#) Life of Imam Husayn [s] [The Saviour], p. 147, Imam Husayn (a.s.) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 167 quoting Ansabul Ashraf, vol. 3 p. 180, Nafasul Mahmoom, p 307.

[11.](#) Imam Husayn (a.s.) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 168, Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 307.

Chapter 20: Seventh and eighth of Muharram

The water stored in Imam Husayn's camp was exhausted by the night of the sixth of Muharram and in the extreme heat of the desert; the whole seventh day and the following night were spent by the children in crying for water. On the eighth day of Muharram, Imam Husayn's brother and trusted friend Abbas (S) tried to dig a well in several places, one after another. Unfortunately, they faced a sheet of solid rock at every place, shattering the hope of providing water to the thirsty children in Imam Husayn's camp.[1](#)

Ali Nazari Munfared and some others write, "Nineteen steps away from the tents facing the Qibla, Imam Husayn (a.s.) dug in the ground and a gush of water erupted from which everybody drank and water bags were filled. After this, the water disappeared without leaving any sign."[2](#)

This is quite contrary to the reports received from the infallible Imams (a.s.). Even non-Shia sources do not record any such incident, except perhaps in much later interpolations during the long rule of the Umayyads and the Abbasids. From the Shia traditions, it is established beyond doubt that no water was available in Imam Husayn's camp from the seventh until the night of the tenth of Muharram, 61 AH.

Unable to see small children crying for water, Imam Husayn's companion Yazid bin Hussayn al-Hamadani took the Imam's permission to talk to and persuade Umar ibn Sa'd to allow them to bring water from the river. When he met ibn Sa'd, he did not greet him with the customary salutation. Ibn Sa'd asked, "*Why did you not greet me? Am I not a Moslem?*" Al-Hamadani replied, "*You have assembled to kill the Prophet's grandson. With what excuse will you plead before the Prophet (S) for whose intercession you hope on the Day of Judgement? You have denied water to children that even an infidel will not do. How do you then call yourself a Muslim?*" Umar ibn Sa'd said, "*For the present, I am not worried about the Day of Judgment. What concerns me is the Governorship of Ray which is waiting for me after I am finished with Husayn.*"[3](#)

Then, Imam Husayn (a.s.) called Abbas (a.s.) and asked him to take some companions and try to fetch water from the Euphrates. Abbas (a.s.) took twenty horsemen, and when they reached the riverbank, they were challenged by al-Hajjaj who was guarding the river with his platoon. On hearing the voice of Hilal bin Nafi', who was his cousin, al-Hajjaj permitted him to go to the river to drink. Hilal said, "*When the Holy Prophet's grandson and small children and ladies in his camp are not allowed to drink water, it is a shame that you allow me to drink it.*" He then asked his companions to charge forward and collect as much water as possible in the leather bags. However, al-Hajjaj and his soldiers unsuccessfully fought with Abbas (a.s.) and his companions who succeeded in bringing a few leather bags of water, which was not sufficient even to quench the thirst of the children.[4](#) The thirsty children rushed to take water, and in the melee, the vessel was upturned and water flowed out on the ground. The elder members of Imam Husayn's entourage did not get any water to drink since the seventh of Muharram.

Ibnul Atheer, a well-known Sunni historian, writes in al-Kamil, “*A vile soldier, called Abdullah bin Hussayn al-Azdi standing at the banks of the Euphrates, taunted al-Husayn by saying: ‘Don’t you see the crystal water, as pure and transparent as the sky above? By God, you will not be allowed to taste a drop until your death.’ On hearing this, al-Husayn lifted his hands toward the sky and prayed that the wretch might taste the severity of thirst before his death. Thereupon, the said Abdullah was seized by a burning thirst that to quench it he went on gulping water from the river, vomiting it and gulping again and again, until at last his stomach became bloated and he fell and died in the river within a short time.*”⁵

Though several such incidents should have been seen as a warning, the wicked forces of Yazid remained unmoved.

Umar bin Sa’d was greatly enraged to learn that the brave companions of Imam Husayn (a.s.) could face such a large platoon and succeed in getting water, however meager, to Imam Husayn’s camp. He ordered that the riverbank should be barricaded more vigilantly and not a drop should reach Imam Husayn’s camp. Umar also tightened the circle around Imam Husayn’s tents and planned to attack them with his enormous army.

On knowing this, Imam Husayn (a.s.) came out of his tent accompanied by twenty of his companions and asked Umar ibn Sa’d to come out for a discussion. Umar came with twenty of his companions. The Imam (a.s.) asked his companions to stay back. Umar also left his companions and met the Imam (a.s.) alone. According to some historians, Imam Husayn’s son Ali al-Akbar (a.s.) and brother Abbas (a.s.) accompanied him when the others went and stood at a distance. Umar ibn Sa’d was accompanied by his son and one servant. Imam Husayn (a.s.) told ibn Sa’d, “*Do you not fear God who will call you to account for my blood? You are aware that I am the grandson of the Prophet (S). Leave the Banu Umayya and keep away from harming me, for that will be more pleasing to God.*” Umar replied, “*I am afraid that all my properties will be confiscated.*” The Imam (a.s.) said, “*I will compensate you with my properties.*”

According to some narrators, Umar untenably excused himself saying, “*I am afraid they will annihilate my kith and kin.*” Imam Husayn (a.s.) replied, “*Soon you will be killed in your bed and you shall have no intercession or clemency. I hope that you shall not eat from the wheat of Iraq except a little after me.*” Umar sarcastically replied, “*Barley shall be enough!*”⁶

After this, ibn Sa’d ordered his army to surround the camp of Imam Husayn (a.s.) from all sides. This incident took place on the night of eighth of Muharram.

Between the fourth and the eighth of Muharram, ibn Ziyad continued to send additional soldiers as reinforcement. By the morning of the eighth of Muharram, over a lakh and forty thousand armed men were assembled against Imam Husayn (a.s.) at Karbala. Whenever ibn Ziyad’s forces arrived in Karbala, there was jubilation and beating drums and blowing of trumpets. Every time this happened, Imam Husayn’s sister Zainab (a.s.) inquired if any body had come in response to Imam Husayn’s letter. On hearing a negative reply, she used to feel dejected. At last, she remembered Habib ibn Mudhahir who

was a childhood friend of Imam Husayn (a.s.). She asked Imam Husayn (a.s.) to write to him. Finding over a lakh of soldiers gathered by the satanic forces of Yazid and his commanders, Imam Husayn's sister Zainab (a.s.) insisted that he should also write to some of his friends. Imam Husayn (a.s.) wrote a letter to his childhood friend, Habib bin Mudhahir in the following words,

"From Husayn bin Ali to the great Jurist Habib. I am now surrounded by Yazid's forces at Karbala."

When Imam Husayn's messenger brought the letter, according to one group of historians, Habib was buying henna in the market place. According to other historians, when Imam Husayn's messenger brought the letter, Habib was having food with his wife. Yet, others contend that the incident of buying henna was on an earlier and entirely different occasion and the conversation was between Habib, Maytham and Kumail.

According to the first version, on seeing the letter, Habib returned the henna to the shopkeeper saying, *"Henna is of no use to me now. My white beard will become red with my own blood."* According to the second version, on reading the letter, Habib got up from the dinner and told his wife, *"I bequeath you all that I possess and I hereby divorce you."* His wife sorrowfully asked about the cause for this. Habib informed her that he was leaving in response to Imam Husayn's call to join him as he was surrounded by Yazid's forces. He was sure that he would be martyred and so he bequeathed all that he possessed to his wife and divorced her so that she might, if she chose, go to her mother's house and live there. Habib told her that the wicked and satanic forces of Yazid would not spare even women and children from insults and abuse. The noble wife expressed her determination to serve Imam Husayn's sister Zainab (a.s.) and other ladies of his house during their travails. Habib reached Imam Husayn's camp along with his wife to discharge the obligation to the Imam.

When Habib reached Imam Husayn's camp, he found only a few hundred persons. He asked permission to go to the nearby residents, the Bani Asad tribe, and seek their help, since they were known to be brave and honest people. He went under the cover of night and met the tribe of Bani Asad, who were glad to learn that Habib also belonged to their tribe. Habib said, *"I have brought you the best of all presents. I bring good news for you, both in this world and in the hereafter. The Grandson of the Prophet (S) has been surrounded by a vile and cruel army. If you choose to help the Prophet's grandson, you will earn their blessings."* Abdullah bin Basheer spoke for the Bani Asad tribe and said, *"We will be only too glad to help the Prophet's grandson."* On hearing this, ninety warriors from the Bani Asad tribe accompanied Habib ibn Mudhahir and proceeded towards Imam Husayn's camp. Meanwhile, Umar bin Sa'd learnt about this and sent four hundred men under the command of al-Azraq. A severe skirmish ensued and many people were killed on both sides. Fearing hard reprisal by ibn Sa'd, the remaining persons of the Bani Asad returned back and vacated their village.

Shimr along with his relative Abdullah bin Mahl requested ibn Ziyad to issue a letter of guaranteeing asylum and safe passage saying, *"Our four cousins Abbas, Ja'far, Abdullah and Uthman, who are sons of our aunt Ummul Banin (and Imam Ali) are with al-Husayn. We do not want that any harm may come*

to them as they are related to us.” Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad agreed and gave the letter guaranteeing safe passage and asylum to Abbas, Ja’far, Abdullah and Uthman, the four sons of Imam Ali (a.s.).⁷ On the night of Ashura, Shimr showed this letter to Abbas (a.s.) and his brothers and asked them to desert Imam Husayn (a.s.) and save themselves. Abbas (a.s.) replied, “*How strange! You bring us clemency while the Prophet’s grandson is sought to be killed. Damn your asylum and protection! God is our protector and we are safe under the banner of the Imam.*”⁸

Imam Husayn (a.s.) came out and addressed the army of Yazid that surrounded him,

*“Do you not know that I am the grandson of the messenger of Allah? Do you not know that I am the son of only child of the messenger of Allah Fatima? The martyr Hamza was my father’s uncle. The martyr Ja’far was my father’s brother. Have not you heard the messenger of Allah declare and stress his love for the Ahlul Bayt, and that the Qur’an and the Ahlul Bayt are the inseparable legacies that the messenger of Allah was leaving behind; and that I and my brother Hasan are the masters of the youths of Paradise? If you do not know all these things, then ask and verify, if you so desire, the truth of what I have said from the surviving companions of the messenger of Allah, such as Jabir bin Abdullah al-Ansari, Abu Sa’eed al-Khudri, Sahl bin Sa’d as-Saa’idi, Zayd bin Arqam, Anas bin Malik...etc.”*⁹

Imam Husayn (a.s.) then addressed those who belonged to Kufa and were now in Umar bin Sa’d’s army,

“Have you not written to me complaining that you had no Imam and therefore invited me to come to Kufa and guide you in religious matters?”

When they pretended ignorance of such letters, Imam Husayn (a.s.) had the letters brought from his tent and started reading out their contents along with the names of writers. When there was no answer to this, Imam Husayn (a.s.) said,

“Even if you deny writing these letters and assume that the letters are forged, tell me why you have surrounded us and do not allow us to go away.”

To this, Qeis ibn Ziyad replied, “*First, you acknowledge Yazid as the caliph and sovereign, and then we shall listen to you.”*

Imam Husayn (a.s.) replied, “*I would rather sacrifice my life than to declare allegiance to Yazid who is a tyrant and oppressor; he is steeped in worldly, carnal pleasures; brazenly disobeys the Divine Commandments and in the open court makes fun of the Prophet (S). I would prefer to go away from here, but if I am constrained, I will not submit to the threats of a hypocrite and a despot. ”*

In reply, one from the enemy said, “*We will not let you go, nor will we allow you to have even a drop of water until you are slain and your head is presented to Yazid.*”¹⁰

^{1.} Life of Imam Husayn [s] [The Saviour], p. 148.

- [2. Imam Husayn \(a.s.\) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 168, Nafasul Mahoom, p. 310 quoting Madinatul Ma'ajiz.](#)
- [3. Nafasul Mahoom, p. 310–311, Imam Husayn \(a.s.\) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 169.](#)
- [4. Life of Imam Husayn \[s\] \[The Saviour \], p. 149, Imam Husayn \(a.s.\) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 169–170](#)
- [5. Nafasul Mahoom, p. 307, Imam Husayn \(a.s.\) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 168, Life of Husayn the Saviour, p. 148.](#)
- [6. Nafasul Mahoom, p. 315, Imam Husayn \(a.s.\) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 170–171, Life of Husayn the Saviour p. 151–152.](#)
- [7. Imam Husayn \(a.s.\) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 174, Nafasul Mahoom, p. 317–318.](#)
- [8. Ansab al-Ashraf, vol. 3 p. 184 quoted in Imam Husayn \(a.s.\) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 174–175, Nafasul Mahoom, p. 318.](#)
- [9. Nafasul Mahoom, p 313, Haeiri's Balaghatal Husayn, p. 156–157.](#)
- [10. Life of Imam Husayn \[s\] \[The Saviour\], p. 150–151.](#)

Chapter 21: The Ninth of Muharram

The ninth day of Muharram was the successive third day without water in Imam Husayn's camp. The children, particularly, suffered greatly from the agony of thirst. Sukaynah (a.s.) the daughter of Imam Husayn (a.s.), who was a child then, later narrated, *"By the nightfall of the ninth day, I and the other children in the camp were almost dying due to thirst. There was not a drop of water available. We went around to find out if any water is available. I found that my brother Ali al-Asghar, who was six months old, had turned pale and was crying incessantly due to lack of water and milk, as my mother's breasts had dried up due to her not getting any food or water for the last three days. My aunt Zainab was unsuccessfully trying to console the infant. We were crying out aloud. My father's companion Burair al-Hamadani, who happened to pass by our tents and see our plight, was greatly distressed."*

Burair called some of his friends and insisted that each one of them should hold a child by the hand and approach the enemy guarding the banks of the Euphrates. Burair hoped that on seeing small children crying for water the guards might allow them to drink water. One of Burair's friends, Yahya al-Muzani said that if the stonehearted enemy refused and a skirmish ensued, the children would be exposed to mortal danger. He therefore thought it unwise to take the children with them. It was then decided that only Burair and his friends would approach the riverbank from the road leading to Ghazaria. Once, Ishaq, a relative of Burair, was in charge of that part of the riverbank. He allowed Burair and his companions to go forward and drink as much water as they liked. When they reached the river, Burair's friends were overjoyed at their good fortune and without even sipping a drop of water, collected it in the leather bag brought by Burair. When the enemy soldiers found that instead of drinking water, for which they had permission, Burair and his men were trying to take water to Imam Husayn's camp, which was strictly prohibited by their commander. An altercation ensued in which Burair shouted that it was shameful that he and his friends should be allowed to drink water but the grandson of the Prophet (S) and his small children were forbidden. An arrow pierced the leather bag and pinned it to Burair's neck.

The intense arguments were heard in the camp and immediately Imam Husayn (a.s.) asked some of his friends to rescue Burair. On seeing several persons approaching them, Ishaq's men were subdued lest there should be bloodshed. Bleeding profusely, Burair proudly set down the leather bag and asked the children in the camp to drink. The anxious crowd of jostling children upset the vessel and in no time, the water flowed out and was absorbed by the parched earth. Burair was grieved that the water brought at the risk of life could not pass the thirsty throats of the children in Imam Husayn's camp.[1](#)

Imam Husayn (a.s.) came to know that the vile Umar bin Sa'd was planning a sneak attack by his entire force from behind to kill everyone including women and children and destroy Imam Husayn's camp. To safeguard against such an event, a trench was dug all around the camp, leaving a small passage in the front. Firewood and other available fuel was lit and thrown into the trench. The heat of the burning trench was added to the agony of the three-day's thirst.

One of Umar's soldiers called Jawairia, mocked saying, *"O associates of Husayn, this fire should remind you of the fire of Hell that is waiting for you."* Imam Husayn (a.s.) replied, *"You mention my connection with fire, while I am expecting eagerly to meet my Creator."* Thereafter, Imam Husayn (a.s.) raised up his arms and prayed, *"O Lord, make this man taste the fire in this world before the one that awaits him in the next."* Jawairia's horse suddenly shied and threw him straight into the burning trench, reducing him to ash.[2](#)

Imam Husayn (a.s.) deputed his brother Abbas (a.s.) to go and speak to Umar bin Sa'd. Abbas (a.s.) went with about twenty companions. He asked Umar bin Sa'd, *"Why have you surrounded us? What crime has Husayn committed?."*

Umar replied, *"Our chief [ibn Ziyad] has ordered that we should either make Husayn accept Yazid as the leader of Muslims and pay allegiance to him, or kill him along with all those who support him."*

Abbas (a.s.) asked his companions to stay back and he said to ibn Sa'd, *"Do not take any hasty step till I give your message and get the reply from al-Husayn."* When Abbas (a.s.) left, Habib ibn Mudhahir addressed the surrounding army, *"You are a wretched gathering who have assembled here to kill the only surviving son of Fatima and the grandson of the messenger of Allah. You should know that the Prophet not only loved Husayn, but also commanded you to love and respect him. You have gathered at the instance of Yazid who is a hypocrite and a sinner. His father Mu'awiya, grandfather Abu Sufyan and grandmother Hind hated the Prophet (S) and openly fought against him till they were overpowered and pretended to become Muslims. Have you forgotten that Husayn is the last of the five persons about whom Allah has revealed the verse of purification?"*

Zohair ibn Al-Qain said, *"You are a cruel and heartless assembly of people who deny water to infants, children and the old and ailing. Do you not hear the voices of the children crying for water? What sin have the children committed that you deny them water for the last three days? God will surely punish you for what you are planning to do. It is not too late even now. Go away and do not harm Husayn or his*

people, for indeed Husayn is innocent.”

Some in the crowd kept quiet for fear of reprisal, other in anticipation of reward and yet other merely out of their inherent cruel nature. Yet others said, “*You are very few and sure to be killed. Leave Husayn and join us for your safety and prosperity.*” Habib and Zohair replied, “*Life amidst sinners and tyrants like you is a curse. Death with Husayn is the ultimate triumph here and in the hereafter.*”

Abbas (a.s.) came back after talking with Imam Husayn (a.s.). He addressed the commanders and the surrounding army:

“I once again remind you that you have gathered to kill the Prophet’s grandson al-Husayn. With him is the progeny of Fatima and Ali and a few friends. You have prevented water from reaching Husayn’s camp so much so several infants are near death. What crime have they committed to be so tortured by your inhuman act? What crime has al-Husayn done by which you could absolve yourself from his murder? In the past, people have killed prophets and pious people and deserved God’s wrath. You are also doing the same now. Do not blame us that you were not warned sufficiently or that you did not know with whom you are bent on fighting and killing. In fact, you all know who Husayn is, for it is you people who wrote and invited him to guide you as your Imam. Now, al-Husayn has asked me to give you respite till tomorrow morning so that you may contemplate during the night and comprehend the result before you take any action. After that, you will be solely responsible for your deeds and there will be no scope to plead ignorance or find escape from the consequences of your action.”

In fact, by this action, Imam Husayn (a.s.) gave a night’s reprieve to provide an opportunity to revive the oppressors’ dead conscience and to enable them to realize and correct their mistake. It had a big effect on the enemy, for, from their ranks several persons switched over to Imam Husayn’s camp. On the other hand, none from Imam Husayn’s camp wished to leave despite being offered asylum and safe passage or being aware of imminent death.

Qurra bin Qeis al-Handhali, Habib ibn Mudhahir’s nephew, who had earlier acted as ibn Sa’d’s messenger, was enraged at the injustice and cruelty of ibn Ziyad in shutting down all accesses to water. He cursed ibn Sa’d and joined Imam Husayn’s camp saying, “*I have left behind Hell which surely was my destination if I had stayed with and fought for ibn Sa’d. I do not wish to go back to it. Husayn’s camp is heaven and no wise man would prefer hell to Heaven.*”³ The disgusting conduct of Yazid’s army in sealing the banks of the river and preventing water from reaching the children and women in Imam Husayn’s camp, prompted some thirty soldiers to leave Yazid’s army and cross over to Imam Husayn’s camp.⁴ This incident occurred late within the last night before the battle. Al-Hurr himself crossed over to Imam Husayn’s camp along with his brother, son, and servant in the morning of the tenth of Muharram.

The fact that some persons, contrary to all odds and human nature, left a huge army when definite success and prosperity was within their reach, and crossed over to support a small band of men facing certain death, is another unique aspect of the battle of Karbala. Yet, inexplicably, most authors narrate

that it was Imam Husayn (a.s.) who sought a night's respite from the attack by ibn Sa'd and for prayers too.⁵

Here, we should remember that for centuries, most of the historians were under the control of the Umayyads and the Abbasids who were inimical towards the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.). They sought to remove anything that glorified the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) and supplement it with dubious, if not derogatory and unconfirmed reports. M.S. Mirza quotes the learned historian J.A. Conde, “*A sort of fatality attaching itself to human affairs would seem to command that in the relating of historical events, those of the highest importance should descend to posterity only through the justly suspect channels of narration written by the conquering parties. The mutation of empires, the most momentous revolutions, and the overthrow of the most renowned dynasties seem all to be liable to this advantage; it is from the Romans themselves that the history of their rivalry with the Carthaginians has come down to us, and even if Greek writers have similarly treated the subject, these men were tributaries and dependants of Rome, who did not spare the flatteries best calculated to conciliate its favour.*”⁶

It is therefore not surprising that most historians report contrary to the above version and mistakenly report that it was Imam Husayn (S) who sought time from the enemy. The popular version was created by simply attributing the last part of al-Abbas' speech to an unnamed soldier from ibn Sa'd's army who was supposed to have said, “*We give you time till morning to ponder over the matter of accepting Yazid as your leader. If you do not accept Yazid as your leader, we shall kill you in combat.*”⁷ The mutilation is cleverly carried out by attaching a religious sanctity of ‘request for time for penitent prayers’. However, a factual and sincere analysis brings out the lie.

It was an inviolable custom in those days that during battles, all fighting ended with the sunset to be resumed after the dawn on the next day. Only dacoits and plunderers violated this code, but never a fighting army or a person of noble descent. At Karbala, on one side was the huge army of Yazid and on the other side was the noble person of Imam Husayn (a.s.), his family and a few companions. With such overwhelming numbers, a sly nocturnal attack never even would have been contemplated. Hence, there was never any threat of a nocturnal attack. It will be trite to suggest that Imam Husayn (a.s.) perceived a nocturnal attack and wanted to forestall it by seeking a night's respite.

The *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) never neglected prayers. Imam Ali (a.s.) was martyred while prostrating in the Morning Prayer. The *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) supplicated to God during long hours in the nights. For Imam Husayn (a.s.), prayers were an integral part of his self. It is unimaginable that Imam Husayn (a.s.) asked for a night's respite to perform his prayers and supplications in penitence.

Lastly, the effect of a night's respite appears to have worked only in favour of Imam Husayn (a.s.) to kindle the conscience of a few enemy soldiers who left ibn Sa'd and joined Imam Husayn (a.s.). On the other hand, no amount of advice or persuasion could dislodge even a single member from Imam Husayn's camp. The Twelver Shia believe that the Prophet (S) as well as Imam Ali (a.s.) had given Imam Husayn (a.s.) the names of those who would be martyred along with him in Karbala. The Imam

also knew that, in the initial stages, some of them would be with the enemy and that they would ultimately join him. It is therefore considered that Imam Husayn (a.s.) gave the respite to enable such people to come over to him from the enemy's camp.

After the sunset, in the night between the ninth and the tenth days of Muharram, Imam Husayn (a.s.) led the obligatory prayers with his companions. As soon as the prayers were finished, Imam Husayn (a.s.) made a speech before his companions. First, he praised the Lord for giving so many sincere companions and friends. He then said,

"I am thankful to you all for your affection and your willingness to help me at this hour. But, I assure you that Yazid is only thirsting for my blood. I hereby discharge you from the obligation under your pledge of allegiance to me and I release you from all bonds you pledged to assist me. I like that you leave me now and go back to your homes. I shall not hold you responsible if you go away now, as it is now not obligatory for you to remain with me. If you feel shy to leave before my eyes, I will make it easy for you by putting out the lights so that, in the darkness, nobody can see who has left the camp."⁸

So saying, Imam Husayn (a.s.) snuffed out all the lights and darkness enveloped for a long time. At that time, there were few hundred persons besides Imam Husayn (a.s.), but, when the lamps were lit, only fifty-four companions remained, in addition to Imam Husayn's kith and kin.

Those who remained with Husayn (a.s.) were resolute about sacrificing their lives for the cause of the Imam of the day. Imam Husayn's brother, Abbas (a.s.) said, "*Woe to the life without you!*"⁹

Muslim bin Awsaja, an octogenarian and a companion of the Prophet (S) got up and said, "*I have heard the messenger of Allah declaring that 'Hasan and Husayn are from my flesh and blood, and it is obligatory on everyone to obey and love them as much as I myself love them.' So, if I desert you now, am I not responsible before the messenger of Allah? I will not tolerate a tyrant and infidel to harm you. We shall make ourselves a shield to defend and protect al-Husayn, the example of virtue and righteousness.*"

Zuhair ibn Al-Qain said, "*If we were to be killed a thousand times and our bodies revived, we would fight against the oppressor to protect our Imam and his just cause.*"

Seeing the love and devotion of his companions, Imam Husayn (a.s.) said, "*I am indeed proud to have such companions. Neither the prophets of yore, nor my grandfather, nor my father had as many devout companions as I now have at this time of adversity.*"

Another unique feature of the battle of Karbala is that impending calamity and certain death should have, normally, brought a gloom over Imam Husayn's camp. Quite contrary to this natural response, the entire camp was jubilant. Some prided that they were fulfilling their covenant by offering their lives for Imam Husayn (a.s.). Some others were anxious to meet the Prophet (S) and Imam Ali (a.s.) and receive the rewards that awaited them. Each one was advising the other to be steadfast and to sacrifice his life for

the cause of the Imam (a.s.). Muslim and the octogenarian Habib, who always presented a sober countenance, gleefully laughed as if they were small children, awaiting and about to receive the object which they fondly desired. Even the women rose to the occasion. Recounting stories of valour of the martyrs Hamza (a.s.), Ja'far (a.s.) and Imam Ali (a.s.) and several others, they encouraged their children to face the enemy valiantly and discharge their obligation to the Imam of the time. The teens were enthusiastic and joyful in anticipation of tasting the elixir of death in martyrdom, which they considered sweeter than honey, while defending the Imam (a.s.). Historians like Abu Makhnaf, at-Tabari and Abu Ishaq al-Esfarayini record that throughout the night, supplications and prayers and frequent cries of 'Allaho Akbar' were reverberating along with the wailing of the thirsty children demanding water with their mothers trying to console them, that Imam Husayn's camp sounded like a busy bee hive.

In the enemy's camp, al-Hurr commanded a thousand men against Imam Husayn (a.s.). He was restless, for he realized that it was he, with his thousand men, who had surrounded Imam Husayn (a.s.) and prevented him from going back to Mecca, Medina or any other place. He felt guilty when he heard the cries of thirsty and hungry children in Imam Husayn's camp. The blocking of the riverbank to prevent water, the sharpening of swords and the elaborate plans of Umar bin Sa'd to eliminate a handful of persons, pricked al-Hurr's conscience. The innately cruel and vile nature of Yazid, Umar bin Sa'd and ibn Ziyad further tormented his conscience and soul. He paced his tent throughout the night. His son asked him the reason for his anguish. Al-Hurr replied, "*I am at the crossroads between Heaven and Hell. I have decided to leave Hell and go to Heaven.*" So saying, at the first ray of dawn, al-Hurr jumped on to his horse followed by his noble brother, son and faithful slave. They galloped towards Imam Husayn's camp. Al-Hurr stopped a short distance from Imam Husayn's tent, asked his son to tie his hands behind his back, in the manner of tying an apprehended criminal. Seeing al-Hurr, his brother, son and slave, Imam Husayn's companions advanced, thinking from the past experience that al-Hurr was coming to cause mischief. Al-Hurr asked his son to lay down all arms. All of them surrendered with bowed heads. Al-Hurr begged to be pardoned and Imam Husayn (a.s.) readily pardoned him saying, "*I am pleased with you, and your Lord the Creator is also pleased with you.*"

The above facts bring out another unique aspect of the battle of Karbala. In battles, people desert from a weaker side, be it weak in arms or numbers, to the opponent who has superior strength or numbers. In the battle of Karbala, none from Imam Husayn's camp left him though apparently Imam Husayn (a.s.) had no superiority in numbers or arms. On the other hand, from Yazid's army of over a lakh of soldiers, at least forty persons came over to fight for Imam Husayn's cause. There was no incentive for them other than the independence of their spirit to uphold justice and oppose repression. They did not choose to strike any deal in the darkness of night. The switching over was not a clandestine affair, but an open and defiant protest by right thinking persons against the oppression and injustice of Yazid and his hordes.

1. Life of Imam Husayn [s] [The Saviour], p. 153–158.

2. Life of Imam Husayn [s] [The Saviour], p. 158 – 159.

3. Life of Imam Husayn [s] [The Saviour], p. 145.

- [4.](#) Al-Iqd al-Fareed, vol. 4 p.168, Imam Husayn (a.s.) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p 184.
- [5.](#) Nafasul Mahmoom, p 322, Imam Husayn (a.s.) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 177, Life of Imam Husayn (a.s.) [The Saviour], p. 152 – 153.
- [6.](#) The Caliphate by Agha Muhammad Sultan Mirza, p. 24 quoting “History of the Dominion of the Arabs in Spain.”
- [7.](#) Nafasul Mahmoom, p 322, Imam Husayn (a.s.) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 177, Life of Imam Husayn the Saviour, p. 152 – 153.
- [8.](#) Nafasul Mahmoom, p 323, Imam Husayn (a.s.) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 178, Life of Imam Husayn the Saviour, p. 160 – 153.
- [9.](#) Al-Irshad of Sheikh al-Mufid, Tr. IKA Howard, p. 347.

Chapter 22: Ashura; the Tenth of Muharram

The battle of Karbala was foretold in almost all religions. The *Bhaunik Puran* of the Hindus was translated into Urdu by Maulvi Abdurrahman Chishgti, a prominent Sunni scholar under the title ‘Mir’atul Makhloqat’. In that book, Mahadev relates to his wife Parbati all the future things that were to happen, including the birth of Prophet Mahamat (Muhammad) who will preach a great religion and that a few years after his death some evil men would unjustly murder his grandson.[1](#)

Among the Zoroastrians *Jamasp Nama* is a famous book of predictions. It was translated into Urdu by Mulla Wahidi, editor of *Nizamul Mashayakh*, Delhi. Jamasp predicts the birth of the Prophet (a.s.), the spread of Islam and the chaos after the Prophet’s death. He writes, “Religion shall become a stepping stone to rulership. People will wage war against his son-in-law. The son-in-law will have two sons. One will be poisoned and the other will be martyred along with his friends in the desert. The leaders opponent to the Prophet’s progeny will be men of low morals.[2](#)

The battle between Imam Husayn (a.s.) and the forces of Yazid took place on the tenth of Muharram, the year 61 A.H corresponding to October 9, 680 A.D.

Mirza Ghulam Abbas Ali writes, “*Adib, the first month of the Jews, corresponds to Rajab of Moslems; and Nisan, the seventh month of the former, to Muharram of the later. But, during the time of Moses [Exodus Ch. 12 V. 2], the seventh month of the civil year was changed into the first month of the sacred year, and hence Muharram that was originally the seventh month is now considered the first month of the year by Muslims.*” [3](#)

He writes further, “*The Jewish months as well as those of Hindus and Moslems have always been Lunar. The difference in the dates calculated by the Jews and the Hindus from those of Moslems is due to the fact that the Jews give the month of Nisan 40 days and the Hindus give every third year an additional month, so as to make their years keep pace with solar years; otherwise, the Day of Atonement, Dasara and Muharram, all being the tenth day of the seventh month, would fall on the same day.*” [4](#)

The tenth day of the seventh month has great importance in every true religion. The Christian and the Jews consider it as the Day of Atonement or the Day of Sacrifice. They are directed to observe Sabbath and rest, and a day of convocation in which they should afflict their souls and give offerings of fire to the Lord on that day.⁵ There is no explanation with Christian and Jewish theologists as to why they are commanded to afflict their souls on the tenth day of the seventh month.

In the Hindu mythology, Pandavas got the permission to untie their weapons from the Jimmi plants in preparation of regaining their lost empire from the Kauravas. Until date, the Hindus celebrate it as Dasara, the tenth day of their seventh month. On this day, Hanuman found out the place where Ravana had hidden Sita, and informed it to Rama.

According to Muslim traditions, it was on the tenth day of the seventh month, at the place now called Karbala, Noah's Ark was caught in a whirlpool and barely escaped drowning. On that day while passing the plains of Karbala during their times, the Prophets Abraham, Moses and Jesus stumbled, suffered bleeding injuries and cried when their hearts suddenly became heavy with inexplicable deep sorrow. Suffice it to say that the Tenth day of the Seventh month is of great importance in every religion, signifying war or sorrow.

It was the invariable custom among the Arabs in their wars to challenge the opponent into a single combat. Those who were at the bottom of the hierarchy came out first to throw or face the challenge, followed progressively by the best, bravest, and renowned warriors, sparing the commander until the last. If the single combat was indecisive, in rare cases, recourse was to be a general onslaught by the entire army, but, ordering a general onslaught was looked down upon by valiant and noble soldiers as a mean and cowardly act of a vile and weak commander.

In the battle of Karbala, the tradition of single combat was adopted in the initial stages. The hostilities were invariably commenced by Yazid's forces, who, finding confidence in their numbers, challenged Imam Husayn's small number of companions and family members in single combat. Imam Husayn (a.s.) being steeped in his father Imam Ali's tradition, advised his small group of companions to refrain from commencing any hostility, and only to defend themselves whenever the enemy threw a challenge.

The scribes present in the battlefield were not in agreement as regarding who was the first martyr or the sequence in which Imam Husayn's companions went forth to meet the enemy's challenge. The differences in their reports may be due to their situation, exact spot and time of their observation.

There also appears to be some difference, among various narrators, regarding the number of martyrs from Imam Husayn's camp. It is commonly asserted by the Shia sources that the total number of martyrs is seventy-two, comprised of fifty-four companions of Imam Husayn (a.s.) and eighteen members from his family including Ali al-Asghar, the six-month-old son of Imam Husayn (a.s.).

Moulvi Mirza Ghulam Abbas Ali Sahib writes, "... *Thus, the whole number of Imam Husayn's companions ranges between seventy-two and one hundred and twenty according to different authors.*" ⁶

According to him, the total number of companions, identified by name, is ninety-five and the number of Imam Husayn's family members is twenty-seven, thus making a total of one hundred and twenty-two martyrs. This figure takes into account twenty-eight companions of Imam Husayn (a.s.) who were martyred during the frequent shower of the enemy's arrows,⁷ shot blindly towards Imam Husayn's camp. Sheikh Abbas al-Qummi gives a list of twenty-nine companions of Imam Husayn (a.s.) who were martyred in the first raid.⁸ S.V. Mir Ahmed Ali has appended a brief note on 105 martyrs of Karbala in his book 'Husayn, the Saviour of Islam'.⁹

All narrators, however, unanimously record that it was Umar ibn Sa'd who emerged from his tent, called his slave Duraid to whom he handed over the standard and stood under the shade of the banner with bow and arrow in his hand and shouted "*My warriors! Bear witness before God and people that it is me, Umar son of Sa'd, who is the first to attack al-Husayn.*" Umar, then, shot the first arrow towards Imam Husayn's camp, signifying the commencement of war.

According to some narrators, al-Hurr, who crossed over to Imam Husayn's camp early that morning, was the first person to seek permission to face the challenger. Having got the permission from Imam Husayn (a.s.), al-Hurr was preparing to go into the battlefield, when his servant Urwa approached him saying that the slave cannot live to see his master facing the enemy. He begged to be allowed to go first. He first dispatched triumphed over several warriors in single combats and then killed many of the enemy who surrounded him before falling down a martyr. Thus, Urwa, Al-Hurr's slave, according to some historians. was the first to face the enemy and to attain martyrdom, followed by al-Hurr's son, brother Mus'ab and al-Hurr himself in that order.

According to Moulvi Mirza Ghulam Abbas Sahib, the first to face the enemy was Abdullah son of al-Hurr who attained martyrdom after slaying a good number from the enemy. He was followed by al-Hurr's slave, son, brother and al-Hurr himself. ¹⁰

However, there is unanimity among all the writers that the last person to face the enemy was Imam Husayn (a.s.). They also agree that just before his martyrdom, Imam Husayn's six-month-old infant son Ali al-Asghar (a.s.) was brought into the battlefield to get for him some water, but Harmalah martyred him by slitting his parched throat with his powerful arrow.

Umar ibn Sa'd gave his army's standard to his slave Duraid, the command of the left flank to Umar bin al-Hajjaj and the right flank to Urwa bin Qeis. He gave the command of the cavalry to Khouli and the infantry to Shabath bin Rib'iy.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) gave the standard to his brother Abul Fadhl al-Abbas (a.s.), who in turn appointed Zohair ibn al-Qain to command the right flank and Habib ibn Mudhahir to command the left flank.

A detailed account of the battle itself is found in the various 'Maqatil'.¹¹ Mirza Ghulam Abbas Ali's book "Life of Husayn" and the English translation of Nafasul Mahmoom provide the details for those who read English. Late S.V Mir Ahmed Ali, the well-known translator of the Qur'an into English, has also written a

book under the title of “Husayn; the Saviour of Islam” in 1964. Curiously, Ghulam Abbas Ali, S.V. Mir Ahmed Ali as well as this humble servant all belong to Madras. Another excellent book is Yasin T. al-Jubouri’s “Kerbala and Beyond.” Our object is not to go into lengthy details of the battle but to bring out the words uttered by Imam Husayn (a.s.) and his companions, so that we may understand the object and motive that propelled them to fight Yazid’s forces and attain martyrdom. Detailed accounts of the battle can be found in several books, which establish the ferocity and inhuman nature of the vile Yazid and his forces, and in contrast, the just cause and the spirit of independence from tyranny in which Imam Husayn (a.s.) and his noble companions defended themselves. Historians are also unanimous in recording that it was Yazid’s forces that always initiated the attack and that Imam Husayn’s companions went forth, as a last resort, in response to the enemy’s challenge.

In the following pages we give a general account of the battle with some details about Imam Husayn’s brother Abbas (a.s.), his sons Ali al-Akbar (a.s.) and Ali al-Asghar (a.s.). Whenever anyone from Imam Husayn’s camp emerged to meet the challenging enemy, they reminded their opponent about the Qur’anic verses and sayings of the Prophet (S) which praised and demanded adherence and obedience to the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). They emphasised that Imam Husayn (a.s.) was the last of those Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). They also demanded to know what crime Imam Husayn (a.s.) had committed and the reason why they were after his blood.

Moulvi Mirza Ghulam Abbas Ali Sahib recounts the various sermons addressed by Imam Husayn (a.s.) and his companions Brurair, Muslim, Zohair, Habib and several others before the enemy commenced the war.

According to some other authors, al-Hurr was the first to address the enemy, perhaps hoping that he would be able to persuade the thousand horsemen he commanded to see reason and leave their services under the aggressor and to shift their support to the righteous cause. Al-Hurr along with his son, brother, and servant were some among those who had crossed over from Yazid’s army. Therefore, his address to the forces that he commanded until recently was very significant.

In his speech, al-Hurr praised the Lord and the Prophet (S) and he recited verses from the Qur’an glorifying the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) one of whom Imam Husayn (S) was. Al-Hurr recited the verses relating to the Prophet Salih (a.s.), the killing of whose camel had brought down the wrath of God. He reminded them that the killing of Imam Husayn (a.s.) who was from the very the flesh and blood of the Prophet (S), for no fault, would be a major sin inviting greater wrath of God both in this world and the hereafter. He reminded them that the pleasures and promises of this world were merely a transitory mirage and that the life to come would be the everlasting one. He then recounted his own experience saying that until the last night he commanded Yazid’s cavalry and that he realized that never had Imam Husayn (a.s.) done anything unjust, illegal or contrary to Islam, while Yazid was an imposter, debauch and hypocrite undermining Islam from within. It was this reason why he left the command of Yazid’s cavalry though knowing that he would be martyred.

The enemy had no answer to al-Hurr's arguments. Realising that al-Hurr's speech had caused a stir in the rank and file of the enemy, Shimr, the most cruel and stonehearted of all, advised Umar bin Sa'd that they should immediately attack and kill al-Hurr before he could utter another word. Al-Hurr went back to seek Imam Husayn's permission to fight the enemy.

Burair took permission to address the enemy. In his address, Burair told the enemy, “*Would you deny and refuse to recollect the tradition in which the messenger of Allah had said that he was leaving, among the people, two inseparable and essential things, namely the Qur'an and the Ahlul Bayt and that following both is obligatory and that if they forsake anyone of the two, Muslims will be confounded and led astray.*” In unison, the enemy forces replied, “*We admit that the messenger of Allah had done so.*”

Burair said, “*Would you deny that in the Qur'an God declares that the Ahlul Bayt are Immaculate, free from the possibility of committing error?*” The enemy soldiers replied, “*We can not deny what you say as it is the truth.*” Burair said, “*Do you admit that al-Husayn is one of the Ahlul Bayt and the Imam of the time and that he is pious and righteous?*” The soldiers replied, “*We do admit.*”

Burair said, “*Has al-Husayn committed any transgression of divine laws, killed anyone, deprived anyone of his property or has he committed any act that demands his execution?*” The enemy forces admitted that Imam Husayn (a.s.) had not committed any such act. Burair continued, “*Do you not remember that Yazid's father Mu'awiya prevented water in (the battle of) Siffin and that when Ali gained possession of the river, he acted magnanimously in giving water and he refused to act like Mu'awiya or to prevent water to be given to the thirsty enemy?*” The enemy concurred.

Burair then said, “*You know that there are women, children and infants in al-Husayn's camp who are being denied even a drop of water since the past three days. You allow heathens, atheists, Christians and Jews and even animals to drink water from the river, but you refuse to allow even a drop of it, to your Prophet's grandson and his children.*” The enemy replied, “*We are soldiers employed by Yazid to wage war. We obey his orders and there is no room for sympathy in a war.*”

Burair cursed their blind following and lack of humanitarian considerations, and came back to Imam Husayn's camp.

Then, Zohair ibn al-Qain took permission to address the enemy ranks. Zohair said, “*O you people who have gathered here, have you forgotten that the messenger of Allah had advised you to adore and follow the Ahlul Bayt of whom al-Husayn is the most prominent of those present here? This is the time of your test regarding that advice. You claim to be Muslims. Your action will show how you treat al-Husayn now in the context of the Prophet's advice.*”

Shimr shot an arrow towards Zohair saying, “*O old Man, will you face us in combat or you will waste the breath of your old lungs with unnecessary talk? I am anxious to kill all of you.*” Zohair replied, “*Life among people like you is a disgrace and a burden. Death for al-Husayn's cause is indeed a grace, blessing and everlasting pleasure.*”

Muslim ibn Awsaja and Habib ibn Mudhahir went and addressed the enemy similarly, but Shimr, Ibn Sa'd, Harmala and Khouli interfered and disturbed their speech to prevent the soldiers from being impressed with the unassailable arguments put forth before them.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) then addressed the soldiers of Kufa saying, *“Have you not written to me and requested me to come to you for providing religious guidance? Did you not assert that you are left without an Imam? Have I not written in reply promising to be among you to provide religious guidance? Have we done anything wrong? Have we committed any crime? Did you ever find me negligent in my religious obligations or in the adherence to the Islamic tenets?”*

The soldiers replied, *“You are not guilty of any of these.”*

Then, Imam Husayn (a.s.) said, *“On the other hand, Yazid himself and his men who have gathered here are guilty of making innovations, discarding religious injunctions, indulging in worldly carnal pleasures, and mocking the messenger of Allah by saying that there is nothing but this life in this world, and that there is no accountability or reward or punishment and no life hereafter. Has not Yazid persecuted and killed several noble scholars who were pious Muslims? Do you then take sides with such men against me? Have you lost your sense of justice? Have you forgotten that Islam teaches austerity and piety? Is not this worldly life transitory and the gain you hope to get is not going to provide eternal comfort to you? Do you not realize the consequences of the evilness of your act in seeking to slay me?”*

The enemy soldiers were spell bound. Imam Husayn (a.s.) continued, *“You have fallen in serious error. You are misled and baffled by your own ignorance and the incitement of Yazid and his men. You have lost your sense of Judgement and the desire to distinguish and accept good instead of evil. You are tempted by vain promises of worldly wealth and comfort. I assure you that you shall not have it. In fact, your guilt will torment you in this world and you will suffer punishment in the next. Take heed and listen. I have not done anything wrong nor harmed any of you, as you never met me before. There is no cause for enmity between you and me. You know that God will punish those who kill an innocent person. Desist from your evil plan, and even this moment let us part ways and avoid bloodshed.”*

Umar bin Sa'd at the head of the enemy soldiers shouted, *“We will not let you go. We have gathered here to fight and kill you and your companions.”*

Imam Husayn (a.s.) replied, *“Disgrace be upon you! You have forsaken your religion and become Satan's disciples. The ill-gotten and prohibited food that you consume has imbibed disloyalty, uttering falsehood, injustice, oppression and shamelessness into your very blood and nature. Yet, you seek my allegiance so that you may later claim that I had assented to your evil deeds? I would rather sacrifice my life than to succumb to the threats of a tyrant. I have placed all facts before you to show who I am, and that we have not done anything wrong to warrant your wrath. I have also warned you sufficiently and if you do not heed my words, you shall be eternally held responsible in this life and in the hereafter.”*

On hearing this, Umar bin Sa'd shot the first arrow towards Imam Husayn (a.s.) saying, *“Bear witness O*

you God and men, that I am the first to shoot this arrow in token of initiating this war against al-Husayn and his companions.”

Thereafter, one after another, Imam Husayn’s companions went, as per the custom of the Arabs, to meet the challenge in a single combat. They told the enemy about their noble ancestry and depending on their age, their achievements in various wars fought alongside the Prophet, Imam Ali, or Imam Hasan (a.s.) and explained the relationship of Imam Husayn with the Prophet, his daughter Fatima, and Imam Ali (peace be on them). They explained the justness of Imam Husayn’s cause for which they were ready to sacrifice their lives in accordance with the Qur'an and the Holy Prophet’s traditions. Each of them prevailed over several opponents in single combats and were martyred when they were slyly attacked from behind or when Yazid’s soldiers made a concerted onslaught.

The Martyrdom of al-Qasim ibn al-Hasan

After the companions of Imam Husayn (a.s.) were all martyred, it was the turn of his relatives; the remoter relatives facing the enemy before the nearer ones. Thus, the first to go, one by one, were the six brothers, three nephews and two sons of Muslim bin Aqeel (a.s.), cousin and deputy of Imam Husayn (a.s.) who was martyred in Kufa. Then, followed Own and Muhammad the two sons of Abdullah bin Ja'far and Imam Husayn's sister Zainab (a.s.). Next, came the turn of the sons of Imam Hasan (a.s.). Al-Qasim was in his teens. In the single combat, he prevailed over several renowned warriors including the renowned Syrian, al-Arzaq and his brothers. When the enemy made a general attack with all his might, Qasim fought with great valour and the ferocity of his attack scattered the enemy whom he pursued right into the midst of Yazid's army. Sa'd bin Urwa bin Nufail, a vile soldier of Yazid, hid himself and when Qasim passed in pursuit of the fleeing soldiers, attacked from behind so ferociously that Qasim fell from his horse. The enemy, seeing Qasim lying on the ground, regrouped and attacked him. Hearing Qasim's cries, Abbas, Ali al-Akbar and Imam Husayn (a.s.) rushed to rescue him, but in the melee, the hoofs of horses of the retreating forces of Yazid trampled him (Qasim) badly.

The Martyrdom of Abbas and other sons of Imam Ali

According to Hafiz Jalaluddin¹², Own son of Imam Ali (a.s.) and Asma' bint Umai, a stepbrother of Imam Husayn (S), was present and fought valiantly for Imam Husayn (a.s.). He prevailed over Salih bin Sayyar and his brother Badr bin Sayyar in a single combat, but while he was thus engaged, Khalid bin Talha came from behind and dealt a mortal blow and Own was martyred.

Abbas (a.s.), one of the four stepbrothers of Imam Husayn (a.s.), was born to Imam Ali (a.s.) and Ummul Banin bint Hizam bin Khalid bin Rabi'a. Three of them, Uthman, Ja'far and Abdullah had earlier in the day fought the enemy and attained martyrdom. Abbas (a.s.) was now very anxious to face the enemy. He was a renowned warrior and had fought alongside Imam Ali (a.s.) even when he was only twelve years old. The enemy ranks were terrified of facing him. Earlier in the preceding night Shimr, who

claimed that Ibn Ziyad, the governor of Kufa, was distant relative of Ummul Banin, produced ibn Ziyad's letter, offering enormous wealth and property to Abbas in addition to a high post in Yazid's army. Abbas tore and scattered the letter of guarantee and refused to be enticed saying that he was least interested in worldly wealth or power and that he was fighting for the just and noble cause of Imam Husayn (a.s.) against the tyrants and hypocrites.

When Abbas approached, Imam Husayn (a.s.) did not permit to fight against the enemy. Instead, he permitted him only to fetch water from the river Euphrates to quench the thirst of the children in the camp.

Abbas came out of the camp and addressed the enemy soldiers saying:

"O you vile and base men of ignoble birth, would you deny the basic need of water to the children of the Holy Prophet's grandson al-Husayn, while you claim to be Muslims and hope for the Holy Prophet's intercession before God? What sin have these children committed that you seek to kill them? How do you justify denying water to children and women? Your conscience is dulled by the lure of wealth and you have forsaken the Islamic tenets. The curse of God is forever upon you for your evil nature."

Hearing these words, the enemy attacked Abbas (a.s.) from all sides. Abbas repelled the onslaught and the enemy soldiers took to their heels. Murad, a veteran soldier from Yazid's army, became infuriated and called upon his men to stop running, as he, an accomplished soldier, would singly face Abbas (a.s.). When Murad attacked with his lance, Abbas (a.s.) dexterously evaded it at the very last moment, wrenched it from Murad's hands and struck his horse with such force that Murad was thrown down and his horse was disabled. Shimr shouted at Suraqa to take and give Murad another horse called Tawia. Abbas (a.s.) frustrated this plan by killing Suraqa and taking the horse Tawia. Abbas (a.s.) left his own horse at Imam Husayn's camp and riding Tawia, went back to the fight. Murad, in mortal danger, shouted at his men to come to his rescue saying, *"Abbas, riding my horse Tawia, will kill me with my own lance."* Hearing the pitiful cries of the wretch, Shimr accompanied by Sinan bin Anas, Khouli bin Yazid al-Asbahi, Jameel bin Malik and several horsemen went forth to rescue Murad. But, before the rescue party could reach Murad, Abbas (a.s.) overtook them and killed Murad with Murad's own lance.

Scattering the enemy contingent, Abbas (a.s.) reached the banks of the Euphrates and asked the horse to drink water. The faithful animal turned away its head as if refusing to taste water. Abbas (a.s.) then raised a handful of water up to his mouth to show to the world that he had command over the river then. Abbas (a.s.) filled the leather bag with water and started towards Imam Husayn (a.s.) camp, anxious to deliver water to the thirsty children. Fearing that water might, after all, reach Imam Husayn's camp, the enemy soldiers rallied. Unable to face him with sword or lance, the archers were pressed into service. While Abbas (a.s.) was busy avoiding the arrows, one of the soldiers came from behind and severed his right arm. Abbas (a.s.) caught the leather bag by his left hand. Another vile soldier of Yazid slunk behind and cut his left hand. Abbas (a.s.) caught the leather bag by teeth, intent on saving the bag of water. An arrow then pierced the leather bag and water flowed out of it. At that moment, an arrow struck Abbas

(a.s.) in the eye, blinding him completely, while simultaneously he was clubbed from behind with brute force. Finding that his object of procuring water to Imam Husayn's children failed, frustrated Abbas (a.s.) had no desire to live, and he fell down from his horse.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) fought and scattered the enemy and reached Abbas (a.s.), whose face and eyes were completely covered with blood. As a last wish, Abbas (a.s.) wanted his healthy eye to be cleaned of the blood so that he might see his master in his last moments, even as he had opened his eyes at his birth to see Imam Husayn (a.s.) before he saw anyone else. Abbas (a.s.) heaved a deep sigh and expressed his desire that Imam Husayn (a.s.) should not take his body to the camp, as he was, even at death, ashamed to face the children for whom he could not procure water. Abbas (a.s.) breathed his last in Imam Husayn's lap. His wish was fulfilled and he was buried where he breathed his last. His mausoleum is far away from that of Imam Husayn's camp.

Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.), the eldest son and next Imam to his father Imam Husayn (a.s.), was laid up with such high fever that he became completely unconscious. Muslims believe that by making him sick, God paved the way for the succession of the Imamate to continue by devolving upon him.

The Martyrdom of Ali al-Akbar

The last person to fight in the cause of Imam Husayn (a.s.) was his second son Ali al-Akbar (a.s.) who was then eighteen years old. He was the darling of the family. He very much resembled the Prophet (S), not only in appearance and bearing but also in the manner of speech. His aunt Zainab (a.s.) and his mother Layla were severely grief stricken on his departure for battle. Imam Husayn (a.s.) asked them to pray for his safe return. When Ali al-Akbar (a.s.) went to fight the challenging enemy, he overcame every mighty opponent who came for single combat.

The efforts in the battle coupled with the lack of water over the past three days brought with it excruciating thirst. Ali al-Akbar returned to the camp and said, "If only I could get a gulp of water, I would show the enemy the mettle of a Hashemite warrior." Hearing this, Imam Husayn (a.s.) called and asked him to suckle his tongue, as there was not even a drop of water available. When he took his father's tongue in his mouth, he immediately withdrew it saying, "Father, your thirst is more severe than mine, for your tongue is parched and hard."

Ali al-Akbar (a.s.) went back to the battlefield. This time, Imam Husayn (a.s.) forbade Zainab and Layla from praying for the safe return of Ali al-Akbar (a.s.). With renewed vigor, Ali al-Akbar (a.s.) fought the enemy, who instead of coming for single combat, now attacked him in a concerted effort of the cavalry, archers, lancers and infantrymen. The lance of the wretch Sinan ibn Anas pierced Ali al-Akbar's chest and passed through his liver.

All the day, Imam Husayn (a.s.) used to call Abbas (a.s.) and Ali al-Akbar (a.s.) to help him bring the bodies of every martyr. Now, when he heard the cry of Ali al-Akbar (a.s.), there was no one remaining to

assist him. Hameed ibn Muslim records, “*In the morning of Ashura when I saw him, al-Husayn appeared much younger than his sixty three years. By the time al-Abbas was martyred, he was stooping from the waist. The colour of his beard had turned salt-and-pepper. When I saw him hurrying to the side of his martyred son Ali al-Akbar, he was stumbling and his vision appeared to have dimmed. His hair had turned completely grey and he appeared to have suddenly aged into a very old man. He was calling out: ‘Where are you Ali? Where is my Ali? Oh Lord, help me to find my son!’ At that moment, Ali al-Akbar’s horse appeared, smeared with blood, and it pulled al-Husayn to where its master was rolling in blood.*”¹³

When Imam Husayn (a.s.) attempted to lift his son’s full-fledged body, he found that all his strength had suddenly drained. He prayed God to give him the strength to lift the body. With great difficulty, he lifted and put his son’s body on the back of the horse and took him to his camp. He called out the children to help him in bringing down the body of Ali al-Akbar from the back of the horse. Some years later in a congregation, a person asked Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.), “*I was present at Karbala on the day of Ashura. Though it was a very solemn occasion for the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.), towards the end of the day, I saw a woman of noble stature clad in red clothes. I wonder what the happy occasion was which warranted the wearing of a red colored dress.*” On hearing this, Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) wept and said, “*The woman was my aunt Zainab. She had assisted my father in getting down my brother Ali al-Akbar’s body from on the back of the horse and her clothes were smeared with his blood and appeared red.*”

The enemy, finding that there none was left in Imam Husayn’s camp except women, children and the ailing and unconscious Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) and Imam Husayn (a.s.) himself, started shouting and clamoring for Imam Husayn (a.s.) to come out and fight them.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) bade farewell to his family members and came out to face the challenge. He asked Umar bin Sa’d to order his men to be quite so that they might hear his words. Umar replied, “*I will order my men, but can I prevent the neighing of horses and the clanging of armors?*”

Imam Husayn (a.s.) said, “*If you are not capable of it, I shall do it.*” Then, Imam Husayn (a.s.) cast a glance all around. The men became quite, the neighing of horses and the clanging of armors stopped. A miraculous and absolute silence prevailed over the entire battlefield.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) first glorified God while addressing the enemy:

“God has created this world as a temporary and ever changing abode for his creatures. Its pleasures entrap men and those who run after such pleasures are, in reality, the losers. Let not the pleasures of this world deceive you, for it denies you that which you seek and deprives you of that which you aspire. I find that you have united in that which God deplores and have thus incurred God’s wrath. You had apparently accepted God’s sovereignty and Muhammad’s prophethood. Yet strangely, you have joined hands against the very progeny of the Holy Prophet’s and intend to kill them. Satan has prevailed over

you and you have forsaken God. You and your evil plans are going to be destroyed very soon. We are from God and to Him is our return. You people have rescinded and lost your faith and have become infidels. Tyrants will be soon destroyed.”¹⁴

On hearing this, the vile Shimr said, “What you say is not comprehensible to us, nor do we care for what you say.” Imam Husayn (a.s.) replied,

“I say: fear the True God, ¹⁵ and do not slay me, for in any sense, it is neither legal nor proper for you to murder me. Nor have you any right to disgrace me, ¹⁶ for I am the son of the daughter of the messenger of Allah and my grandmother is Khadija. You know that the messenger of Allah had declared that Hasan and Husayn are the masters of the youth of Paradise.”

So saying, Imam Husayn (a.s.) raised his voice so that everyone there might hear him. He said,

“O people of Iraq and all those who have gathered here, pay attention and listen carefully. Do not be hasty until you hear me fully, for you have the right to hear my objections and arguments before you, so that if you decide justly, it will stand to gain. If, perchance, you are unable to decide justly, ¹⁷ I advise you first to, at least, consult and discuss among yourselves so that you may resolve any confusion, differences, difficulty or complication in the process of arriving at a just conclusion. After this, inform me of your final decision, but remember that God, Who had revealed the Book and *protects the virtuous, is also my Protector.*”

Imam Husayn (a.s.) then returned to his camp, so that the enemy might have the opportunity to discuss among themselves and arrive at their own conclusion.

After some time, Imam Husayn (a.s.) once again returned to advise the enemy forces. He said,

“You, people, are intent on being doomed. Is it not a fact that you yourselves wrote to me complaining of your bewilderment at the oppression and called me to your assistance? Have we not, at your behest, rushed to redeem you? Until yesterday, you had drawn your swords in our support and against oppression. Today, you have turned against us. You fanned the smoldering fire of freedom against the common bigots and oppressors, and today you are fanning the fire of hatred against us. You have now joined hands with the enemy and are now opposing your well-wishers, though your enemy has dealt injustice to you. You can not repose any hope for just reward from the enemy except for the possibility of getting impure and prohibited things of transitory carnal pleasure. Nothing has transpired to shake your faith and confidence in us. Then, what is the cause for deserting us and preparing to wage war against us, even when our swords were in their sheaths and we continued to repose confidence in you. Like swarms of locusts, you have gathered in great numbers and surrounded us. You are doomed because you have become oppressors, transgressors under Satan’s influence and you have forsaken the Divine Commandments. You have joined the group of infidels who introduced innovations in Islam, alterations in the Book and Traditions, killed prophets and the progeny of their vicegerents. You have now joined hands with those who adopted illegitimate children, persecuted true believers, reviled the signs of God

and tore the Holy Qur'an into pieces. Your souls have accepted the most evil matter, which have drawn you, in its vortex towards eternal doom. You are supporting the offspring and associates of Harb (the Umayyads), and have betrayed us. Your betrayal is well-known. Your roots are founded in betrayal and your hearts are steeped in and content with betrayal. Your character is abhorred by the pious and you are the most desired fruit of usurpers. The curse of God is upon those who make solemn covenants only to break them. You are, verily, those who broke their solemn covenants. The illegitimate son of an illegitimate father (ibn Ziyad) is intent upon two things; to either slay me or put me to the disgrace of meek submission. It is impossible that I suffer the disgrace of submission. My upbringing by the messenger of Allah in immaculate laps, noble descent and independent mind does not brook even the very thought abandoning sacrifice in preference to meek submission to the power of the wretched tyrant. Look, I have discharged my duty of presenting my objections and arguments and I have sufficiently warned you against incurring God's wrath for your evil intentions. You hold great numbers of soldiers in your army against me while the numbers of my own companions is very small. Friends have turned away from me and there is none to help me. Despite all this, I have decided to stand up to your evil forces.” [18](#)

According to Farwa, Imam Husayn (a.s.) then recited a few verses and continued:

“It is only for as short time as it takes to mount a horse that you will rejoice. Thereafter, you will be drawn and spun in the vortex of the wheel of Time. My father has related this to me from my grandfather.”

Imam Husayn (a.s.) continued:

“It is better that all of you and your associates sort out the affair (to its proper and lawful conclusion) and do not hide your intent, but make it known to each and everyone of you. After this, you are free to deal with me forthwith, according to your choice. I only rely on God, Who is also your Lord, for He controls everything, big and small, and His Justice is sublime.” [19](#)

Hearing this, Umar ibn Sa'd was enraged, and he asked his men to attack Imam Husayn (a.s.) immediately. In his defense, Imam Husayn (a.s.) fought and prevailed over whoever challenged him for a single combat. The evil Shimr, as always, advised Umar ibn Sa'd to stop sending individuals, and to launch concerted attacks. Imam Husayn (a.s.) repelled the attacks with such ferocity that the enemy soldiers scattered for fear of their lives. Imam Husayn (a.s.) himself was wounded. He then raised his voice and called out, “*Is there any one to defend us? Is there anyone to help us?*” [20](#)

The Martyrdom of Ali al-Asghar

Imam Husayn's call had its effect on his son Ali al-Asghar (a.s.), who was six months old. The child fell out of his cradle in response to Imam Husayn's call for help. This caused a great commotion among the women, who feared that the infant was about to die out of the three day's thirst. The commotion and wailing attracted Imam Husayn (a.s.) who returned to the camp. He took the child and covered him with

a cloth to protect him from the scorching sun. He brought the child into the battlefield. The enemy soldiers assumed that Imam Husayn (a.s.) was holding the Qur'an in his hand as a prelude to surrender. When Imam Husayn (a.s.) lifted the cloth, the soldiers gasped with surprise to see an infant. The infant smiled as if taunting the enemy in the face of adversity.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) told the surrounding army:

"On account of you, this child has gone without water for the past three days and you can see that the extreme thirst will kill him shortly. Is there anyone who would provide water to this child?"

Several enemy soldiers were moved by the sight and a murmur of sympathy was heard. Umar ibn Sa'd realized the seriousness of the situation and said, "*Beware my soldiers! Do not be beguiled by al-Husayn's word. He is only tricking you into getting some water for himself. Even if al-Husayn gets only a sip, it will reinvigorate him and several of us will lose lives.*"

Imam Husayn (a.s.) replied,

"I only seek water for the infant, whose condition and agony is before you. Since you fear that I may myself drink the water, I am placing this infant on the ground so that you may yourselves take the child and quench his thirst."

The child, placed on the burning sand of Karbala, protruded its tongue as if to show the severity of the thirst. This act of the infant was so eloquent that it created great pathos and several of the enemy soldiers cried in grief. The eloquent gesture did not go unnoticed by Umar bin Sa'd who considered it to be much more powerful than all the eloquent sermons of Imam Husayn (a.s.) and all the martyrs. He therefore ordered Harmala to interrupt Imam Husayn's words.

The cruel Shimr said, "*Beware soldiers! Al-Husayn is only playing on your sentiments. Do not forget that the emir ibn Ziyad's order is that not a drop of water should reach al-Husayn or his family. Any disobedience of his order will invite immediate punishment.*"

The wretched Umar ibn Sa'd called his archer, Harmala, who was renowned for the velocity and strength of his arrows. He commanded Harmala to kill the child with his arrow and thus to terminate the pathos created by Imam Husayn's infant. Harmala's arrow whizzed towards the child whom Imam Husayn (a.s.) held close to his chest. The arrow slit the throat of the six-month child and pinned him to Imam Husayn's ribs and arms. Imam Husayn (a.s.) collected in his palm the dripping blood from the child's throat, looked towards the sky and then downwards towards the earth, and finally applied it to his own face. He was seen muttering something.

Several years later in a gathering, Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) was asked why Imam Husayn (a.s.) had applied the infant's blood to his face and what was he muttering then. He replied, "*My father was saying: 'Before God, I swear that these wretched people are cruel even to an infant. If I throw the blood*

of this innocent martyr toward the sky, no rain will ever fall anywhere on the earth, and if I throw it on the earth, it will become parched and unproductive forever. Therefore, I am applying it to my face so that I may complain to my Creator about the cruelty of these people.'

Imam Husayn (a.s.) was perplexed whether he should take the dead child back to the camp or to bury him there. The cruel nature of Yazid's army was brought into full focus when, after the battle, the heads of martyrs were counted, and not finding the infant's head, soldiers were ordered to find it. The wretched Harmala, Shimr and Khouli went about striking their spears to find the soft earth where the child was buried and ultimately unearthed the infant's body, severed his tiny head and carried it on a lance along with the heads of the other martyrs.

The Martyrdom of Imam Husayn (a.s.)

Imam Husayn (a.s.) went back to his camp and bade farewell to his family members who gathered around him in a circle. He advised them to bear the calamity patiently. He then went to his ailing son and heir Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) who was lying unconscious. The sweat from Imam Husayn's brow fell upon Imam Zainul Aabidin who opened his eyes then. Seeing his heavily injured father, Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) asked as to what happened to all the relatives and companions, particularly Abbas and Ali al-Akbar. Imam Husayn (a.s.) told him that they were all martyred and that he alone remained alive. He told Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) that then he would not return from the battlefield. Imam Husayn (a.s.) advised Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) to bear the calamity with patience. He then said, *"My son, when you go back to Medina, convey my greetings to our Shias (followers) and tell them that I remembered them very much when I was carrying the dead body of Ali al-Asghar. Ask my Shias to remember me whenever they drink water and whenever they see any person suffering away from his home."*

Imam Husayn then bade farewell to all members of his family and those who were present in his camp. He bid adieu to each of the women and to Fidhdha, his mother's retainer.

As Imam Husayn (a.s.) came out of his tent, his daughter Sukayna (a.s.) caught hold of him and on being told that he was going to the battlefield, she cried out, *"My uncle Abbas went promising to bring water, but he never returned. My brother Ali al-Akbar went, but he did not come back. My cousins went but they too did not return. If you also do not return, what will happen to me?"* To satisfy the child, he lay down on the ground and Sukayna (a.s.) clambered on and lay on his chest, as she did everyday before going to sleep. She dozed off for a while, but suddenly got up startled and said, *"I will not detain you because I saw that your mother, father, and grandfather were all waiting for you and asked me not to detain you any longer."*

Imam Husayn (a.s.) who appeared old and feeble after the martyrdom of his son Ali al-Akbar (a.s.), now appeared to be invigorated with the desire to meet his Creator. Abdullah ibn Imad, who was present in the battlefield, narrates, *"I have not seen anyone whose companions, kith and kin were slain before his eye, fighting the enemy with so much zeal, vigour and determination."*[21](#)

Imam Husayn (a.s.) fought valiantly, scattered the soldiers and went to the Euphrates. He spoke to his horse asking him to drink water, but the faithful steed turned his head and refused to even lower his head. Imam Husayn (a.s.) took the water in his hands to show that the river was now in his control. He said, *“When my brother Abbas, my son Ali al-Akbar and the infant Ali al-Asghar and my companions have all died thirsty, of what use is this water to me?”* So saying, Imam Husayn (a.s.) threw down the water back into the river.

Meanwhile, the enemy had reassembled their ranks. Umar ibn Sa’d ordered a general assault. Imam Husayn (a.s.) met the onslaught, defeated, and scattered his opponents. He called out the names of Abbas (S), Ali al-Akbar, Habib ibn Mudhahir, Muslim ibn Owsaja, Zohair, Habib, Sa’eed and other companions, and asked them to witness his valour.

He then stood leaning on his sword and in a final attempt to bring the enemy to reason, and eliminate the possibility of any claim as to a mistake arising out of ignorance, regarding identity, he addressed the enemy saying, “Tell me, by God, Do you not know who I am?” The soldiers replied, “We know that you are the progeny and grandson of the messenger of Allah.”

Imam Husayn (S) said, *“Do you know that I am the son of Fatima, daughter of the messenger of Allah?”* They replied, “Yes, it is true.”

Imam Husayn (S) said, *“By God, you also know that Ali ibn Abu Talib is my father.”* They replied, “Yes, we know.”

Imam Husayn (S) said, *“Do you know that my grandmother Khadija was the first to embrace Islam?”* They replied, “Yes, it is so.”

He then reminded them that it was his own uncle Ja’far and his father’s uncle Hamza, who was killed and his raw liver was eaten by Hind mother of Mu’awiya, were among the first martyrs who gave their lives for the cause of Islam. He showed them the turban he was wearing and the sword he held and asked, *“Do you know to whom these belonged?”* The enemy replied, *“These are inherited by you from your grandfather, the messenger of Allah.”*

Imam Husayn (a.s.) then reminded the enemy saying,

“Was not my father the first to accept Islam, entrusted as the Holy Prophet’s trustee, given the standard by the Prophet (S) who declared him as his vicegerent, successor and deputy? Did not the Prophet (S) inform you that at the Pond of al-Kawthar in the Paradise, Ali will quench the thirst of the faithful?”

The enemy admitted the truth of every word uttered by Imam Husayn (S). Umar ibn Sa’d replied, *“All this is nothing new. Everybody knows these facts. We are professional soldiers and have come to fight you and not to listen to your rhetoric. We will not rest until we slit your parched throat.”* [22](#)

Imam Husayn (S) then said,

“Tell me if I have made innovations in Islam. Have I altered the Book? Have I transgressed any tenet of Islam? Have I failed to observe my religious obligations even once in my life? Have I killed anyone? Have I deprived anyone of his property? Have you found anything I ever said to be false? Did I ever hurt you? Did I ever aspire for any wealth or power?”

In one voice, the enemy soldiers declared that Imam Husayn (S) had never done any such thing.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) then asked, *“If you know all this, then tell me why you want to slay me?”* Some of the soldiers shouted out, *“It is in revenge for your father Ali. Our only desire is to slay you and avenge our ancestors who were killed by your father Ali in the battles of Badr, Uhud, Hunain and al-Khandaq.”* [23](#)

Umar ibn Sa'd realized that the real truth behind waging war had been inadvertently revealed. Before Imam Husayn (a.s.) could say anything, the cunning Umar ibn Sa'd ordered his soldiers to attack the women and children in Imam Husayn's camp. This sudden turn of events greatly pained Imam Husayn (a.s.).

He said, “O supporters of the Umayyads, how mean it is on your part to think of attacking defenseless women. Even an atheist will not think of doing it, if only out of his civic sense. You are worse than heathens and atheists. I am still alive. Engage in combat with me and leave the women and children alone.”

Imam Husayn (a.s.) quickly intercepted and killed the soldiers marching towards his camp. He fell upon the enemy with renewed vigour and he dispersed them far and wide.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) called out at Umar ibn Sa'd to come before him. The wretch came out and stood under the shade of the umbrella held by his servant. At that time, there was much commotion and a lot of noise. Imam Husayn (a.s.) said, *“I like to have a last word with you and your army.”* Hardly could his words be heard above the din and noise. Imam Husayn (a.s.) asked Umar ibn Sa'd to order silence so that all the attendants might listen carefully. Umar ibn Sa'd replied, *“It is impossible. I may ask my men to keep quite, but how can I prevent the neighing of horses or the clanging of weapons.”* Imam Husayn (S) said, *“You have expressed your inability. Now, I will do it myself to see that silence reigns so that every one present here may clearly hear every word I utter.”*

Imam Husayn (S) cast an intense glance all around him. The whole atmosphere became quiet, neighing of horses and clanging of armor stopped. Even the very wind became still and silence prevailed over the entire battlefield. Thus, when Imam Husayn (a.s.), by his spiritual power, commanded complete silence and got the attention of everyone, he said in a loud and clear voice:

“O son of Sa'd, listen carefully and pay heed to my words so that you may even now redeem yourself. I have been saying this from the first day, and today I repeat it so that none may complain that he does not know. I once again repeat that even now I give you the same three options. I say, the first option is for you to remove the blockade around me and let me go from here and return to Mecca or Medina.”

Umar ibn Sa'd replied, "Do you think that we have surrounded and dragged you here to let you go? We are not such fools. Our leader Yazid has ordered your death and has not permitted us to let you go from here."

Imam Husayn (a.s.) then said, "Your second option is that since you intend to confine me here and *to fight, let me have some water to quench my thirst before fighting. Under your orders, I was deprived of water for the past three days and this desert sun is scorching.* "

Umar ibn Sa'd replied, "*We have strict orders from our emir Ibn Ziyad not to allow even a drop of water to pass through your parched throat until we slit it open.*" This reply of ibn Sa'd created a stir in his army.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) said,

"O son of Sa'd, since you are neither willing to let me go nor to give me even a drop of water, your third option is that, like true warriors, come and face me one after another and fight me in single combat, for I am alone and you are in thousands. "

Umar ibn Sa'd realized that the refusal of all three options, which were just and reasonable, might brook discontent and even lead to mutiny in his own army. Grudgingly and outwardly, as hypocrite that he was, Umar ibn Sa'd conceded the last demand and agreed that his soldiers would challenge Imam Husayn (a.s.) only in a single combat.

Hardly had a few soldiers challenged and were vanquished by Imam Husayn (a.s.), when Shimr bin Thul Joushan, Harmala, and Sinan bin Anas advised Umar ibn Sa'd saying, "*This is the valiant son of the undefeated warrior Ali. He is the best of the Hashimites, and like his father, he can never be overcome in single combat, even if you keep on sending warriors until eternity. The only way to defeat him is to order a general attack, preferably by archers and lancers who can pick al-Husayn from a distance, without risking their own lives.*" Umar bin Sa'd replied, "*You are only reflecting what is in my own mind.*" Umar ordered a general attack by his archers and lancers. Arrows and lances rained on Imam Husayn (a.s.) injuring him from all sides.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) suffered many serious injuries and was bleeding profusely. He was swaying on his steed. Yet, none of the cowards dared to go near him. An arrow struck his forehead with such force that it stuck there. Imam Husayn (a.s.) pulled it out and fresh blood started flowing on his face. He murmured, "*O God, be my witness as to how these people treat your humble servant.*"

At that moment, another dart pierced his chest with such force that Imam Husayn (S) trembled on the saddle. He recited:

"In the name of Allah, for the sake of Allah, with His help and in following the tenets of the messenger of Allah. My Lord, you are a witness that these people has killed me and killed the progeny of Your Prophet."

An evil man, Salih bin Wahab al-Muzany, was waiting for an opportunity and he struck the fainting Imam Husayn (S) on the head with a heavy club, bringing him down from his horse. Seeing this, Abdullah son of Imam Hasan (a.s.) who was about ten years old, rushed out, caught hold of Salih, and said, “*How dare you assault my uncle?*” The notoriously wretched Harmala struck Abdullah with his poisoned arrow. Imam Husayn (a.s.) caught hold of the falling lad who died in his arms.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) looked up at the sky. It was time for evening prayers. Imam Husayn (a.s.) put his sword in the scabbard and performed his prayers while sitting. He was unable to lift his head. He collected a little heap of sand, and placing his right cheek, facing the camp, and watching if any assault is being made on his camp, Imam Husayn (a.s.) recited, “*O Allah, my Preserver, my Master.*” He repeated this with his left cheek placed on the small heap of sand and lastly with his forehead placed on the small heap of sand. This *Sunnah* is practiced by the Shia when they end their prayers, whether obligatory or recommended prayers, by keeping, instead of a mound of soil, a small pellet made from the soil of Karbala.

Seeing Imam Husayn (a.s.) motionless, ibn Sa'd ordered an assault on the women in Imam Husayn's camp, just to find out if Imam Husayn (a.s.) was still alive. On hearing the mean trick, Imam Husayn (a.s.) pulled himself up and said,

“How cowardly and shameless you are! You order women and children, who cannot defend themselves, to be assaulted. Come one by one if you are men and fight with me, for I am still alive.”

The coward Shimr ordered his soldiers to surround Imam Husayn (a.s.) and bring him down on the ground. The cowards surrounded Imam Husayn (a.s.) in a great number and each one gave a blow with whatever weapon he carried. Imam Husayn (a.s.) fell down and lay prostrate on the ground. Malik bin Bishr gave a severe blow with his sword followed by Zar'ah bin Shareek. Moving on his knees, Imam Husayn (a.s.) killed Zar'ah with a single blow of his sword.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) said,

“O my Lord, give me patience so that I may bear this cruelty. I declare that there is no God but You...”

Finding that Imam Husayn (a.s.), even in this plight continued to glorify, pray and seek strength from God, the infidel hypocrite Hussayn bin Numair struck an arrow which transfixed Imam Husayn's mouth.

Another wretch, Abu Ayyoob al-Ghanawi pierced Imam Husayn's throat with an arrow. Nasr bin Kharasha dealt a heavy blow with his sword. Salih bin Wahab al-Muzany struck Imam Husayn (a.s.) with his lance. Imam Husayn (a.s.) continued moving about on his knees and praying. Sinan ibn Anas dealt two blows, one with his lance and another with his arrow which paralyzed Imam Husayn (a.s.).

All these names and factual details are recorded by historians who were present in the battlefield at Karbala. The historian Abu Makhnaf, recorded his detailed eye-witness account about the beheading of

Imam Husayn (a.s.).

First, Shabath bin Rib'iy attempted to behead Imam Husayn (a.s.), but when Imam Husayn (a.s.) faced him, he ran back shivering. Sinan ibn Anas asked the reason for his sudden retreat and Shabath replied, *“When I saw al-Husayn’s eyes, I found that they resembled the eyes of the Prophet. The sight so frightened me that I had no courage to touch al-Husayn.”* Sinan mocked at Shabath and proceeded towards Imam Husayn (a.s.). When Imam Husayn (a.s.) looked at him, Sinan trembled and ran away and his sword slipped and fell from his hand.

When Shimr questioned him, Sinan replied, *“Al-Husayn so much resembled Ali that I was unnerved and I lost my courage.”* Shimr said, *“You are all boneless cowards. It is I and I alone who will behead al-Husayn.”*

The accursed Shimr sat on the chest of the prostrate Imam Husayn (a.s.). Imam Husayn (a.s.) opened his eyes and asked the name of the one who was so harsh to him. Shimr mentioned his name, and then Imam Husayn (a.s.) asked, *“Do you know who I am?”* Shimr replied, *“Yes, I know that you are Husayn son of Ali and Fatima the daughter of the Prophet. Hasan is your brother.”*

Imam Husayn (a.s.) said, *“When you know this, then why do you want to kill me?”* The shameless brute replied, *“For the reward promised by Yazid to anyone who brings your head.”* Imam Husayn (a.s.) asked, *“Is salvation and a place in the Paradise dearer to you, or the reward promised by Yazid?”* Shimr replied, *“Salvation and Paradise are vain promises without proof and I am not sure about them, but I am sure of the reward promised by Yazid.”*

On hearing this, Imam Husayn (a.s.) asked Shimr to remove the cloth covering his chest. On seeing Shimr's chest, Imam Husayn (a.s.) exclaimed, *“How true my father is and how true my grandfather the messenger of Allah is!”* Shimr asked Imam Husayn (a.s.) what was that, and Imam Husayn (a.s.) replied, *“My grandfather, the messenger of Allah, told my father Ali who related to me that my assassin’s chest would bear the marks of leprosy and it would be full of coarse and long hair like those of a wild boar.”*

Hearing this, Shimr became angry. He turned Imam Husayn (a.s.) over and beheaded him from behind. When asked later why he did so, Shimr replied that he dared not look into the eyes nor hear the words of Imam Husayn (a.s.) and therefore he turned him upside down. The severed head mounted on a lance was handed over to Khouli ibn Yazid al-Asbahi and Hamid ibn Muslim. The heads of the other martyrs including the infant Ali al-Asghar were severed from their bodies, mounted on lances, and carried by the tribes of Kindah, Hawazinn, Tameem, and Muthhij under the command of the accursed Shimr bin Thil Joushan, Qais ibn al-Ash'ath, and Amr ibn al-Hajjaj. The tribe of al-Hurr refused to sever his head or permit trampling his body. They took his body and buried it in their village about seven kilometers away from Karbala where his mausoleum is found today.

Abu Makhnaf writes, “Having committed the nefarious and sacrilegious act, Shimr cried out ‘Allaho

Akbar' while beheading al-Husayn (a.s.). At that moment, darkness enveloped and a violent earthquake shook the earth. Raw blood rained from the sky and a loud voice proclaimed, "By God, an Imam, son of an Imam is unjustly slain. The one who cared for the poor, the sick, the disabled, the widows and children is butchered without cause." This occurred on Friday the tenth of Muharram, in the year 61 A.H." Abu Ishaq al-Esfarayini narrates similar facts with some additions.[24](#)

Among the Twelver Shia, the tragedy of Karbala is recited in the form of Elegies called 'Marthiya' and have been passed on from a generation to another and regularly recited and detailed by their orators in prose in their congregations known as 'Majlis', throughout the year on different important occasions.

It will be incorrect to assume that the details of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (a.s.), his companions and family members are exaggerated. These are facts recorded by impartial historians like Abu Makhnaf and Hameed ibn Muslim, a reporter imbedded with Yazid's army. None of their accounts have ever been challenged or disproved or even shown to be incorrect or exaggerated. Major Price, Simon Oakley[25](#) and several western writers have relied on the narration of Hameed and Abu Makhnaf.

- [1.](#) Understanding Kerbala by Sayyid Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi, Eng. Tr. By Sayyid Ather Husayn S.H Rizvi, Ansariyan Publication [2006], p. 70-73.
- [2.](#) Understanding Kerbala, p. 74.
- [3.](#) Life of Imam Husayn [The Saviour], p. 170.
- [4.](#) Ibid., p. 170-171.
- [5.](#) Leviticus, Ch. 16 vol. 29, Ch.23 vol. 23 to 32, Revelations 12:1-11.
- [6.](#) Life of Imam Husayn, p. 203.
- [7.](#) Life of Imam Husayn, p. 194, quoting at-Tabari who gives the names of 28 martyrs, killed by the shower of arrows at Karbala.
- [8.](#) Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 353.
- [9.](#) Husayn the Saviour of Islam, Ansariyan Publications, [2005], p. 198 to 213.
- [10.](#) Life of Imam Husayn [A.S], p. 182.
- [11.](#) The plural form of Maqta that means the record of the murder of so-and-so, but somehow particularly the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (a.s.) and his family and companions.
- [12.](#) Roudhatul Ahbab.
- [13.](#) Life of Imam Husayn the Saviour, p. 220.
- [14.](#) Balaghatal Hussain, p. 105 – 107.
- [15.](#) The words 'True God' is used here to distinguish between the Creator on the one hand and the worldly wealth, power and pleasure which Yazid and his men worshiped as their god.
- [16.](#) To demand fealty for Yazid and to compel Imam Husayn [s] to swear allegiance to him is itself an act of insult and disgrace to Imam Husayn [s].
- [17.](#) Injustice done out of fear or due to undue influence or avarice
- [18.](#) Balaghatal Hussain, p. 121-125.
- [19.](#) Ibid., p. 127-129.
- [20.](#) Note: Imam Husayn's request of help was not because he expected to survive, but because he wanted to show that those surrounding him were stonehearted and cruel and that there was none, at that time, who was ready to help the lone, innocent person against the hordes who had gathered in support of oppression and tyranny.
- [21.](#) Life of Imam Husayn, p. 229.
- [22.](#) Balaghatal Husayn, P. 113-115.
- [23.](#) Note, all these battles were fought by Imam Ali [s] to defend and preserve Islam, under the Prophet [s]. Though Yazid's

forces, in seeking to kill Imam Husayn [s], claimed that they were taking vengeance against Imam Ali [s], it was in fact vengeance against the Prophet [s] and Islam.

[24.](#) Life of Imam Husayn, p. 239–240.

[25.](#) History of the Saracens.

Chapter 23: The Martyrs

The number of martyrs slightly varies from one author to another. Some include those who were martyred as a prelude to Karbala, such as Muslim ibn Aqeel, Hani ibn Urwa... etc., and those who were martyred after Ashura. Other stick to only those martyrs who were slain at Karbala. Depending on such classification, the number of martyrs varies from 72 to the double of this number.

In the volley of arrows showered by Ibn Sa'd's army on Imam Husayn's camp, the following persons were martyred and their horses also were killed even before fighting in the battle: [1](#)

1. Na'eem bin Ajlan al-Ansari
2. Umar bin Ka'b al-Ansari
3. Handhala bin Umar ash-Shaibani
4. Qasit bin Zuhair
5. Karsh bin Zuhair
6. Kinana bin Ateeq
7. Umar ad-Dhabbi
8. Dhirghama bin Malik
9. Saif bin Malik an-Nimyari
10. Abdurrahman bin Abdullah
11. Majma' bin Abdullah al-Aa'ithi
12. Hannan bin Harith as-Salmani
13. Amr al-Jundi
14. Hallas bin Amr ar-Rasibi

15. An-No'man bin Amr Rasibi
16. Siwar bin Abi Humair al-Fahmi
17. Zahir bin Amr; bondsman of ibn al-Hamq al- Khuza'iy
18. Jabala bin Ali ash-Shaibani
19. Ammar bin abi Salama
20. Mas'ood bin al-Hajjaj
21. Hajjaj
22. Zohair bin Basheer
23. Ammar bin Hassaan
24. Abdullah bin Umair
25. Aslam bin Katheer al-Azdi
26. Zohair bin Muslim al-Azdi
27. Abdullah bin Yazid al-Qeisi
28. Abdullah bin Urwa al-Ghifari

The names of the valiant nobles who fought and were martyred at Karbala are as the following, though not in order of precedence in their martyrdom:

1. Al-Hurr ibn Yazid al-Riyahi
2. Al-Hurr's son
3. Al-Hurr's brother Mus'ab
4. Al-Hurr's slave Urwa
5. Abdullah bin Umar
6. Burair al-Hamadani
7. Wahab al-Kalbi
8. The wife of Wahab

9. The mother of Wahab
10. Umar bin Khalid al-Azdi
11. Khalid bin Umar
12. Sa'd bin Handhala at-Tameemi
13. Umair bin Abdullah al-Muthhaji
14. Muslim ibn Awsaja
15. The son of Muslim ibn Awsaja
16. Hilal bin Nafi' al-Bajali
17. The son of Hilal bin Nafi'
18. Habib ibn Mudhahir
19. Sa'eed bin Abdullah²
20. Zohair ibn al-Qain
21. Abu Thumama as-Saidawi
22. al-Hajjaj bin Masrooq
23. Mubarak
24. Yahya bin Katheer
25. Yahya bin Muslim
26. Handhala bin Sa'd
27. Abdurrahman bin Abdullah
28. Umar bin al-Khattab al-Ansari
29. John; Abu Dharr's slave
30. Umair bin Khalid as-Saidawi
31. Sa'eed bin Umar
32. Qurra bin Qurra al-Ansari

33. Malik bin Anas al-Maliki
34. Umar al-Ju'fi
35. Aabis bin Shabeeb
36. Showthab bin Aabis
37. Abdullah al-Ghifari
38. Abdurrahman al-Ghifari
39. A Turkish bondsman of Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.)
40. Yazid bin Ziyad
41. Yazid bin Mohajir
42. Saif bin Abil Harith
43. Mu'allah bin Mu'allah
44. Thur-Rimma bin Adi
45. Muhammad bin Mu'allah
46. Jabir bin Urwa al-Ghifari
47. Abdurrahman bin Kadri
48. Abdurrahman's brother
49. Malik bin Ows
50. Anees bin Minhal
51. Abul Sh'atha' al-Kindi
52. Umar bin Khalid as-Saydawi
53. Khalid bin Amr
54. Sa'd the retainer of Umar bin Khalid
55. Jabir bin al-Harith as-Sulaymani
56. Majma' bin Abdullah al-Aa'ithi

57. Suwayd bin Amr bin Abi Mutaa'

58. Sa'd bin Handhala at-Tamimi

59. Umair bin Abdullah al-Mathhaji

60. Abdurrahman al-Yaznee

61. Yahya bin Salim al-Muzani

62. Malik bin Anas al-Kahili

63. Anees bin Ma'qal al-Asbahi

64. Abul Sh'atha' al-Kindi

65. Junadah bin Harith al-Ansari

66. Amr bin Junadah

67. Malik bin Dawdan

68. Ibrahim bin Hussayn al-Azdi

69. Amr bin Qaradahah

70. Ahmed bin Muhammad al-Hashimi

Sheik as-Saduq gives the following as the martyrs from the tribe of the Banu Hashim:³

1. Al-Abbas bin Ali bin Abi Talib whose mother was Ummul Banin

2. Abdullah bin Ali bin Abi Talib whose mother was Ummul Banin

3. Ja'far bin Ali ibn Abi Talib whose mother was Ummul Banin

4. Uthman bin Ali bin Abi Talib whose mother was Ummul Banin

5. Abdullah bin Ali bin Abi Talib whose mother was Layla bint Mas'ud

6. Abu Bakr bin Ali bin Abi Talib whose mother was Layla bint Mas'ud

7. Muhammad bin Ja'far

8. Own bin Ja'far

9. Ja'far bin Ali bin Abi Talib

10. Abdurrahman bin Ali bin Abi Talib
11. Abdullah bin Ail bin Abu Talib
12. Muhammad bin Ail bin Abu Talib
13. Al-Qasim bin al-Hasan (a.s.)
14. Abu Bakr bin al-Hasan (a.s.)
15. Abdullah bin al Hasan (a.s.)
16. Ali ibn al-Husayn (Ali al-Akbar)
17. Abdullah ibn al-Husayn (the infant Ali al-Asghar)
18. Imam Husayn (a.s.)

The popular belief is that the total number of martyrs is twenty-seven. However, some historians consider them to be above one hundred and twenty. S.V. Mir Ahmed Ali is an erudite writer from Madras, now called Chennai in South India. His translation and commentary of the Qur'an in English with an excellent introduction running to over three hundred pages is well-known and has been printed several times by the Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, New York. In his book 'Husayn; The Saviour of Islam', S.V. Mir Ahmed Ali Vafaqani gives a brief note on each of the one hundred and five martyrs by name and a list of one hundred and thirty-eight martyrs classified as follows:⁴

[a] The Hashimites; the progeny of Abu Talib

Those who are mentioned in the

Ziyarate Nahiya.. 18

Those who are not mentioned in the

Ziyarate Nahiya.. 13

Three Young children 3

Total: 34

[b] the Number distributed according to the immediate parentage of martyrs:

1. The Holy Imam 1

The sons of the Holy Imam

[Two in Karbala; Abdullah martyred later and buried in Asqalan] 3

The sons of Amirul Mo'minin... 9

The sons of Imam Hasan 4

The sons of Aqeel 12

The sons of Ja'far 4

[c] The comrades of the Holy Imam those who are mentioned in the Ziyarate Nahiya... 70

Those who are not mentioned in the

Ziyarate Nahiya... 27

The number of martyrs in Kufa 8

Total: 105

Total martyrs: $105 + 34 = 139$

S.V Mir Ahmed Ali Vafaqani has taken into account the eight companions who were martyred at Kufa, such as Hani ibn Urwa...etc., to arrive at the figure of 139 martyrs.

In addition to giving details of martyrs, Sheikh Abbas al-Qummi gives a list of persons who were present in Imam Husayn's camp at Karbala on the Tenth of Muharram who did not fight but they escaped alive. The reason for this is manifold. Firstly, the number, names and details of martyrdom at Karbala were already revealed to the Prophet (S) who in turn had informed Imam Ali, Fatima Imam Husayn, Umm Salama and other members of the Prophet's family (*the Ahlul Bayt*) peace be on them. Sheik Muhammad Saffaar al-Qummi, who died in 290 AH, relates in his book '*Basayerud Darajat*' that Huthaifa narrated that he was present with Imam al-Hasan (a.s.) when he was returning to Medina after concluding a treaty with Mu'awiya. The load on one of the camels was being zealously guarded all the time. Huthaifa inquired the reason for such security given to that particular load, and Imam Hasan (a.s.) informed him that the load consisted of musters of the names of the *Shia*. Huthaifa wanted to see if his name was in any of those registers. The Imam (a.s.) asked him to come the next day. Huthaifa, who was illiterate, took with him his nephew who could read and write. The Imam (a.s.) took out a register. On perusing, the nephew found his name in the register and shouted joyfully that his name was there along with that of Huthaifa. This young man was later martyred in Karbala along with Imam Husayn (a.s.).[5](#)

Apart from this, those who escaped alive were nonetheless *Shia* of Imam Husayn (a.s.) though of a lower caliber. They provided a vital link in the narration of events, though at times the trauma and the stress they suffered on seeing their beloved Imam (a.s.) and his companions being killed and their bodies trampled clouded their perception. As a result, some of their narrations are not in conformity with

the narrations of the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.).

Abdullah ibn Abbas, Abdullah ibn Ja'far and Muhammad bin al-Hanfiyya consoled themselves by saying that though they did not participate in the battle their representatives' names were in the List of Martyrs.⁶

At-Tabari and Ibnul Athir relate that al-Muraqqa' bin Thumamah had spread the quiver of arrows on the ground and kneeling down, he fought the enemy. Suddenly, a group of people appeared, took him under their protection, and took him away from the battlefield. Umar bin Sa'd took him to Ubeidullah ibn Ziyad and related the incident. Ibn Ziyad banished bin Thumamah to az-Zarah.⁷

At-Tabari and ibnul Athir relate that Ad-Dhahhaak bin Abdullah al-Mashriqi and Malik bin an-Nadhr al-Arhabi met Imam Husayn (a.s.) before the battle and informed him that the people of Kufa were determined to fight and kill him. When they were about to depart, the Imam asked, '*Why don't you join and assist me?*' Malik bin an-Nadhr replied that he had a family to look after and that he was in debts. Ad-Dhahhaak said, '*I too am in debts, though I have no children. However, I will stay with you if you promise to excuse me, if my being with you is of no more help to you.*' The Imam (a.s.) agreed. Ad-Dhahhaak had hidden his horse in a tent. When none except Imam Husayn (a.s.) was left, ad-Dhahhaak reminded the Imam about the promise. The Imam said, '*Yes, you are free to do what you want.*' Ad-Dhahhaak took out his horse and rode through the enemy, taking them by surprise. His tribesmen and some sympathizers saved him from the pursuing enemy.

^{1.} At-Tabari, quoted in 'Life of Husayn' by Mirza Ghulam Abbas Ali, p.167.

^{2.} Sa'eed bin Abdullah; he and Zohair stood in front as a shield to protect Imam Husayn (a.s.) from the volley of arrows during his Noon Prayer. Sa'eed was mortally wounded by an arrow and was martyred.

^{3.} As-Saduq's al-Irshad, Tr. IKA Howard, p. 372-373.

^{4.} S.V. Mir Ahmed Ali's 'Husayn; The Savior of Islam', p.196 – 213.

^{5.} Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 358.

^{6.} At-Tabari's Tarikh, vol. 6 p.218.

^{7.} Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 355.

Chapter 24: The Burial of the Martyrs

The night after the battle was the most painful one for the remaining members of Imam Husayn's family. Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) was lying unconscious with high fever. On the martyrdom of his father, he had succeeded as the fourth Imam. There was no male member to guide the women. Tents were burnt and the women and children were forced to go out into the open. Lady Zainab (a.s.), in keeping with the family tradition, approached Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.), the Imam of the time, and asked, '*O son, all our men have been killed, our tents have been set on fire, and our head-scarves have been snatched. We have no option but to remain in the tents and be burnt to ashes or to go out into the open. You are the*

Imam succeeding our martyred lord Husayn. What do you order us to do in the present state of affairs?"

By her conduct, Lady Zainab (a.s.) established that Zainul Aabidin Ali ibn al-Husayn (a.s.) was the *Imam* succeeding his father that even at the peril of one's life, one has to strictly abide by the order, direction, and wish of the *Imam* of the time.

Imam Zainul Aabidin replied that death would be preferable to life after the loss of Imam Husayn, yet since it would amount to suicide if they remained to be burnt in the tents, they should go out into the open. The Imam further said that if all were burnt to death, there would be no anyone to tell the truth about what happened in Karbala and the tyrants would spread all sorts of false rumors. It was therefore necessary to live, though as captives, in order to propagate the message of Imam Husayn (a.s.) and explain in detail the atrocities and injustice meted out to him and his companions. From that moment, Lady Zainab (a.s.) became Husayn's ambassador, espousing Husayn's cause at every opportunity, even at the most adverse situation.

Lady Zainab gathered all the women and children around the unconscious Imam Zainul Aabidin in a secluded open spot. She took a pole from a burning tent to ward off any mischief monger. In the middle of the night, she found that two children were missing. She left in search of the missing children, telling her sister Umm Kulthoom to take care of others in her absence.

When Lady Zainab (a.s.) entered the battlefield in search for the missing children, she found them lying, clasped to each other. Out of sheer fright and the terrific stress, the children had died. When she returned, she found that Sukaina, the teenaged daughter of Imam Husayn (a.s.), was missing too. Once again, Lady Zainab (a.s.) went into the battlefield. She found that, clasped to a headless body, Sukaina appeared to be asleep. She heard a voice asking her not to disturb the child. Lady Zainab (a.s.) then asked, "*Are you my brother Husayn?*" She received the reply, "*Yes.*"

The battlefield was strewn with the bodies of the martyrs. The men of Umar bin Sa'd removed the bodies of their killed soldiers, leaving behind the bodies of Imam Husayn (a.s.), his relatives and companions.¹ Some persons related to some of Imam Husayn's companions removed the bodies of their relatives. Al-Hurr's tribesmen took away the bodies of al-Hurr, his son, and brother and buried them at their village that is about seven kilometers from Karbala. Some other persons took the bodies of their relatives. Only the bodies of the offspring of Abdul Muttalib were left in the battlefield.

It was an unholy custom among the Arabs in the pre-Islamic times that the body of the vanquished was trampled under the hoofs of horses in a show of barbaric power. The custom was prohibited and discontinued after the Prophet (S) had proclaimed Islam. Thus in none of the several battles and skirmishes, nowhere do we find such incidents of trampling of dead bodies.

As a mark of their return to barbarism, Umar bin Sa'd ordered horses to be freshly shod in order to trample the headless body of Imam Husayn (a.s.). Umar bin Sa'd called for volunteers to trample Imam Husayn's body (a.s.) under the hoofs of their horses. The ten accursed men, who volunteered to do that,

were [1] Ishaq ibn Hawiyyah [2] al-Akhnas ibn Marsad ibn Alqama ibn Salamat al-Hadhrami [3] Hakeem ibn Tufayl al-Sinbisi [4] Amr ibn Sabih al-Saidawi [5] Raja' ibn Munqith al-Abdi [6] Salim ibn Khaythama al-Ju'fi [7] Wahidh ibn Ghanim [8] Hani ibn Thubait al-Hadhrami [9] Salih ibn Wahab al-Ju'fi and [10] Useid ibn Malik.²

Before trampling the body, the accursed Ishaq ibn Hawiyyah pillaged the shirt from Imam Husayn's headless body; al-Akhnas ibn Marthad ibn Alqama al-Hadhrami took his turban; al-Aswad ibn Khalid took his sandals; Jamee' ibn al-Khalq al-Awdi or according to some others, Aswad ibn Handhala took his sword; Badjal took Imam Husayn's ring by cutting his finger.

When the severed heads of the Hashimites were counted, Umar bin Sa'd noticed that the head of the infant Ali al-Asghar (a.s.) was missing. He ordered his men to find it soon. They started poking the ground with lances to find the sift soil where Ali al-Asghar (a.s.) was buried by Imam Husayn (a.s.). Soon, a lance struck a soft spot and when probed deeper out, came the body of the infant transfixed on the lance. The infant's head was severed and mounted on a lance with the other heads of the seventeen Hashimites.³

We have dealt with some detail in order to show that the headless bodies trampled and left in the battlefield were practically unrecognizable. Though there are several reports that men from the tribe of Banu Asad buried the bodies on the night of the eleventh of Muharram,⁴ Shiite sources discount such accounts, firstly on the ground that Banu Asad could not have identified the bodies, and secondly, on account of a fundamental belief that the *Imam* being Immaculate could only be buried by another *Imam*.

The Waqifites believed that Imamate ended with the seventh Imam Musa al-Kadhim (a.s.). Ali bin Hamza, a *Waqifite* man, argued that since Ali bin Musa ar-Redha (a.s.) was in Medina when his father Imam Musa al-Kadhim (a.s.) died in Baghdad, he (ar-Redha) could not have buried his father, being in Medina away from Baghdad, and so ar-Redha (a.s.) could not be the Imam.

Imam ar-Redha (a.s.) asked, "*Tell me, who buried Imam Husayn at Karbala?*" The *Waqifite* man answered, "*Of course, it was Imam Ali ibnul Husayn Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) who buried Imam Husayn (a.s.).*" Imam Reza (a.s.) said, "*But Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) was unconscious with fever and was taken to Kufa as a captive. How could he have buried Imam Husayn?*" The *Waqifite* replied, "*Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) by his miraculous powers came from Kufa to Karbala in the night after Ashura, buried his father and other relatives and he returned to Kufa before Umar bin Sa'd or ibn Ziyad could notice his absence.*"

Imam ar-Redha (a.s.) replied, "*The same powers that enabled Imam Zainul Aabidin to come from Kufa to Karbala in order to bury Imam Husayn enabled me as the Imam to come from Medina to Baghdad to bury my father.*" The incident is reported in detail by Sheikh Abbas al-Qummi.⁵

There are no detailed reports available about the burial, probably because the historians recording the incidents moved to Kufa along with the caravan on the eleventh of Muharram. According to Shiite tenets,

Imam Ali Ibnul Husayn Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) with the assistance of the tribesmen of Banu Asad, Angels and the believers from the Jinn identified the bodies and buried Imam Husayn's headless body along with that of the infant Ali al-Asghar (a.s.). At the foot of Imam Husayn's tomb, he buried Ali al-Akbar (a.s.). The body of Habib ibn Mudhahir was buried near the tomb of Imam Husayn (a.s.). The bodies of the other Hashimites along with other companions of Imam Husayn (a.s.) were buried in a common graveyard at the foot to one side of Imam Husayn's tomb as we find them today in the miraculous shrine in Karabala. After some weeks, the captives were released and the heads of the martyrs given back to them. Lady Zainab insisted that the martyrs' families be allowed to mourn their deads. The caravan reached Karbala. They found that a companion of the Prophet (S) Jabir bin Abdullah al-Ansari had already reached the tombs and was offering his supplications. Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) Joined the heads to the bodies of the martyrs with the help of the men from the tribe of Banu Asad.

[1.](#) Imam Husayn and the Tragic Saga of Karbala, p.304.

[2.](#) At-Tabari's Tarikh, vol. 6, P.161, Ibnul Athir's Tarikh, vol. 4, P.33, al-Mas'udi's Muruj ath-Thahab, vol. 2, p.91, al-Bidaya of Ibn Kathir, vol. 8, p.189, Tarikh al-Khamis, vol. 3, p. 333, Manaqib of Shahr Ashub, vol. 2 p.224, at-Tabarsi's A'lamul Wara, p.662, Imam Husayn & the Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 314-316, al-Jibouri's Kerbala & Beyond, p.65.

[3.](#) Life of Imam Husayn the Saviour, p. 242.

[4.](#) Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 120 quoting Shahr Ashub and al-Mas'udi.

[5.](#) Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 122-123.

Chapter 25: Persecution after Karbala

Yazid and his infamous army achieved their object of eliminating what they found as the biggest obstacle to their oppression and tyranny by slaying at Karbala Imam Husayn (a.s.) and the small group of his companions. If it were a struggle for power, the persecution should have stopped after Karbala. The fact that the persecution and atrocities continued against the women, children and Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.), and Imam Muhammad al-Baqir the fifth Imam, who were the surviving male members in Imam Husayn's (S) family, proves that the battle of Karbala was a struggle for power. The further fact that over the past thirteen centuries, whosoever was found to have any affection or even sympathy with the *Ahlu'l Bayt* (a.s.), particularly Imam Ali (a.s.) and Imam Husayn (a.s.) were and are being persecuted even today, only proves that it is the principles and philosophy underlying the battle of Karbala that are sought to be wiped out.

Ibn Sa'd sent the severed heads to the governor ibn Ziyad in Kufa with an advanced party. He himself remained with the remaining army in Karbala until the afternoon of the eleventh of Muharram. During his stay, he arranged to recover the corpses of his dead soldiers. He performed the Prayer of the Dead over and buried them. However, the beheaded and trampled bodies of the martyrs were left lying in the battlefield, unwashed, unshrouded and unburied.[1](#)

Suffice it to say that the severed heads of some of the martyrs were carried on lances, while the heads of some others were hung on the necks of horses. Yazid's men forcibly snatched the ornaments and jewels from the women and children. The noble women were deprived of their veils and head coverings and made to travel on the bare backs of camels. The camels themselves were prodded into a fast trot, so that the wretched soldiers might collect their rewards at the earliest. Several children died due to slipping and falling from camels. The children were tied to bare backs of camels to prevent them from falling down on the way. They suffered severe injuries due to the friction of camel hide and the tight ropes tied to their legs. Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) was chained, handcuffed, and made to walk barefooted all the way from Karbala to Damascus.

Instructions were given that the caravan should be taken through the longest route to cover the remotest villages and towns so that the martyrs' heads and the barbarity with which they were treated, might instill terror and awe in the common man. In big towns and cities, Yazid's soldiers convened huge congregations in the central mosques. Speakers were arranged to denounce and curse Imam Ali (a.s.), Imam Hasan (a.s.) and Imam Husayn (a.s.) in a repetition of vicious false propaganda branding them as traitors and enemies of Islam. The false and cunning propaganda made earlier by Mu'awiya that he and his son Yazid were the only surviving heirs of the Prophet (S) bore fruit now. The cunning Mu'awiya had already planted false stories and sowed the seeds of hatred against the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) during his long tenure of about twenty years as the governor of Syria and Iraq. Thus, people were made to believe that Yazid was the representative of the Prophet (S) and Islam and that Imam Husayn and his companions were enemies of Islam.

The caravan passed through cities, towns, and villages on its way to Damascus, the seat of Yazid. The accursed Ibn Ziyad had announced that the heads of the mutineers were being brought and he declared that there should be a rejoicing and festivities by general assemblies gathered to witness the event. Throughout the route in every town and village, a false propaganda was made that the enemies of Islam were vanquished. Everywhere, advance parties went and proclaimed that the subdued opponents of Islam and of its ruler Yazid were about to be paraded. Huge gatherings assembled to abuse the captives contemptuously and throw litter at the heads of martyrs dangling from the necks of horses, little knowing that the persons paraded before them were the progeny of the Prophet (S). At several places, people who learnt about the identity of the captives could only sympathize secretly for fear of the dreaded Yazid and his lieutenants.

When Khouli, who had taken charge of the Imam's head, reached his house that was near Kufa, he hid the head from his wife who was a woman from the Ansar. When she saw a radiant light emanating from the place where the head was hidden, she inquired and came to know that the light was emanating from the hidden head of Imam Husayn (a.s.). From that day, she neither dressed her hair nor used any perfume out of her deep mourning for the Imam (a.s.) and she was therefore called 'al-Ayoof'.²

When the caravan entered Kufa, people dressed in ceremonial attire gathered in large numbers wrongly

assuming that the vanquished enemy of Islam was being brought. The crowd was staring at the captives and some were passing comments. On seeing this, Umm Kulthoom (a.s.) shouted, “O You people of Kufa, know that we are members of the Prophet’s family and therefore you should be ashamed to look so brazenly at us.”³ Some in the crowd felt sorry for the unfortunate captives. They tried to dole out dates and other food, particularly to the children among the captives. On seeing this, Lady Zainab (a.s.) chided the women and prevented them saying, “*We the Ahlul Bayt are forbidden from eating what is given as charity*”⁴

When Khouli brought Imam Husayn’s head to Ubeidullah ibn Ziyad’s palace in Kufa, the wretched governor treated it with great indignity and he even struck on Imam Husayn’s mouth with a baton.⁵

Zaid bin Arqam objected to this saying, “*I have seen the messenger of Allah fondling this very head of al-Husayn and kissing on the lips.*” Ubeidullah said, “*If you were not a senile old man and a companion of the messenger of Allah, I would have killed you.*” Zaid replied, “*Alas! You call me senile, while you yourself are demented with the intoxication of wine, wealth and power. You pretend to respect the companions of the messenger of Allah and yet you kill his progeny and disgrace their severed heads. A slave and a bondsman has now become the governor treating people as if they were his chattel. O Arabs, henceforth you shall live as slaves, for you meekly kept quiet when the son of Marjana*⁶ *killed the most noble and pious people among all creatures. You have submitted yourself to evil and shall therefore suffer humiliation.*” Zaid was severely punished for his bold and truthful stand in condemning the murder of Imam Husayn (a.s.).⁷ A similar incident is reported about Jundab ibn Abdullah al-Azdi, a venerable old man.⁸

In the Mosque of Kufa, the accursed ibn Ziyad ascended the pulpit and started abusing and cursing Imam Ali (a.s.), Imam Hasan (a.s.), and Imam Husayn (a.s.).⁹ Abdullah ibn Afeef, who was blind due to old age, got up and objected saying, “*I have seen the messenger of Allah when he said ‘Whoever abuses Ali abuses me and whoever abuses me abuses God, and Hell shall be his eternal abode.’ How then, do you dare abusing Ali and his sons? If, at all, anyone deserves to be cursed, it is you and your infidel ancestors.*”¹⁰ Hearing this, ibn Ziyad ordered the blind man to be executed, but his tribesmen gathered in large numbers and saved him. However, ibn Ziyad got him arrested and he was brought before him. Ibn Ziyad insulted Abdullah saying, “*God has rightly blinded you.*” Abdullah replied, “*I thank God that I have only lost my bodily eyes, whereas God has enlightened the vision of my mind. I thank God for enhancing my vision in the perception of right and wrong and to distinguish between a vile tyrant like you and the noble progeny of the messenger of Allah. When I lost my eyesight in the battle of Siffin, I regretted that I was not martyred while fighting on the side of Ali and I prayed that I should not suffer normal death but should be glorified with martyrdom.*” Ibn Ziyad realized that the powerful speech of the blind old man might bring out the truth and cause revolution. He ordered Abdullah to be executed immediately. The old man rejoiced, praising the Lord that at last his long cherished wish to die a martyr was being fulfilled. Ibn Ziyad ordered the severed head of Abdullah to be carried in procession along with the heads of other martyrs, as a lesson to whosoever dared to praise the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) or to

oppose Yazid's regime.

The struggle against the enemy's injustice was carried on principally by the Lady Zainab (a.s.) and Umm Kulthoom, daughters of Imam Ali (a.s.) and sisters of Imam Husayn (a.s.). Their sermons were delivered in the very court of the tyrant Yazid who sat on his golden throne in his palace durbar surrounded by seven hundred courtesans.

The details of the atrocities committed by Yazid's forces and the sufferings, which the members of Imam Husayn's family were subjected to, would have remained concealed and forgotten, if the brutalities committed in Karbala had not been described in the sermons of the noble ladies of the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) and the fourth Imam as-Sajjad (a.s.) that were delivered in the face of Yazid in his open court.

It is apt to quote here, Mukulika Bannerjee who wrote, "*Non-violent civil disobedience offered the chance of martyrdom in its purest form, since putting one's life conspicuously into one's enemy's hands was the key act and death incurred in the process was not a defeat or a tragedy; rather an act of witness to an enemy's injustice.*"¹¹

Sahl as-Sa'idi, a resident of Kufa, was a companion of the Prophet (S). In the year 60 A.H, he went to perform the hajj. The Islamic year is computed from the month of Muharram, which follows the month of Thul Hijjah. When Sahl returned after performing the Hajj, the year 61 A.H. had started. When he arrived in Kufa, he found the entire city fully decorated and people were moving about in their festival clothes. As it was not a season for any festival, Sahl asked an old man about the cause of all round celebration. The old man replied, "*It is true that neither in the pre-Islamic days nor under Islam, this day was celebrated as a joyous occasion. However, I am told that Yazid has subdued some people who rose against Islam and therefore he declared today as a day to joyfully celebrate Yazid's victory. The caravan of the prisoners is to arrive shortly and I too am waiting to see the captives.*" Another friend of Sahl took him aside and explained what had transpired at Karbala. Soon, the procession carrying the heads of the martyrs slung in the necks of horses, appeared. Sahl had met and seen Imam Husayn (a.s.) and was a witness to the love and affection that the Prophet (S) showered on him. He was also aware of the verses of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet (S) praising Imam Husayn (a.s.). Sahl closely followed the procession, concealing his grief, throughout the journey up to Damascus. Several incidents that took place during the journey were later narrated by him.

Instructions were given to parade the captives through the market and main streets of all the localities of Kufa, which was the capital established by Imam Ali (a.s.). It was then, as now, a big city. Umm Habiba, according to majority of writers, and according to some others Umm Ayman, during the *Caliphate* of Imam Ali (a.s.), had befriended Zainab (a.s.) and Umm Kulthoom (a.s.) and had become a part of their family. Twenty years later, then, Umm Habiba was watching the procession from her balcony. She was told that the captives and heads of some people, who opposed the Islamic rule, were being brought to Kufa.

Umm Habiba, who was taught by Lady Zainab, was a spectator in the crowd. She loved, respected and admired the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.). She was not aware who the captives were. Among the captives, Umm Habiba found that a young girl was restless. Obviously, the severe sun had made her thirsty. Unable to see the plight of the child, Umm Habiba took water to her. She told the child, “*I have heard Ali say that whenever you satisfy the need of a deserving person, ask him to pray for you, because God grants such prayers. I request you to pray that my children may be spared the torment that you have suffered.* Secondly, *it is a long time since I had seen my lady Zainab and Umm Kulthoom. Pray that I may meet them soon.*”

On hearing this, Lady Zainab (a.s.) said, “*Since it appears that you have not met or seen them, would you recognize Zainab and Umm Kulthoom if you meet them?*” Umm Habiba replied, “*Certainly I will, for I have spent a great amount of time in their company, learning the Qur'an and religious tenets from them.*” On hearing this, Lady Zainab (a.s.) was moved to tears and she said, “*Umm Habiba, I am that very Zainab. This is Umm Kulthoom and this child is Sukayna daughter of al-Husayn. Al-Husayn and his companions were slain at Karbala.*” She then pointed to the heads being carried on long lances as those of Imam Husayn (a.s.), Abbas (a.s.), Ali al-Akbar and others. Umm Habiba fell at Zainab’s feet and cried loudly cursing those who propagated lies that the captives were enemies of Islam.

Seeing the emotional scene, the guards feared that it would set an example to others who might approach the captive women and learn the truth from them. They whipped Umm Habiba and prodded the captives with their lances to move ahead.

When the heads of martyrs and the captives were brought before Ibn Ziyad, Yazid’s Governor, who was sitting, full of intoxicated arrogance, on his highly decorated seat, Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) addressed him saying,

“*Very soon you and I will be presented before God. You claim to profess Islam. When you are questioned about your deeds and the treatment you meted out to us, the Ahlul Bayt, whose respect and love was enjoined upon all Muslims by the Holy Prophet's, what answer shall you have then?*” [12](#)

Ibn Ziyad pretended not to hear the Imam’s words. Instead, he turned towards the women and asked, “Which one of you is Umm Kulthoom?” When she was pointed out, he said, “Your are all liars. Your grandfather was a liar.”

Umm Kulthoom (a.s.) replied,

“You dare to talk like this about my grandfather, the messenger of Allah and yet you claim to be a Muslim following his religion. You are a degenerate transgressor and a vile sinner who speaks of the Prophet (S) with such disrespect and vilify Islam by your sinful acts. You have slain the most sacred souls on the earth, and for this you shall be burned in the eternal fire.”

Lady Zainab (a.s.) said, “O you illegitimate, born to an illegitimate. You are a debauch and a sinner. You

have forsaken the tenets of Islam, though you claim to be a Muslim. You killed my brother and his companions unjustly. Your deeds are contrary to the injunctions laid down in the Qur'an. You have put us to shame by snatching our veils and head covers and making us stand here like criminals. You shall surely be thrown into Hell."

Ubeidullah said, "I do not know what will happen after I die. But, look how God has humiliated, at my hands, your brother who wanted to snatch the rulership from Yazid. God has frustrated his attempt and here lies his head under my control at my feet."

Zainab (a.s.) replied,

"O son of Marjana, your ill-gotten wealth and power and the unclean prohibited food and drink intoxicate you to utter such words. My brother was an Imam. We, the Ahlul Bayt, never aspire for worldly gains. Assuming that my brother aspired for the Caliphate, it rightly belonged to him and not to you usurpers. You are a liar. My brother came because your people wrote and invited him saying that they were left without a guide in religion. It is under your orders that my brother was surrounded and brought to Karbala. You, under your evil master Yazid, surrounded Husayn with your huge army and prevented us from leaving Karbala. It is you who ordered closure of access to the river. My thirsty brother was slain by your order. Think of the day when you will be tongue-tied and will have no recourse to lies or assistance while standing before God. No false testimony will then help you, nor be there any power to rescue you from God's chastisement. You shall then be burned in eternal fire."

This eloquent reply and the fear of the truth coming out leading to a possible revolt by the public that appeared to tone down ibn Ziyad into saying, "*You are the daughter of the valiant orator Ali, and it is no surprise that you have the courage to speak so boldly to me.*"

Zainab (a.s.) replied,

"Bravery is no part of a lady's quality. Courage lies in telling the *truth*. *I speak the truth and your cowardice makes you spin blatant lies.*"

Fatima al-Kubra (a.s.), Imam Husayn's daughter who was married to Imam Hasan's son, was too an eloquent orator like her grandmother the Immaculate Fatima (a.s.) whom she resembled closely. Fatima al-Kubra delivered the following sermon, after praising Allah and the Prophet (S),

"Muhammad's offspring were slaughtered besides the Euphrates neither for blood revenge nor due to any dispute over inheritance. O my Lord, I take refuge from inventing a lie about you; about what you revealed about the covenants regarding the vicegerency of Ali ibn Abi Talib, the man whose right was usurped, who was killed though he was innocent in the house of Allah (mosque) by hypocrites pretending to profess Islam, and similarly his son (Husayn) was slaughtered only recently. Woe to those who did not defend him against the injustice done to him during his life and at the time of his unjust murder, though they were fully aware that he was most commendable in his dealings with others, was

steadfast in his faith and was most meritorious. He was undaunted in carrying out what is just and right and never feared any criticism or blame. O Lord, you guided him and praised his virtues. He constantly enjoined people to follow Your Path and the path shown by the Prophet (S). He never cared for worldly wealth, but aspired only for rewards in the hereafter. He struggled in your cause. You were pleased with him and You chose him for guidance (of mankind) in the Straight Path. O you deceitful and treacherous people of Kufa, on your account (in inviting Imam Husayn) our family is afflicted and we have been put to untold hardships and trial. God has bestowed and entrusted to us knowledge, understanding, cognizance, and wisdom, and He sent down to the earth His Proof and Argument for your guidance and good life. He blessed us by sending the Prophet in our family. And yet, you impute maliciously apostasy and falsehood to us? Have you deemed killing and looting us lawful for you, just as you killed my grandfather (Imam Ali) ? Your swords are dripping with our blood, the blood of the Ahlul Bayt only out of malice and enmity. By rejoicing at the killing of our family members, you claim to gain solace, and for that you hatched evil plans, while for us Allah is the best of all Planners. Do not rejoice over spilling our blood or looting us, for what has befallen us is indeed a great calamity. Everything that happens is within the Knowledge of Allah and is encrypted in a Book even before anything was created. We do not grieve for what is not ours nor do we unduly rejoice over what we acquire. Soon, very soon severe chastisement will come down upon you. You will be subjugated by tyrants and be tortured. You will suffer for the injustice meted out to us. How could you fight or think of slaying us unless you had surrendered yourself to Satan? The Prophet (S) will seek recompense from you, before God for slaying his brother (Imam Ali) and his progeny. Unmindful of what is awaiting for you, you gloat over killing Ali and his sons and taking his family as captives. You brag about people whose sanctity Allah has declared. You envied us for the favors granted to us by Allah, for He bestows favors upon whom He pleases. Yet out of envy and jealousy, you suppress our virtues and nobility, just like your forefathers did.” [13](#)

Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) said, “*O product of illegitimacy, are you not ashamed of yourself? How long will you torment us?*” Ubeidullah threatened to kill the Imam.

The Imam replied, “We the Ahlul Bayt have inherited martyrdom, as part of our covenant with God. Every prophet, every noble soul was persecuted by the like of you. I am not afraid of your threat, for death in the way of God is dearer to me than the life in the company of a tyrant like you.”

Ubeidullah ibn Ziyad was silenced by such public chastisement.

Imam Zainul Aabidin then addressed the gathering saying,

“Those who recognize me know who I am. As for those who do not recognize me, I say I am Ali son of Husayn ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib. I am the son of the man who was slain unjustly, whose properties were plundered and whose family members made captives. I am the son of one who was brutally slaughtered on the bank of the Euphrates. This fact is enough to make me stand up with pride. I beseech you in the name of Allah, are you not the ones who wrote letters to my father making your covenant with him and then you reneged and fought and slew him? You have sinned against your own souls and you are

doomed. How will you face the Messenger of Allah when he will ask you, ‘You killed my progeny, violated my sanctity and therefore you are not among my Umma?’”

Hearing this, people said, ‘O son of the Messenger of Allah, do not curse us. We shall abide by your command and follow your directions. We dissociate from the oppressors and shall fight them with you’.

The Imam (a.s.) replied,

“I have no faith in what you say. Do you want to behave with me as you did with my father? My father and his companions were slain only yesterday and the wound is still fresh in my mind. The choking memory of the manner in which you betrayed the Messenger of Allah and killed my father still lingers in my throat.” [14](#)

Imam Husayn’s head was set up in Kufa, as a reminder and a lesson to those who opposed Yazid. Ubeidullah ibn Ziyad had planned to keep it installed for some time but a threatening revolt by the people of Kufa compelled Ubeidullah to send it as soon as possible to Yazid. Khouli was ordered to take the heads of the martyrs and the captives to Damascus under an escort of a thousand and five hundred horsemen. Khouli started for the capital of Yazid and proceeded via Mosul. Wherever the heads were carried, Imam Zainul Aabidin, his aunts Zainab, and Umm Kulthoom (peace be on them) addressed the gatherings declaring the truth and exposing the lies planted by Yazid’s men.

On the way to Damascus when the caravan halted, an old man leaning on his stick saw the procession and said, “*Thank God for the victory of Islam and its leader Yazid over these heretics.*”

Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) realized that the old man had love to Islam. The Imam (a.s.) asked him, “*Do you know to whom these heads belong?*” The old man replied, “*Obviously, they belong to opponents of Islam.*” The Imam (a.s.) asked, “*Do you recite the Qur'an?*” The old man replied, “*It is strange that you, a heretic and a captive ask me, a devout Muslim, about the Qur'an. I have repeatedly recited the Holy Book and thank God that I am well versed in its connotations.*”

The Imam (a.s.) then recited verses from the Qur'an and asked the old man whether he knew in what context the verses were revealed. The old man replied that each of the verses recited by the Imam (a.s.) referred to and glorified the *Ahlul Bayt* [a.s], the progeny of the Prophet (S). Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) asked the old man if he had heard about Hasan, Husayn, Zainab, and Umm Kulthoom (a.s.). The old man replied that they were the noble children of Imam Ali (a.s.) and Fatima (a.s.) the daughter of the Prophet (S), the love for whom the Prophet (S) had made obligatory on every believer.

The Imam (a.s.) pointed to the severed heads hanging from horses of Khouli’s and others and said, “*Look! That is the head of al-Husayn. This one is of Husayn's brother Abbas. That one belongs to Ali al-Akbar, al-Husayn's son, and the small one belongs to Ali al-Asghar, the infant son of al-Husayn.*”

The Imam (a.s.) then pointed to the caravan and said, “*The women on the camel's back are Zainab and*

Umm Kulthoom. We are the Ahlul Bayt.”

The old man became agitated when he learnt the truth and with rage, he attacked Yazid's soldiers indiscriminately, shouting out, “You, liars, renegades, infidels and hypocrites! You have committed the vilest crime in killing the Ahlul Bayt and their supporters. You have propagated falsehood and evil. You have invited God's wrath and are all doomed to Hell for your misdeeds.”

Soon the pious old man was overpowered and killed by Yazid's soldiers.¹⁵ Several such incidents are reported from many places during the journey of the caravan to Damascus.

On the way, the caravan halted at a hermitage, where a pious man was spending his time in prayers and fasting. The hermit inquired to whom the heads belonged and who the captives were. Shimr told a lie that al-Husayn (a.s.) had rebelled against Yazid and was killed in Karbala. The heads were those of Husayn and his companions. The hermit asked if it was al-Husayn the grandson of the Prophet (S). On getting a reply in the affirmative, the hermit said, “God's curse be upon you! You have killed the pious and saintly grandson of the Prophet (S). You are hypocrites, claiming to be Muslims but indeed the real hidden enemies of Islam.”¹⁶ The wicked Shimr was enraged but waited until midnight, when he entered the hermitage and killed the hermit during his sleep.

The caravan reached Damascus, covering a distance of over 1400 km, after a long time. In fact, the revolutionary response of the people of various towns and cities, on learning the real identity of the captives and the martyrs, compelled Yazid's men to take the caravan through the desert full of prickly thorns, avoiding populated areas. The camels were made to trot at a fast pace often throwing the children from their backs. Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) was made to run barefoot, holding the chains and fetters. The fetters had eaten the flesh of his ankles and the chain around his body and neck had made deep gashes.

Yazid, anticipating the arrival of the caravan, had declared festival holidays. When at last in the evening the caravan reached Damascus, the city wore a festive look. All around-the-town people were dressed in their best attire and were celebrating. The caravan was made to halt at the outskirts of the city to be brought in the day through the city market.

In the morning, the caravan was taken through, haltingly, the market place, which had shops with residential portions on the upper floors on both sides with passage itself covered by an arcade. Crowds on both sides, ignorant of the identity of the heads carried on lances and the captives accompanying them, jeered and mocked at them. It took almost the entire day for the caravan to pass the market street.

Sahl bin Sa'd al-Sa'idi relates that in the year 61 AH, he performed the hajj and when he returned to Kufa he found that Imam Husayn (a.s.) was martyred and the members of his family were taken as captives. Sahl, who was a Shia, found that he, being alone, could not do anything to take revenge for the massacre of Imam Husayn (a.s.). Instead, he followed the caravan all the way to Damascus. Many incidents are narrated through Sahl who is considered a reliable and truthful narrator of events.

Sahl relates that at the Market of Damascus, Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) [according to some Imam Husayn's daughter Sukaina] called Sahl and asked if he had any money to spare. On his replying in the affirmative, Sahl was asked to pay the money to the persons carrying the heads of the martyrs to induce them to move away from the women so that the attention of the crowds might be diverted in that direction.¹⁷

From one of the balconies in the market street, five women were sitting with their servant girl. One of them threw a stone that hit the head of Imam Husayn (a.s.) being carried on a lance. Her companions clapped their hands in joy at hitting the target successfully. Sahl, who was accompanying the caravan, prayed that God might punish them. No sooner than Sahl prayed, the balcony crashed, killing all its occupants.¹⁸ Until date, the balcony is in the same condition, though several efforts were made to rebuild it.

When the caravan reached the gates of the palace, words reached that Yazid would receive them only on the next day and until then the captives were to be kept in disgrace standing at the gate. In the morning, Yazid took his own time to decorate himself with finery and until noon, the captives were made to stand under the hot sun in front of the palace gate, which came to be known as 'Babul Sa'ah'.

When, finally, the captives were ushered in, the court was filled with over seven hundred persons including several representatives from other countries. Yazid was sitting on his gilded throne, full of arrogance and the liquor he had consumed. He demanded to know if the captives were really those whom they were meant to be or whether the corrupt ibn Sa'd, out of avarice, took bribe to substitute them with some slaves. Ibn Sa'd was aware that Yazid was capable of doing anything when he was intoxicated. Fearing for his life, ibn Sa'd identified the captives as Zainul Aabidin as the son, Zainab and Umm Kulthoom as sisters, Ruqayya and Sukayna as daughters, and Layla and Rabab as the widows of al-Husayn (a.s.).

Yazid found that the women were covering their faces with their tresses and an old woman was standing in front, concealing them. Ibn Sa'd said, "*The old woman is Fidhdha, an Abyssinian princess who had volunteered to become a maid to help the Prophet's daughter Fatima.*"

Yazid asked Fidhdha to move aside and on her refusal, he ordered her to be lifted out. Shimr took a few steps to carry out Yazid's order. Seeing this, Fidhdha cried out to the Abyssinians present in Yazid's court, "*My country men, would you like a woman from your country and your people to be treated so disrespectfully?*" Unitedly, all the Abyssinians in Yazid's court drew their swords and swore that disrespect to their women would not be tolerated. Cunning as he was even in his state of intoxication, Yazid sensed a revolt brewing even from the beginning moments of confrontation with the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.).

To take out his frustration and humiliation, Yazid took a baton and started striking the lips of Imam Husayn's severed head that was kept in a golden platter, while saying, "*These are the very lips which*

Muhammad kissed. How delighted would be my forefathers to see it lying here near my feet and receiving strokes with this baton, as a revenge for the defeat they suffered in (the battles of) Badr and Hunayn at the hands of Muhammad and Ali. (the Banu) Hashim only played a game to get power. No angel descended nor did any revelation come down.”¹⁹

Abu Barzah al-Aslami said, “*I have seen the Prophet (S) kissing these very lips. The Prophet (S) said, ‘Hasan and Husayn are the masters of the youth in the paradise’. May Allah curse and throw into hell whoever causes any pain to them.*” On hearing this, Yazid ordered his soldiers to throw out Abu Barzah.²⁰

Among those, who had witnessed this blasphemy, was Abdul Wahab, a Christian ambassador from another country. He was enraged at the disgraceful treatment of a dead person by Yazid. He only knew what was proclaimed by Yazid’s men to the effect that the heads presented at the court belonged to people who waged war against Islam. He now wanted to know the names and nationality of those to whom the heads belonged.

The highly intoxicated Yazid boasted that he had the Prophet’s grandson, his family members and companions killed, for not declaring their fealty to him, as the ruler and the religious head of Muslims. He also prided in proclaiming that the women standing as captives before him were the members of the Holy Prophet’s family and the young man in chains was al-Husayn’s son Zainul Aabidin.

Hearing this, Abdul Wahab replied, “*I am not a Muslim, but I am sure your conduct in treating the heads of the dead and the members of their family with disrespect does not become of a human being, much less a ruler in your position of power.*”

Yazid became enraged and said, “*How dare you comment about my conduct, when my subjects respect and obey me? Had you been a Muslim, I would have ordered you death at this very moment. You are an ambassador and a Christian and this thing saves your life.*”

Abdul Wahab replied, “*The religion I follow is immaterial. Your crime is obviously one against humanity and is contemptible. In one of our islands, we have a relic that is the hoof of the donkey, which carried Jesus. We perform pilgrimage to it and pay our respects as much as one would do to a holy relic. You are accursed ones who have no regard for the grandson of the Prophet whose religion you claim to follow. I now realize that these people are noble... who braved an inhuman wretch like you. You claim to spare my life because I am a Christian! Here and now, I declare that I embrace Islam and accept the One and Only Supreme God and that the Prophet (Muhammad) is His Messenger and these people whom you wrongfully revile, are the most noble ones who have suffered injustice at the hands of this vile person. I further declare that Imam Husayn’s son, Zainul Aabidin is the true guide and Imam. If I am held guilty for professing Islam and acknowledging the true Imam, I shall gladly suffer death, which, coming from the hands of this devilish tyrant, certainly amounts to martyrdom.*”²¹

The exasperated Yazid said, “As long as you were a Christian, I could not execute you. Now, that you

have become a Muslim, I have no hesitation to kill you.” He then made a sign to his executioner who immediately beheaded Abdul Wahab. His head was hung at the palace gate for three days.[22](#)

Still smarting under the insult, Yazid felt that Abdul Wahab’s murder was not enough to satisfy his ego. He called his slaves and ordered them to flog Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) saying that the Imam (a.s.) was responsible for the insult.

Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) replied, “*Under our covenant with God, we the progeny of the prophets have agreed to bear the afflictions and suffering in the Way of the Lord. Trials and tribulations are a part of our life. However, the disgrace of removing the headdress of our women is your vile doing, which hurts us very much. You have no right to disgrace our women against whom you can hold nothing except their being the members of the Holy Prophet’s house, the Ahlul Bayt.*”

Yazid recited a verse from the Qur’an[23](#) which reveals that the Lord of the world gives sovereignty to whomsoever He wills and disgraces whomsoever He wills. Yazid then said, “*Why do you blame me? It was on account of God’s Will that I am the Caliph and it was He who willed that al-Husayn should be slain and you should stand a prisoner before me. Had your father the wisdom to accept me as the religious as well as temporal ruler, he would have avoided all the suffering to himself and his family.*”

Enraged by these verses, Lady Zainab (a.s.) replied,

“*You are a bigot and a hypocrite that you twist the meaning of the verses of the Qur’an. You are either ignorant or willfully suppress the verse which reveals that God has declared to Abraham that He will never make an oppressor as an Imam. God has given ample time for the tyrants, but that does not mean that He has approved the tyranny or has let the tyrant go unpunished. You are also ignorant that God has given you independence to choose between right and wrong and has promised reward for those who do good and eternal chastisement for those who prefer the evil of worldly pleasures. Are you not aware that God’s retribution is reserved for a time when, after death, you will stand alone, spell bound and helpless before Him and that your own tongue will be witness against you? The Qur’an prohibits bloodshed and creation of discontent and chaos. For what crime my brother was slain? Did he fail to perform his religious obligations? Had he killed any one that he was killed in retaliation for him? Had he deprived you of any property or appropriated your land? Had he brought any changes in Islam? Was he guilty of permitting what was prohibited and prohibiting that which was permitted? Have none of you here heard the verses of the Qur’an and the traditions of the messenger of Allah where he (the Prophet) asked of you, in recompense, to love and respect his progeny?*”

Yazid then recited Ibn al-Ziba’ra’s verses of poetry[24](#) that are translated by al-Jibouri as the following:

“*I wish my forefathers at Badr had witnessed*

How the Khazraj are by the thorns (spears) annoyed

They would have glorified and unified Allah

Then they would joy and say in elation,

'May your hands, O Yazid, never be paralyzed'

We have killed the masters of their Chiefs

And equated it with Badr, and it was so indeed

Hashim played with the dominion so indeed,

No news came, nor was there a revelation revealed

I do not belong to Khandaf if I do not

Seek revenge from Ahmed's children

For what he to us had done"[25](#)

Yazid continued and asked, *'Does anyone know what made Fatima's son walk into my trap?"* They answered in the negative. Then, Yazid said, *"He (al-Husayn) claimed that his father Ali is better than my father Mu'awiya, that his mother Fatima the daughter of the messenger of Allah is better than my mother, that his grandfather is better than mine, and that he is worthier than me. As regarding his father and my father, my father left the matter for Allah to arbitrate, and you know in whose favour Allah has ruled. As regarding his saying that his mother is better than mine, Fatima daughter of the Messenger of Allah is certainly better than my mother. As regarding his saying that his grandfather is better than mine, it is absolutely true that none who believes in Allah and Doomsday can find anyone equal to the Messenger of Allah. But, he (al-Husayn) spoke with little understanding of the verse: 'Say: Sovereign of all sovereignty. You bestow sovereignty upon whom You will and take it away from whom you please. You exalt whomever You will and abase whomever You please' [Qur'an, 3:26]. He (al-Husayn) did not read the verse: 'Allah gives His sovereignty to whom He pleases.'*[26](#) [Qur'an, 2:247]"

Lady Zainab, after praising God and blessing the Prophet (S), replied, [27](#)

"Evil indeed is the end of the evildoers who denied and scoffed at Allah's signs [Qur'an 30:10]. O Yazid, Do you think that just because you have made us captives you are superior to us or that we have been degraded before Allah? Just because you have usurped power from us, you have achieved a higher status in the eyes of God? Have you forgotten that God has revealed 'Let the unbelievers not imagine that We prolong their days for their good. We do so only that they may grow in wickedness. There shall be a shameful punishment. [Qur'an, 3:178]. Is it fair, O son of Tulaqa,[28](#) that you keep your women behind veils in their chambers, while we the children of the Messenger of Allah should be paraded from one place to another, from one country to another, our veils snatched and our faces exposed to the full

view of all and sundry without the protection of our men whom you slaughtered? What else can be expected from you; the heir of one who chewed the raw liver which she plucked from the body of a noble martyr? Your flesh grows out of the blood of our martyrs. You envy us, the Ahlul Bayt, and therefore you hate us. Your conscience is dead and therefore you remorselessly recite,

'Then they would joy and say in elation,

'May your hands, O Yazid, never be paralyzed'.

"You have the temerity to cane the lips of the severed head of Abu Abdullah; you had killed the progeny of Muhammad (S), who shine like brilliant stars in the family of Abdul Muttalib, because your heart is bereft of all feelings. You speak about your ancestors as if they are present here. Soon you will also join them when you will regret having uttered the blasphemy and done what you did. You would then wish that it had been better if you were paralyzed or had become dumb.

O Allah, avenge on those who oppressed us, take away from them what they had snatched away from us, and let your wrath come down upon those who shed our blood and killed our guardians.

By Allah, you have only harmed yourself. Soon you shall meet the messenger of Allah with the blood of his progeny on your hands and the crime of violating his creed and insulting his kith and kin who are from his flesh and blood. You will be questioned about the atrocities you committed when Allah will gather you along with them to render Justice to them.

You must not think that those who were slain in the cause of Allah are dead. They are alive and well sustained by their Lord.²⁹ Allah shall be your judge, the Prophet shall be your prosecutor, and the Archangel Gabriel shall be your executioner.³⁰ Those who instigated you to do what you did³¹ and who usurped power and illegitimately installed you in the seat of power to enable you to carry out your wicked deeds and oppress the faithful, shall surely be cast in the deepest part of hell.

Though I hold you evil and mean in my esteem, yet I am forced by your taunts and brazen lies to address myself to you despite the great pain and suffering we underwent because of you. The strangest thing is that the noble and honoured people of God are being killed by the Taleeq³² who belong to Satan's party. Your hands are dripping with our blood and your mouths are filled with our flesh, while the corpses of the noble martyrs are left lying in the desert.

If you imagine that you have conquered us as your booty, remember that very soon you will see the tables turned, for the Lord never does injustice. To Allah is my complaint and upon Him do I rely. However much you may try to obliterate our name through your vile and wicked schemes and plots, you shall find that our glory is perpetuated and your shame cannot be washed away. Your days are numbered and your efforts shall go waste when the caller calls out: 'The curse of Allah is upon the wrongdoers'.³³

All glory belongs to Allah the Lord of the worlds, Who bestowed His Blessings and Mercy upon our ancestors and martyrs and upon our companions. We pray that Allah may bestow upon them manifold rewards. Allah is the most Merciful and Compassionate. Allah suffices us, for He is the Great One. "[34](#)

Yazid was dumbfounded by this oration. The execution of Wahab and the speech and unassailable arguments of Lady Zainab (a.s.) created an uproar and sympathy for the captives. There were murmurs of disapproval all around the court.

Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) then addressed the gathering saying:

“All praise is due to Allah for Whom there is neither any beginning nor any end, for He is Eternal. He is the First, for Whom there is no starting point, and He is the Last, for Whom there is no ending point, and He is the One Who exists eternally after all existence has ceased and nothing exists. He measured the nights and days. He has divided them into parts. Blessed is Allah, the Sovereign of all Sovereigns, the All Knowing.

O People, God has granted us six things and favored us with some more. We have been granted wisdom, clemency, magnanimity, oratory, courage, and love for us in the hearts of the faithful believers. We have been favored with the advent of a Prophet from among us, as-Siddeeq (the truthful one; Imam Ali), at-Tayyar (Ja’far), the Lion of God (Hamza), and the two Masters of the youth of Paradise (al-Hasan and al-Husayn) (are from us).

Whoever recognizes me knows who I am. Let me tell those who do not know me that I am the son of Mecca and Mina. I am the son of Zamzam and as-Safa. I am the son of the one who carried the Rukn (the Black Rock) in his mantel. I am the son of the best of all persons who ever donned the Ihram (consecration) and made the Tawaf (circumambulation) and the Sayee (the trotting between Safa and Marwa during the Hajj). I am the son of the best among those who ever performed the Hajj and recited the Talbiya (the compliance to the call of Allah).[35](#) I am the son of the one who rode on the Buraaq (the means on which the Prophet had gone to the Heavens) and was accompanied by Gabriel to the Sidratul Muntaha (the farthest Lote-tree that none can reach), closer to the Lord to a distance of a bow or still less. I am the son of the one who led the angels in their prayers. I am the son of the one to whom the Supreme One revealed what He wished, during the Me’raj (night ascension).

I am the son of the one who defended and shielded the Messenger of Allah in (the battles of) Badr and Hunain. I am the son of the one who never disbelieved even for the twinkling of an eye. I am the son of the best of all believers. I am the son of the one who is the best among all the vicegerents of prophets. I am the son of the foremost among believers, the Commander of the Faithful. I am the son of the radiant beacon (Noor) who guides all Jihad and killers of renegades, deviators and those who spread the Ahzab (parties). I am the son of the most valiant, and the most steadfast one. Such was Ali ibn Abi Talib, the father of the grandsons of the messenger of Allah; Hasan and Husayn. I am the son of the immaculate Fatima az-Zahra, the principal of all women. I am the son of Khadijatul Kubra. I am the son of the one

whose blood was made to flow on the sand. I am the son of one who was slaughtered in Karbala. I am the son of the one for whom the jinn mourned in the darkness of the abyss and the birds filled the space with their lamentations.[36](#)

This extraordinary and eloquent speech rendered the hearts of the gathering that burst into uncontrollable cries of lamentation. The lies and hollowness of Yazid's justification for the massacre was fully exposed, as was exposed the myth perpetuated by Mu'awiya during his occupation of the seat of power that he and his son Yazid were the only heirs to the Prophet (S). Great unrest prevailed among the people who started discussing the atrocities committed by Yazid and the unjust treatment towards the captives.

Yazid was a rank hypocrite. Though he derided Islam and the Prophet (S) he pretended to follow Islamic tenets. To confuse the public and to defuse the volatile situation, Yazid cunningly took recourse to religion and ordered that the call for prayers be called out.

When the caller of Azan (mu'azzin) cried, '*Allaho Akbar*', Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) said, '*Unbound is God's Majesty and unbound is His Glory*'. When the caller cried, '*I testify that there is no God but Allah*', the Imam said, '*Verily I testify that God is One without a second and He has no participants*'. When the caller cried, '*I testify that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah*', Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) said, "*O Mu'azzin stop for a moment*." He then turned towards Yazid and asked him, "*O Yazid, tell these people here, whether Muhammad is my grandfather or your grandfather*." Not finding an answer, Yazid suddenly rose and slunk away, instructing the guards to confine the captives in a dark small dungeon which had only walls but no roof over it, where the tyrant wanted to torture the captives. From the roofless dungeon, Sukaina watched the birds flying. She asked innocently whereto the birds were flying. Lady Zainab replied that they were going to their homes. Yearning to go back home, the child cried bitterly.

Sukaina (a.s.) fell seriously ill after seeing her father's severed head being beaten and abused by the accursed Yazid. She saw her father Husayn (a.s.) in her dream and started crying, calling out to him. She suddenly felt silent. The captives suffered the extremities of heat and cold and the vicissitudes of seasons. As a result, Sukaina (a.s.) breathed her last. Yazid did not permit her to be buried outside the prison for fear of incurring the wrath of the public. The child was buried in the confines of the cell. The wailing in the dungeon revealed the death of the innocent child that became the immediate and compelling cause for Yazid to release the captives.

Like the Pharaoh's wife, Hind the wife of Yazid was a true and noble believer, but she concealed her faith for fear of Yazid. Now, she prevailed upon him describing the plight of the captives due to their prolonged confinement and the death of Sukaina. She persuaded Yazid to release the prisoners.

Meanwhile, Yazid himself was being tormented by awful dreams and had lost his sleep. Some historians relate that Yazid being tormented by his guilt used to often cry out '*What wrong had Husayn done to me*

that I ordered his slaying?” Assuming this story to be true, it is like the drowning Pharaoh’s crying out ‘*declare my faith in the God of Aaron and Moses*’, for which the reply came: ‘*What! Now you declare your faith!*’

Yazid ordered the captives to be released and he provided the means of their travel to wherever they wished to go. Lady Zainab (a.s.) demanded that as a first step, they should be allowed to hold a congregation to explain what exactly transpired at Karbala. Thus, the very first proclamation of the innocence of the martyrs was made from the very bastion of the tyrant.

We have not detailed numerous pathetic incidents that took place both in the battlefield at Karbala and the torturous journey of the captives to Damascus and back to Karbala and Medina. Our object is not to create pathos but to recall the words exchanged between the two sides, for the words men utter are truly windows showing glimpses of the personality of the speaker. We are ever thankful to the Ahlul Bayt (S) who passed on the speeches, sermons, and dialogues from generation to generation and to those honest and fearless historians who dared to publish them. As we have noted earlier, Imam Husayn (S) is the golden link in the chain of Prophets starting with God’s Command to prostrate before one He had created in His Lofty similitude.

Yazid is the ultimate and the crudest link in the chain of representatives of Cain, Nimrod, Pharaoh...etc., leading to Satan himself, who championed evil, bloodshed and chaos and unsuccessfully attempted to bend man’s will to patiently strive for good. The likes of Abu Sufyan, Mu’awiya, and Yazid spared no effort on their part as Satan’s deputies, to support Satan’s challenge that he will try to destroy the innate nobility and dignity of humankind and disprove the validity of God’s command to prostrate before one whom He created in His likeness.

Satan left Yazid as his heir, successor, and progeny. Yazid in turn has left his progeny who spare no effort to vilify the pious and noble, and seek to create universal confusion, discord, bloodshed, and chaos under the garb of religion. Such persons deserve to be cursed as much as Yazid himself deserves.

1. Al-Khawarizmi’s Maqta al-Husayn, vol. 2 p. 39.

2. Al-Balathuri’s Ansabul Ashraaf, vol. 5 p.238 quoted in al-Jibouri’s Kerbala and beyond, p.67.

3. Ibn Nama’s al-Lahuf, p.81.

4. Al-Qazwini’s Tadhallum az-Zahra, p.150, Ar-Rasiti’s Asrarul Shuhada, p. 477, quoted in al-Jibouri’s Kerbala and Beyond, p. 73, 86.

5.

6. Ubaidullah bin Ziyad whose mother’s name was Marjana.

7. As-Saduq’s al-Irshad, Tr. IKA Howard, p. 364, as-Sawa’iq of ibn Hajar, p.118, at-Tabari’s Tarikh, vol. 6, p.262, ibn Kathir’s al-Bidaya, vol. 8, p. 190, ibn Asakir’s Tarikh, vol.4, p 340.

8. Ibn Nama’s Muthir al-Ahzan, p.51, al-Qazwini’s Riyadul Ahzan, p.52, al-Khawarizmi’s Maqta al-Husayn, vol. 2 p.55.

9. At-Tabari’s Tarikh, vol. 1 p.34.

10. Ibid., vol. 6, p.263, History of the Saracens.

11. The Pathan Unarmed.

- [12.](#) Life of Husayn the Saviour , p.212.
- [13.](#) Extracted from al-Jibouri's Kerbala & Beyond, p. 77–79 based on al-Lahuf of ibn Tawus and ibn Nama's Muthir al-Ahzan.
- [14.](#) Extracted from al-Jibouri's Kerbala & Beyond, p. 79–80 based on al-Lahuf of ibn Tawus and ibn Nama's Muthir al-Ahzan.
- [15.](#) Al-Lahuf of Ibn Tawus, p.100, Tafseer of ibn Katjhir, vol. 4 p.112, al-Khawarezmi's Maqta al- Husayn, vol. 2 p. 61, al-Jibouri's Kerbala & Beyond, p. 104–105 Life of Husayn, p.217–218.
- [16.](#) Tathkiratul Khawas of ibnul Jawzi, p.150, al-Jibouri's Kerbala & Beyond, p. 102.
- [17.](#) Al-Jibouri's Kerbala & Beyond, p. 104, Maqta al-Awalim of al-Bahrani, p.145, Life of Husayn the Saviour, p. 220.
- [18.](#) Life of Husayn The Saviour, p.220–221.
- [19.](#) At-Tabari's Tarikh, vol. 6, p.267, ibnul Athir's Tarikh, vol. 4, p. 35, Ibn Hajar's as-Sawa'iq, p.116, Ibn Kathir's al-Bidaya, vol. 8, p. 192, Manaqib of ibn Shahr Ashub, vol. 2, p.225, al-Beyruni's al-Aathar al-Baqiya, p.33, al-Jibouri's Kerbala & Beyond, p.110, Life of Husayn, p.221.
- [20.](#) Al-Lahuf of Ibn Tawus, p. 102, at-Tabari's Tarikh, vol. 6, p.267, Manaqib of ibn Shahr Ashub, vol. 2 p.26.
- [21.](#) Ibn Hajar's as-Sawa'iq, p.119, al-Bahrani's Maqta al-Awalim, p. 151, al-Khawarezmi's Maqta al-Husayn, vol. 2 p.72, Ibn Nama's Muthirul Ahzan, Life of Husayn, p.222, al-Jibouri's Kerbala & Beyond, p. 111.
- [22.](#) Al-Khawarezmi's Maqta al-Husayn, vol. 2 p.75, al-Bidaya of Ibn Kathir, vol.8, p.204, al-Maqrizi's Khutut, vol.2, p. 289, Habib al-Sayyar's A'lamlul Nubala, vol. 3 p.216.
- [23.](#) Qur'an, 3:26.
- [24.](#) Al-Khawarezmi's Maqta al-Husayn, vol. 2 p. 64, al-Lahuf of Ibn Tawus, p.102, al-Bayruni's Athaar al-Baaqiya, p.331.
- [25.](#) Al-Jibouri's Kerbala & Beyond, p.112.
- [26.](#) At-Tabari's Tarikh, vol. 6 p.266, al-Bidaya of Ibn Kathir, vol. 8, p. 195.
- [27.](#) Al-Khawarezmi's Maqta al-Husayn, vol. 2 p.64, al-Lahuf of Ibn Tawus, p.102, al-Bayruni's Athaar al-Baaqiya, p.331.
- [28.](#) Tulaqa were the Meccans (people of Quraysh who were unbelievers yet) whom the Prophet released after conquering Mecca.
- [29.](#) Qur'an, 3:169.
- [30.](#) What Lady Zainab meant is that Yazid had arrogantly declared that no messenger was ever sent nor was any revelation made. He had thus denied the Prophethood of Muhammad [s], the Book revealed to him and the Archangel who brought the revelations. Thus, he had become an apostate deserving to be cast in hell.
- [31.](#) Committing the massacre of Husayn, his kith and kin and followers.
- [32.](#) Taleeq is the singular for of Tulaqa.
- [33.](#) Qur'an, 11:18.
- [34.](#) Al-Khawarezmi's Maqta al-Husayn, vol. 2, p.64, al-Lahuf of Ibn Tawus, p.102, al-Bayruni's al-Athaar al-Baaqiya, p.33, al-Jibouri's Kerbala & Beyond, p.114 – 116.
- [35.](#) Special statements recited in the Hajj.
- [36.](#) Al-Jibouri's Kerbala & Beyond, p. 108–109.

Chapter 26: Miracles

Before we discuss Imam Husayn's miracles, it is necessary to understand the meaning, connotation, and genesis of miracles. Simply defined, a miracle is an act of a Divinely appointed Prophet, Apostle, or Saint which is contrary to the ordinary nature of things, incapable of being explained or duplicated by human beings, performed not by any practiced skill but as a Grace endowed by God, rendering the

beholders spellbound and submissive to a Superior and Omnipotent Power. The Arabic word ‘Mu’jizah’ simply means that which makes man acknowledge his helplessness, incapacity and inferiority before a Supreme Omnipotent.¹

Miracle is the proof of Prophethood; vicegerency of the Supreme, Almighty Lord, the Creator. Non-believers turned away from the miracles, declaring them to be ‘magic’.² They accused the Prophets as liars and sorcerers and the Scriptures as nothing but empty words to veer them away from their ancestral deities.³ A third category of people took a converse sense and started worshiping Prophets, Rabbis, and monks as gods besides Allah.⁴

One of man’s inborn qualities is the tendency to gloat over his achievements. When men perform great deeds or achieve great objects, they fall into two categories; firstly, those who acknowledge and prostrate before that Supreme Power that enables men to reach the pinnacle of success, and secondly, those who in their conceit deny a Supreme Power while giving credit to themselves for their success. In the later case, the heady wine of conceit confers a sense of invincibility on the vainglorious. This assumed sense of invincibility breeds arrogance. Tyranny is nothing but an aggravated form of arrogance on a larger scale.

The basis of tyranny is a false sense of freedom from accountability to one’s actions. Unrepentant tyrants consider that there is none who would be able to subjugate them to render account. For the tyrants, there is no concept of a reward for good deeds, while he imagines that his evil deeds will go unpunished.⁵

The religious and pious men, on the other hand, tremble at the very thought of the Supreme Lord calling them to account and punishing them for the injustice they are guilty of while they hope for a reward for their good deeds and redemption through intercession and Divine Mercy.⁶ This combination of fear and hope acts as a major deterrent against their committing evil deeds and at the same time acts as an incentive to do good deeds. Despite this restraint, if anyone commits a sin, the penitent sinner hopes, as a Grace, for the Mercy of the Almighty Lord.⁷

Religion is nothing but a reminder to man that he is accountable and shall be punished for his evil deeds while his good deeds would bring in suitable rewards both in this life and in the afterlife.⁸ God propagates the religion – a code of conduct in this life- through His chosen Apostles, Prophets, Deputies, and Saints. In order to distinguish them from pretenders, God bestowed the power of miracles upon His chosen ones. The pretenders could not match the miracles performed by God’s chosen ones and were fully exposed as frauds. Another reason for the miracles is that after God had sent His Messengers and Messages, no soul which denied the Messenger or the Message should say: ‘If Allah had guided me, I would have been one of the righteous’, or ‘If I were allowed to go back to life again, I would lead a righteous life’.⁹

Whenever tyrants committed great atrocities, God sent His chosen Apostles, Prophets, Deputies, and

Saints with miracles in order to relieve the oppressed, and to re-establish harmonious and peaceful life and to confound the tyrant. The miracles, therefore, were in accordance with the need of the time so that man may be confronted with something more superior and wondrous than the best of his latest achievements.

But, when men saw the Apostles in a human form leading an ordinary life, they assumed that the Apostles were not different from ordinary men.¹⁰ Therefore, they demanded that the Apostles should perform some miracles (do something super-natural). The miracles were such that they excelled far beyond and were superior to man's achievement of the time.

Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) said that miracles were endowed on the Divinely appointed persons as proof of their veracity that they were indeed sent by an Omnipotent Lord. Imam Ali bin Musa ar-Ridha (a.s.) said that the types of miracles varied according to the need of the time and were accepted as conclusive proof of the Prophet's Divine appointment.¹¹

In early days when a Prophet (S) preached obedience to One Omnipotent God Who will hold them to account, people reviled him saying that if there would be punishment in the hereafter why they were not tormented immediately. However, God always warned in advance through His Apostles before sending down chastisement on any nation or community.¹²

Thus, God sent the deluge and those who disbelieved Noah's Messengership and Message were drowned.¹³ Similarly, the people of Aad disbelieved the Prophet Hud whom they called a liar. They said, "*Should we abandon our ancestral deities and worship one God? Then bring down the scourge with which you threaten us if you are really in truth.*" The believers were saved and the disbelievers annihilated.¹⁴ On similar lines, was the case of the prophets Salih,¹⁵ Lot¹⁶, Shu'aib...etc.¹⁷ The reason for the annihilating scourges is to make men realise that there is an Almighty Lord before Whom they are humble.

Abraham (a.s.) was sought to be punished by his people for calling them to worship One Almighty God and to desist worshiping idols of their own making. A huge fire was prepared which was so intense that a catapult was made and Abraham (a.s.) was thrown from it into the fire. Miraculously, on the Command of the Almighty, the fire did not harm Abraham (a.s.).¹⁸ The saving of Ishmael (a.s.) from being sacrificed by Abraham was yet another miracle.¹⁹ Abraham was endowed with the miracle of raising the dead to life when he wanted to know how the dead would be raised to life. He was asked to tear birds into pieces and throw the pieces on the tops of mountains and then to call them back. The birds came flying.²⁰

During the period of Solomon, Satan taught sorcery. Harut and Marut in Babylon taught magic to men who used it only to cause harm and no benefit to anyone.²¹

The people of Moses demanded miracles as assurance that he was indeed divinely appointed.²² During the period of Moses (a.s.), men became so adept at sorcery that they thought they were invincible.

Moses and Aaron (a.s.) were unable to convince the Pharaoh to give up the claim of his godship and to accept and submit to an Almighty Lord Who will call the Pharaoh to account for his deeds. Instead of meeting the arguments in the debate, the Pharaoh wanted to see a sign whereupon Moses (a.s.) threw down his rod, which became a serpent. He showed his palm which shone like a brilliant light. The Pharaoh's men said that Moses (a.s.) was practicing sorcery to veer them away from worshiping the Pharaoh. They advised him to summon all the skilled sorcerers in the kingdom to confront and challenged Moses and Aaron (a.s.). When the sorcerers gathered together, Moses' rod became a huge serpent and swallowed all their serpents. This miracle led some of the assembly to acknowledge the truth of the Message of Moses (a.s.) and to submit to the Lord of all Creation, the God of Moses and Aaron (a.s.). However, the denial by the Pharaoh led to the final scourge and his destruction by drowning.²³ His last moment repentance could not save him and as the excavations in Egypt have revealed, his body was preserved as a lesson to posterity.²⁴ The Qur'an reveals that Moses (a.s.) was given nine clear signs which the Pharaoh denied and was made to drown.²⁵ Moses (a.s.) was asked to strike his rod on the water that parted and gave way to him (a.s.) and his companions to escape.²⁶ Thus, the miracle of Moses (a.s.) overwhelmed the sorcery of all other sorcerers, which subdued the arrogance of the people of Egypt. God sent miracles that every miracle would be mightier than the previous one, yet the non-believers denied the signs saying that it was nothing but magic. They called upon Moses (a.s.) to invoke God to send down the promised punishment. It was then that they were all drowned. ²⁷

Qarun was the richest man in the time of Moses (a.s.). He spurned the advice of Moses (a.s.) to obey the Almighty Lord, but Qarun was insolent and proud. He denied the Message and Messengership of Moses (a.s.) and was swallowed along with his palace and immense wealth. Haman, the Pharaoh's vizier was also a vicious man²⁸

Prophet David (a.s.) was given two miracles. One is he was blessed with a mellifluous voice that when he sang the praise of the Lord, the mountains and birds joined in his singing. The other is that iron became soft to him like wax so that Prophet David (a.s.) could mould it into anything he desired.²⁹ This indeed was necessary because the 'Iron Age' had started and anyone who could strive and make a weapon became more powerful. David (a.s.) had no need to strive to make a sword, for iron was soft as wax in his hands.

Prophet Solomon (a.s.) was given the miracle of speaking to birds, animals, and Jinn.³⁰ He was given control over the elements.³¹ By this time, man had started understanding the elements and was trying to put them to his own advantage. Man also was in the process of understanding the behaviour of animals. His miracles were in tune with the times.

By the time Jesus (a.s.) was born, man had advanced by leaps and bounds in the field of medicine. By this time, cures were found from herbs, trees, metals, and minerals. Man boasted that he had found cures for everything except congenital blindness, leprosy, and death. Jesus (a.s.) was sent with the

power to heal the sick, give sight to the blind, cure the leprous, and raise the dead to life.³² The most wonderful miracle of Jesus (a.s.) was that he spoke while in his cradle during his early infancy.³³

However, man misconstrued that miracles were performed not by Prophets, Apostles or Saints but by God Incarnate. Thus, Prophets, Apostles and Saints themselves came to be worshipped as gods.³⁴ The real object of miracles as proof of an Omnipotent Almighty God became obscure and miracles were assumed of lesser importance. Man had grown out of the stage of wondering at abnormal things. Man realised that some miracles could be scientifically explained. What man has thirsted for now is knowledge of the unknown, what lay beyond the range of the eye, ear, or mind.

Though the Prophet (S) was surrounded by infidels and hypocrites who challenged his Messengership and Vicegerancy of God, no scourge came down because the Prophet (S) was designated as '*Rahmatul lil Aalameen*' or 'Mercy for the creatures'. It is therefore that the Qur'an reveals, "*Allah was not to send them any chastisement while you (the Prophet) were among them, nor was He going to send it while they could seek pardon.*"³⁵ Now, the time for seeking pardon is given to every person until the last moment of his life.

In due course of time, medical science developed very fast. Healing was no more a specialty. Man devoted himself to studying nature and acquiring knowledge. Literacy and acquisition of knowledge of the unseen and unknown took priority. Therefore, the miracle then had to be related to reading and acquiring of knowledge. The very first word revealed to the Prophet (S) in the Qur'an was '*lqra'* or 'Read'.³⁶ The Qur'an urges man to think, ponder, and see his intellect. Intellectual reasoning is given top priority in the Shiite thought. Miracles, though important in themselves, are yet relegated to a secondary position.

During the Prophet's time, the Arabs had reached the zenith of literary acumen and culture in addition to other sciences. It is a different matter that their way of life was extremely clannish in which vengeance was largely practiced, earning them the sobriquet 'Barbaric'. The Arabs were extremely proud of their literature and there would be frequent open challenges to excel their poetry or prose. In such an atmosphere, the Qur'an brought in a mixture of poetry and prose in an unequalled style of its own, taking the Arabs by surprise in the field which they boasted supremacy in.

The Qur'an's challenge that it was revealed by God and no man could bring even one verse similar to it remains valid even today.³⁷ The Qur'an was not revealed all at once like the Torah which was revealed all at once to Moses (a.s.). It was revealed gradually to meet the arguments raised from time to time and to bring out the truth.³⁸

The Qur'an reveals the unseen events of antiquity, past generations and their Prophets and the tyrants who opposed them.³⁹ It revealed that the Pharaoh was preserved in his body as a lesson to posterity, centuries before his body was excavated in Egypt. It prophesies the future. It reveals about the creation of the universe, the cosmos, the sun, moon, stars and the earth. It reveals about the Doomsday and the

life after death in a scientific manner. In the Qur'an, Maurice Bucaille found scientific facts that were unknown for centuries after they were revealed in the Qur'an.[40](#)

In addition to this, it contains prayers as cure for sickness of the body and mind; as solace for the depressed psyche and for exorcism. Allama al-Majlisi devotes chapter seven for the miraculous nature of the Qur'an.[41](#) The Qur'an by itself is an everlasting and ever present miracle of the Holy Prophet (S)

The Holy Prophet (S) was endowed with innumerable bodily miracles in addition to those that he physically performed. Allama al-Majlisi devotes too chapter eight of over 80 pages to the miracles of the Prophet (S).[42](#) It is beyond our scope to relate those miracles of the Qur'an and the Prophet (S).

The twelve Imams of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) designated by the Prophet (S) as his heirs, successors, vicegerents and deputies, were endowed with miraculous powers, which successfully warded off the challenge to their Divine appointment, by imposters from time to time. Sheik al-Mufid devotes chapter seven, running to about 38 pages, to the miracles performed by the first Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.).[43](#)

Allama Sayyid Hashim al-Bahrani has written five volumes under the title 'Miracles of Aal Muhammad'. Pages 18 to 111 of volume two are devoted to the miracles performed by Imam Hasan (a.s.). Pages 113 to 291 are devoted to the miracles of Imam Husayn (a.s.).

It may be mentioned here that some pious men who are related to Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) or those who became devout followers of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) have also manifested minor miracles. For example, Salman (al-Farsi) is reported to have performed miracles to show that pure devotion and absolute obedience to the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) elevates even ordinary men to a status and position similar to the Prophets of the Israelites. The Prophet (S) had foretold, "The learned men from my Umma are like the prophets of the Bani Israel.

Though there are countless miracles of Imam Husayn (a.s.), we refer to a few of them from his early life, in the prime of his life, in the battlefield at Karbala, and those miracles which were manifested after he attained martyrdom until this day.

Shurahbil bin Own reports that at the time when Imam Husayn (a.s.) was born, an angel descended from the heavens and proclaimed that people should observe mourning for the one, who would be massacred at Karbala, was born. He gave a handful of soil saying, "*O Prophet, keep this (soil) safely. I have brought it from Karbala. When this soil turns red (like blood), know that your beloved son Husayn is slain.*" The Holy Prophet(S) handed over the soil to his wife Umm Salama...Then, the Prophet (S) wept and said, "*O Allah, forsake those who desert Husayn. Kill those who kill Husayn and frustrate their hopes both in this world and the hereafter.*"[44](#)

At the time of his departure from Medina, Imam Husayn (S) met Umm Salama. On her request, he miraculously showed her the spot where he would be slain. He then gave a handful of soil and said, "*Mix it along with the soil given by the Prophet. It will turn blood-red when I am slain.*" Umm Salama kept the

soil in a glass jar. She along with Fatima as-Sughra, the teenage daughter of Imam Husayn (a.s.) who left behind due to sickness, watched the glass jar anxiously every day after Imam Husayn (S) had left Medina. On the tenth of Muharram just before dusk, they saw that the soil had changed into blood-red. Both ladies realised that Imam Husayn (a.s.) was slain. With loud lamentations, they mourned for the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (a.s.).⁴⁵

Imam Ali's retainer Nejad relates, "*I had lost my vision when I saw some angels picking and giving the arrows which Ali was shooting in a battle. Later, I complained to al-Husayn about the loss of my eyesight. He asked me if I had seen any angel. I replied in the affirmative. Al-Husayn passed his palm over my eyes and I got back my vision instantly.*"⁴⁶

For several years, it did not rain in Kufa and people facing severe starvation requested Imam Ali (a.s.) to pray for rain. He asked Imam Husayn (a.s.) to do so. As Imam Husayn finished his prayer, it started raining profusely.⁴⁷

Ata' bin as-Sa'ib narrates that his brother reported that he was present in Karbala when ibn Jowria accosted Imam Husayn (a.s.) and said, '*I foresee your departure to Hell*'. On hearing this, Imam Husayn (a.s.) lifted his hands towards the sky and prayed, '*O Lord, let this wretch taste Hell fire*'. On hearing this, ibn Jowria became enraged and he wanted to attack Imam Husayn (a.s.). His horse shied throwing him off the saddle. His leg was caught in the stirrup and the terrified horse dragged him over boulders smashing his head and dispatching him to hell instantly.⁴⁸

It is reported from Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) that on the day of Ashura, Tamim bin Hussayn taunted Imam Husayn (a.s.) saying, '*Look Husayn, how cool water flows in the river Euphrates! Even till your death you shall not have even a single drop of it*'. Hearing this taunt, Imam Husayn (a.s.) asked who the speaker was, and it was said to him that he was Tamim bin Hussayn. The Imam (a.s.) said, '*Both he and his father are from the people of Fire. O Lord, even this very moment let him taste the torment of thirst and die*'. Even as the Imam (a.s.) finished his prayer, Tamim was seized by a burning thirst and he wanted to quench it by jumping down from his horse. His violent action terrified the other horses and in the melee, Tamim was trampled to death.⁴⁹

A similar incident is reported by al-Asbaqh bin Nabata about Bani Aban bin Darim, who taunted about Imam Husayn's thirst. When Imam Husayn prayed Allah, Bani Aban was seized with severe thirst and he called for water. People gave him gallons of water that he drank and ultimately his stomach burst and he died.⁵⁰

Imam Husayn used his supernatural power when his daughter Sukaina wanted water to be brought for the infants who were near dying because of the three-day's thirst. Imam Husayn (a.s.) tried to explain by saying that the enemy forces had surrounded them and that they prevented his companions from fetching water. He also told her that they made unsuccessful attempts to dig wells. However, when the child insisted, Imam Husayn (a.s.) struck the ground with his toe and water gushed out. He then

told: 'Sukaina, Here is water. If you quench your thirst with it, there will not be any intercession for the Umma of your grandfather, the messenger of Allah. Would you still prefer to drink water?' The noble child preferred to bear the thirst than to quench it and thus deprive her grandfather's Umma of his intercession.

When Imam Husayn (a.s.) wanted to address Yazid's army for the last time, he asked their commander Umar ibn Sa'd to silence his men so that they might hear what Imam Husayn wanted to say. Umar replied, 'I can order my men to keep quiet, but what about the neighing of horses and the tingling of their bells? How can I silence them?' Imam Husayn (a.s.) replied, 'Of course, you can not do that, but I can do it'. Imam Husayn (a.s.) cast a glance all around him and absolute silence prevailed, so that everyone present at Karbala heard his sermon clearly. This exercise of Imam Husayn's power was necessary because the Imam (a.s.) wanted to convey and establish his righteousness and the injustice of the enemy.

The Qur'an categorically declares that those who attain martyrdom are not to be reckoned as 'dead', for they are alive and they get their sustenance from their Lord.⁵¹ The one and only proof of this is to be found in the events that took place after *Ashura*.

It is reported that a man from the tribe of Bani Asad went into the battlefield on the night after *Ashura*. He found a radiance and fragrance emanating from the bodies of the martyrs. When he went closer, he saw that a lion was going around the bodies and was moaning as if in great pain.⁵²

At-Tabari reports from Harith bin Wakidah who said, "I was one of those who accompanied the head of al-Husayn to Syria when I heard the head, which was mounted on a spear, reciting (Qur'anic) verses from the Sura of al-Kahf. I assumed that I must have been imagining it. The head then addressed me and said, 'O son of Wakidah, don't you know that we the Imams live and get our sustenance from our Lord?' At that time, I planned to secrete the head. The severed head once again addressed me, 'O ibn Wakidah, remove all such thought from your mind, for it is a greater crime to parade my severed head than slaying me. Leave them to their devices'. The head then recited, 'Soon, they shall know when they will be dragged with chains and yokes around their necks.' [Qur'an, 40:71].⁵³

Abu Makhnaf reports that when the severed head of Imam Husayn (a.s.) was hung in the market place of Kufa, they heard it reciting the Sura of al-Kahf. Similarly, he reports on the occasion when the head was hung on a tree, it recited 'Soon the tyrants will know how they will be punished'. In Damascus, people heard the head saying loudly, 'There is no might except in Allah'.⁵⁴

Abdurrahman al-Khath'ami reports from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) who said, 'Once, I and my father Imam Zainul Aabidin were going to one of our farms. Leaving Medina, we entered a desert area. There appeared a noble and venerable sage. On seeing him, my father got down from his steed and paid his respects. Then my father sat near him, attentively hearing every word. My father was repeating the endearment every now and then, 'May my life be sacrificed for you'. After some time, the sage left,

but my father stood watching him until he disappeared from sight. I then asked my father who the sage was, and he replied, ‘It was your grandfather Imam Husayn (a.s.).’”⁵⁵

- [1.](#) As-Saduq’s *Ilalush Sharayi*’, chap. 100, tradition 1, p.92.
- [2.](#) Qur'an, 54:2, 61:6.
- [3.](#) Qur'an, 54:23.
- [4.](#) Qur'an, 9:31.
- [5.](#) Qur'an, 3:21.
- [6.](#) Qur'an, 2:281, 11:22, 11:102–103, 12:56.
- [7.](#) Qur'an, 2:277.
- [8.](#) Qur'an, 6:160
- [9.](#) Qur'an, 39:57–59, 37: 167–170.
- [10.](#) Qur'an, 14:11, 17:94, 21:7–8, 23:33, 25:7–8, 26:111, 26:154, 26:185, 29:29, 34:43, 36:15, 26:154, 26:185–186, 34:43, 46:27.
- [11.](#) As-Saduq’s *Ilalush Sharayi*’, Ch. 99, tradition No.6, p.91, p. 138 of 3rd edition, [1998].
- [12.](#) Qur'an, 26:204–209, 28:59.
- [13.](#) Qur'an, 7:59–64, 10:71–73, 23:23–27, 26:105–121, 28:7–40, 29:14, 15, 51:38, 54:9–16.
- [14.](#) Qur'an, 7:65–72, 11:49–60, 26:123–139, 41:13–18, 46:21–25, 54:23–30.
- [15.](#) Qur'an, 7:73–79, 10:61–68, 26:141–158, 27:54–58, 54:33–39.
- [16.](#) Qur'an, 7:80–84, 11:81–82, 26:160–174, 29:28–35, 91:10–15.
- [17.](#) Qur'an, 7:73–93, 11:84–95, 14:9–11, 21:41–91, 23:44, 26:176–190, 28:36–37–38, 29:36,37, 38:12–14, 50:12.
- [18.](#) Qur'an, 21:51–70, 29:24, 37:97.
- [19.](#) Qur'an, 37:102–108.
- [20.](#) Qur'an, 2:259–260.
- [21.](#) Qur'an, 2:102.
- [22.](#) Qur'an, 2:55, 2:60, 2:63.
- [23.](#) Qur'an, 10:90, 11:96–100, 20:18–70, 27:7–14, 40:23–45.
- [24.](#) Qur'an, 10:91–92, 20:77, 23:45–48, 26:10–48.
- [25.](#) Qur'an, 17:101–103.
- [26.](#) Qur'an, 26:64–68.
- [27.](#) Qur'an, 43:46–55, 44:22–24, 54:41–42, 79:15–26.
- [28.](#) Qur'an, 28:76, 81, 29:39,40, 34:34, 43:23–25.
- [29.](#) Qur'an, 34:10, 38:17–20.
- [30.](#) Qur'an, 27:15–43, 38:36.
- [31.](#) Qur'an, 34:12.
- [32.](#) Qur'an, 3:49, 5:110.
- [33.](#) Qur'an, 3:46, 19:28–33.
- [34.](#) Qur'an, 9:31.
- [35.](#) Qur'an, 8:33.
- [36.](#) Qur'an, 96:1 and introductory note by Abdullah Yousuf Ali.
- [37.](#) Qur'an, 2:23–24, 10:37–38, 17:88, 11:13.
- [38.](#) Qur'an, 25:32–33, 28:48, 76:23.
- [39.](#) Qur'an, 46:12, 46:29.
- [40.](#) The Qur'an, Bible and Science by Maurice Bucaille.
- [41.](#) Al-Majlisi's *Hayatul Qulub*, Tr. Rev. James L. Merrick, Chapter 7.
- [42.](#) Ibid.
- [43.](#) Al-Mufid's *Kitabul Irshad*, Tr. by IIK.A. Howard, Ch.7.
- [44.](#) Mu'jizat Aal Muhammad, p126 – 128 quoting from *Maqta* of al-Khawarezmi, vol. 1 p. 162–163.

- [45.](#) Mu'jizat Aal Muhammad, p. 150–152 quoting from ath-Thaqib fil Manaqib, p. 330.
- [46.](#) Ibid., p. 162 quoting from ath-Thaqib fil Manaqib, p.344.
- [47.](#) Ibid., p. 126 – 139 quoting from Sayyid Razi's Uyoon al-Mu'jizat, 64.
- [48.](#) Ibid., p. 139–140 quoting from Sayyid Razi's Uyoon al-Mu'jizat, 65.
- [49.](#) Ibid., p. 140–141 quoting from Amali of as-Saduq, p. 134.
- [50.](#) Ibid., p. 142 quoting from ath-Thaqib fil Manaqib, p.143.
- [51.](#) Qur'an, 2: 154, 3: 169.
- [52.](#) Imam Husayn & the Tragic Saga of Karabala, p. 313–314 quoting Madinatul Ma'ajiz, p.70–74.
- [53.](#) Hashim al-Bahrani's Mu'jizat Aal Muhammad, vol. 2 p 137.
- [54.](#) Ibid., p.217 quoting Manaqib Aal Abi Talib, vol. 4 p. 61, quoting Maqta of Abu Makhnaf.
- [55.](#) Ibid., vol. 2 p 291.

Chapter 27: Persecution of the Shia

This Chapter is dedicated to those Martyrs whose names are lost in History due to the enormity of their numbers.

NOTE: Part 'A' of this chapter deals with the construction of the shrine and the frequent demolition made by the Umayyads and other rulers. Part 'B' and 'C' deal with the persecution of the Shia. The material of Part 'A' is collected primarily from the Urdu translation of a well-researched book in Arabic under the title 'Tarikh Karbala al-Mu'alla wa Ha'ir al-Husayn' written by Dr. Abdul Jawad Kalidar of Iraq. The book was translated into Urdu by Muhammad Baqir Naqvi, the editor of Islah, Khajwa, Bihar.

The material of Part 'B' is collected mainly from a book under the title '*Masa'ibush Shia*' written by Moulana al-Haj Sadat Husayn Sahib, printed at Sarfaraz Qaumi Press, Liknow, U.P., in six volumes of about 200 pages each, in the year 1966. Its second edition was brought out in three volumes. I have followed both editions of this book.

Part A: Demolition of the Shrines

The Bani Asad had helped Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) in burying the martyrs. Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) foretold, "In this land of Karbala, the shrine of Imam Husayn (a.s.) will become a beacon of perpetual guidance. Centuries will pass but the grace flowing from Husayn's shrine will continue unabated. The misguided leaders of recanting disbelievers will spare no effort to destroy and obliterate every sign and memory of the shrine, but every one of their malicious attempt will only augment the glory of the shrine."

History is witness to the fact that no less than eight times, if not seventeen times, the shrine of Imam

Husayn (a.s.) was completely destroyed only to come up in a larger and more glorious structure. The Umayyads and the Abbasids spared no effort to prevent people from visiting the shrine. Every such restriction only brought more and more determined pilgrims. We give below a short account of these incidents.

Now, within a few years after Ashura, for the first time the Banu Asad constructed a small structure over the graves and a mosque nearby. The Umayyads however established police chowkidars to prevent people from visiting the tombs. However, the structure remained until the end of the reign of the Umayyads, who were more interested in identifying and annihilating the Shia. The structure drew the Shia like a magnet and thus helped the Umayyads in easily apprehending them (the Shia). Perhaps this was the reason why the structure remained intact, even as the Umayyads desecrated Medina and Mecca and the shrines in those cities.

According to the authors of *Nuzhat Ahlil Haramain* and *A'yaanush Shia*, the first structure remained until the year 193 AH.¹ The Abbasids, who succeeded the Umayyads in the rule, were initially engaged in establishing their control over the newly acquired government. At first, the jealousy and enmity to Imam Ali and his progeny was only secretly nurtured. It was in the period of the Abbasid Caliph al-Mansur ad-Dawaniqi that the first demolition of the shrine took place. So cruel was al-Mansur that he not only killed the Umayyads but also massacred thousands from the progeny of Ali and Fatima and their followers. No sooner than the shrine was demolished, a new and better structure was put up by the public at great peril.

For the second time, Harun ar-Rashid demolished the structure out of his intense enmity towards Imam Husayn (a.s.). He even ordered the tree that stood as a marker near the tomb to be cut. Harun ar-Rashid died shortly thereafter and immediately another structure was constructed in the year 193 AH. Some authors are of the opinion that al-Ma'mun got the second structure constructed in 193 AH only to pacify the enraged public by pretending to be a well-wisher of the *Ahlul Bayt*.

Sheik at-Toosi also narrates that when Yahya bin al-Mughira was with Jareer bin Abdul Hamid, an Iraqi came and on being questioned he said, "*Harun ar-Rashid destroyed the tomb of al-Husayn and cut the lote-tree which was near the tomb and that was used as a mark leading to the tomb. I have heard a tradition of the Prophet (S) who repeated thrice: 'May Allah's curse be upon the one who cuts the lote-tree.' It is only now that I can understand the significance of the Prophet's saying.*"²

Sheikh at-Toosi in his *Amali* writes that in the year 247 AH, Ubaidullah bin Rabee'ah went to perform the Hajj and on his return, he went to visit the tombs of the martyrs of Karbala. He found that on the orders of the caliph, the graves were demolished and when the earth was sought to be ploughed, the bulls refused to tread the tomb (of Imam Husayn) and veered off to the right or the left of the tomb in spite of being beaten severely. Ubaidullah saying, "*By Allah, if the Umayyads have killed the grandson of the messenger of Allah, then their cousins the Abbasids too have oppressed him. By your life, his tomb has been desecrated even as they (the Abbasids) regret for not having supported in killing al-Husayn, they*

persecuted him after he was martyred.”³ A similar report is narrated through Umar ibn Faraj ar-Rakhji.⁴

The third construction, which was a huge structure, remained for about forty years until al-Mutawakkil ascended the throne in 232 AH. Al-Mutawakkil not only demolished the structure but he also confiscated all the properties dedicated to the shrine saying that the graves of the dead did not need anything.⁵ Soon after the demolition, every time a new and larger structure was constructed by the public. In his tenure of fifteen years, al-Mutawakkil demolished the shrine not less than four times; in the years 233, 236, 237, and 247 AH.⁶

Al-Muntasir killed his father al-Mutawakkil and reconstructed the shrine. In 247 AH, the shrine was once again constructed. Al-Muntasir not only got the shrine reconstructed on a larger scale, but also he encouraged people to visit it.⁷

In the year 263 AH due to a conspiracy of the government, the roof of the shrine caved in and hundreds of visitors were crushed to death.

For ten years, the shrine remained without a roof. In 273 AH, Muhammad bin Zaid bin al-Hasan bin Muhammad bin Ismael, who was known as *Da'iyy as-Saghir*, reconstructed the shrines at Karbala and Najaf once again.⁸

The shrine in Karbala was provided a dome and the shrine in Najaf was renovated and expanded. The shrines at Mecca and Medina were expanded and fresh constructions were added by Adhdud Dowla Khosrow bin Buwayh Dailamy. Ibnul Athir in his *at-Tarikh al-Kamil* praises the work done by Adhdud Dowla. Ibnul Athir also records that a dacoit called Zaba bin al-Asadi looted the shrine several times. Adhdud Dowla sent a large contingent to apprehend the dacoits, but they escaped arrest.⁹ During this period, Imran bin Shahin constructed a mosque and walls surrounding a huge courtyard at Karbala that were known as the *Courtyard of Imran*. It is also said that under a vow taken by him, he also constructed a mosque at Kazimain. In the month of Rabi’ul Awwal in 407 AH, there was an accidental fire that destroyed the entire structure.¹⁰ Some say that the fire was accidental but a majority is of the opinion that it was started on the secret orders of the caliph al-Qadir Billah who was responsible for several cases of arson and looting.

After the fire, Ibn Sahlan Ramhurmuzi, who was appointed the prime minister, constructed a stone wall all around the shrines in Karbala and Najaf. These walls remained intact for about a century from 424 to 562 AH. Ibnul Athir was contemporary and has reported the incident in detail in his book about the reconstruction of the shrine by Abu Muhammad bin Sahlan.

In 526 AH, al-Mustarshid Billah merely appropriated all the moveable and immovable properties dedicated to the shrines, but he did not meddle with their structures.

In 620 AH, the caliph Nasiruddin’s minister Mo’ayyiduddin Muhammad al-Alqami made many beautiful additions to the structure that remained intact for about 360 years.

An Arab, Muhammad bin Falah came to power in 754 AH. He was a student of Muhammad Sheikh Ahmed bin Fahad al-Hilli. He believed that Imam Ali (a.s.) was alive and that his soul has had transmigrated into him. He destroyed the dome of the shrine at Najaf saying that Imam Ali was God and that God would never die. He converted the shrine into the royal kitchen.¹¹

Muhammad bin Falah's son Ali went one step ahead of his father and claimed to be God incarnate. In 858 AH, he looted the pilgrims to Najaf and Karbala and destroyed the shrines and the houses surrounding them.

The foundations for the present structure of the shrine at Karbala were laid and a beautiful building was raised in 767 AH by Sultan Owais bin Sheikh Hasan al-Jalairi. His children Sultan Husayn and Sultan Ahmed continued the work of expansion and beautification. The Sultan's Bondsman Marjan was appointed governor of Baghdad. He revolted against the caliph, but when the caliph brought a huge army, Marjan's supporters deserted him. Marjan sought asylum in the shrine of Imam Husayn, dedicated all his wealth to the shrine, and vowed that if he was spared by the caliph, he would beautify the shrine. On receiving the Sultan's pardon, Marjan renovated the shrine and constructed a beautiful minaret. Ibn Kathir, the author of *al-Bidaya wan-Nihaya* who was a contemporary and eye witness, has reported the incident in detail at page 913 of vol. 14 of his book about the reconstruction of the shrine by Abu Muhammad bin Sahlan and the beautiful minaret raised by Marjan.¹²

On the tenth of Thul Hijjah, 1216 AH, corresponding to the year 1948 AD, the Wahabite army of Arabs entered Karbala and demolished, razed the shrine to the ground, and looted all decorations including the gold inlays and precious stones. This incident is reported in detail in Stephen Hamly's book 'Four Centuries of Iraq's History'.

The minaret constructed by Marjan in 767 AH was demolished in the year 1354 AH. The excuse made was that the minaret was tilting towards one side and that it might, in its fall, damage the main shrine. It is commonly believed that the minaret was demolished only to misappropriate the huge endowments that were made by the Safawid kings.

Shah Abbas Safawi in 914 AH, Sultan Sulaiman Qanuni in 941 AH, Shah Tahmasb in 950 AH, the Qachar kings Sultan Agha Muhammad Khan, Fateh-Ali Shah, and Nasiruddin Shah and finally Mulla Tahir Saifuddin, towards the end of the 1300 AH, made several renovations and additions to the shrine that we see today.

The latest incident of demolition of the shrine of Imam Ali an-Naqi (al-Hadi) and Imam al-Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) took place at Samara in Northern Iraq by bomb blast on February 2, 2006. It bears testimony to the fact that even in these enlightened and civilized times, people get a sadistic pleasure in bombing and destroying the tombs. We can very well imagine the atrocities that would have been committed in the days when men were known to be more barbaric, illiterate and uncivilized.

¹¹. Tarikh Karbala-e-Mu`alla Published by Islah, Khajwa, Bihar, p.109.

- [2.](#) Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 286.
- [3.](#) Ibid., p. 285–286.
- [4.](#) Ibid., p. 286.
- [5.](#) Tarikh Karbala-e-Mu’alla, p.111quoting Nasikhut Tawareekh, vol. 2 p. 37.
- [6.](#) Ibid., p.152–153.
- [7.](#) Ibid., p.115 quoting Nuzhat al-Haramain, vol. 2 p. 17 and A’yan ash-Shia, vol. 4 p. 53.
- [8.](#) Tarikh Karbala-e-Mu’alla, p.117–118 quoting Nuzhat al-Haramain, p. 20 and A’yan ash-Shia, vol. 4 p. 306.
- [9.](#) Tarikh Karbala-e-Mu’alla, vol. 2, p. 173 quoting at-Tarikh al-Kamil, vol. 8 p.226,.
- [10.](#) At-Tarikh al-Kamil of ibnul Athir, vol. 9 p. 102.
- [11.](#) Tarikh Karbala-e-Mu’alla, vol. 2, p. 182–183 quoting Aatharush Shia, p. 58–59.
- [12.](#) Ibid., p.139.

Part B: Persecution of the Shia by the Umayyads

The fact that the details about the persecution against the Shia was compiled in seven volumes each of over 200 pages, under the title ‘*Masa’ibush Shia*’[1](#) goes to show the enormity of the matter. The writer/compiler was Moulana Sadat Husayn Khan Sahib. The book was published by Sarfaraz Press, Luknow in 1347 AH. The book was reprinted in three volumes in May 2001. I have mostly followed the contents of the earlier edition of ‘*Masa’ibush Shia*’. Instead of detailing each individual persecution that would only add to the volume of this book, for brevity’s sake I have given short sketches of the persecution against the Shia during various regimes.

Be it the Umayyads or the Abbasids or any other regime for that matter, it is a historical fact that the Shia of the *Ahlul Bayt* alone were persecuted, tortured, banished, and killed, beginning from the moment of the Prophet’s death to the present day. In this enlightened twenty-first century, in Iraq and elsewhere, misguided persons kill hundreds of Shia with remote controlled bombs. The scenes of youngsters slitting the throats or beheading those, whom they consider as their opponents, are a slur on the religion whose founder is known as ‘Universal Mercy’. The book ‘*Masa’ibush Shia*’ tells the story of the persecution against the Shia throughout centuries.

The period of persecution of the Shia can conveniently be divided into the following periods

- [a] Immediately after the demise of the Prophet (S) between 11 and 30 AH
- [b] The period after the martyrdom of Imam Ali in the year 35 until 60 AH when Mu’awiya died
- [c] The period between 61 to 132 AH when Abdullah ibn az-Zubair and the Umayyads ruled as the caliphs
- [d] The period between 133 to 334 AH when the Abbasids ruled as the caliphs

[e] The period when a multitude of caliphs came to rule the Muslim world

[f] During the Mongolian period and the recent times

Persecution of the Shia by Mu'awiya from 11 to 30 AH

(1) Sa'd bin Ubadah

Sa'd bin Ubadah was a close companion of Imam Ali (a.s.). When the Prophet (a.s.) settled the marriage of his daughter Fatima (S), Sa'd was in charge of arranging the event and he did his job excellently. According to ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, Sa'd was an erudite scholar, an excellent swimmer, and noted archer of his time. Sa'd had inherited a few forts which were well-known for generosity and hospitality.

In the Prophet's army, there used to be two standards; Sa'd was the bearer of the Ansar's standard, while Imam Ali (a.s.) was the bearer of the Muhajirin's standard.

Sa'd was a loyal companion of the Prophet (S). He was a well-educated person and often officiated as the Prophet's scribe in writing down the Qur'anic revelations, writing letters, drafting deeds...etc. His tribe was well known for its generosity and hospitality. Sa'd was among the people of Medina who were, by reason of their learning of ancient scriptures, aware that a Prophet would soon appear in the Arabia. When they heard about the Prophet (a.s.) and the religion he preached and the torture which he and his followers were subjected to, Sa'd along with some other learned persons from Medina came to the Prophet (S) and invited him to migrate to Medina. In every skirmish, battle, or other confrontation with the opponents of Islam, Sa'd participated and fought valiantly.

When Umar, Abu Bakr, and Abu Ubaidah ibn al-Jarrah went to the *Saqifa* to stake the claim for the *Caliphate*, Sa'd bin Ubadah challenged them saying that among the tribe of Quraish, if the people of Quraish were to have precedence, Imam Ali (a.s.) was the nominated by the Prophet (S) as his successor and that he was the most fit person to the post. On hearing this, Umar was so infuriated that he shouted, "Kill Sa'd." However, Sa'd's tribesmen rescued him. Sa'd never recognized Abu Bakr or Umar as the *Caliphs*. He never mingled with them nor did he offer prayers behind them at any time. He was steadfast in his refusal to acknowledge Abu Bakr and later Umar as the *Caliph*. Umar asked Khalid bin al-Walid who secretly killed Sa'd bin Ubadah. Though Sa'd was not the first in point of time to be martyred because of his love for Imam Ali (a.s.), he was the first one to openly oppose at the *Saqifa* the men who claimed the *Caliphate*.

Immediately after the death of the Prophet (S), the affair at the *Saqifa* created a rift among Muslims. The Ansar had heard the Prophet (S) nominating Imam Ali (a.s.) as his successor. They were aware of the virtue, caliber, and wisdom of Imam Ali (a.s.) and hence were ready to accept him as the successor to the Prophet (S). However, during the last days of the Prophet (S), the Ansar found that every order of the Prophet (S) was disobeyed and the parchment and pen he requested to write down his will was

denied. Umar was at the head of this group (who opposed and disobeyed the Prophet). The Ansar realized that there was a concerted effort to prevent Imam Ali (a.s.) from succeeding the Prophet (S). They determined that if anyone other than Imam Ali (a.s.) was to become the *Caliph*, the Ansar had in Sa'd bin Ubadah a better claim than the stranger incumbent to the post.

When Umar wanted Khalid bin al-Walid to be penalized for having killed Malik bin Nuwayra, a pious Muslim, and on the same night committing adultery with his widow, for the sake of pleasing the *Caliph* Abu Bakr, Khalid replied, "*I killed Malik bin Nuwayra to please Abu Bakr just as I had killed Sa'd bin Ubadah to please you.*" After this retort, Umar stopped accusing Khalid of murdering Malik bin Nuwayra.²

(2) Malik bin Nuwayra

Umar, who was well known for his booming voice and ill temper, went around Medina brandishing his unsheathed sword and threatening dire consequences if the caliphate of Abu Bakr was not accepted. In Medina, many companions and learned Muslims preferred to express their disagreement by staying away from open acceptance of Abu Bakr as the *Caliph*. They were immediately branded as friends of Ali and therefore, by implication, enemies of the caliph. Ali himself was made a target, dragged from his house and the house itself was threatened to be set on fire for refusing to acknowledge Abu Bakr as the caliph.

The well known and true companions of the Prophet (S) such as Salman, Abu Dharr al-Ghfari, Huthaifa bin al-Yeman, Malik al-Ashtar, al-Miqdad, Maytham at-Tammar, Muhammad bin Abu Bakr (the son of the caliph), Malik bin Nuwayra, Muhammad bin Abi Huthaifa, Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, Sa'sa'a bin Souhan, Qambar, Kumail ibn Ziyad, Sulaym bin Qays, and an endless list of the Prophet's companions and Imam Ali's companions were not only deprived of their pensions but also banished from Medina to flimsy lands.

In remoter parts of the Islamic state, people were only aware that during his last pilgrimage, the Prophet (S) had nominated Imam Ali (a.s.) as his successor and demanded that the Muslim Umma should obey him alone. At any rate, they were not aware of any parallel nomination of anyone else by the Prophet (S). This was all the more evident from the fact that Abu Bakr, Umar, and their group claimed that the Prophet (S) had not nominated any successor and that Abu Bakr was unanimously elected at the Saqifa. This was contrary to what the Muslims had witnessed during the lifetime of the Prophet (S) who had repeatedly, from the first day of Youm ad-Dar till the incident of his demanding 'ink and parchment' to write down his will, nominated Imam Ali (a.s.) as his successor. Malik bin Nuwayra, a respected companion of the Prophet (S), went to Medina and found Abu Bakr sitting on the Prophet's pulpit. Malik asked Abu Bakr who made him sit there when Imam Ali (a.s.) who was nominated by the Prophet (S) was the rightful person to occupy the seat. Abu Bakr replied that he was elected at the Saqifa. Malik returned back refusing to pay allegiance to Abu Bakr. Therefore, when Muslims found that instead of Imam Ali (a.s.) Abu Bakr had become the Caliph, they refused to acknowledge the new incumbent or to submit to his authority. Above all, Malik bin Nuwayra told his tribesmen to keep the Zakat and Khums

and to refuse paying them to the agents of Abu Bakr.

Abu Bakr became angry and ordered Khalid bin al-Walid to kill Malik bin Nuwayra for disobeying the *Caliph's* authority. When Malik heard this, he said, “*I do not dare disobey the Caliph, but I will not bow down to Abu Bakr who is a usurper of the Caliphate. The rightful Caliph is Ali who was nominated by the Prophet (S).*” After a short fight, Khalid bin al-Walid killed Malik bin Nuwayra and his three hundred men. He confiscated all their properties and arrested their women. On the same night, he committed adultery with Malik’s widow who was renowned for her beauty. These illegal acts created a stir among several persons, like Abu Qattara, in Khalid’s army. They complained to Abu Bakr. The women prisoners complained that they were unjustly imprisoned to which Abu Bakr replied, “*Your men refused to pay the tax to me.*” The women replied, “*If our men refused to pay the tax, you have slain them. Why do you hold us prisoners, where we have not committed any crime?*” Hearing this, Abu Bakr ordered them to be released. When Umar heard about the murder of Malik bin Nuwayra and his companions and the committing of adultery by Khalid, he suggested that Khalid should be executed for killing a pious Muslim, and that Khalid should also be stoned for committing adultery with Malik’s widow. Abu Bakr refused saying that he pardoned Khalid for his misinterpretation and that he would pay blood money to Malik’s heirs and ask Khalid to forthwith divorce Malik’s widow. This decision speaks volumes about the *Caliph’s* acumen. Firstly, the *Caliph* is not the authority to pardon sins. Secondly, blood money could be paid only when heirs of the killed person agree to receive it, but if they demand *Qisas* (retaliation), Khalid had to be executed. Thirdly, since Khalid had committed adultery and no marriage was possible between him and Malik’s widow, the question of Khalid to divorce her does not arise at all. At any rate, what all transpired was only because of the love that Malik bin Nuwayra had toward Imam Ali (a.s.).[3](#)

(3) The Tribes of Kinda and Hadhramaut

Immediately after his ascension to the *Caliphate*, Abu Bakr was faced with opposition from the tribes in the surrounding districts. The Kinda and Hadhramaut tribes asserted, “*As long as the messenger of Allah was alive, we were obliged to him. After the Prophet’s demise, we would have obeyed if someone from his progeny [Ahlul Bayt] had ascended the Caliphate. What right has the son of Abu Quhafa (Abu Bakr) over us or over the Caliphate?*”

The *Caliph’s* agent Ziyad bin Labid was afraid that soon the entire Arab society would rise against the *Caliph*. He approached the Bani Zohd, a sub tribe of Kinda, and complained about the attitude of the Kinda Tribe. Bani Zohd replied, “*Why do you insist upon demanding obedience to one whom the Prophet (S) has never appointed as his successor?*” Ziyad replied, “*It is true that the Prophet (S) did not command anyone to obey Abu Bakr, but Muslims have appointed him by mutual consent.*” The Bani Zohd replied, “*Since, as you claim, they exercised their option, then why did they [the Muslims] not exercise their option in favour of the Ahlul Bayt? We know that the Prophet (S) did not die before nominating his successor. Therefore, keep away from us and do not indulge in creating mischief. We are not obliged to your Caliph nor would we abide by his orders.*”

On seeing the belligerent mood of the tribesmen, Ziyad took to his heels. He returned with reinforcement and in the fight that took place in the town of Bureim, 209 Shia under al-Ash'ath bin Qais were martyred. Ziyad lost the fight and once again sought the safety of the Fort in Bureim. Ziyad sought the help of Muhajir ibn Abi Umayya who collected a large army and went to the aid of Ziyad. Al-Ash'ath also collected a huge army. Ziyad was afraid of the army of al-Ash'ath and he wrote to Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr in turn wrote to al-Ash'ath advising him to surrender. The letter enraged al-Ash'ath and one of his companions struck the hand of the courier. Al-Ash'ath was left with only two thousand men. Hundreds of deserted him and joined Ziyad's army.

However, al-Ash'ath defeated Ziyad's men. Those, who escaped, sought shelter in the Fort at Bureim. Once again, Ziyad wrote to Abu Bakr who called a meeting in which Abu Ayyub al-Ansari said, "*The people of Kinda are valiant warriors. Once all of them join hands, it will be impossible to defeat them. The best course now is to forget collecting taxes. Later, they may themselves regret and submit to you.*" To this, Abu Bakr replied, "*O Abu Ayyub, I have sworn not to let go even a six-month-old lamb and I will fight until the end in the matter of collecting taxes.*"⁴

Abu Bakr sent a contingent under Akrima to assist Ziyad. The combined forces of Akrima and Ziyad ibn Labeed surrounded the army of al-Ash'ath and prevented food and water to reach them. Deprived of any strength to fight, al-Ash'ath sought an amnesty from Ziyad. Ziyad imprisoned all the men of al-Ash'ath and one after another, he beheaded them. He sent al-Ash'ath to Abu Bakr.

Al-Ash'ath surrendered before the *Caliph* who immediately bestowed costly gifts upon him (al-Ash'ath) and got him married to his sister Umm Farwa through whom al-Ash'ath got three sons Muhammad, Ismael, and Ishaq and a daughter called Ja'dah.

The treason of al-Ash'ath passed on to his children. His son Muhammad was a soldier of Umar ibn Sa'd and fought against Imam Husayn (a.s.) at Karbala. His two brothers Ismael and Ishaq joined the army of Abdul Melik ibn Marwan. Ja'dah poisoned Imam Hasan (a.s.).

Due to the betrayal by al-Ash'ath, noble men of the tribes of Kinda and Hadhramaut, such as Suraqa bin al-Harith, Abdullah bin Arfajah, Adiy bin Owf, and the tribes of Bani Hajjar, Bani Himyar, Banu Kinda, numbering to about eight thousand were slaughtered merely because they wanted anyone from the Prophet's progeny to be the *Caliph* instead of Abu Bakr whom they considered an incompetent usurper of the *Caliphate*.

Al-Ash'ath and his ilk were similar to Talha and az-Zobair who recanted from the faith and were expelled as *Kharjites*. Thousands of learned scholars and companions of the Prophet (S) and of Imam Ali (a.s.) were killed in the battles of al-Jamal, Siffin, and an-Nahrawan.

(4) Abu Sa'eed Khalid bin Sa'eed bin al-Aas bin Umayya

When Abu Bakr claimed to have been elected as the *Caliph*, a group of twelve well-known companions

of the Prophet (S) ; six from the Muhajirin and six from the Ansar, decided to confront Abu Bakr. The six Muhajirin were Khalid bin Sa'eed, Salman al-Farsi (the Persian), Abu Dharr al-Ghfari, al-Miqdad ibn al-Aswad, Ammar ibn Yasir, and Buraidah al-Aslami. The six men of the Ansar were Abul Hasim ibn Yethan, Sahl and Uthman bin Huneif, Ubay bin Ka'b, Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, and Khuzaima bin Thabit. They decided to sit near the pulpit on a Friday when Abu Bakr would ascend the pulpit to deliver his sermon as the *Caliph*.

When confronted as to how he could become the Caliph when the Prophet (a.s.) did not nominate him and when Imam Ali (a.s.), whom the Prophet (S) had nominated, was present, Abu Bakr was unable to give any reply. He merely said, "*Leave me alone. I have somehow become the Caliph but I am not the best among you.*" After this for three days, Abu Bakr locked himself in his house. On the fourth day led by Umar, Khalid bin al-Walid with one thousand men, Salim, a slave of Huthaifa with one thousand men, Ma'ath bin Jabal with one thousand men went around the streets of Medina with drawn swords.

Heading the contingent, Umar proclaimed, "O companions of Ali, I dare you to repeat what you told the caliph a few days ago and I will have each one of you beheaded." To this, Sa'eed replied, "O son of ad-Dahhak..., do you mean to threaten me with the power of the sword? Though we are few in number, we are not afraid of your threats. Were we not bound by the orders of the Imam, this very moment we would have put you and your cronies to our swords."

Salman al-Farsi then got up and addressed Umar saying, "I have heard the messenger of Allah saying that one day when my brother (Imam Ali) would be sitting in the mosque along with his companions, he will be harassed by a group of persons who are destined to be the dogs of Hell. They would wish to kill him and his companions. Surely you are the Dogs of Hell." Khalid bin Sa'eed was killed in the year 13 or 14 AH.⁵

(5) Ubay bin Ka'b bin Qais al-Khazraji al-Ansari

Ubay was one of the best reciters of the Qur'an. The Prophet (S) used to say that it was a pleasure to hear Ubay reciting the Qur'an. Abul Fida Ismael bin Ali in his book⁶ gives the names of persons, apart from the Banu Hashim, who refused to pay allegiance to Abu Bakr; az-Zobair bin al-Awwam, Utbah bin Abi Lahab, Khalid bin Sa'eed bin al-Aas, al-Miqdad bin Amr, Salman al-Farsi, Abu Dharr, Ammar bin Yasir, al-Bara' bin Aazib, and Ubay bin Ka'b bin Qais.

Similarly, in the initial stages, Abu Sufyan and the Umayyads refused to acknowledge Abu Bakr as the Caliph. Ubay was one among the twelve persons who surrounded Abu Bakr on a Friday and questioned him about his eligibility to occupy the seat of Caliphate when Imam Ali (a.s.), the one nominated by the Prophet (S) was present.

During the reign of Umar, there was a great influx of people into Islam, mostly due to the conquests of foreign territories. Umar wanted to expand the Prophet's mosque and he offered to acquire the houses

of the Prophet's wives and other relatives.

Umar came to al-Abbas bin Abdul Muttalib, the paternal uncle of the Prophet (S) and said, "Abbas, it has become necessary to expand the Prophet's mosque in order to accommodate the large population of Muslims in Medina. I have already acquired all the houses except yours, surrounding the Mosque. You may ask for whatever price you want. I will pay the same from the public treasury."

Al-Abbas refused the offer. Umar said, "I give you three options to choose anyone of them that you like; either you take whatever price you want from the public treasury, or you choose any alternative place in and around Medina so that I may get a house constructed for you, or you give your house as donation for the use of Muslims so that your house may be demolished and a larger mosque to be built."

Al-Abbas refused to accept any of the three options. Then Umar suggested that the matter might be settled by arbitration, and he asked al-Abbas to name anyone as the arbitrator. Al-Abbas nominated Ubay bin Ka'b as the arbitrator.

Al-Abbas and Umar came to Ubay to arbitrate on the dispute. After hearing both sides, Ubay said, "I have heard the Prophet (S) saying that when God asked (Prophet) David to build the 'House of God', David prepared a plan for the construction of Baitul Maqdis (Jerusalem). The square shape of the plan was marred by the house of a person from the Israelites. David offered to buy the house but its owner refused to sell it. David thought that if somehow he could acquire the house, he could make a perfect square shape for the planned building. Then, God revealed to David: 'I only want a house to be constructed so that people may enter it and glorify me. I never like people to glorify me in a place usurped by force. Therefore, you shall not have the honour of building a house for me.' On hearing this, David asked, 'O Lord, will anyone from my progeny build a house for You?' God replied, 'Yes, your progeny will build a house for me'."

Umar was enraged to hear this. He dragged Ubay by the collar into the Prophet's mosque and asked those assembled there whether anyone had heard from the Prophet (S) what Ubay had related. Abu Dharr, who was there, stated on oath that he had heard a tradition similar to the one narrated by Ubay. Hearing this, Umar let Ubay go with great consternation.⁷

Umar bore grudge against Ubay. One day, Ubay was passing through the market followed by his disciples. Umar took the opportunity to whip Ubay saying that to be surrounded by followers was an act of pomp and pride.⁸ Ubay was tortured on one pretext or the other, often on the ground of 'narrating traditions' that was strictly prohibited by the Caliphs. The real reason for the torture was that Ubay was a devout follower of Imam Ali (a.s.).

(6) Bilal bin Rabah al-Habashi

Bilal was the famous Caller of Azan and a great favorite of the Prophet (S). Bilal was an Abyssinian slave who was purchased and set at liberty by the Prophet's uncle al-Abbas.⁹ He had a slight lisp of the

tongue and could not pronounce 'sh' which he pronounced as 's'. Because of this lisp, once Umar stopped Bilal from calling out the Azan. Umar himself called out the Azan. The Prophet (S) came out and asked, "Why is not the Azan called out today?" Umar said, "I had just called out the Azan." The Prophet (S) asked why Umar called the Azan instead of Bilal, and Umar said that Bilal did not have the correct diction. The Prophet (S) said that it was Bilal's heart that was to be seen and not his diction. He called Bilal and asked him to call the public for prayers through the Azan.

Bilal was one of the very first converts to Islam. Being a poor slave, he was subjected to severe torture by the infidels of Mecca. Bilal was one among those who refused to acknowledge Abu Bakr as the Caliph. Umar, referring to a mistaken belief that Bilal was purchased and emancipated by Abu Bakr, told him (Bilal), "Is this how you repay your emancipator?" Bilal replied, "If Abu Bakr had released me from slavery for the love of God then let me be myself, for Abu Bakr has no right over me. If Abu Bakr had retained his lordship over me, then, as a slave, I am prepared to render personal service. But at no cost will I pay allegiance to one whom the messenger of Allah did not nominate as the Caliph."[10](#)

After the Prophet's demise, Bilal faced hardships in Medina and he wanted to migrate to Syria. Abu Bakr insisted that he should stay in Medina but he said, "If I was made a free man for the love of God, then none has the right to force me against my wish. But, if I am still your bondsman, then imprison me for disobedience." Abu Bakr relented and Bilal went to Damascus where he died in the year 20 AH.[11](#)

(7) Al-Hurmuzan

Al-Hurmuzan was a prince of Ahwaz. He was an early convert to Islam and had settled down in Medina. He was a pious Muslim and had participated valiantly in several wars with the Prophet (S). He was a noted companion of the Prophet (S) and of Imam Ali (a.s.). He was a great scholar in the Qur'an and Hadith. He was respected by the Muslims for his knowledge, honesty, and piety.

Ubeidullah ibn Umar ibn al-Khattab had once seen Feiroz Abu Lu'lu', a Persian slave, carrying a double-edged knife that was commonly used in Persia. When Feiroz stabbed and killed Umar with such a weapon, Ubeidullah killed him immediately. Suspecting a Persian conspiracy, Ubeidullah also killed al-Hurmuzan and Jufaynah. When protests were raised that Ubeidullah had killed two innocent Muslims, merely on suspicion, without any cause and without any inquiry, Uthman admitted that the offense had been committed by Ubeidullah, but offered to pay the blood money for al-Hurmuzan from the public treasury. Al-Hurmuzan had no relatives living and so the blood money remained in the public treasury. In this incident, Uthman had no right to accept blood money for murder. It was the exclusive right of the heirs of al-Hurmuzan. Since there were no heirs to accept the blood money, Ubeidullah ibn Umar ought to have been subjected to the normal penal laws, instead of being favoured because that he was the son of the preceding Caliph. The matter of blood money was only a show put up before the public view, since no money was paid to anyone. Al-Hurmuzan was killed only because he was a supporter of the *Ahlul Bayt*.

(8) Abu Dharr Jundab bin Junadah al-Ghifari

He was the fourth or fifth person to embrace Islam. After conversion, he went back to his tribe and preached Islam. He returned to Medina after the Battle of al-Khandaq. He was a constant companion of the Prophet (S), participating in all the battles and skirmishes. The Prophet (S) said that there was none more truthful than Abu Dharr was.¹² He was a great admirer of Imam Ali (a.s.).

After the Prophet's death when many people deserted Imam Ali, Abu Dharr was among the constant companions and supporters of Imam Ali (a.s.) and was among the twelve people who surrounded and questioned Abu Bakr about his competence to become the Caliph. Abu Dharr was very outspoken and often openly questioned the authority of Abu Bakr while arguing that the Prophet (a.s.) had nominated Imam Ali (a.s.) as his successor. For his opposition, Abu Dharr was harassed. Umar had forbidden Abu Dharr and some others from going beyond the city of Medina, for fear of his relating traditions of the Prophet (S). Uthman banished Abu Dharr to Syria. There, he found the extravagance and un-Islamic conducts of Mu'awiya irritating him. He openly criticized Mu'awiya. Mu'awiya wrote to Uthman complaining about the open criticism of Abu Dharr. Abu Dharr criticized Uthman for showing favouritism to the Umayyads and filling up all the government jobs with men from the Umayyads. Uthman banished Abu Dharr to ar-Rabathah a forsaken place in the desert. Imam Ali, his sons Hasan, and Husayn defied the ban imposed by the Caliph and with other friends, they went along with Abu Dharr until the border of Medina and bade him good-bye. There, alone and without any help, Abu Dharr and his wife lived for some time. When Abu Dharr died in the year 32 AH, his widow was worried how he could be buried. At last, a caravan suddenly appeared headed by Abdullah ibn Mas'ud and several companions of the Prophet (S) who performed the last rites and buried Abu Dharr in ar-Rabathah. According to other traditions, Imam Ali (a.s.) with his two sons was also present and he led the prayers and performed the last rites for Abu Dharr. Throughout his life, Abu Dharr was tortured, mentally and physically, for his affection for the Ahlul Bayt and for narrating traditions openly and boldly despite the prohibition of the Caliphs.

(9) Al-Miqdad bin Amr

In a quarrel with Shimr bin Hajjar al-Kindi, al-Miqdad struck him on the leg with his sword, and he sought asylum with al-Aswad bin Yaghoor az-Zohri in Mecca. Therefore, he came to be known as al-Miqdad bin al-Aswad. Al-Miqdad was one of the earliest converts to Islam. He migrated twice; one to Abyssinia in the early days of Islam, and the second when the Prophet (S) ordered Muslims to migrate to Medina. He participated in all the battles and skirmishes with the Prophet (S). After the demise of the Prophet (S), al-Miqdad was one of the twelve persons who surrounded Abu Bakr and questioned him about his competency to become the Caliph. He was deprived of the state pension and was subjected to financial difficulties. He was subjected to immense mental torture for his love of the Ahlul Bayt. He died in the year 33 AH.

(10) Salman al-Farsi

Nobody knew the exact age of Salman. Some said that he was over a century and a half of old. He had been a disciple under several Christian saints, who told him about the awaited Paraclete. When the Prophet (S) proclaimed Islam, Salman was one of the first to become Muslim. The Prophet (a.s.) treated him as a member of his family (Ahlul Bayt). Ibnul Arabi has discussed this tradition in detail in his book ‘al-Futuhat’ and established that Salman was also immaculate and therefore was counted among the Ahlul Bayt.¹³ According to Allama Noori, Salman was in fact the last of the vicegerents of Jesus (a.s.).¹⁴ Salman was one of those persons who openly opposed Abu Bakr as the Caliph. The others who joined Salman were Miqdad, Abu Dharr, Buraida al-Aslami, Khalid bin Sa’eed, Ammar bin Yasir from the Muhajirin, and al-Haitham, Uthman bin Hunaif, Sahl bin Hunaif, Khuzaima bin Thabit, Ubay bin Ka'b and Abu Ayyub al-Ansari from the Ansar. For not paying allegiance to Abu Bakr, Salman was so much beaten that his neck became crooked. Salman died in the year 36 AH.

(11) The Martyrs in the Battle of al-Jamal

The cunning Mu’awiya made use of the murder of Uthman into a political weapon to oppose Imam Ali (a.s.). He enlisted the help of Talha and az-Zobair and convinced Aa’isha to join him in the battle of al-Jamal against Imam Ali (a.s.). The circumstances that led to Uthman’s murder were as the following: Muslims, particularly of Syria, Egypt, and Iraq were vexed with the tyranny and misrule of Mu’awiya. In Medina, Muslims found that Uthman had filled the entire government with his kin and clansmen who were inefficient, impious, and avaricious. The well known case of al-Walid bin Uqba, who fully drunk led the Morning Prayer and instead of the mandatory two rak’as, he performed four rak’as, and turning to the congregation, he said, “If you like, I would add more.” Muslims gave a memorandum to Uthman complaining that he had deviated from the Prophet’s Sunna and the precedents set up by his predecessor Caliphs, listing out the following complaints:

- [i] Uthman had gifted the Khums of Africa to his uncle Marwan. Khums was the exclusive right of the Ahlul Bayt and could not be gifted to anyone else.
- [ii] From the Khums gifted by Uthman, Marwan illegally purchased prime properties and constructed several mansions in Thee Khashab.
- [iii] Uthman himself constructed seven huge mansions in Medina, out of which one was given to his wife Na’ila and another to Aa’isha bint Abu Bakr and the rest were given to his daughters.
- [iv] He appointed inefficient and impious men from his kin and clansmen in important government posts.
- [v] When al-Walid bin Uqba led the prayers while he was drunken, and the matter was brought to his notice, Uthman refused to take action against him.
- [vi] He neither appointed nor consulted many prominent companions of the Prophet (S).

[vi] He had forcibly acquired several prime properties in and around Medina.

[vii] He issued grants of cash and property to persons who had not even seen the Prophet (S) nor had they possessed any special qualification to deserve the grants.

[viii] He introduced whipping instead of expelling.

[ix] Ammar, who presented the memorandum, was severely beaten by Uthman, Marwan, and their men that he was about to die. The rest of the incidents leading to Uthman's murder have already been set out in an earlier chapter.

[x] At-Tabari reports that around Aa'isha's camel, ten thousand men were killed, a half of the number were companions of Imam Ali (a.s.) and the other half were partisans of Aa'isha.[15](#)

[xi] According to Shahr Ashub, there were twenty thousand men in Imam Ali's army, out of whom eighty were companions who had fought in the battle of Badr, fifteen hundred companions of the Prophet (S), and two hundred and fifty were participants in the Homage of the Tree (Bay'at ash-Shajara) [16](#).[17](#) The total number of martyrs on Imam Ali's side was one thousand and seventy. Notable martyrs among the companions of Imam Ali (a.s.) were Zaid bin Souhan, Hind al-Jamali, Abu Abdullah al-Abdi, Abdullah bin Ruqayya, Thumama, Hind ibn Amr, Ghaniyya bin Haytham, and Makhdooj.[18](#)

It is related through al-Hasan al-Basri that Aa'isha wrote to Zaid bin Souhan asking him to stay at home and not to join Imam Ali's army. Zaid replied, "You are doing what is forbidden for you by leaving your home and entering the battlefield. Curiously, you are forbidding me to do what my religion commands me to do, that is to take arms against traitors."[19](#)

(12) Uthman bin Hunaif al-Ansari

He was a companion of the Prophet (S). He was one among those who had at first accepted Abu Bakr as the Caliph, but later he was convinced that Imam Ali (a.s.) was the designated successor of the Prophet (S). He fought in the battle of al-Jamal as Imam Ali's agent. When he was able to subdue the enemy, compromise was suggested by Aa'isha. Uthman bin Hunaif said that there could be no compromise as long as Aa'isha associated herself with Talha and az-Zobair. The talks were inconclusive and the parties retired for the night. During the night, Talha and az-Zobair killed the guard of the mosque and several companions of Uthman bin Hunaif who was captured and brought before Aa'isha by Labban. She ordered the man to kill Uthman, but an old woman said that it was unjust to kill Uthman bin Hunaif as he was a companion of the Prophet (S). On hearing this, Aa'isha sent for the man and told him that Uthman should be imprisoned instead of being killed. Labban was anxious to kill Uthman bin Hunaif. He said that had he known the purpose of his being recalled, he would not have returned. Mujashe' bin Mas'ud suggested that Uthman bin Hunaif should be severely beaten and his beard, mustache, and eyebrows be plucked. The suggestion was carried out. Seventy of Uthman bin Hunaif's kin fought and were martyred in the battle of al-Jamal.

(13) The Martyrs in the Battle of an-Nahrawan

In the battle of an-Nahrawani, Imam Ali (a.s.) fought against the Kharijites. Only nine men from the Kharijites remained alive and from Imam Ali's army only nine were killed, among whom were Ru'bah al-Bajali, Rifa'a ibn Wa'il, al-Fayyadh ibn Khaleeli al-Azdi, Kaysum ibn Salama, Habib ibn Aasim al-Azdi.

(14) The Martyrs in the Battle of Siffin

Among the notable companions martyred at the battle of Siffin, which was between the army of Mo'awiyai and the army of Imam Ali (a.s.), were Owais al-Qarani, Huthaifa ibn al-Yaman al-Ansari, Abul Haytham, Malik ibn at-Tayyihan al-Ansari, Khuzaima ibn Thabit Thush Shahdatain, Abdullah bin Badeel al-Khuza'i, Aqeel bin Malik, Abdullah bin Khabbab bin al-Aratt, al-Harith bin Murra, Buraid al-Aslami and his two sons.

(15) Ammar bin Yasir

Ammar was from the first Muslims and was a very close companion to the Prophet (S). The Prophet (S) foretold that Ammar would be killed by the Aggressive Party. This tradition was widely known throughout the Muslim world. After the Prophet (S), Ammar never acknowledged Abu Bakr, Umar or Uthman as Caliphs. Ammar was one among the twelve persons who protested against Abu Bakr on his becoming the Caliph. In fact, he presented the memorandum complaining against the bad rule of Mu'awiya, Marwan, and Uthman himself. Uthman not only whipped Ammar but also wanted to banish him out of Median. When the clan of the Bani Makhzoom collectively opposed the proposal to banish Ammar out of Medina, Uthman relented and withdrew his order.

When Imam Ali (a.s.) was elected as the Caliph by public demand, Ammar joined Imam Ali's army. He fought valiantly in the Battle of al-Jamal.

In the battle of Siffin when Amr bin al-Aas learnt that Ammar was in Imam Ali's army, he remembered the tradition that the Aggressive Party would kill Ammar. Amr bin al-Aas started having doubts about the righteousness of his cause. He sent Thul Kila' al-Himyari to find out if Ammar was among Imam Ali's warriors. Thul Kila' sent for Abu Noah al-Himyari and enquired whether Ammar was on Imam Ali's side. Abu Noah confirmed the fact and asked why the inquiry was being made. Thul Kila' replied that Amr bin al-Aas recollected the tradition that the killers of Ammar would be aggressors and that Ammar would always be with the truth and that Ammar would have a special place in the Paradise and his killers would be in the Hell.

When Ammar was killed by Mu'awiya's men, there was a commotion that great injustice was done in killing Ammar. Mu'awiya, who was famous for his cunning, said, "We did not kill Ammar. Those, who brought Ammar into the battlefield exposing him to the dangers of the battle, are the real killers of Ammar." Hearing this, Imam Ali (a.s.) said, "Does Mu'awiya suggest that the messenger of Allah was

the killer of Hamza?"[20](#)

(16) Hashim bin Utba bin Abi Waqqas az-Zohri

Hashim was the nephew of the famous companion Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas. Hashim embraced Islam on the day of conquest of Mecca. He was a devout follower of Imam Ali (a.s.). Hashim fought valiantly in the Battle of Siffin. During the battle, a Syrian young man started abusing Imam Ali (a.s.). Hashim asked him why he was doing so. The young man replied, "I have been told that the people of Iraq and their leader never perform prayers and that they have killed the Caliph (Uthman)." Hashim said, "Uthman was killed by the companions of the Prophet (S) and our leader Ali had nothing to do with the murder of Uthman. Our leader is the first to accept Islam, the first to pray behind the messenger of Allah. He recites the Qur'an and spends the night in prayer. O Syrian, do not be carried away by the false propaganda of the hypocrites. Save yourself even now." The Syrian young man was impressed by the speech of Hasim and he left the battlefield. When Hashim was martyred, his son Utba took up his standard and was martyred after a valiant fight. [21](#)

(17) Owais al-Qurani

The Prophet (S) had foretold, "Though Owais may not meet me, he will become a Muslim and will fight with my guardian Ali and will be martyred in (the battle of) Siffin. Anyone who meets Owais is to convey my salutations to him." When Umar met Owais during the Hajj, he requested him to pray for him. Owais replied, "Everyday I pray for every believer. If you are a true believer you will be benefited by my prayers."[22](#)

Owais joined Imam Ali's army, fought in the battle of Siffin, and was martyred.

(18) Huthaifa bin al-Yaman's sons Sagwan and Sa'eed

Huthaifa was a well-known companion. The Prophet (a.s.) had informed him of the names of the hypocrites who had plotted to kill him (the Prophet) on his return from the skirmish of Tabuk. Due to the desire of Huthaifa, his two sons fought for Imam Ali (a.s.) and were martyred in Siffin.

(19) Malik bin al-Harith al-Ashtari

Malik was a close companion of Imam Ali (a.s.). He fought in many battles alongside Imam Ali (a.s.). When Mu'awiya started harassing Muhammad bin Abu Bakr who was the governor of Egypt, Imam Ali (a.s.) recalled Malik from Azerbaijan. Mu'awiya learnt about this move and was scared of Malik. He employed a man at a place called al-Qalzam to insert poison to Malik, mixed with honey. On hearing this, Imam Ali (a.s.) said, "Malik was to me as I was to the Prophet (S)."

(20) Kinana bin Bishr

He was a devout follower of Imam Ali (a.s.). When Mu'awiya made a revolt in Egypt, Imam Ali (a.s.) advised Muhammad bin Abu Bakr to seek the assistance of Kinana. When Kinana was martyred in the battle, many people deserted Muhammad bin Abu Bakr.

(21) Muhammad bin Abu Bakr

He was the son of the first Caliph Abu Bakr and the real brother of Aa'isha. He was opposed to the Caliphate of his father. He was a devout follower of Imam Ali (a.s.). In the year 38 AH, Mu'awiya surrounded and killed him while thirsty and his body was burnt.

(22) A'yan bin Dhubay'ah

Imam Ali (a.s.) sent him to help Muhammad bin Abu Bakr in Egypt. However, before he could reach Egypt, he was assassinated on the way by Mu'awiya's men.

(23) Muhammad bin Abi Huthaifa

He was an uncle of Mu'awiya, but he was a devout follower of Imam Ali (a.s.). When Umar bin al-Aas conquered Egypt, he arrested Muhammad and sent him to Mu'awiya. Muhammad was jailed, but soon escaped. He hid himself in a cave in Hawareen, but was soon discovered and slain by Mu'awiya's man Ubeidullah bin Umar bin Dhallam.

(24) Maytham at-Tammar

Maytham was a companion whose martyrdom was foretold by Imam Ali (a.s.). Maytham was shown the tree where his corpse would be hung. He used to water that tree every day. Imam Ali had said that Maytham would be asked to abuse Imam Ali (a.s.) and on his refusal, his tongue would be pulled out and cut by Mu'awiya. When Ubeidullah was appointed as the governor of Kufa, he chased the companions and partisans of Imam Ali (a.s.). He asked each one of them to abuse Imam Ali (a.s.) publicly from on the pulpit. People like Hujr bin Adiy and several others refused to comply and were thrown down from the parapet of the palace and their bodies were dragged in the streets of Kufa. Maytham also refused to comply with Ubeidullah's order saying that his Imam, Ali (a.s.) had already informed him that Ubeidullah would pull out his tongue before crucifying. Ubeidullah said he would disprove Imam Ali's words. He ordered that one hand and one leg of Maytham to be cut and he be thrown in the street. When this was done, Maytham started praising Imam Ali (a.s.) and cursing Mu'awiya, Yazid, and Ubeidullah ibn Ziyad. Unable to stop Maytham, Ubeidullah ordered Maytham's tongue to be pulled out and his body hung in the tree.

Persecution by Mu'awiya between 30–60 AH

Mu'awiya appointed Bisr bin Artat to seek out and kill Imam Ali's partisans. Bisr played havoc in Mecca, Medina, Yemen, and other towns. It is reported that he had killed more than 30,000 Shia.²³ When he could not locate Ubeidullah ibn Abbas, he killed his little children in front of their mother.²⁴

When Abu Sufyan saw that Abu Bakr had been installed as the Caliph, he went to Imam Ali (a.s.) and said, "You have been deprived of your right by those who do not deserve the post of caliph. If only you assent, I will fill Medina with cavalry and soldiers to unseat the usurpers of the seat of caliphate."

Imam Ali (a.s) was fully aware that Abu Sufyan, who fought the Prophet (S) all his life, was a hypocrite and that all he wanted was dissension and discord in Islam. Imam Ali (a.s.) refused to be dragged into the trap. Rebuked and rebutted by Imam Ali (a.s.), Abu Sufyan planned to join the opponents of Ali.

Umar, who received the news of what transpired between Abu Sufyan and Ali, realized that if left to himself, Abu Sufyan would cause great mischief. Umar thought it best to purchase Abu Sufyan's loyalty rather than to face his mischief. Umar sent for Abu Sufyan and told him that he and Abu Bakr had decided to appoint his (Abu Sufyan) son Yazid as the governor of Syria. Abu Sufyan was immensely pleased. In the year 11 AH, Yazid bin Abu Sufyan became the governor of Syria. Very soon, he died and in his place, the caliph appointed Mu'awiya as the governor of Syria and Iraq. Though, on becoming the second caliph, Umar removed several governors on various charges, Mu'awiya was not disturbed from his post in spite that his misrule was the cause of the uprising and the ultimate assassination of Uthman.²⁵

In his letter to Muhammad bin Abu Bakr, Mu'awiya wrote, "Even during the lifetime of the messenger of Allah, we (the Umayyads) were together with your father in contesting against Ali's right (of leadership). We were certainly aware of his superiority and supremacy over all others. But, when God chose to take away the messenger of Allah from this world, it was your father and his friend Umar who were the foremost in snatching the caliphate from Ali by opposing him at all costs. In this, both of them (Abu Bakr and Umar) were in perfect consonance with each other."²⁶

Mu'awiya's rule of Syria, Egypt, and Palestine actually commenced from the year 11 AH, and lasted for fifty years, when he died in 60 AH. Thus, the areas under his domain were far away from Mecca and Medina, the centers of Islam, and the population there believed only what was taught to them by Mu'awiya's henchmen. The public had no idea who were the relatives of the Prophet (S) or who were his companions. Mu'awiya made the people there believe that he alone was the heir of the Prophet (S), that Ali was a dacoit, and Husayn a reactionary opposed to Islam. People were made to believe that anybody who praised Ali must himself be a dacoit or at least of low morality, and that anybody who praised Husayn in fact sowed the seeds of sedition. Fifty years were more than enough to achieve this goal.

From the year 11 to 35 AH, Mu'awiya apprehended no danger from the ruling caliph. He had Syria, Iraq,

and Egypt under his control. These areas were far away from Medina, the then capital of Islam. Except for the essentials, the public had no idea about the thought and philosophy of Islam. In fact, Mu'awiya wanted the people to be ignorant of Islam so that nobody might point out that Mu'awiya himself was acting against Islam in his daily life. In order to win over the public, he allowed them to lead a life without any reference to the prohibitions and recommendations made in Islam.

The public found that their rulers provided them jobs and food. Beyond that, they had no need or desire to consider any aspect of Islam or its true proponents. As a result, al-Hajjaj bin Yousuf asked people from on the pulpit, "*Who provides you food and jobs?*" People replied, "*The Caliph.*" He then asked, "*Who is better, the Prophet or the Caliph?*"²⁷

The foundation for the thought that the *Caliph*, in the least, was next only to God was strongly and truly laid by Mu'awiya. Because of this, in the year 96 AH When al-Waleed bin Abdul Melik bin Marwan became the king, he contended that the caliph was superior to past Prophets.

Ibnul Athir records that in 98 AH, al-Waleed bin Abdul Malik asked while giving a sermon in Mecca, "Who is more important for you; the Caliph or Abraham the Prophet? How I wish you realized the superiority of your caliph who provided sweet drinking water for you whereas Abraham the Prophet only provided brackish water (Zamzam). By God, al-Waleed is dearer in the eyes of God than any Prophet."²⁸ Al-Waleed was referring to the well he had dug up in Mecca, which provided sweet water for some time, but later it dried up.

Initially, Mu'awiya was engaged in consolidating his own position by lavishly bribing amenable persons and killing or at least confiscating the properties of those who were even suspected to sympathise with Ali. But, from 11 to 30 AH, we do not find any interference by Mu'awiya with the Caliph. When Uthman was killed, Mu'awiya apprehended a contender and feared that he might lose power, and therefore, he took these steps:²⁹

[i] He sent his army commander Bisr bin Artat who killed 30,000 Shia and slaughtered two young sons of Abdullah Ibn Abbas in their mother's lap.

[ii] He sent Sufyan bin Ouf whose contingent of six thousand strong men created terror by looting and destructing the houses of the Shia in al-Mada'in.

[iii] He sent Abdullah bin Sa'dah al-Fazari with a contingent to loot and harass the people who sympathized with Imam Ali (a.s.).

[iv] He sent ad-Dhahhak bin Qais with 30000 men to loot, terrorize, and kill Ali's adherents in Waqisa, Thalabiya, and Qatqat.

[v] He sent an-No'man bin Basheer to eliminate Ali's adherents in Ayn at-Tamr.

[vi] He removed the names of the Shia from the citizenship registers.³⁰

[vi] He stopped the state pensions to any one suspected to be a Shia.

[vii] He ordered that the testimony of anyone suspected to be a Shia should not be admitted in evidence.

In his rule of about half a century, Mu'awiya laid a solid foundation for the extreme hatred toward Imam Ali (a.s.) and anybody even remotely linked or sympathetic to him. In the course of time, the Shia along with their Imams inherited the legacy of blind persecution by their opponents. The Abbasids gained power on the basis of a popular and widespread perception that the Umayyads were usurpers of Power and that the Caliphate rightly belonged to Ali and his offspring. After gaining power, the Abbasids became much crueler out of the unfounded fear that if not persecuted, the Imams would wrest the power from them.

Sa'eed Akbarabadi, a Sunni historian, writes, "Every act forbidden and disapproved by Islam was done to build up and stabilise the government. There is an Arabic proverb that the Umayyads were 'the First Diggers of buried bodies' and the Abbasids were 'the Second Diggers of buried bodies'." Then, the writer's personal preference comes to the fore and he makes his choice by adding, "Perhaps the first group of gravediggers were less cursed."

The writer gives the reason for the downfall of the Umayyads as follows, "The fall of the Umayyads was largely due to their excessiveness, repression, and tyranny and also due to their nomination of successors within the life period of the working caliph. The Abbasids also committed the same blunders and they never cared to change their attitude and conduct."³¹ The writer forgets that the precedent of nominating the successor was set by Abu Bakr when he nominated Umar as his successor, and the example was scrupulously followed by Mu'awiya and his successors. Elsewhere Sa'eed Akbarabadi gives the following reasons for the development of apostatic trends in Islam: "The apostatic trends that developed among Muslims were largely due to the following two factors; the false and morbid system of government founded by the Umayyads, and the patronage and propagation of rational branches of knowledge and dogmatic theology by the Abbasids ³²"

We may recall here what we noted in earlier pages that firstly, the Umayyads were invested with the governorship of Syria and Iraq by the first two caliphs, and that the third caliph only expanded the hold of the Umayyads by filling up every position of power with his relatives or tribesman; secondly, when the first three caliphs prohibited the narration of *Hadith*, they had to perforce open the doors for *Ijtihad*.³³ When the unwanted effects of *Ijtihad* were noticed, the doors of *Ijtihad* were suddenly and unceremoniously closed down, but only after when Islam came to be divided into four sects. The 'unwanted effects' that the writer bemoans are but the fruits of the seeds sown immediately after the death of the Prophet (S).

To be fair to the writer, who describes in detail the atrocities committed by the Abbasids, we quote this passage: "*Besides the Umayyads, people who were suspected of supporting the progeny of Ali were also similarly maltreated.*"³⁴

As non-Muslim governments came to power, there was a slackening in the torture and the killing of the Shia. Among the Indian Rulers, except the two kingdoms of Bijapur and Golconda, all were *Sunnis*. Where the Shia ruled, there was communal harmony, but in places like Luknow, Benaras...etc., with the connivance of the rulers, the Shia were singled out for persecution. With the passage of time, the Shia have slowly forgiven and forgotten the persecution and torture they suffered for centuries.

I remember as a youth that during the 60's in Madras, we dreaded to wear our '*Alfi*' (a black scarf traditionally worn by the Shia during the first ten days of Muharram) while passing a road called the *Jane Jehan Khan Road*. If anyone was found wearing the *Alfi*, he was derided, spat upon, and abused by the inhabitants of that road who were staunch *Sunnis*. We had to perform our Majlis (ritual meetings) quietly within specific localities thickly populated by Shia.

During the procession on the seventh of Muharram, on Triplicane High Road, disturbance was sought to be created by throwing silver and gold coins on the breast-beating processionists. Fortunately, advance information was passed on by some well-wisher and the elders of the community decided that from the junction at Pyecrofts Road and Triplicane High Road, to the junction at Chowk (a square Bazaar) and Triplicane High Road, there would not be any breast-beating and that the processionists would only recite "*Nadi Aliyyan Aliyyan Ya Ali*" and that nobody would stoop to pick up anything, even if it be silver or gold coin which might be thrown on the processionists from the surrounding buildings. People who planned the conspiracy are dead, the throwing of the coins has stopped, but processions commemorating Imam Husayn's martyrdom continue until now.

To perpetuate the memories of the great sacrifice at Karbala, the Shia contributed their own blood. Be it Umayyad, Abbasid, or any other, the successive regimes spared no effort to erase the graves and memories of the sacrifice made by Imam Husayn (a.s.) and his companions. The rulers imposed severe penalties by way of taxes for visiting the tombs of the martyrs at Karbala. The Shia never hesitated to pay the huge levies to visit Imam Husayn's shrine at Karbala. Leaving the old and the sick, the Abbasids killed the young Shia, so that the Shia population might dwindle.

Quite often, they ordered the tombs of the martyrs at Karbala to be destroyed and erased completely. Ibnul Athir, in his *al-Kamil*, relates that in the year 236 AH, the Abbasid caliph *al-Mutawakkil* ordered the tomb of Imam Husayn (a.s.) and the surrounding houses to be demolished without leaving any trace.[35](#)

Allama al-Majlisi quotes that Ibn Babwayh narrates through reliable authorities from Abdullah Neishapuri that he had some dealing with Hameed bin Atiyya at-Toosi, and he went to meet him in his house. It was the month of Ramadan, but Atiyya had his food. When questioned why he did not observe the fasting, Atiyya said, "I beheaded sixty young men from the progeny of Ali and Fatima. The last of them was an old man. He cursed me for killing the innocent progeny of Ali and Fatima and that I would certainly be punished in the Hell. What use would prayer and fasting make to me with the murderer of the innocent progeny of Ali and Fatima? It is because of that that I neither pray nor fast."

Mu'awiya appointed the following governors who were notorious for committing cruelty and torture:

[1] al-Mugheera bin Shu'ba [2] Ziyad bin Sumayya (bin Abeeh) [3] Samura bin Jundab [4] Amr bin al-Aas [5] Muslim bin Uqba [6] Ubaidullah bin Ziyad who was the commander in chief of the army that fought against Imam Husayn and [7] Hussayn bin Numair who guarded the banks of the Euphrates and prevented Imam Husayn (a.s.) from getting any water...etc.[36](#)

The following persons were friends of Imam Ali. They were killed when they refused to curse the Imam in Mu'awiya's presence:

[1] Hujr bin Adiy [2] Muhammad bin abi Huthaifa [3] Shaddad bin Aws [4] Sa'sa'a bin Souhan al-Abdi [5] Abdullah bin Hashim bin Utba bin Abi Waqqas [6] Jameel bin Ka'b ath-Tha'labi [7] Jariya bin Qudama at-Tamimi [8] Shareek bin Shaddad al-Hadhrami [9] Saifi bin Faseel ash-Shaibani [10] Qabeesa bin Dhubay'ah al-Absi [11] Kiram bin Habban al-Anzi [12] Muhriz bin Shihab at-Tamimi [13] Abdurrahman bin Hassan al-Anzi [14] Amr bin al-Humq al-Khuza'iy [15] Juwairiya ibn Musshir al-Abdi... etc.[37](#)

Sumara bin Jundab killed eight thousand innocent persons.[38](#)

Ziyad bin Sumayya (bin Abeeh) was a bastard appointed by Mu'awiya as governor of Basra. Ziyad knew every Shia and every one from Imam Ali's progeny in Basra. He killed over a hundred thousand of them.[39](#)

Al-Mughira bin Shu'ba cunningly told Shareek bin al-A'war al-Harithi to collect people in order to fight against the Kharijites. Shareek collected about three thousand Shia from the tribe of Rabi'a. When they gathered outside Basra, al-Mughira surrounded and killed them all.

Ibn Ziyad, as the governor of Basra first and later as the governor of Basra and Kufa, killed hundreds of thousands of Shia from the two cities

Between 61 to 64 AH under Yazid bin Mu'awiya

1. The following persons were sent as ambassadors by Imam Husayn (a.s.) or were his friends who were killed by Yazid's men:

[1] Sulayman bin Zareen [2] Abdullah bin Yaqtur al-Himyari [3] Qais bin Musahhir as-Saidawi [4] Muhammad bin Kathir and his son [5] Muslim ibn Aqeel [6] Hani ibn Urwa al-Muradi [7] Ammar al-Azdi [8] Abdul A'la bin Yazid al-Kalbi

2. The slaughter of over one hundred and fifty noble men at Karbala along with the friends and relatives of Imam Husayn (a.s.) which is the theme of this book.

3. The following were killed after Ashura:[1] Rashid al-Hijri [2] Abdullah bin al-Harith bin Noufal [3]

Maytham at-Tammar [4] Khalid bin Mas'ud [5] Muhammad bin Aktham [6] Kamil [7] Amr bin Abdullah al-Hamadani [8] Sawwar bin al-Mun'im bin al-Habis al-Hamadaini Nahmi [9] al-Mowaqe' bin Thumama al-Asadi as-Saidawi [10] Wahab bin Abdullah [40](#)

4. In the incident of al-Harra, the army of Yazid desecrated the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. They wantonly killed hundreds of thousands of Muslims. They raped the women in the two cities. They used the mosque of the Prophet and the Kaaba as stables. They burned the covering of the Kaaba.

The Shia Martyred between 64 & 73 AH under Abdullah ibn az-Zubair's rule

We had noticed earlier that when he saw Abdullah ibn az-Zubair in Mecca, Abdullah ibn Abbas said that he (ibn az-Zubair) was only waiting for his opportunity to become the Caliph. This proved correct. The holy cities of Mecca and Medina, Iraq, Persia, and the rest of the Muslim world, [except Syria, Palestine, and Egypt] were under Ibn az-Zubair until 73 AH when was killed. Abdullah ibn az-Zubair was a mean-minded who felt pleasure in creating chaos. He hated Imam Ali (a.s.) and his progeny. When Yazid demanded his allegiance, ibn az-Zubair took asylum in the Kaaba. He pretended to be pious while always coveting worldly gain. On the death of Yazid and in the prevailing confusion, Abdullah ibn az-Zubair declared his caliphate and occupied the Arabia and a part of Iraq and Iran. He could not wrest Syria, Palestine, and Egypt where Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad set up Abdul Melik bin Marwan as the caliph.

Ibn az-Zubair subjected the Shia living in Mecca and Medina to immense torture and he exiled them out of the two holy cities. Abul Qasim Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya was the third son of Imam Ali and step-brother of Imam Husayn. Ibn az-Zubair arrested and kept him in a dark dungeon for a long time. Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyya had a son called Hasan. Hasan was also subjected to torture in prison only because he was the grandson of Imam Ali.

Abu Ishaq al-Mukhtar bin Abu Ubaida ath-Thaqafi was born in the year of the Prophet's migration to Medina. He was two years senior to Imam Husayn, but he considered Imam Husayn to be his master. He openly proclaimed his love for the progeny of Imam Ali. Mu'awiya had imprisoned him in Kufa long before the battle of Karabala. It was only after the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (a.s.) when the general public broke into to open the locks of the dungeon that al-Mukhtar could come out. Learning about the cruel manner of the martyrdom which Imam Husayn was subjected to, al-Mukhtar swore that he would catch everyone of the stone-hearted miscreants and kill them. Initially, he joined the forces of Ibn az-Zubair and fought against Hussayn bin Numair. When he learnt that the people of Kufa were like a herd of sheep that had lost their shepherd, he went to Kufa and collected people who wished to seek revenge for Imam Husayn's blood. Among them was Ibrahim bin Malik al-Ashthar. Ultimately, both al-Mukhtar and Ibrahim were killed.[41](#)

It is reported by al-Khawarezmi that the day after al-Mukhtar was killed, seven thousand Shia were

surrounded and mercilessly killed by Mus'ab bin Abdullah ibn az-Zubair. This incident so much influenced Abdullah ibn Umar, the son of the second caliph, that once when Mus'ab met him and introduced himself, Abdullah ibn Umar said, “*Yes, I know that you are Mus'ab who had killed seven thousand Muslims without any guilt. You may live as long as you wish.*”⁴²

Persecution between 64 to 85 AH, by Marwan and his son Abdul Melik

After the death of Yazid, there was much confusion. Marwan, who was banished by the Prophet (S) and then allowed to come back by the first caliph, now assumed power. His reign was in dispute and even the Sunnis do not recognise him as a caliph. Within a year, he passed away. He had nominated his son Abdul Melik as his successor in the rule. Thus, the long cherished dream of Abu Sufyan was reralised and for nearly a century, the Umayyads tossed around the ball of caliphate among themselves.

Marwan could control only Syria and Palestine at first. After the martyrdom of Muhammad bin Abu Bakr, Egypt also came under his rule. The notorious Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad was his commander in chief, and persons like Umar bin Sa'd, Hussayn bin Numair, Shimr bin Thil Joushan, and other such cruel and tyrannous persons were heading the divisions of the army and cavalry. However, Marwan lived hardly for a year after coming into power.

The rule of Abdul Melik bin Marwan lasted for twenty-one years that were full of oppression and persecution. Any person, who was even suspected to be a sympathiser with the *Ahlul Bayt*, was imprisoned, banished, or killed for no other fault.

Mu'awiya, in his time, imprisoned several noble and innocent men. Sulayman bin Surad al-Khuza'iy, al-Musayyab bin Naqaba al-Fazari, Abdullah bin Sa'd bin Nafi' al-Azdi, Abdullah bin Wal at-Taimi, Rifa'ah bin Shaddad al-Bajali, Abdullah bin Sa'd bin Nufeil, Muttaqi bin Muhrisa, Sa'eed bin Huthaifa, Katheer bin Amr al-Muzani, Sa'eed bin Sa'eed al-Hanafi, Abdullah bin Handhala at-Ta'iy, Abul Huwayrith al-Abdi, and their group of 4500 men known as the Tawwabin (repentants), several of whom were companions of the Prophet (S) and of Imam Ali (a.s.) and were noble men in their tribes, were imprisoned by Mu'awiya on account of their love to Imam Ali.

Therefore, they could not participate in the battle of Karabala. When Yazid died, pandemonium broke out and the public looted the treasury, broke open the lock of the prisons and released all prisoners. Under Sulayman bin Surd al-Khuza'iy, the Tawwabin wanted to seek revenge for Imam Husayn's blood. Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad sent an army of twelve thousand men under the command of Hussayn bin Numair. Ubaidullah himself headed an army of thirty thousand men.

Most of the Tawwabin, numbering over five thousand, were killed by Ibn Ziyad and Hussayn bin Numair's men. A few Tawwabin escaped and went back to their native places.

Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad and Hussayn bin Numair were killed near Mosul by the men of Ibrahim bin Malik al-Ashtar and al-Mukhtar. Abdul Melik bin Marwan appointed al-Hajjaj ibn Yousuf ath-Thaqafi as the governor of Iraq, al-Muhallab bin Abi Sufrah as the governor of Persia, Hisham bin Isma'eel and his son over Egypt, Musa bin Nuseir as the governor of Yemen, al-Hajjaj's brother Muhammad bin Yousuf as the governor of Algeria. All these persons were vicious, cruel, and barbaric murderers.⁴³

We may gauge the character of al-Hajjaj bin Yousuf from the incident when he climbed the pulpit and asked the congregation, "Who gives you the daily bread; the Caliph or the messenger of Allah?"⁴⁴

Al-Hajjaj had the greatest contempt towards the Prophet (S) as well as towards the people of Medina and Mecca in general. He used to boast, "*Had I not been restrained, due to political necessity, by the caliph Abdul Melik bin Marwan, I would have killed the people of Mecca and Medina and put their corpses in sacks of donkey skin, for these people bear a grudge against the caliph and are jealous of his affluence.*"

In the year 72 AH, Abdul Melik sent al-Hajjaj bin Yousuf with an army of two thousand Syrians to subdue Abdullah bin az-Zubair whose son Mus'ab had been already killed. Instead of Medina, al-Hajjaj went to Iraq and sent men from there to Arafa in the Arabia. Abdullah ibn az-Zubair also was collecting and sending men who fought and were defeated by the army of al-Hajjaj. Since Abdullah ibn az-Zubair had established himself in the Kaaba, al-Hajjaj wrote to Abdul Melik seeking permission to enter the Kaaba. Abdul Malik gave permission and sent a contingent of five thousand soldiers headed by Tariq bin Amr to assist al-Hajjaj.⁴⁵ Abdullah ibn az-Zubair was killed in Mecca in the last days of the year 71 AH.

Al-Hajjaj killed Hamadan a bondsman and caller of Azan of Imam Ali.⁴⁶ He also slaughtered Qambar another bondsman of Imam Ali,⁴⁷ and beheaded Kumail ibn Ziyad, Imam Ali's close companion.⁴⁸ He also killed Umair [or Umar] bin ad-Dhabbi an old man of 90 years.⁴⁹

Al-Hajjaj inflicted four hundred whiplashes on Utba bin Sa'd for refusing to curse Imam Ali (a.s.).⁵⁰

During his governorship of eleven years under the rule of Abdul Melik bin Marwan and nine years under the rule of al-Waleed bin Abdul Melik, al-Hajjaj killed 1,20,000 Shia in Kufa and Basra for the only reason that they were sympathisers with Imam Ali.⁵¹ When al-Hajjaj died thirty thousand men and twenty thousand women, who had been imprisoned by him, were released

Abu Sadiq Sulaym bin Qais al-Hilali was a companion of the Prophet (S), and of five Imams; namely, Imam Ali, Imam Hasan, Imam Husayn, Imam Zainul Aabidin, and Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (peace be on them). When al-Hajjaj became the governor of Iraq, he ordered Sulaym to be arrested. Sulaym hid himself in various countries, and he suffered immensely and died in exile. His book under the title 'Kitab Sulaym Bin Qays' is translated into English. It throws new light on the incidents that occurred in the year 11 AH, and thereafter.

Sa'eed bin al-Musayyab was a well-known successor of the Prophet's companion (Tabi'een) and a

companion of Imam Ali. Abdul Melik bin Marwan wanted to get married to Sa'eed's beautiful daughter, but Sa'eed married her to a poor young man. In his anger, Abdul Melik ordered Sa'eed to be whipped thirty times for refusing to accept him as the caliph. The old man died in the year 94 AH.⁵²

Sa'eed ibn Jubeir was a companion of Imam Ali (a.s.). He was caught by al-Hajjaj and slaughtered in the year 94 AH. Sa'eed cursed al-Hajjaj, and within a few months, al-Hajjaj died.

Al-Waleed bin Abdul Melik poisoned Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) on 25th Muharram, 95 AH.

Sulayman bin Abdul Melik succeeded al-Waleed in the rule. He released three hundred thousand prisoners (men and women) who had been jailed by al-Hajjaj.⁵³ The release was not due to any mercy or pity, but because it cost the exchequer too much. Sulayman poisoned Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ali bin Abi Talib.

Hisham bin Abdul Melik succeeded his brother Sulayman in the rule and died in 125 AH. He poisoned Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) and Abul Hasan Zaid bin Ali. He demolished the house and cut off the tongue of al-Kumait al-Asadi, a poet who wrote in favour of the *Ahlul Bayt*.

Haleef al-Qur'an Abul Husayn Zaid bin Ali Bin al-Husayn bin Ali bin Abi Talib was killed along with his three hundred and thirteen followers by an army of Yousuf bin Umar by the orders of Hisham bin Abdul Melik. He then hung the corpse of Zaid on the main entrance to Kufa. The corpse remained hung for five years. A pleasant smell emanated from the corpse. This happened in the year 121 AH. In the same way, Muhammad bin Ali al-Kufi was slaughtered the next year.

When al-Waleed bin Yazid bin Abdul Melik became the king, he sought to arrest Yahya bin Zaid, who resisted against ten thousand warriors just with the help of seventy followers. Zaid and his followers were martyred. Zaid's head was severed and sent to al-Waleed bin Yazid, and his body was hung on the gateway of Jurjan for one year. Khushkhash al-Azdi, who escaped death in the battle, was taken to Nasiruddin Sayyar. Al-Azdi's hands and feet were first severed, and then he was martyred.

1. Calamities of the Shia.

2. Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 1 p. 80.

3. For a detailed study see Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 1 p. 54 – 82 [2001 Edition] quoting several sources.

4. Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 1 p. 92 [2001 Edition].

5. Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 1 p. 109– 115 [2001 Edition].

6. Ibid., p. 127– 128 [2001 Edition], quoting al-Mukhtasar fi Akhbaril Bashar.

7. Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 1 p. 129– 132 [2001 Edition].

8. Ibid., p. 133.

9. Ibid., p. 136.

10. Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 1 p. 138 [2001 Edition].

11. Ibid., p. 139.

12. Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 1 p. 145 [2001 Edition], quoting al-Isabah, vol. 4 p. 94.

13. Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 1 p. 180 [2001 Edition].

14. Ibid., p. 142.

- [15.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 1 p. 202–203 [2001 Edition] quoting Tarikh of at-Tabari, vol. 5 p. 222.
- [16.](#) The homage that had taken place under the tree.
- [17.](#) Ibid., p. 203 quoting Manqib of Shahr Ashub.
- [18.](#) Ibid., p. 204 quoting at-Tabari, vol. 5 p. 224.
- [19.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 1 p. 205–206 [2001 Edition] quoting Sharh Nahjol Balaghah of Ibn Abil Hadid, vol. 2, p.81.
- [20.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 1 p. 222 [2001 Edition].
- [21.](#) Ibid., p. 225–226.
- [22.](#) Ibid., p. 235.
- [23.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 1 p. 247 [2001 Edition] quoting Sharh Nahjol Balaghah of Ibn Abil Hadid, vol. 1 p. 121.
- [24.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 1 p. 245 [2001 Edition] quoting al-Isti'ab and al-Isaba.
- [25.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 2 p. 13, First Edition, Publisher Idara-e-Nasirul Uloom, Luknow, UP.
- [26.](#) Ibid., p. 3–4 quoting Ibn Abil Hadid's Sharh Nahjul Balaghah, vol. 1 p. 284.
- [27.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 4 p. 54 quoting al-Mas'udi's Murooj ath-thahab, vol. 2, p. 164.
- [28.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 4 p. 174–175.
- [29.](#) Ibid., vol. 2 p. 14.
- [30.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 2 p. 120.
- [31.](#) The Rise and Fall of Muslims, p. 82, Adam Publishers [2005].
- [32.](#) Ibid, p. 94.
- [33.](#) To form one's own judgment on questions concerning the Sharia.
- [34.](#) The Rise and Fall of Muslims, p. 80.
- [35.](#) Nafasul Mahmoom,] p. 280, Pub Ja'fari Propagation Center, Mumbai [2006].
- [36.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 2 p. 144 quoting an-Nasa'ihul Kafia, p.64.
- [37.](#) Ibid., p. 155–161.
- [38.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 2 p. 166 quoting an-Nasa'ihul Kafia, p. 52.
- [39.](#) Ibid., p. 169 quoting Sharh Nahjul Balaghah.
- [40.](#) For details see vol. 3 of Masa'ibush Shia [1966 Edition].
- [41.](#) For a detailed account, see Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 3 p. 215–227 [1966].
- [42.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 3 p. 226, quoting at-Tabari's Tarikh, vol. 8 p. 159.
- [43.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 4 p.50 quoting Allama Kamaluddin ad-Dimyari's Hayatul Haiwan, vol. 1p. 55.
- [44.](#) Ibid., p.54.
- [45.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 4 p.59 quoting at-Tabari's Tarikhul Umam wal Muluk, vol. 1 p. 175, 360 Al-Bidaya, and al-Balathuri's Ansabul Ashraf.
- [46.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 4 p.150 quoting Manaqib of ibn Shahr Ashub, vol. 3 p. 162.
- [47.](#) Ibid., p.157, quoting Biharul Anwar, vol. 9 p. 714.
- [48.](#) Ibid., p.161 quoting al-Bidaya wal Nihaya, vol. 9 p. 47.
- [49.](#) Ibid., p.164.
- [50.](#) Ibid., p.186.
- [51.](#) Ibid., p.93 quoting Muruj ath-Thahab of al-Mas'udi, vol. 3 p.175 and Mukhtasar Tarikh of Ibn Asakir, vol. 4 p.70.
- [52.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 4 p.181.
- [53.](#) Ibid., p.190 quoting Manaqib of ibn Shahr Ashub, vol. 2 p. 107, Hayatul Haiwan vol. 1 p. 55.

Part C: Persecution of the Shia by the Abbasid

kings

The Abbasids did not fall in the category of the progeny of the Prophet (S), the Ahlul Bayt. Al-Abbas was a paternal uncle of the Prophet (S). The children of Ali and Fatima alone were called Shareef or Sayyid, a term which came to be used more commonly later to denote the progeny of the Prophet (S). A Sunni writer of repute states, “The offspring of Ali are known as the ‘Ahlul Bayt’, ‘Aal Muhammad’, ‘the Progeny of the Prophet’, ‘the Children of the Messenger’, ‘Aal Taha’ and ‘Aal Yasin’. They are also known by the title of ‘Sayyid’ or ‘Shareef’. ”¹

Moulana Ali Naqi Naqvi draws a fallacious assumption that since Abdul Muttalib was the leader (Sayyid) of the Arabs, his children also came to be called ‘Sayyids’. It is a historical fact that none from the offspring of Abdul Muttalib’s other children, except those born to Ali, ever were called Sayyid.

Yet, the Abbasids assumed a garb of the Khilafah indirectly from Abu Hashim bin Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyya, the grand son of Imam Ali (a.s.). In order to pretend a proximity to Imam Ali (a.s.), the Abbasids created a legend saying that Abu Hashim al-Alawi appointed Muhammad bin Ali bin Abdullah bin Abbas as his successor (Khalifa) at the place called Hamiya. The Abbasids claimed that Abu Hashim was the Khalifa of Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyya, who in turn got to the Khilafah from Imam Ali (a.s.). The Abbasids also claimed that Abu Hashim had a great following of the Shia of Khurasan. Based on the above assumption, Ibn Khaldun, Ibnul Athir, Abul Faraj al-Isfahani, and some other writers state that the Abbasids invited people towards the ‘contentment of Aal Muhammad’. The Abbasids claimed that before he died, Muhammad bin Ali bin Abdullah bin Abbas appointed his son Ibrahim, and when Ibrahim was arrested by Marwan al-Himar, he appointed his younger brother Abul Abbas Abdullah as-Saffah as his successor.

The Abbasids also contended that Abu Hashim sent twelve persons as his deputies to espouse his cause into the various districts of Iran. This contention is not supported by any historical record that would show that Abu Hashim bin Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyya went anywhere near Khurasan or that he sent his emissaries. His father Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyya himself was under the Imamate of the Fourth Imam Ali Ibn Husayn Zainul Aabidin (a.s.). Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyya predeceased Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.). Abu Muslim, who was a native of Khurasan, was appointed as one of the emissaries by Ibrahim. Abu Muslim succeeded in gathering huge support for the cause of ‘the contentment of Aal Muhammad’ since the people of Khurasan loved the Ahlul Bayt. The cruelty and oppression of the Umayyads had vexed the public and a revolt was already brewing. The cause of ‘the contentment of Aal Muhammad’ was heartily welcomed.

Though the Abbasids touted the cause of this conception, they cleverly did not disclose the name of the person, who was supposed to represent the Aal Muhammad, for the simple reason that if they had named themselves, it would have been contested since, as detailed above, the Abbasids did not fall in

the category of Aal Muhammad. Therefore, they claimed that they represented the children of Imam Ali (a.s.).

[1] Abul Abbas as-Saffah (133–137 AH)

Abul Abbas as-Saffah became the first Abbasid Caliph in 133 AH, who controlled Asia, Egypt and West Africa. The truth is that having gained power in the name of *Aal Muhammad*, the Abbasids turned to be their tormentors.

In order to establish his reign, Abul Abbas indiscriminately killed the Shia and the Sunni. His brother Yahya, who was sent to quell the rebellion in Mosul, earned the title of ‘Shedder of Blood’. The Caliph’s title ‘as-Saffah’ in itself means ‘butcher’. K. Ali writes, “The name as-Saffah (butcher), by which the caliph was known, is well chosen, for as such he is distinguished beyond all others in a dynasty that had small respect for human life. He intensified his cruelty and guilt by treachery in the face of solemn oaths and also by ingratitude, for amongst his victims there were not a few who had spent their lives in helping him to the throne.”²

The Abbasids were always suspicious that they might be dethroned, particularly by the Imams of the Shia. They also realized that unless held on a tight leash the public might see through their game and demand that an Alawid be invested with the Caliphate. For these reasons, they perpetrated untold hardships against anyone suspected to be a sympathiser with the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). K. Ali, a Sunni present-day historian, wrote, “The murder of Abu Muslim and Abdullah who helped him greatly to raise the Abbasids to power and prestige, and his treatment toward the descendants of Ali, the fourth Caliph, are the darkest records in the Abbasid history.”³ It was actually as-Saffah’s younger brother, al-Mansur who was responsible for the murder of Abu Salama and Abu Muslim. The only reason behind the murder was that people such as Abu Salama Hafs bin Sulaiman in Kufa and Abu Muslim in Khurasan, were supporters of the Ahlul Bayt. Most of them were also greatly disappointed by the character of as-Saffah.

[2] Abu Ja’far al-Mansur ad-Dawaniqi (137–159 AH)

As-Saffah, at his dying moments, nominated his younger brother Abu Ja’far Abdullah, who on becoming the caliph in 137 AH, assumed the title ‘al-Mansur’. Among all the Muslim monarchs, al-Mansur was the first to keep near him an executioner holding an unsheathed sword, ever ready to behead anyone instantly.

About al-Mansur’s cruel nature, Allama Abdur Rabbah reports, “When al-Mansur sat in his court, the executioners will bring row upon row of people and behead them so mush so that the blood used to flow in the court and splatter on to al-Mansur’s cloak. Al-Mansur then ordered his chaplain to preach to him. When the chaplain preached, al-Mansur used to sit with his head bowed down as if he were ashamed, but in no time another group of persons would be brought and beheaded as before.”⁴ People were brought on the ground that they were Alawid or on a mere suspicion that they sympathised with the Ahlul

Bayt.

Al-Mansur ordered that the progeny of Imam Hasan (a.s.) should be gathered in one place. He got them chained and threw them into a dark cell. As they could not make out day from night, and the times for prayers, the prisoners divided the Qur'an into five parts in order to approximate the time of prayer and after finishing each part they offered prayers. There was no sanitation due to which they fell sick. When one died, the corpse was left to rot. Soon all of them died.⁵

Frequently, the progeny of Ali and Fatima and their sympathisers were gathered and al-Mansur ordered to be flogged so severely that the victims soon died.

Al-Mansur was the first person to make the victim stand and a masonry pillar raised all around him. Thus when the pillar was raised around him, Muhammad bin Ibrahim bin al-Hasan, was alive.⁶

One day, al-Mansur said, "By God, I do not find anyone as obedient as al-Hajjaj was to the progeny of Marwan." Once, al-Musayyab got up and said, "My master, al-Hajjaj is nothing compared to us, for God has elevated our Prophet (S) to the highest position among His creation, and yet when you order us, we unhesitatingly carry out your orders to kill the Prophet's progeny. Tell us; are we not more obedient to you than al-Hajjaj was to the progeny of Marwan?"⁷

Al-Mansur arrested Ibrahim bin al-Hasan bin Ali ibn Abi Talib along with Abdullah bin al-Hasan, Abu Bakr bin al-Hasan, and his brothers Abbas, Abdullah, Hasan, and Ja'far, and Hamza bin Ishaq bin Ali bin Abdullah bin Ja'far. They were kept in confinement in Medina for three years.

Thereafter, they were shifted to a dark dungeon in az-Zabadah where they all died one after another.⁸

Allama Muhammad Jawad wrote, "According to al-Mansur's own admission, he had killed more than a thousand persons who were from the progeny of Ali and Fatima (a.s.). He killed innumerable Shia and invented new and outrageous methods of torture and ultimate death."⁹

Though several persons wrote to Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) asking him to accept the leadership of the Muslims, he refused. He was content to preach Islam at Medina. It is said that he had as many as six thousand students studying various sciences at his hand. Despite his noninterference with politics, Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) was always looked upon with suspicion by al-Mansur.

Al-Mansur often used to send for the Imam with the intention of killing him, but he always lost his nerve at the last moment. At-Tabari records in his *Tarikhul Umam wal Muluk* that the Imam demanded that al-Mansur should return the properties confiscated from him (the Imam).

Al-Mansur ordered the Imam to be poisoned. The order was carried out. There was a cenotaph on the Imam's tomb but that was demolished in 1344 AH, by Abdul Aziz bin Sa'ud of Saudi Arabia.

In his last moments, al-Mansur called his wife and son al-Mahdi and entrusted a key saying that it was for the house that holds the most precious of all his possessions. He instructed that the house should be

opened only after his death and that none except his wife and son al-Mahdi should enter inside. When al-Mansur died, his wife and son opened the house and were shocked to see rows upon rows of bodies of young, old people, and children with tags in their ears showing the branch of the Family of Fatima and Ali (a.s.) to which they belonged.¹⁰ Such was the cruelty of al-Mansur.

[3] Muhammad al-Mahdi (157–169 A H)

Al-Mahdi was as cruel as his father al-Mansur. He bore an unabated hatred toward the Shia and Sayyids. When he found that his father had hundreds of tagged bodies of the progeny of Ali and Fatima (a.s.) stored in a house, as we saw above, he ordered all the bodies to be buried in a common ditch and a shop to be erected upon the ditch. He spared no effort to trace Ali and Fatima's progeny and to incarcerate them until their death or to have them beheaded. Any person least suspected of harbouring good will towards the Ahlul Bayt was unceremoniously killed without trial. So ferocious was al-Mahdi that people concealed their identity for fear of being persecuted for being the progeny of Ali and Fatima (a.s.). The Shia concealed their faith and preferred to be branded as zindiq (atheists) rather than to be known as Shia.

[4] Abu Muhammad Musa al-Hadi (169–170 A H)

Though he ruled for a short period of one year, he became as notorious as his father was for his cruelty and persecution toward the *Sayyids* and the Shia. He imposed restrictions on the progeny of Ali and Fatima (a.s.) who lived in Medina, and made them stand surety for each other. He made it obligatory on them to report every morning to the local authority. Often, they were made to wait for long hours just to insult them. The insults led to altercations. Being unable to bear the insults and harassment, al-Husayn bin Ali bin al-Hasan bin al-Hasan bin Ali ibn Abi Talib called for the progeny of Imam Ali (a.s.) and the following persons gathered around him; Yahya, Sulaiman, and Idris the sons of Abdullah bin al-Hasan, Abdullah bin al-Hasan al-Aftas, Ibrahim bin Isma'eel, Umar bin al-Hasan, Abdullah bin Isma'eel, and Abdullah bin Ja'far. These ten persons were proceeding on their pilgrimage. They were joined by thirty-six persons who were the progeny of Ali (a.s.) and a few bondsmen. They went to the governor's house early in the morning. On seeing them, the governor ran away. However, they were soon surrounded by the army of al-Hadi the Abbasid king and were massacred. The bodies remained lying on the ground for three days.¹¹ Six persons were taken prisoners and were brought before al-Hadi who beheaded them.

[5] Haroon ar-Rashid (170–193 A H)

Haroon ar-Rashid was the son of al-Mahdi and the brother of al-Hadi. In his long reign of 23 years, he perpetrated great crimes of murdering the progeny of Ali and Fatima and their supporters. He either killed or imprisoned them to death. The following are a few names of those who were killed or jailed to death by Haroon ar-Rashid, in addition to the unnamed sixty ones from the Progeny of Ali and Fatima

(a.s.) in Toos. Here are the names:

Ibrahim bin Isma'eel, Ali bin al-Hasan bin Ibrahim, Ali bin Hashim bin Buraid, Ma'qil bin Ibrahim, Abdu Rabbih ibn Alqama, Idris bin Abdullah, Hasanain bin Abdullah bin Isma'eel, Abbas bin Muhammad bin Abdullah, Abu Muhammad Hisham bin al-Hakam, Ali ibn Salih at-Taliqani, Ishaq bin al-Hasan bin Zaid...etc.

Haroon ar-Rashid was the first to order to demolish and remove Imam Husayn's tomb. Before him, neither the Umayyads nor the Abbasids, though desired, dared to destroy the tomb of Imam Husayn (a.s.). However, they imposed severe restrictions on visiting the tomb.[12](#)

Imam Musa al-Kadhim (a.s.) was living in Medina. When Haroon visited the holy city, he went to the Prophet's tomb and in order to show his proximity to the Prophet (S), he saluted the tomb saying '*Peace be upon my cousin*'. Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.), who was present at that time, put down Haroon ar-Rashid by saluting the Prophet's tomb saying: '*Peace be upon my (grand) father*.' Thus, the Imam proved that if proximity in relationship was what would count, Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.) was closer to the Prophet (S) than Haroon was.

Due to the above incident, Haroon felt so insecure that on several occasions, he made Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.) travel from Medina to Baghdad to kill him, but, whenever he met the Imam, he was scared to take any precipitate action. Instead, on several occasions, Haroon imprisoned Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.) for long periods. Seeing the piety of Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.), who was in prison for over a year, the jailor, at Basra, Eesa bin Ja'far bin Mansur wrote to Haroon ar-Rashid asking him to transfer the Imam to some other jail; otherwise he would himself release.

Haroon sent Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.) from Basra to Baghdad and kept him imprisoned under al-Fadhl bin ar-Rabee'. Soon, al-Fadhl found that Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.) was innocent and that he was being unjustly persecuted. Haroon learnt that Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.) was living a relatively comfortable life. He sent his confident Masrur to spy upon al-Fadhl. Haroon gave two letters, one addressed to Abbas bin Muhammad and another one addressed to Sindi bin Hashak asking him to follow the instruction of Abbas bin Muhammad. Accordingly, Abbas inflicted one hundred whips on al-Fadhl bin ar-Rabee' and handed over Imam al-Kadhim to the custody of Sindi bin Hashak. Sindi bin Hashak asked Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.) to lie on the floor and he made some Christian wrestlers to sit on, due to which the Imam died. According to Ardabili, Sindi bin Hashak inserted poison and martyred Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.) [13](#)

Haroon's jealousy of the infallible Imams of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) was so intense that he closed down the university run by Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) at Medina. He frequently ordered Imam as-Sadiq to leave Medina and travel to Baghdad just to disturb the Imam's teaching of his students who were said to be more than four thousand ones. Very cleverly, Haroon ar-Rashid used the pretext of encouraging sciences and he invited different persons for debates. His son al-Ma'mun followed the same policy of diverting people from seeking knowledge from the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.).

[6] Abdullah al-Ma'mun (198- 218 AH)

Al-Ma'mun was the son of Haroon Rashid. He was highly educated and was cunning. He was an expert politician. He killed his brother al-Amin, who was the caliph, after a prolonged battle of four years. Al-Ma'mun was a son of a bondwoman whereas al-Amin was of pure Abbasid descent. This created a rift between the Abbasids who were about eighty thousand people, and this constituted the biggest threat to al-Ma'mun. Like his predecessors, al-Ma'mun was also scared of the Alawids. Being a clever politician, he first forced Imam Ali ibn Musa ar-Ridha (a.s.) to marry his daughter and offered to nominate as his heir apparent. By this stratagem, al-Ma'mun had planned to subdue the Abbasids with the threat that if they rose in revolt against him, he would hand over the caliphate to the Alawids. For this purpose, he gave the title of 'ar-Ridha' based on the original Abbasid slogan of 'ar-ridha min Aal Muhammad; (seeking) the contentment of the progeny of Muhammad'.

Such a prospect was horrifying to the Abbasids. Al-Ma'mun was also confident that once the pomp and glory of the earthly kingdom surrounded him, Imam ar-Ridha (a.s.) also would fall into the trap of all the attendant vices, just like the judge of judges Yahya bin Aktham had fallen. It is said that al-Ma'mun was initially not given to any vices, but when he got rid of his brother al-Amin, he felt safer and in course of time fell into all sorts of vices that he indulged in that along with his ministers, counselors, and religious heads.¹⁴

However, Imam ar-Ridha (a.s.) saw through the game of al-Ma'mun and consistently he refused to have anything to do with rulership. Under threat, Imam ar-Ridha was forced to accompany al-Ma'mun and sit next to him. Imam ar-Ridha explained that his position was similar to his grandfather Imam Ali's when he was nominated and forced to participate in the Shura¹⁵ or to the Prophet Yousuf (a.s.) who became the minister of the king of Egypt.¹⁶ However, the Imam refused and never participated in the state affairs. Al-Ma'mun asked Abdullah bin Basheer to grow his fingernails. When they had grown to a considerable extend, he gave something that appeared to be tamarind, and asked Abdullah to squeeze it. According to a popular tradition, it was through grapes filled with poison that the Imam was made to consume and die.

There is an unending list of people who were martyred under al-Ma'mun's orders. The well-known among them are:

Al-Hasan al-Harsh, al-Hasan bin Zaid, al-Hasan bin al-Husayn bin Zaid, al-Hasan bin Ishaq, Ali bin Abdullah, Abu Sara bin Mansur, Muhammad bin al-Husayn bin al-Hasan, Muhammad bin Zaid bin Ali, Muhammad bin Ja'far, Abdullah bin Ja'far, Muhammad bin Abdullah bin al-Hasan,... etc., in addition to thousands of their supporters.

[7] Al-Mu'tasim Billah (218-227 A H)

He was the son of al-Ma'mun and was nominated to the caliphate by his father. He inherited from his ancestors the hatred for the Prophet's progeny. He imprisoned thousands of Shia and of the Prophet's progeny who died in prison or were killed on the orders of him.

Al-Mu'tasim married his daughter Ummul Fadhl, apparently out of respect and love, to Imam Muhammad al-Jawad (a.s.), but in fact to keep a close watch on the activities of the Imam and to have an executioner ready to eliminate the Imam by poison. Thus, Imam al-Jawad (a.s.) was martyred by poison inserted to him by Ummul Fadhl at the behest of al-Mu'tasim

[8] Al-Mutawakkil `Alallah (232-247AH)

Al-Mutawakkil was the cruelest of all the Abbasid kings. He bore great ill will towards the progeny of Imam Ali and Fatima (a.s.) and their Shia. He used to abuse and tell lies against Imam Ali (a.s.) in the open court. His clown Ibadah, who was a eunuch, pretended to imitate Imam Ali (a.s.). When al-Mutawakkil's son al-Muntasir Billah saw this, he chided his father saying that Imam Ali (a.s.) was the nephew of their grandfather Abbas bin Abdul Muttalib and allowing a clown to imitate him was the worst thing. Al-Mutawakkil was given to heavy drinking and was always surrounded by female dancers.

Al-Mutawakkil had abdicated his authority to the Turkish slaves who were whimsically running the administration of the state. Al-Muntasir Billah, with some disgruntled persons, killed his father al-Mutawakkil in 247 AH, when he heard him abusing Imam Ali and Fatima az-Zahra' (a.s.).¹⁷

Al-Mutawakkil not only bore ill will, but he also hated the popularity of Imam Husayn's tomb at Karbala to which millions flocked as pilgrims. Al-Mutawakkil wanted to erase the tomb completely. He destroyed the tomb seventeen times during his rule of fifteen years, but there is a record of four times; in the years 233, 236, 237 and 247 AH.¹⁸ Every time the tomb was erased a new and more magnificent structure was put up by the Shia.¹⁹ By al-Mutawakkil's orders, anyone attempting to visit the tomb of Imam Husayn (a.s.) was arrested and sent to the governor of Kufa who either killed or punished him severely. Every time the tomb of Imam Husayn (a.s.) was demolished, the surrounding houses and shops of the Shia were demolished too. On four occasions, the entire town of Karbala was demolished.

Umar bin Faraj, the governor of Medina and Mecca, looted the properties of the progeny of Ali and Fatima (a.s.) and harassed the Shia in all possible manners. Similarly, the governors of Egypt and Kufa used to arrest the Shia on false allegations and they punished them unjustly.

The names of the despotic governors are as follows:[1] Ibrahim ad-Daizaj who demolished Imam Husayn's tomb in 233 and 236AH, [2] Umar bin Faraj who demolished the tomb in 237 AH, [3] Harun al-Mu'ammari who demolished the tomb in 437 AH, [4] Ja'far bin Muhammad bin Ammar.

From the progeny of Imam Ali and Fatima (a.s.) al-Mutawakkil killed the following well-known and learned persons: *al-Qasim bin Abdullah, Ya'qub bin Ishaq, Ahmed bin Isa, and Abdullah bin Musa*.

- [1.](#) *Manaqib of ibn Shahr Ashub*, vol. 2 p. 134 quoted in *Masa'ibush Shia*, vol. 5 p. 29.
- [2.](#) *A Study of Islamic History* by K. Ali. P. 229.
- [3.](#) *Ibid.*, P. 234.
- [4.](#) *Masa'ibush Shia*, vol. 5 p. 93 quoting *al-Iqd al-Farid*, vol. 1 p. 41.
- [5.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 101–102 quoting *Muruju ath-Thahab*.
- [6.](#) *Masa'ibush Shia*, vol. 5 p. 103, quoting *at-Tabari's Tarikh*.
- [7.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 104 quoting *al-Mas'udi's Muruju ath-Thahab*. vol. 2 p. 171.
- [8.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 114–115 & 119 quoting *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin*.
- [9.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 146 quoting *ash-Shia wal Hakimun*.
- [10.](#) *Masa'ibush Shia*, vol. 5 p. 125–127 quoting *at-Tabari's Tarikhul Umam wal Muluk*.
- [11.](#) *Masa'ibush Shia*, vol. 5 p. 187–199 quoting *al-Mas'udi's Muruju ath-Thahab*, vol. 3, p. 336.
- [12.](#) *Ibid.*, vol. 6 p. 46 quoting from 'History & Geography of Karbala'.
- [13.](#) *Masa'ibush Shia*, vol. 6 p. 69–71.
- [14.](#) *Masa'ibush Shia*, vol. 6 p. 79 quoting *Shibli Nomani's 'Al-Ma'mun'*.
- [15.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 127.
- [16.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 128.
- [17.](#) *Masa'ibush Shia*, vol. 6 p. 164–171 quoting *at-Tarikh al-Kamil*, vol. 7 p. 20, *Muruju ath-Thahab*, vol. 2, *ash-Shia wal Hakimun*, p. 169...etc.
- [18.](#) *Masa'ibush Shia*, vol. 6 p. 186–199.
- [19.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 186.

Part D: Persecution of the Shia during the Period when a Multitude of Caliphs came to Rule the Muslim World

The animosity towards the Prophet's progeny borne by the Umayyads is understandable for several reasons. Firstly, Islam put a hold on the unbridled life enjoyed by the Arabs in the pre-Islamic days. Thus, we find that immediately after the death of the Prophet (S), Abu Sufyan managed to get his son Yazid first and then Mu'awiya appointed as governor of Syria where they lost no time in reintroducing the use of alcohol, gambling, and bondwomen, as was the custom in the pre-Islamic days. Whatever they did was out of their old barbaric spirit asserting itself rather than following the restraints imposed by Islam. While in public, they pretended to follow Islamic tenets, in private they did everything that Islam had forbidden. The *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) were the stumbling block in their wayward life of pagan aristocracy.

Secondly, Islam forbade idol worship and polytheism that was so dear to the ancient Arabs. Mu'awiya and his succeeding Umayyads were more interested in the old Arab culture and poetry than in the

traditions of the Prophet (S). For this purpose, they engaged writers at great expense to the state.

Thirdly, in the battles that ensued, many ancestors and near relatives of the Umayyads were killed. That is why we find the severed head of Imam Husayn (a.s.) kept in front of Yazid who gloated saying, “*How I am sure that the spirits of my ancestors slain in (the battles of) Badr, al-Khandaq, and Hunain must be happy to see the severed head of the son of Ali ibn Abi Talib lying at my feet!*”

Fourthly, the Umayyads always considered the Islamic movement not as a spiritual movement but as a political one leading to an empire. Therefore, when Abu Sufyan saw the huge gathering of devout Muslims, all that he could visualize was a great army powerful enough to create an empire.

Fifthly, neither Abu Sufyan nor his sons ever really embraced Islam. They were impelled more by hypocrisy and a ruse to save their skin and to grab whatever they could by joining their powerful enemy.

There might be several more reasons for the Umayyads to bear malice towards the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.), but for the Abbasids, who came to power on the slogan that the *caliphate* was the inherent right of the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.), animosity could spring only from a desire to cling to the power that so fortuitously fell in their lap. But a more important reason was the suspicion of an imagined threat from the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.).

However, the surprising thing is that the Ottomans, Ghaznawids, Mongols, and other Muslim rulers all over the globe, such as Saddam in recent days, bore animosity towards the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) in general and the Shia in particular that can not be normally explained.

The root cause is to be found in the following facts:

Immediately after the Prophet’s demise, several legends were invented to create a divide between the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) on the one hand and the rest of Muslims on the other. Firstly, a tradition was put forward as an argument against the claim of the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) that the Prophet (S) had said, “*We the prophets neither inherit nor bequeath.*” The tradition appeared to be so noble in content that it was accepted by many without inquiring whether the Prophet (S) had really said so or not. Obviously, the said tradition is contrary to the Qur’an which speaks about Prophets inheriting one from the other and Prophets praying for a successor to carry on the Divine Mission. Hence, the tradition is an obvious invention. In fact, none from the large number of the Prophet’s companions, except two persons, testified to hearing the said tradition from the Prophet (S).

Another legend was that the Prophet (S) did not wish to place the spiritual as well as the temporal leadership in one place. Even this tradition had no corroborators. No reason was given as to when and why the Prophet (S) said so, particularly when he himself held both the offices. This tradition is also contrary to the Qur’an that speaks of the kingdoms bestowed upon the Prophets David, Solomon...etc.

Regarding the invention of such legendary traditions, Nicholson wrote, “During the first century of Islam, the forging of Traditions became a recognized political and religious weapon, of which all parties availed

themselves. Even men of the strictest piety practised this species of fraud, and maintained that the end justified the means.”¹

The effect of the legends was that the infallible Imams became the acknowledged spiritual leaders while the *Caliph* assumed the temporal rulership. The only object of these legends was to separate the spiritual leadership (*wilaya*) from the temporal rulership (*mulk*), and to keep the temporal leadership out of the reach of the *Ahlul Bayt*. It is this later motive that was responsible for the creation of further fast legends such as that Ali and his Shia never offered prayers and that the Shia were heretics. The false propaganda that Ali and his Shia were heretics deserving to be cursed after every prayer, was first started by Mu’awiya in the year 12 AH, and spread by him throughout the Muslim world that he later came to preside over. As a result of Mu’awiya’s orders, Imam Ali (a.s.) and his Shia were cursed from on seventy thousand pulpits everyday, and false stories about them were spread throughout the Muslim world for over half a century. This put unshakable roots in the minds of common Muslims, so much so that even in these enlightened days they persist in several Muslim countries.

Sheikh Shamsuddin Abu Abdullah bin Makki bin Hamid al-Aamuli al-Juzaini known as ‘the First Martyr’ was a great scholar of his time. He had written several books. The accusation against him was that he was a Shia and therefore deserved to be killed. First, he was imprisoned for one year and then he was asked to tender an apology that he refused because it would then amount to admission of guilt. He was martyred at the instance of Judge Burhanuddin al-Maliki and Judge Abbaad ibn Jama’ash-Shafi’iy on Jumada II, 786 AH in Damascus. On the persistence of Judge Abbaad ibn Jama’ash-Shafi’iy, he was beheaded and his body was hung from gallows and later was burnt.

The ‘Second Martyr’ is Sheikh Zainuddin bin Ali bin Ahmed bin Muhammad bin Jamal bin Taqiyuddin bin Salih. He was martyred on the allegation that he was Shia and so he deserved to be killed. When he came to know that he was likely to be arrested, he left on pilgrimage. When the Judge came to know this, he wrote to the king of Rome that a person who was not from the four sects of Sunnis and who was a *Kharjite* had taken refuge in his (the king) domain, and that he should be arrested forthwith. The king sent an emissary to find out if what the judge had written was true, and at any rate to apprehend the man and bring him alive. The emissary found Sheikh Zainuddin bin Ali in Mecca. The Sheikh asked to be his guest until he would complete the pilgrimage. They both left for Rome. On the way, they met another person. On being told that the Sheikh was a Shia Scholar, the stranger told the emissary, “*Do you not apprehend that this Sheikh may complain to the king that you have ill-treated him and that on such complaint the king may punish you?*” The emissary believed that such could be the case. He beheaded the Sheikh near a canal. He carried the head and left the body. During the night, the residents of the village saw radiant beings visiting the spot where the Sheik’s headless body was lying. The next day, they buried the Sheik’s body and built a building with a dome over it. This happened in the year 966 AH. When the king was enraged to see that his emissary had killed the Sheikh and brought his head instead of following his orders, the emissary was hanged.²

¹. A Literary History of the Arabs, p. 145 [2003].

[2.](#) Shahide Salis (the Third Martyr) by Mirza Muhammad Hadi Sahib Aziz Lucknowi, p. 12–13.

Part E: Persecution under the Mongols and Recent Times

Persecution by the Mongols

During Akbar's rule, Judge Noorullah ash-Shushtari, known as (the Third Martyr) and popularly called 'Qadhi (judge) Sahib', migrated from Iran to India. He was a great scholar in all the five schools of Jurisprudence (*fiqh*) ; the Hanafite, Shafiite, Malikite, Hanblite, and Shiism. His knowledge was appreciated by Akbar who appointed him as the chief judge of Lahore. Ash-Shushtari accepted the appointment with a precondition that he would administer justice according to any of the five schools of Jurisprudence. His knowledge of the Islamic sects had convinced him that there was always a parallel in one of the four Sunni schools of Jurisprudence. Accordingly, he gave judgment according to that school of Sunni Jurisprudence that was in agreement with the Shiite thought. Complaints started pouring that ash-Shushtari was administering judgment according to the Shiite Jurisprudence. Ash-Shushtari showed that in fact he gave Judgment according to one of the four Sunni schools, which incidentally was in agreement with the Shia Law. Akbar realized the wisdom of ash-Shushtari and refused to entertain any complaint against him.[1](#)

When Akbar died, his son Jahangir killed Ali Quli Khan and took his widow, famous Noor Jehan as his wife. We may recall the incident of Khalid bin al-Waleed with Malik bin Nuwayra where Khalid killed Malik and committed adultery with his wife. By his nature, like Khalid bin al-Waleed, Jahangir was also a tyrant.

One of the Sunni scholars Makhdumul Mulk Abdullah al-Ansari became all-powerful in Jahangir's court. He was an extremist. He issued a *Fatwa* that it was not only impermissible but had become sin to perform the *Hajj* in the circumstances then prevailing. When asked to explain he said, "*In these days, if pilgrims travel by land, they will have to pass through the land of the Rafidhite (Twelver Shia)] which is sin. On the other hand, if the pilgrim takes a ship, all ships belong to the Europeans where they will find the portraits of Jesus and Mary which amounts to idolatry that is sin.*"[2](#) Makhdumul Mulk equated the Shia to idolaters and thereby indirectly declared them as disbelievers.

Makhdumul Mulk could not find fault with the judgments rendered by Noorullah ash-Shushtari. He therefore planted a spy who pretended to be a Shia. He gained the confidence of ash-Shushtari and got access to two books on Shiism, namely, '*Ihqaqul Haq*' and '*Majalisul Mo'minin*'. The spy pretended to be deeply interested in the books and, after taking ash-Shushtari's permission to read them, he took them

to his house. He passed on copies of the books which became powerful weapons in the hands of those who were inimical to ash-Shushtari. They took the books to Jahangir as a proof that ash-Shushtari was Shia who deserved to be executed. Jahangir agreed to their demand and ash-Shushtari was flogged with barbed whips that virtually stripped his skin. This was in the year 1019 AH. Ash-Shushtari's dead body was left lying on the open ground for several days.³

An Iranian nobleman, who was holding a high post in Gwalior, dreamt that Lady Fatima (a.s.) was asking him to bury the body of the martyr ash-Shushtari. The Iranian took permission from Jahangir and buried the body near the Civil Court, a few yards away from *Changi Chowki*. In the year 1188, Muhammad Mansur Musavi Nishapuri constructed a shrine over the tomb. In the year 1290, a compound wall was constructed enclosing the huge area of endowed land by Sayyid Ali Naqi, Deputy Collector. In the year 1309, Tahsildars Kifayat Husayn and Khan Bahadur Sayyid Abul Hasan and Sayyid Nazim, an advocate, fixed iron doors, and with donations collected by the public. Nazim Husayn also started the *Majlis* which has continued until now. In 1332 AH, a committee was formed that supervised the construction of four buildings to accommodate men and one building to accommodate women. They were constructed under the direction of the Secretary Nawab Muhammad Sajjad Ali of *Sheesjh Mahal*.⁴

Adil Shahi and Qutub Shahi the kings of Deccan were Shia. Aurangzeb persecuted and killed several of them. My father told me that my ancestors, who were Shia living in Bijapore, were hunted down and killed. The younger members of the family were made to stand and walls raised around them, that if old structures were to be pulled down now, skeletons would be found in the walls. Because of the persecution, my grandparents left Bijapore and settled in Vellore of North Arcot District of the erstwhile Madras State. They were pious people and until now, their graves in Qasba near the Fort at Vellore are revered both by Hindus and Muslims alike. However, in the process, they were forced to conceal their faith, offer prayers only privately in closed rooms, and shut themselves up during the first ten days of Muharram. In course of time, Vellore and some surrounding villages acquired their own Shia population. Madras being a cosmopolitan city, soon attracted the Shia who settled in pockets in areas such as Thousand Lights on Mount Road, Triplicane, Royapettah, Perambur, Pudupet...etc., and spread to several outskirts of Chennai. Madras gave birth to several Shia scholars such as Moulvi Hasan Raza from Pudupet, Moulvi Nabiul Ahmed Khan, Moulvi Ghulam Muhammad Mehdi Khan, his son Ghulam Muhammad Taqi Khan, and S.V. Mir Ahmed Ali from Thousand Lights; and lastly, my mentor and teacher Mirza Ghulam Abbas Ali Sahib from Royapettah. There were such great businessmen like the Khaleelis. It is said that the Khaleelis acquired so many properties on Mount Road that the British Government issued a notification, prohibiting sale of any property to the Khaleelis.

Bangalore, Mysore and its suburbs also have a sizeable population of Shia. Andhra Pradesh Hyderabad has the largest Shia population. Vizag, Masuliptam, Nagaram and Nellore also have sizeable Shia populations.

Hyderabad has its own legends. The Nizam was prevailed upon to issue an order prohibiting breast-

beating and to the Chant of ‘Husayn’, ‘Husayn’ in the famous Ashura procession of Bi Bi ka Alam. The Sunnis had argued that breast-beating is barbaric and should be banned in these enlightened days. When the Shia came to know about the ordinance, they approached the Nizam who had a soft corner for the Shia. He gave them counsel and said, ‘you go ahead with the procession on the lines I have given you.’ When the procession started, the Shia started chanting ‘Ibne Zehra wa wayla’ while striking their heads. The Sunnis rushed to complain to the Nizam. The Nizam replied, *“At your instance, I have banned breast beating. What can I do if they strike their head? I have also banned the use of the words ‘Husayn’ as desired by you. It will not be an offence if the Shia use the word ‘Ibne Zehra’ though that word also refers to Husayn. They have not violated my order. ”*

In the late seventies through the eighties, there was a rash of politically manipulated communal violence in the city of Hyderabad which was frequently subjected to imposition of curfew. Once, the curfew fell on the day of Ashura. Prominent Shia met and decided that, come what may, they would take out, as usual, the procession of Bi Bi ka Alam and perform all the usual rituals of *Matam*. They went to speak to the Police Commissioner Mr. Pavithran and to convey the resolution of the Shia to hold the procession as usual despite the curfew. Mr. Pavithran was a very sensible person and he had observed that the Shia localities had the lowest crime rate and that never did any untoward incident occur during the Ashura procession. He therefore allowed the Ashura procession of the Bi Bi ka Alam to be taken out as usual. The Sunnis and some extremist Hindus objected saying that in the procession, Shia youth would come out openly with their swords and knives and would likely use the occasion to use the weapons against their opponents. They asked, ‘Would Mr. Pavithran permit them to come out openly with their swords and knives?’ They argued that the Shia should at least be banned from doing ‘*Matam*’ with swords and knives. Mr. Pavithran replied, *“If you want to put your swords and knives to the same purpose of beating yourselves, as the Shia do, then, to that extent I have no objection if you too carry weapons to beat yourselves.”*

One of the great miracles of Imam Husayn (a.s.) to the present day is that the wounds of those who beat themselves with chains, knives, and swords never become septic and none is known to have died in the long history of the Ashura processions anywhere in the world. I had personally witnessed a team of Germans taking video of the Shia, young and old, beating themselves with chains, Knives, and swords in the Ashura procession at Diwan Devdi, Hyderabad. One of the team members told me that they were puzzled by the fact that the chain, knife, or sword used by one individual was used by another without cleaning it. Looked at scientifically, this should lead to gangrene because the blood group of one individual using the knife or sword may be ‘A’ and the next person using the same sword may belong to a different blood group. The gentleman told me that when they collected samples of blood from various individuals and found that all the blood samples had turned to ‘O’ group, and later when the blood of the same individuals was tested later, they belonged to various blood groups. None of the participants ever needed or took ATS injection.

In order to obliterate this living miracle, a very attractive proposal was mooted that instead of letting the

blood flow on the roads on the Day of Ashura, the Shia should donate their blood that could be used to save lives. Many Shia were impressed by the novelty and apparent nobility of the cause. Soon, it was realized that the motive behind the suggestion was to dilute the effect that the procession made on the onlookers and to erase the miraculous nature of Matam during Ashura. Our ancestors sacrificed their properties and lives to keep the memory of Karbala fresh in the minds of generations to come. Unfortunately, even among the Shia, there has arisen a minority that holds prayer to be superior to Majlis. There is no comparison between the two; if prayer is like the Book of God, Majlis is the remembrance of the Prophet's progeny (a.s.).

Remember that the Prophet (S) had said, "I am leaving among you two precious things entwined and knit together like a strong rope; the Book of God and my Progeny. They will never separate from each other until they will come to me at the Pond in the Paradise. If you cling fast to them, you will never go astray at all." An unnecessary controversy is raised to separate the Book of God from the Progeny of the Prophet (S) in an attempt to glorify one over the other. Glorifying one means demeaning the other and that could only be the work of Satan. The atrocities against the Shia were so severe that they preferred to remain in anonymity. It is only recently that the world has started to take notice of the Shia. It is for the Shia to put forth their religious beliefs through their writings and to establish their exclusiveness through their conduct. We should try to weed out some undesirable elements that are a blot on the name and character of the Shia, by educating our masses.

[1.](#) Ibid., p. 23–24

[2.](#) Shahide Salis, P. 22.

[3.](#) Ibid., P. 24.

[4.](#) Shahide Salis, P. 25–26.

Appendix: The Martyrs at Karbala

(a) The Names of the 18 Martyrs from the Banu Hashim

[1] Sons of Imam Ali

1. Imam Husayn bin Ali

2. Al-Abbas bin Ali

3. Uthman bin Ali

4 Ja'far bin Ali

5 Abdullah bin Ali

6. Muhammad bin Ali

[2] Sons of Imam al-Hasan

7. Al-Qasim bin al-Hasan

8. Abdullah bin al-Hasan

9 Abu Bakr bin al-Hasan

[3] Sons of Imam Husayn

10. Ali al-Akbar bin al-Husayn

11. Ali al-Asghar bin al-Husayn

[4] Sons of Abdullah bin Ja'far

12. Oun bin Abdullah bin Ja'far

13. Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Ja'far

[5] Sons of Aqeel bin Abdul Muttalib

14. Abdurrahman bin Aqeel

15. Ja'far bin Aqeel

16. Abdullah bin Aqeel

[6] Sons of Muslim bin Aqeel

17. Abu Abdullah Amir bin Muslim

18. Abdullah bin Muslim

(b) Names of the 16 Martyrs who left Yazid's army and fought with Imam Husayn

[1] Bakr bin Taim

[2] Jabir bin al-Hajjaj

[3] Juwair bin Malik at-Taimi ad-Dhabbi

[4] Al-Harith bin Amr al-Kindi

[5] Al-Hurr bin Yazid ar-Riyahi

[6] Al-Hurr's Brother

[7] Al-Hurr's son

[8] Al-Hurr's retainer

[9] Hallas bin Amr al-Absi

[10] Zohair bin Salim bin Amr al-Azdi

[11] Dharghama bin Malik

[12] Abdurrahman bin Mas'ud at-Taimi

[13] Umair bin Abi Dhabiya

[14] Qasim bin Habib al-Azdi

[15] Mas'ud bin al-Hajjaj at-Taimi

[16] An-No'man bin Amr ar-Rasibi

(c) Names of the 14 Companions of the Prophet (S) who were Martyred at Karbala

[1] Anas bin al-Harith al-Asadi

[2] Junada bin Ka'b

[3] Habib bin Mudhahir al-Asadi

[4] Muslim bin Owsaja

[5] Muslim bin Kathir al-Azdi

[6] Na'eem bin Ajlan al-Ansari

[7] Dhahir bin Amr as-Salami

[8] Shu'aib bin Abdullah

[9] Abdurrahman bin Abdur Rabb al-Ansari

[10] Uqba bin as-Salt (as-Samit)

[11] Ammar bin Abu Salama

[12] Amr bin Ka'b al-Ansari

[13] Muslim bin Kathir al-Azdi

[14] Na'eem bin Ajlan al-Ansari

(d) Names of the 22 Companions of Imam Ali who fought with Imam Husayn

[1] Abu Thumama Amr bin Abdullah as-Sa'idi

[2] Aslam bin Kathir al-Azdi

[3] Umayya bin Sa'd at-Ta'iy

[4] Burair bin Khudhair al-Hamadani

[5] Jabala bin Ali ash-Shaibani

[6] John the slave of Abu Dharr

[7] Al-Harith bin Nabhan

[8] Habashi bin Qais an-Nahmi

[9] Handhala bin As'ad

[10] Salim

[11] Sa'd bin al-Harith

[12] Sawwaar bin Abi Himyarr al-Fahmi

[13] Shouthab bin Abdullah

[14] Amr bin Jundab

[15] Qasit bin Zohair at-Taghlubi

[16] Kardus bin Zohair at-Taghlbi

[17] Kinana bin Atiq at-Taghlubi

[18] Majm'a bin Abdullah al-Mathheji

[19] Muqsit bin Zohair at-Taghlubi

[20] Nasr bin Abi Nizar

[21] Nafi' bin Hilal al-Bajali

[22] Yazid bin Ma'qil al-Ju'fi

[23] Jundab bin Hujair al-Kindi

(e) Names of the 42 valiant soldiers who fought and sacrificed their lives for Imam Husayn

[1] Abu Aamir Ziyad bin Umair al-Hamadani

[2] Souhan bin Omayya al-Abdi

[3] Bishr bin Amr al-Kindi

[4] Hubab bin al-Harith at-Taghlubi

[5] Al-Hajjaj bin Yazid at-Tamimi

[6] Handhala bin Umar

[7] Rafi' bin Abdullah

[8] Zohair bin Bishr

[9] Zohair bin Qais al-Bajali

[10] Salim bin Amr

[11] Sa'd

[12] Sa'eed bin Abdullah al-Handhali

[13] Salman bin Mudharib bin Qais al-Bajali

[14] Salim [Sulayman]

[15] Saif bin al-Harith bin Sariyi

- [16] Saif bin Malik al-Abdi
- [17] Suwaid bin Amr
- [18] Shabib bin Abdullah
- [19] Aabis bin Abi Shu'aib ash-Shakiri
- [20] Aamir bin Muslim al-Abdi
- [21] Aayiz bin Mujmmi'
- [22] Abbad bin Muhajir
- [23] Abdurrahman bin Abdullah bin Arji
- [24] Abdurrahman bin Urwa al-Ghfari
- [25] Abdullah bin Urwa al-Ghfari
- [26] Abdullah bin Umair
- [27] Abdullah bin Umair al-Kalbi
- [28] Abdullah bin Yazid bin Sabeet al-Qaisi
- [29] Ubeidullah bin Yazid bin Sabeet al-Qaisi
- [30] Ammar bin Hassan at-Ta'iy
- [31] Amr bin Junadah bin Ka'b
- [32] Amr bin Khalid as-Saidawi
- [33] Amr bin Qarat al-Ansari
- [34] Qaarib bin Abdullah
- [35] Qasit bin Zohair at-Taghlubi
- [36] Qu'nab bin Amr an-Nimyari
- [37] Malik bin Abdullah Sariyi
- [38] Mujjam'i bin Ziyad
- [39] Mani' bin Ziyad

[40] Muhajir bin Sahm

[41] Yazid bin Sabeet al-Qaisi

[42] Yazid bin Ziyad al-Muhajir.

Summary

- (a) Martyrs from Banu Hashim 18
- (b) Martyrs whom left Yazid's army and joined Husayn 16
- (c) Martyrs who were Companions of the Prophet (S) 14
- (d) Martyrs who were Companions of Imam Ali (a.s.) 22
- (e) Soldiers martyred 42

Total number of Martyrs who fought at Karbala: 112

This number does not include the twenty-eight companions of Imam Husayn (a.s.) who were killed in the volley of arrows shot at the beginning of the day of Ashura. It also does not include those who were killed in their attempt to fetch water from the Euphrates on, at least, two occasions, nor the children such as Ali al-Asghar, Abdullah bin al-Hasan...etc.

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A Prayer

*In the name and by the Grace of the Innocent Martyr
Imam Husayn bin Ali bin Abu Talib (a.s.), I beseech you,
O Allah, to forgive us our sins and grant us peace in this world*

and in the hereafter, proximity to the Ma'sumeen (infallible ones) peace be on them.

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